



**Cultural heritage of the Upper Ayeyarwady River Corridor:
with suggestions for community-based tourism that could support the
conservation of cultural and natural heritage**





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3.1 Acknowledgments

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3.2 Introduction

This report summarises the cultural heritage of a 640 km sector of the Upper Ayeyarwady River, which stretches from Bhamo (Banmaw) in Kachin State to Bagan in the central dry zone (Fig. 3.1).

In general, it does not attempt to duplicate information available for tourists in numerous travel guides (Loney Planet, 2014; DK, 2014; Zatko, 2015, Stevenson, 2004), internet sites or specialist publications (Strachan, 1996; Stadtner, 2005). Rather, it seeks to provide an insight into the history, and more especially the culture of the people who live and work on the banks of the Upper Ayeyarwady River.

The study focuses on 18, existing or potential, destinations for tourist boats on the Upper Ayeyarwady (Fig. 3.1). It provides an introduction to each destination; a summary of the current tourism highlights; the potential of the destination for community-based tourism; and recommendations for the future. For a description of the river itself, see Appendix 1, which is based on Owen (2015).

Community-based tourism, or CBT, is here defined as a form of nature/cultural tourism that emphasises the development of local communities and allows for local residents to have substantial control over, and involvement in, the development and management of the tourism project. A major proportion of the benefits should remain within the community. Community-based tourism should foster sustainable use and collective responsibility but it also embraces individual initiatives within the community (CEN, 2013).

In Myanmar, CBT is frequently referred to by an alternative name, 'Community Involvement in Tourism', or CIT. According to the recently published Myanmar government policy document on CIT/CBT, one of its primary objectives is 'to maintain cultural diversity and authenticity'. It should also seek 'to preserve national identity and encourage the development of cultural heritage and living cultures' (CIT, 2013).

This report is the final output of a project '*Developing policies for sustainable tourism in the Upper Ayeyarwady Corridor, Myanmar*' sponsored by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) (for further details see <http://www.tourismmyanmar-cepf.com/>). This involved a study of the natural heritage of the Upper Ayeyarwady River Corridor with particular reference to 23 Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) (Bates et al., 2015a). It included a summary of current river-based tourism on the Ayeyarwady and a review of the threats to wildlife in the Upper Ayeyarwady River Corridor (Bates et al., 2015b). In addition, it has drawn on a recent report on the biodiversity and threats to biodiversity in Bagan, in the southern part of the study area (Bates, 2015).

Within the Upper Ayeyarwady River Corridor (Bhamo to Bagan sector), it is hoped that these four reports will provide valuable information relevant to identifying:

- opportunities for community-based tourism
- priorities for the conservation of natural and cultural heritage
- threats to natural and cultural heritage.

In general, we believe that tourism is not, at present, a threat to heritage in the Upper Ayeyarwady River Corridor. Rather it has the potential to be an invaluable tool, which will help all stakeholders (government, local authorities, business, NGOs, CSOs and local communities) recognise the economic value and therefore the importance of conserving and developing Myanmar's/the Upper Ayeyarwady's natural and cultural heritage. Tourist income will not only help development generally but also provide

income to help conserve Myanmar's heritage. In addition, tourists can act as the eyes and ears of the world to observe and report if they see this heritage being misused, neglected or destroyed.

Photographs on the cover, page 1 and page 5 are respectively: evening light on the Ayeyarwady River at Lawkananda Pagoda, Bagan; farmers crossing the Ayeyarwady River at Myit Kan Gyi on an early morning in February; monks in New Bagan.

All original photographs are taken by Paul Bates except for Fig. 3.59, above and below, which are by Sai Sein Lin Oo. All these photographs were taken between May, 2014 and May, 2015 during a series of field surveys to the study area. Those sourced from the literature or the internet are credited accordingly. The map (Fig. 3.1) is by Malcolm Pearch.

