

The secret of Hsenwi

THE tall and slim pagoda can be seen from afar even before entering Hsenwi, an ancient town over 40 miles from Lashio in the northern part of Shan State. Situated high on a mountain slope in the northern sector of Hsenwi, the pagoda, titled “Kaunghmu Htut” has an unusual architectural design when compared with most of the ceties around the country.

After ascending the mountain through a snaky motor road, we reach the pagoda built under the patronage of Mine Phone Sayadaw, an eminent Buddhist monk from eastern Shan State. According to some local accounts ruins of an ancient pagoda said to be over 2000 years old were found at the place where “Kaunghmu Htut” is now standing. Locals also claim that the idea of building the pagoda at the present site in the present shape came to the Sayadaw in vision; and that the design was drawn by the Sayadaw himself. Additionally, they believe that the ruins are the remaining parts of a pagoda built by the natives with the help of missionaries sent to the area by King Asoka.

On the large foundation structure stands the stupa which has four stories of chambers, each accommodating a standing Buddha image and facing a

different direction.

On top of the uppermost storey comes the florally decorated structure supporting the parts where the scared umbrella, hngetmyatnar and diamond bud are erected.

Painted deep purple on most of the surface areas, the pagoda has altogether 28 standing Buddha images as a symbol of paying obeisance to the 28 Buddhas described by the Buddhavamsa.

Another significance of the pagoda is that all the four side-walls of its square-shaped foundation are studded with mounted figures of white elephant heads.

The surrounding area of the pagoda is mostly forested and there is a natural stream thundering down the mountain slope. As for the monks of a nearby monastery, the stream is a source of clean water for drinking and many other purposes. There are also two strange-looking shrines for local (nats) spirits in the area. From the mountain, picturesque Hsenwi with its medium-size lotus lake lies silently amidst the large paddy fields.

In fact, the town Hsenwi has a long history as it was the seat of the Shan chieftains. Once, the town was besieged by a large invading army with flags and banners fluttering high in the air



Photo shows the Kaunghmu Htut Pagoda.

The general of the enemy troops stationed on the hills surrounding the town was demanding total surrender or to face annihilation. At that time a prophecy came out saying that the only means to crush the enemy troops was to trample on their flags and banners. But how could it be done without defeating them first? Fortunately a wise man appeared

before the chieftain and advised him to dig a shallow lake on whose surface the enemy flags and banners were reflected. Then he asked the chieftain to order his men to trample on the images of the enemy flags and banners. This gave the Hsenwi men and women enough morale, courage and strength to eliminate a much larger army. Some speculate that

the wise man was no other person than the court minister U Paw Oo who was on a visit to the area or was exiled as a light punishment for annoying the King.

Perhaps, Hsenwi may have many more interesting places and stories to show and tell visitors. So, come, visit the town and discover its secrets. —Tin Maung Than ■

Myanmar woman found dead in Thailand

A BODY of a 37-year-old Myanmar woman was found in a roadside drain in Om Noi area of Samut Sakhon district in Thailand at about 9 pm on 11 May.

The woman, Ma Thanda Myint, a migrant labourer of a sofa-making workshop of the area never returned home while on her way to buy Thai tradition-

al food for dinner. As she failed to reappear her roommates made a search and found her body in the drain.

Some people living near the place where the incident occurred said that they heard something like a quarrel, but others speculated that she was hit by a car.

But witnesses only found some bruises at the calf of her body which was kept at a nearby morgue. The Thai-based Aid Alliance Committee-AAC in cooperation with local authorities was trying to contact her family in Myanmar and expose the truth about her death. —Kyaw Soe (Kawthoung) ■

Car, generator, garage, refrigerated coffin for free funeral service in Rakhine State

A LOCAL well-wisher family donated a car, a generator, a garage and a refrigerated coffin to Maungtaw Free Funeral Service Society in Rakhine State on 12 May. At the donation ceremony at Bhaho Monastery in Maungtaw, the chairman of the society said, “This is the first time a donation of high value was made for the so-

ciety. There were small donations made by one or two persons. In the past the society had to rent a hearse from the town municipality, but now we have our own. So we can help the people more. At its initial stage, the society had about 200 members, but now it has only 150. So we are inviting old members to come back and

trying to recruit new members.

The donors were U Tun Myint and family of West Ward, Maungtaw. The society is providing Ks 20,000 for every funeral, but if a Buddhist monk dies, it provides up to Ks 50,000. It is also providing other necessary items for a funeral.—Aung Kyaw Sein (District IPRD) ■

POEM

A Mother's Worry

She is worried since the time she conceived,
Whether her baby inside will be born healthy.
After the little one comes out, she is in baby blue,
With the daily worries even small things like pee and poop.
On her kid's first school day,
She prays that everyone is kind to her baby in special way.
When her beloved screams in the dentist's room,
she wants to shout,
“Stop torturing him right now!”
When her child is in teenage wild,
She passes so many sleepless nights behind.
People advise her to do meditation practice,
She tries and finds it worse as her mind left where her child is.
When her son starts his own business,
Whether he can extract right from wrongs is her stress.
On her son's wedding day,
Who knows that her heart is taken away?
When her first grandchild comes,
She is worried again that the new parents' worry has begun.
Ah, (she sighs...) when will a mother's worry end?
(Devoted to all the mothers)

Meiji Soe