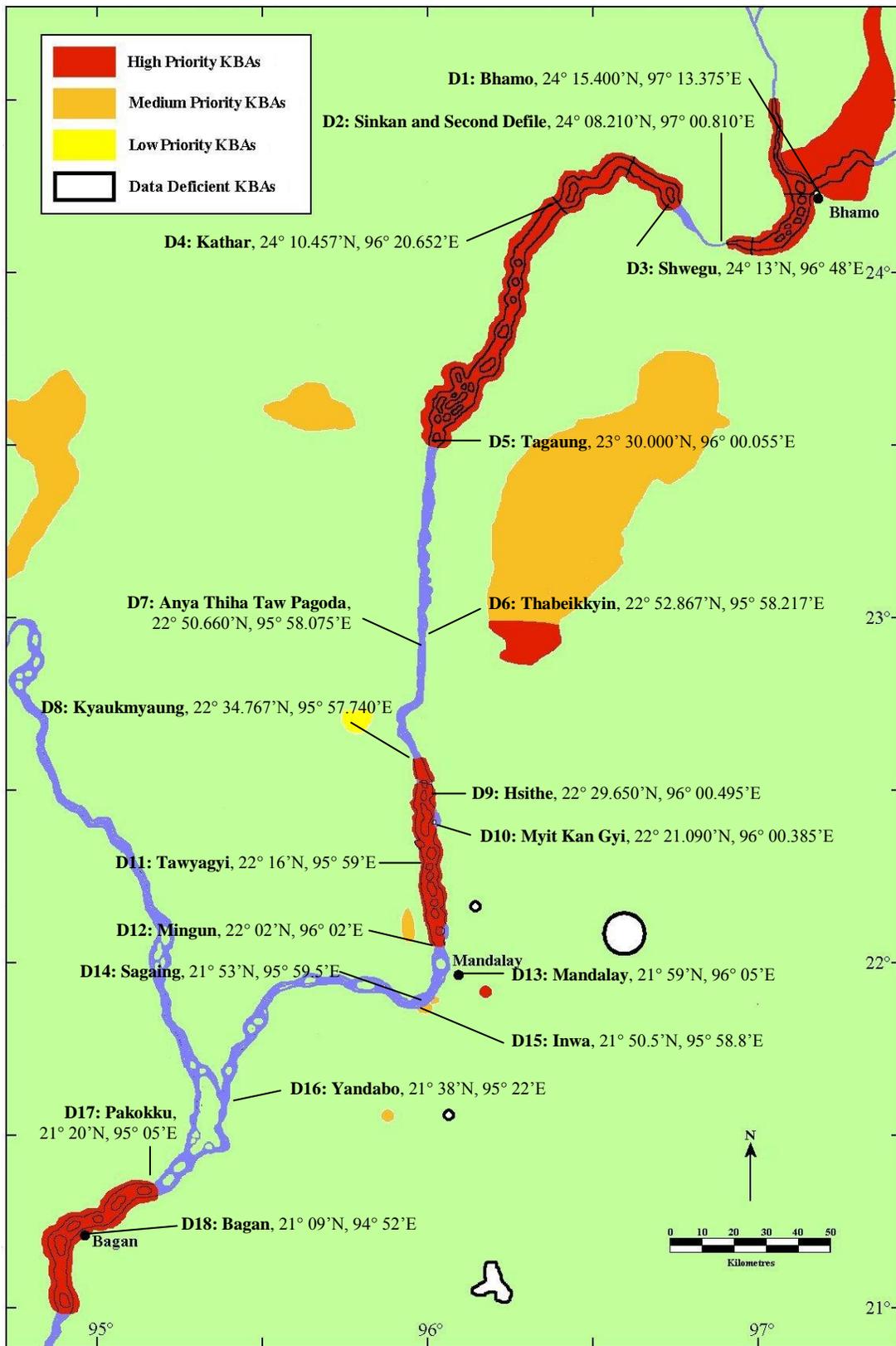


Fig. 3.1. Map of destinations for tourist boats, existing and proposed. The 'D' numbers correspond to the 'Destination numbers' in the text below.



Fig. 3.2. Above: Downtown Bhamo (Banmaw) in the late 19th century (photograph sourced from <http://diglib.colgate.edu/cdm/search/collection/p101901coll9/page/5>); most of the old town of Bhamo was destroyed during fierce fighting in December 1944. Below: The town was rebuilt after the Second World War. However, today, many of these wooden buildings are threatened with demolition as increased economic prosperity has led to a rapid redevelopment of the town and the construction of new concrete buildings.

3.3 Destination 1: Bhamo (Banmaw)

Background: Bhamo (Banmaw) (c.o. 24° 15.400'N, 97° 13.375'E) is a town of some 48,000 inhabitants in southern Kachin State. It is situated on the left bank (east bank) of the Ayeyarwady River, some 1280 km, by the windings of the river, (990 km in a straight line) from its mouth. Despite this distance from the sea, it is only 111 metres (361 feet) above sea-level.



Fig. 3.3. Above: Banmaw University, situated north-east of Bhamo adjacent to Nampha Inn and the Taping River. Middle: Part of the 6.5 km Ayeyarwady River waterfront of Bhamo, with its characteristic and majestic 'rain trees'. Below: The new Shwekyina Pagoda built on the site of the ancient settlement of Sanpenago, 1.5 km north of Bhamo.

Bhamo is in a strategic position since it is sited at the northern limit of year round navigation on the Ayeyarwady (Owen, 2015) and is also only some 35 km from the Chinese border. In the past, it was a centre of trade between Myanmar and China. Goods were brought to Bhamo by boat (Fig. 3.8) and transported from there by caravans of mules travelling between Bhamo and Tengchong (Tengyueh) in West Yunnan Province, a distance of 216 km by track (McCrea and Prentice, 1978). First reference to this trade is found in a 15th century map made by Fra Mauro who recorded the wanderings of the Venetian merchant Nicolò di Conti (1395-1469) in India and South-east Asia (Anon, 2015a). Nicolò wrote of Bhamo '*Goods are transferred from river to river and so pass to Cathay*'.

The size and prosperity of Bhamo ebbed and flowed with the prosperity of this trade. In times of peace it flourished but there were also many times of war and lawlessness involving various factions of Shans, Chinese, Burmans and Kachins (Dawson, 1912).

The name Bhamo is a colonial interpretation of the previous name Banmaw, which is now being reintroduced by the government, see for example Banmaw University (Fig. 3.3). Banmaw is thought to have come from the Shan language and signifies 'pot village'. This either refers to an occupation of pot-making by previous inhabitants or perhaps to the nature of the city itself, which is surrounded by a rim of hills, except for where the Ayeyarwady cuts its path, north to south (Dawson, 1912).

The current position of Bhamo with its 6.5 km frontage on the Ayeyarwady (Fig. 3.3), originates from the 17th century. Prior to this, the earliest settlement, Sanpenago, was situated some 3 km to the north, near the confluence of the Taping River and the Ayeyarwady. Remains of this site can be seen near the Shwekyina pagoda (Fig. 3.3), although apparently much has been lost in the last 65 years (Anon, 2015b). With the fall of Sanpenago, a new settlement, 'Old Bagan', developed on the right bank of the Taping River. The exact site is not clear but was possibly between Sikaw and Sihet or at Myothit, which is about 32 km upstream (Dawson, 1912).

On 28 December, 1885, the British took control of the town. This followed the overthrow of King Thibaw on 29 November, 1885 in Mandalay and a torrid year for Bhamo, which had seen half the town burnt to the ground in a dispute between Wun tribesmen, Kachins and local Burmese (Dawson, 1912). However, there had been a British presence in the town before this. On 13 January, 1868, the first river steamer travelled the 480 km/8 day journey from Mandalay and Bhamo. A year later the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company started a service to the town with the Paddle Steamer (PS) Colonel Fytche (Fig. 3.4). Subsequently, a regular river boat service was set up, which not only linked Bhamo to Mandalay but also to the new railhead at Kathar. This greatly promoted trade between Myanmar and China, which included the export of salt, cotton twist (mainly of Indian manufacture), manufactured goods (mainly European) and oil from Bhamo to Tengchong and the import from China of silk, hides and orpiment (a yellow dye consisting of arsenic trisulphide) (Dawson, 1912; McCrea and Prentice, 1978).

Trade via Bhamo lasted until the construction of the Burma Road, which was completed in 1938 (to provide support to China during the Second Sino-Japanese war) (Fig. 3.4). This road linked Mandalay to Kunming in China via Lashio in Shan State and provided a much more efficient route for import-export than the primitive, tortuous mule tracks between Bhamo and Tengchong. The Burma Road is often confused with the Ledo Road (also known as Stillwell Road), which ran from India to China via Myitkina and Bhamo and was built from December 1942 to December, 1944 during the Second World War to supply China and allied troops in Upper Myanmar (Anon, 2015c) (Fig. 3.3).

Bhamo was occupied by the Japanese on 4 May, 1942 and the town, as we know it today, was mostly built after the Second World War since much of town was burnt to the ground in mid-December, 1944 during fierce battles between Chinese and Japanese forces (Slim, 1956).

Current tourism highlights: Bhamo is the starting point for a number of river cruises that travel from Bhamo to Mandalay and vice versa (for details of operators see Appendix 2). Other tourists fly to Bhamo to visit this somewhat 'sleepy' backwater. However, currently, security problems in Kachin State mean that tourists are restricted to the town and its hinterland.

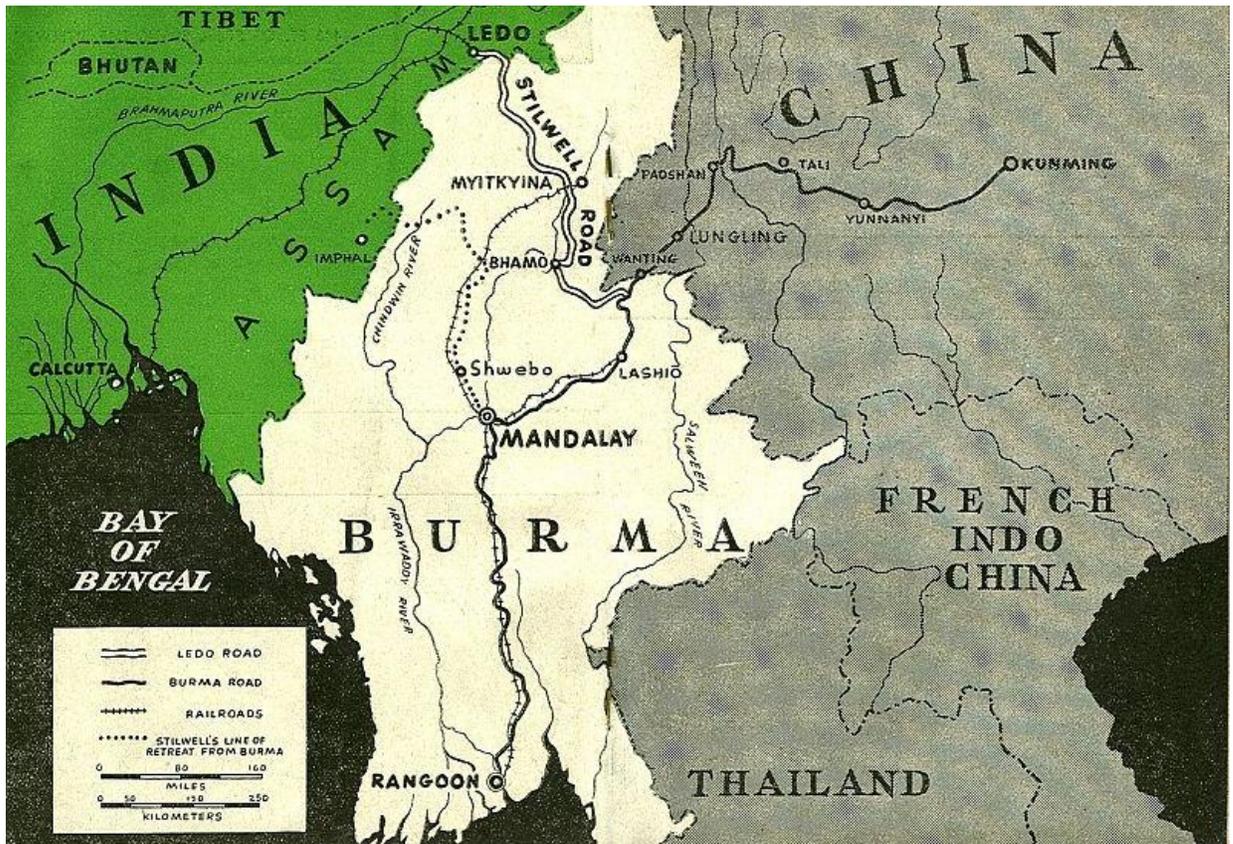
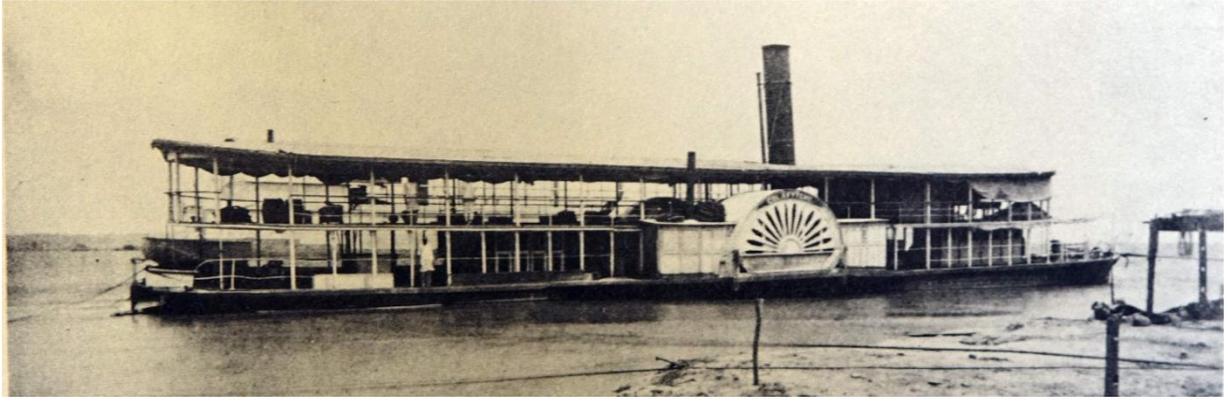


Fig. 3.4. Above: The PS [Paddle steamer] Colonel Fytche, which started a regular service from Mandalay to Bhamo in 1868 (photograph sourced from Chub and Duckworth, 1973). Below: A map showing the route of the Ledo Road (also known as the Stilwell Road) and the separate (and earlier) Burma Road (sourced from <http://www.cbi-history.com/maps/maps.html>).

Today, Bhamo still has an old-world charm. This is accentuated by the architecture of much of its central part, which is characterised by numerous wooden buildings and shops, mostly constructed of teak and stained black with oil (Fig. 3.2). Sadly for tourists (but probably not for the inhabitants) many of these older style buildings are being replaced by modern concrete constructions.

Included below, is a summary of the currently recognised highlights of the town for tourists. This is sourced from the on-line Lonely Planet (Anon, 2015b). *'At the southern end of this riverfront are*





Fig. 3.6. This page: Above: A fisherman using a Chinese dipping fishing net in Nampha Inn. Below: Local inhabitants use a wide range of techniques to propel their boats across the wetlands, as here with a punt pole.

Fig. 3.5. Previous page. Above: View of the wetlands of Nampha Inn from Nampha Monastery. Middle above: Boat hired from Nampha Monastery. Middle below: Traditional agriculture is still practised in the wetlands. Below: Nampha Inn provides an interesting insight into traditional fishing and agricultural practices.

dealerships selling great stacks of clay-pots including simple water carriers from Shwegu and giant glazed amphorae from Kyaukmyaung. Two short blocks east then one north on Lammataw Rd brings you to the main market (Thiri Yadana) from which Sinbyushin St leading west becomes the main road to Myitkyina and China. It quickly passes Post Office St (for Grand Hotel, turn right after one block), the pre-dawn vegetable market and Letwet Thondaya Rd (for the Friendship Hotel, turn left after the second block). Around 500m further is the large, photogenic complex of Theindawgyi Paya featuring an elongated golden bell-shaped gilded stupa. It's best admired from the southeast across a pond lined with concrete monk statues.'

Potential for community-based tourism: Over and above the current attractions of the town of Bhamo, there is considerable potential to involve some local communities, especially those that border a wetland area called Nampha Inn, in a community-based tourism/conservation initiative. The efficacy of this is greatly increased on account of the existing interest in such a project by senior staff of Banmaw University, which is situated next to Nampha Inn.

Nampha Inn (c.o. 24° 18.00'N, 97° 15.500'E) is adjacent to the Taping River (about 5 km north-east [in a straight line] from central Bhamo town). It lies within a 'High Priority' Key Biodiversity Area (KBA 54, Ninety-six Inns: for details see pages 12-14 in Bates et al., 2015a). It extends some 10 km from the Taping River, south-east into a relatively underpopulated area of flooded flatlands. The geographical extent and depth of the 'lake' is dependent on the season and particularly the depth of the Taping River, which back-fills (floods) the Nampha Inn valley in the rainy season.

The wetland can be accessed by boat. Currently, there is no official boat for hire but a reasonable craft with an outboard motor can be arranged at Nampha Monastery (24° 17.623'N, 97° 15.548'N) (Fig. 3.5).

Nampha Inn is of particular interest to tourism on account of its:

- cultural traditions: a wide range of interesting and unusual traditional fishing methods can be observed in its 'lake' area. According to senior staff of Banmaw University, it is home to a community of fishermen and women who practise nine different fishing techniques. In our short visit, we observed some of these (Figs. 3.5, 3.6). For details of a range of traditional fishing practices in Myanmar see Ferrars and Ferrars (1901) and specifically for Bhamo District see Dawson (1912). Nampha Inn also has some traditional agricultural practices (Fig. 3.5).
- biodiversity: as outlined in Bates et al. (2015a), Nampha Inn is home to a rich variety of wetland birds, particularly in the winter season. It also probably has a rich fish fauna.

Other sites/areas of cultural interest close to Bhamo include:

- the Taping River (Chinese name is Ta-ho or 'big stream') (Fig. 3.7), which was part of the former caravan route that linked Bhamo to Tengchong in China. Although centuries old, the nature of the terrain in the mountains to the north-east of Bhamo ensured that the route was never more than a rough bridle path, which was impassable to everything but transport with mules, horses and oxen. The route followed the course of the Taping River and then the Takaw River, a tributary of the Taping. With its steep gradients, spurs and difficult passes, it passed through Kachin and Shan hilltop settlements en route to Tengchong (McCrae and Prentice, 1978).
- the Taping River, which was bridged south of Myothit (24° 24.622'N, 97° 24.292'E) by the Ledo/Stillwell Road in December, 1944 (Anon, 2015d). The road subsequently turned west to Bhamo before heading to the Chinese border by way of Mansi, Namhkan and Muse.
- the Shwekyina Monastery (24° 17.460'N, 97° 13.635'E) (Fig. 3.3), which is built on the site of the former town of Sanpenago, which was the capital of the region from the 6th to 11th centuries (Dawson, 1912).
- a wonderful temporary wood and bamboo pedestrian bridge, which is constructed each year in the dry season by local people to facilitate movement across the shallow Taping River (Fig. 3.7).

Other sites of wildlife interest close to Bhamo include:



- the Taping River, which despite recent indiscriminate logging on its left bank, is still a tranquil area with some wildlife, especially birds on the river and its sandbanks.
- the confluence of the Taping and Ayeyarwady Rivers. In years past, Anderson (1879) reported that *'at the mouth of the Tapeng many dolphins of all ages are generally to be seen disporting themselves in the long deep reach of the Irawady that occurs there. But during the rains, when the Tapeng and other affluents of the great Burmese river...are in flood, they are ascended by these dolphins'*. Smith and Mya Than Tun (2007) also recorded dolphins from the Taping-Ayeyarwady confluence, for three consecutive years (2002-2004). Although dolphins certainly do not ascend the Taping River today, their current status at the confluence is not known but should be researched.

Recommendations: If local authorities wish to promote cultural conservation in order to promote future national and international cultural/nature tourism, they should:

- consider introducing some level of planning/conservation laws to preserve the picturesque nature of the central old town of Bhamo, especially in relation to the teak wood buildings.
- promote collaboration with Banmaw University and other interested stakeholders for the conservation of Nampha Inn. With its fascinating traditional fishing methods and interesting biodiversity (especially birds), it would have wide appeal to tourists interested in Myanmar's cultural and natural heritage.



Fig. 3.8. Two 19th century Myanmar cargo boats on the Ayeyarwady River (photographed sourced from Singer, 1993).

Fig. 3.7. Previous page. Above: The Taping River, north of Bhamo, near its confluence with the Ayeyarwady River. Middle above: Early morning on the Taping River. Middle below and Below: A temporary bridge made of wood and bamboo, which crosses the shallow Taping River in the Dry Season (winter).



Fig. 3.9. The Second Defile and is a natural wonder. There is potential to provide local boat trips for tourists out of Sinkan, which would be interesting for all those who appreciate beautiful scenery and nature.

3.4 Destination 2: Sinkan and the Second Defile

Background/current tourism highlights: Sinkan (24° 08.210'N, 97° 00.810'E) is a village on the left (south) bank of the Ayeyarwady River. It is situated at the eastern entrance to the Second Defile (for details of the defile see pages 20-21 in Bates et al., 2015a). Sinkan was previously rather remote. Now it is served by an upgraded road from Bhamo, which crosses the Ayeyarwady River by way of the 'Kathar Bridge', some 1.5 km to the west of Sinkan.

For over a century, international travellers have passed through the Second Defile, admiring its scenery (Fig. 3.10), which amongst other things is described as 'picturesque and imposing' by Chhibber (1933). More dramatically, Fergusson's Foreword to McCrae and Prentice (1978) recounts his experience of travelling through the defile: *'the steamer appears to be approaching a solid and inexorable wall of rock as the river closes in. Suddenly a small cleft opens before you, and you are swept through a narrow channel, with cliffs towering above on either side, and a small white pagoda half-way up on the starboard hand to wish you well'*.

Potential for community-based tourism: Sinkan has potential to serve nature tourism in two ways:

- providing boat trips for photographers and/or, nature/bird enthusiasts to explore the Second Defile. This could benefit nature by raising the profile of the defile as a landscape of national and international merit and by providing income to local people, which might assist with the conservation of the defile's environment, including its wildlife and forests.
- providing boat trips to travel up the Ayeyarwady towards Bhamo to observe birds, especially in the dry season when winter migrants such as Bar-headed geese (*Anser indica*) congregate on the sand banks. These trips could also provide a useful service in monitoring the distribution

and abundance of the increasingly rare, critically endangered Irrawaddy dolphin in the 'High Priority' Key biodiversity area (KBA 3: Ayeyarwady River, Bhamo to Shwegu section) see pages 17 to 18 in Bates et al. (2015a) and also very rare birds such as the critically endangered White-bellied heron (*Ardea insignis*).

Recommendations: The potential for responsible community-based tourism linked to nature conservation should be explored at Sinkan.



Fig. 3.10. A late 19th century photograph of part of the Second Defile (sourced from Singer, 1993). The defile has long held a fascination for all those who have travelled the Ayeyarwady River between Bhamo and Mandalay.



Fig. 3.11. The monastery of Shwe Baw Kyune is located on an island, almost opposite the town of Shwegu. Within its compound, there are some 7,000 stupas.

3.5 Destination 3: Shwegu

Background/current tourism highlights: Shwegu (c.o. 24° 13'N, 96° 48'E) is situated on the left bank of the Ayeyarwady, south of the Second Defile. It is the capital of Shwegu Subdivision in southern Kachin State. The town itself is of limited interest to most tourists. However, pilgrims and tourists use it as a jumping off point to visit Shwe Baw Kyune, a monastery, which lies nearly opposite on an island in the Ayeyarwady River.

Shwe Baw Kyune is described online (Anon, 2015e): *'At first glance this monastery looks 20th-century. Historians, though, say it was built in the 13th century while monastic fables suggest it was founded two millennia ago when an Indian prince turned up with seven holy bone fragments of the Buddha. These are now encased within small Buddha statuettes decorated over the centuries with layers of gold leaf.*

While they form the monastery's priceless main treasure (dattaw), for non-Buddhists the monastery is far more interesting for its extraordinary array of over 7000 closely packed stupas, ancient and modern, which fill the eastern end of the island. Some are whitewashed, others gilded and many more are mere piles of antique bricks with just traces of former stucco detail. Most appear to have been suffocated for years by foliage, Angkor Wat style. The bushes were recently cut back to reveal the spectacle, but getting to the outlying stupas is very uncomfortable barefoot given all the stubble and thorns (carry your sandals).

Hidden here and there are dozens of tiny buddha statues and the odd brick-and-stucco lion. The whole scene is made even more photogenic by a series of pyatthat (stepped towers) that flank the monastery's central golden tipped stupa. And the island setting, with its tree-shaded village of wooden stilt houses, makes for a wonderfully peaceful environment. There's a big local festival here in the week leading up to full moon of Tabaung.'

During our recent visit in February, 2015, most of the vegetation had been cut back and many of the pagodas were being renovated, whilst others were being built from new. To the non-expert, the site looked rather forlorn.

Potential for community-based tourism: There appears to be no obvious opportunities for new initiatives for tourism in Shwegu that will promote the conservation of natural and/or cultural heritage.



Fig. 3.12. Above: Shwe Baw Kyune includes both new and old pagodas. Below: Many pagodas are still being constructed today.



Fig. 3.13. Kathar is an attractive town, which was once home to the writer George Orwell. It is situated on the west bank of the Ayeyarwady River. In the Second World War many of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company's steamers were scuttled at Kathar.

Below right: Kathar was a crossing point for the British and Indian armies in December 1944 (photo sourced from <http://www.iwm.org.uk/research>).

3.6 Destination 4: Kathar (also spelt Katha)

Background: Kathar (c.o. 24° 10.457'N, 96° 20.652'E) is the administrative town of Katha District, Sagaing Division and is situated on the right bank (west bank) of the Ayeyarwady River. It is linked by rail through the junction town of Naba to Mandalay (12 hour journey) in the south and Myitkyina in the north. It can also be reached by regular ferries that run from Mandalay to Bhamo (Fig. 3.14).

Since colonial times, Kathar has been populated with government offices. Internationally, its most famous resident was George Orwell (pen name for Eric Blair) who lived in the town between 1926 and 1927 whilst serving as Deputy Superintendent of Police for Kathar in the Indian Imperial Police. Kathar (renamed Kyauktada by Orwell) provided the inspiration for his first novel, *Burmese Days*. Kathar also has links with prominent Burmese writers such as Shwe U Daung, Thaw Tar Swe, Theik-Pan Muu Tin, and AFPFL leader Kyaw Nyein (Anon, 2015f).

During the Second World War, Kathar witnessed first the retreat of British forces and British and Indian civilians to India in 1942 and subsequently the return of British and Indian forces in mid-December 1944 (Slim, 1956). It also witnessed the historic sinking of many of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company's boats (Fig. 3.17). These were scuttled on

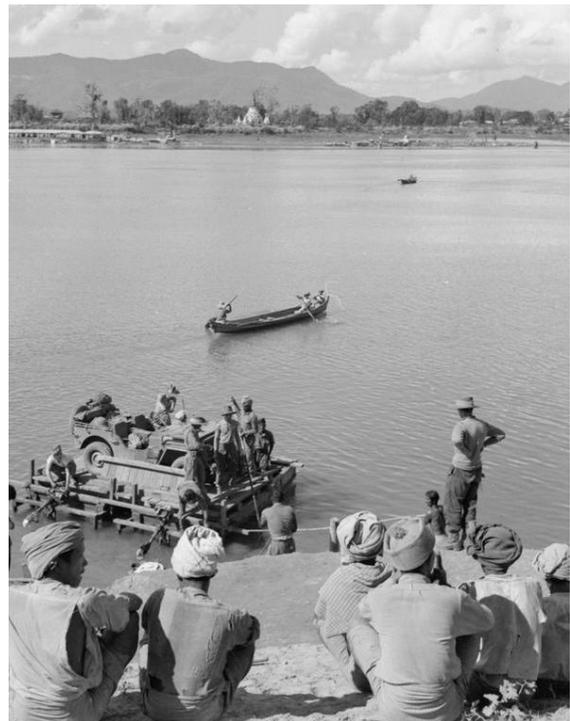




Fig. 3.14. Above: The Strand, the main street which runs parallel with the Ayeyarwady River, is one of the many interesting areas of Kathar. Middle: Kathar is regularly served by government ferries. Below: A beer bar on the Strand, overlooking the river.

3-4 May, 1942 on the orders of John Morton, Manager of the Company. He was part of a team that sunk numerous boats belonging to the Company to avoid them falling into the hands of the Japanese. He wrote in his diary '*Katha is a sight, vessels anchored ten abreast and all deserted. The last train has*





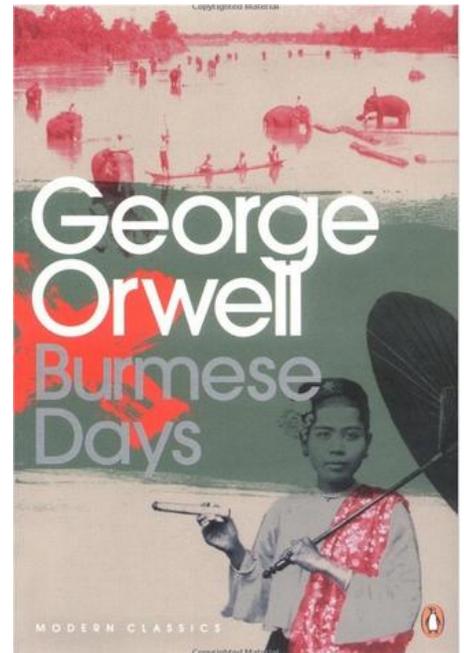
Fig. 3.16. Above: The former British Club, Kathar. Right: *Burmese Days*, the novel by George Orwell written whilst Orwell (Eric Blair) served as a Deputy Superintendent of the Indian Imperial Police, Kathar.

Fig. 3.15. Previous page: Above and Middle: The former residence of the British Deputy Commissioner, Kathar. Below: The house reputed to have belonged to Eric Blair (George Orwell).

gone, the town is evacuated. Parties are told off to sink every vessel' and subsequently 'This morning [4 May] we re-assembled at 4 am having worked all night sinking ships...' (McCrae and Prentice, 1978).

Current tourism highlights: Until recently, Kathar featured little in the tourist itineraries of international travellers to Myanmar. However, this is slowly changing. With the greater number of cruises from Mandalay to Bhamo and with other intrepid travellers arriving by train, more tourists now come to this attractive riverside town. The popularity of Kathar has also been enhanced by writings such as Larkin (2004). Highlights include the vibrant riverside with its boats, human life, monasteries, shops and cafes. Others come to visit the Orwellian landmarks of the old British club, the tennis club, the town jail, Orwell's house (reputed!), and the rather grand but dilapidated Deputy Commissioner's house.

Potential for community-based tourism: If Orwell's observations in '*Burmese Days*' are accurate, it appears there was once much wildlife in the area. In the opening paragraph of the book, he records vultures circling over the town in April, whilst later he writes that in October '*there were snipe in countless myriads, and wild geese in flocks that rose from the jeel with a roar like a goods train crossing an iron bridge*' (Orwell, 1934: pages 1 and 67 respectively in 1989 Penguin paperback edition).



On the recent field survey up the Ayeyarwady River, there still appeared to be much forest on the hills (Gangaw Taung) to the west and especially southwest of Kathar (see pages 22-24 in Bates et al., 2015a). Potentially, Kathar could be a good centre for the exploration of this area for nature tourism. It would also be a point from which tourists with an interest in wildlife could explore some of the river observing waterfowl, particularly migratory ducks and also occasionally observing Irrawaddy dolphins.

Recommendations: If Kathar is to benefit from the Orwellian connection, in terms of national and international cultural tourism, it needs to address quickly the renovation of most of the old British colonial buildings, some of which are in desperate condition, see particularly the Deputy Commissioner's house (Fig. 3.15).

There needs to be a short assessment, including a biodiversity survey, to determine if Kathar can play a meaningful role in natural heritage tourism.



Fig. 3.17. Boats of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company (location not known) at the beginning of the 20th Century. In 1942, hundreds of steamers, flats and barges of the Company were scuttled by their British and Indian crews at Kathar, Kyaukmyaung and Mandalay. This action was taken to avoid them falling into the hands of the Japanese. (Photograph sourced from Singer, 1993).



Fig. 3.18. In ancient times, Tagaung was a triple-walled capital city (some remains of which are still visible within the town). Tagaung lies on the Tropic of Cancer (see the Myanmar burgundy and gold notice).

3.7 Destination 5: Tagaung

Background: Situated on the left bank (east bank) of the Ayeyarwady, the town of Tagaung (c.o. 23° 30.000'N, 96° 00.055'E) has a long and ancient history. According to Moore (2007a, 2007b, and 2011), there is evidence of Neolithic and Bronze Age habitation from the surrounding area and the settlement itself dates from around 1300 BC. Apparently, the Greek geographer Ptolemy writing in 140 AD mentions 'Tugma metropolis' believed to be Tagaung (Phayre, 1883) and the 19th century chronicle Hmanna Yazawin states that Tagaung was the first capital of Myanmar, with the adage '*Myanmar asa Tagaung ga*' ('*Myanmar starts from Tagaung*') (Anon, 2015g).

In its heyday, Tagaung was a triple-walled city (Moore, 2011) with Wall 1 (19 hectares) around a low hillock to the north, Wall 2 (62 hectares) known as Anya Bagan, and Wall 3 (204 hectares) encompassing the other two. The western walls are missing in all three cases, and believed to have been washed away by the river as it changed its course over time (Anon, 2015g). Much of Tagaung's wealth seems to have come from gold, silver, copper, timber, and elephants (Moore, 2007a; Wicks, 1992). Gold was sourced from gold-rich river sand, which was found to the north, the north-west and together with copper from the edge of the Shan Plateau. Silver came from near Mogok, which is also famous for its gems, especially rubies (Moore, 2011). Elephants and timber also came from Mogok.

Tagaung was on one of the three Silk routes that ran from Yunnan (China) to Bengal (India). The route followed the Shweli River and Tagaung was the crossing point of the Ayeyarwady.

Current tourism highlights: Today, Tagaung receives few international tourists. Of those that come, nearly all arrive by boat as the road route from Mandalay is difficult. There is a museum (\$5 entry fee but no photography inside), which includes many archaeological relics recovered in and around this ancient city. Tagaung is situated on the Tropic Cancer with a sign to mark the line of latitude. There is also a famous 'nat' shrine (Fig. 3.20).

Potential for community-based tourism: Currently, there is limited potential for tourism based on natural heritage, although Irrawaddy dolphins were seen in the river opposite the town.



For cultural enthusiasts, Tagaung with its long and interesting history could be a noteworthy site, although there is little to see on the ground that links the present to the past.

Recommendations: There is a need to produce a tourism-friendly guide booklet to the town that explains in a simple way the interesting history of this town. This would allow national/ international tourists to gain a better understanding of its history and encourage others to visit.

Fig. 3.19. Previous page. Above: The Tagaung archaeological museum. Middle: A monastery in Tagaung, which overlooks the Ayeyarwady River. Below: Charcoal piled up on the river bank at Tagaung, ready for transport by ferry.

Fig. 3.20. Right: Offerings to a famous nat spirit in Tagaung. Nats are believed by many country people to rule over the woods, the hills and the streams and influence their lives in hunting, fishing and farming. When offended, nats can inflict sickness and other calamities.

Below: The Ayeyarwady River from Tagaung.





Fig. 3.21. Above: Thabeikkyin as seen from the Ayeyarwady River. Below: The Ayeyarwady River as seen from Thabeikkyin!.

3.8 Destination 6: Thabeikkyin

Background/current tourism: Thabeikkyin (c.o. 22° 52.867'N, 95° 58.217'E) is a small town, which is situated on the east bank of the Ayeyarwady in the Third Defile in the southern portion of Tagaung subdivision, Mandalay Division. It is some 130 miles north of Mandalay by boat. The town comprises, primarily, one long, straggling street, which runs parallel to the river but is distinctly elevated above it. In the past it was served by steamers of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company. Today, it is served by regular government ferries.

To the east of Thabeikkyin are the ruby mines of Mogok, which can be reached by a metalled road. There are four guest houses in Mogok but all foreigners require permission to travel and stay in the area. Currently, there are security concerns about travellers' safety in this region. In the past the luxury cruise ship 'Road to Mandalay' stopped three times a year at Thabeikkyin in order for the passengers to visit the working elephants of the Forestry Department, some 10 km east of the town.

This no longer happens. Some river-based tourists, in the past, also used Thabeikkyin as a starting point for a two day, one night visit to Mogok. It is not clear if this tour is still permitted.

Potential for community-based tourism: Over and above the occasional visit of tourists interested in this small but quite attractive town, there is currently no obvious potential for tourism in the area that will support the conservation of natural and/or cultural heritage. This may change if the security situation improves and more regular visits to Mogok resume.



Fig. 3.22. The main street of the town of Thabeikkyin.



Fig. 3.23. Anya Thiha Taw is a pagoda that sits on a small rocky island in the Third Defile of the Ayeyarwady River.

3.9 Destination 7: Anya Thiha Taw Pagoda

Background/current tourism: Anya Thiha Taw (c.o. 22° 50.660'N, 95° 58.075'E) is a small pagoda situated on a rocky outcrop, which projects from the west bank of the Ayeyarwady River into the Third Defile. Previously a small monastery, it is now home to a variety of Buddhist objects and artifacts. With its attractive architecture and beautiful position, it currently receives a small number of Myanmar/international visitors who pass by on the Ayeyarwady.

Potential for community-based tourism: Currently there seems to be no obvious opportunities to expand conservation orientated tourism at this site. For details of local wildlife, including good populations of birds such as the Ashy wood-swallow (*Artamus fuscus*) [LC] see Bates et al. (2015a: pages 28-29).





Fig. 3.25. Above: View from Anya Thiha Taw Pagoda south down the Third Defile of the Ayeyarwady River. Below: The view north up the Third Defile.

Fig. 3.24. Previous page: Buddha with Naga, one of the attractive sights of Anya Thiha Taw Pagoda.



Fig. 3.26. Above: Myanmar visitors arriving at Anya Thiha Taw Pagoda. Below: Local artisan renovating a Buddha at the Anya Thiha Taw Pagoda.



Fig. 3.27. Above and below: The waterfront of Kyaukmyaung.

3.10 Destination 8: Kyaukmyaung

Background: Kyaukmyaung (c.o. 22° 34.767'N, 95° 57.740'E), with a population of about 15,000, is situated on the right (west) bank of the Ayeyarwady River in Sagaing Division. It is at the southern entrance to the Third Defile and is some 70 km north of Mandalay. It is a thriving market town that is best known for its pottery industry, with four, large-scale factories (Anon, 2015h).

Kyaukmyaung's ceramics industry apparently originated in the 18th century when King Alaungpaya (1752-1760) brought 5,000 Mon prisoners of war to the area (Anon, 2015h). Kyaukmyaung is most famous for its giant water pots, which are made from approximately 18 kg of clay and with a capacity of approximately 200 litres (Fig. 3.28).

For the making of pots (Fig. 3.29), clay with a rich copper content is sourced from the Ayeyarwady river bed; clay with a high lime content is sourced from adjacent areas. For interesting details on the production of pots in Kyaukmyaung, see Anon (2015h).



Fig. 3.28. Giant water pots lined up on the waterfront at Kyaukmyaung. They will be distributed and sold throughout Myanmar.

It is interesting to note that although today, steel, aluminum, brass and bronze pots are popular, many Myanmar people still use earthenware pots for cooking and food storage. They believe cooking in earthenware makes the food tastier, more aromatic, and tender. The pots, bowls and jars of all sizes, which are made in Kyaukmyaung, are distributed throughout Myanmar. Many are transported by boat down the Ayeyarwady, others are tied tightly together with canes like large rafts and floated down the river (Anon, 2015i).

Current tourism: There is some limited tourism to Kaukmyaung. Nearly all tourists come by boat, as part of a Mandalay-Bhamo or Bhamo-Mandalay cruise (for details of the boat operators see Appendix 2), and visit the pot making factories.

Potential for community-based tourism: Kyaukmyaung does have some potential for further culture/nature-based community tourism. It is at the entrance to the Third Defile and also close to the fishing village of Hsithe (see below), where fishermen (and more recently fisherwomen) have had a tradition of fishing co-operatively with dolphins. Kyaukmyaung could become part of a package of destinations for river-based tourism that includes visiting a fishing village (either Myit Kan Gyi or Hsithe), visiting the wildlife sanctuary and monastery at Tawyagyi, the potteries of Kyaukmyaung, and exploring the entrance to the Third Defile.

Recommendations: Further studies should explore the potential for community based tourism in the Kyaukmyaung to Sheinmaga sector of the Ayeyarwady River.



Fig. 3.29. Above and below: Making and glazing pots in Kyaukmyaung.



Fig. 3.30. Above: The markets of Kyaukmyaung sell a wide of variety of produce including fish, vegetables, flowers and a variety of household items. Below: Preparing food in a Kyaukmyaung restaurant.



Fig. 3.31. Above: Hsithe is a village that warmly welcomes the idea of hosting responsible tourism. Below: Currently, villagers are learning to make handicrafts and products that might appeal to visiting tourists. Here women from the village are making mango jam with project team member, Beatrix Lanzinger. There are numerous mango trees in the village.

3.11 Destination 9: Hsithe

Background: Hsithe (22° 29.650'N, 96° 00.495'E) is an extended village on the left (east) bank of the Ayeyarwady River. It is in Singu Township in Mandalay Division and its population is reliant on agriculture, fishing and some traditional home industries, such as the production of cigars (exported to Shwebo in Sagaing Division) (Fig. 3.33). There are primary schools, one secondary school and a number of houses dedicated to the independent tutoring of school children (Fig. 3.32). Education seems to be given considerable priority in the community and several children from the village are currently studying in Mandalay at universities or colleges. There is at least one monastery with its own small junior school. Other activities include tailoring, the making and repair of fishing nets, boat maintenance, and a range of other occupations that support simple village life. For additional photographs of the village, see <http://www.tourismmyanmar-cepf.com/#!tourist-destinations-gallery/c1v00> .



Fig. 3.32. Education is important to the villagers of Hsithe. Above. A school girl, daughter of a local fisherman, completing her home work with the help of her elder sister. Below: Young children attending a tutor class (this is in addition to the compulsory attendance at primary school).

In the past, the fishermen fished co-operatively with the Irrawaddy River dolphins, for a description of this activity see Appendix 3. However, there has been a sharp decline in both fish stocks and dolphins, such that today, the traditional cast-net fishing scarcely provides sufficient income for the fishermen/fisherwomen to support their families.

Current tourism: There is no regular tourism to the village.

Potential for community-based tourism: Hsithe has considerable potential to support community-based tourism that will conserve its cultural and natural heritage. The local CSO (Civil Society Organisation) 'Grow Back for Posterity' and the Harrison Institute, UK are currently working with the



Fig. 3.33. Above: A festival at the local Monastery. Buddhism and the monastery are very important aspects of village life. Below: One of a team of three sisters who manufacture cigars in Hsithe. They produce 1,000 each day and export most to the town of Shwebo, which is some 30 km to the west.

community at Hsithe to develop the riverside village as a destination for tourist boats. The dual aim is (1) to conserve the cultural identity of Hsithe, especially in relation to traditional fishing techniques with dolphins and (2) to protect and conserve the Irrawaddy dolphins themselves. Activities for tourists will include learning to throw a cast net (both on land and from a small fishing boat) (Fig. 3.34), fishing with a fisherman/fisherwoman, cultural tour of the village, and making cigars and other local products. There will be an interpretive centre which will include information on the Ayeyarwady River, Irrawaddy dolphins and life in the village.



Fig. 3.34. The fishermen have been trained by the in-country conservation organization 'Grow Back for Posterity' to work with tourists and give them the experience of being a cast-net fishermen/women. Above: Project team member, Beatrix Lanzinger practises throwing a net on dry land before going to the Ayeyarwady River. Below: Team member, Dr Sai Sein Lin Oo, puts his new found skills into practice and throws the net in a shallow part of the river, opposite Hsithe village.

Recommendations: It is recommended that Hsithe is established as a pilot project for community-based tourism linked to conservation. This will be part of a coordinated approach that is looking to develop Hsithe together with Tawyagyi (Wildlife Sanctuary and monastery) and the fishing village of Myit Kan Gyi as new destinations for river-based tourism.



Fig. 3.35. It is hoped that Hsithe can become an interesting destination for tourists on river-based cruises who wish to experience life in a traditional fishing village. By contributing to this community-based tourism project, they will contribute to the conservation of both the cultural and natural heritage of the Ayeyarwady River.



Fig. 3.36. Myit Kan Gyi is a picturesque village of cast-net fishermen/women and farmers on the Ayeyarwady River.

3.12 Destination 10: Myit Kan Gyi (Myitkangyi)

Background: As with Hsithe (above), Myit Kan Gyi (22° 21.090'N, 96° 00.385'E) is an extended village on the left (east) bank of the Ayeyarwady River. It is in Mattaya Township, Mandalay Division and its population is engaged in traditional cast net fishing, agriculture (especially rice and peanuts) (Fig. 3.37), and small home-based activities such as the making and repair of fishing nets (Fig. 3.38), and the production of peanut oil (Fig. 3.40). For additional photographs of the village, see <http://www.tourismmyanmar-cepf.com/#!/tourist-destinations-gallery/c1v00>.

Current tourism: There is no regular tourism to the village.

Potential for community-based tourism: As with Hsithe (above), Myit Kan Gyi has considerable potential to support community-based tourism that will conserve its cultural and natural heritage. As with Hsithe, the local CSO (Civil Society Organisation) 'Grow Back for Posterity' and the Harrison Institute, UK are currently working with the community at Myit Kan Gyi to develop the riverside village as a destination for tourist boats. Activities for tourists will be comparable to those of Hsithe but include a number of different activities such as learning to make and repair fishing nets.





Fig. 3.38. Village life in Myit Kan Gyi. Above: A fisherman's wife weighs a river prawn. Below: A mother sews a fishing net.

Fig. 3.37. Previous Page. Different scenes in and around Myit Kan Gyi. Above: A village lane. Middle: Picking peanuts in February. Below: A village house.



Fig. 3.39. Myit Kan Gyi life. Above: A village boy leads a bullock into the Ayeyarwady River to wash it – especially important in the hot season of May. Below: One of the village tailors.

Recommendations: As with Hsithe, it is recommended that Myit Kan Gyi is established as a pilot project for community-based tourism linked to conservation. This will be part of a coordinated approach that is looking to develop Myit Kan Gyi and Hsithe together with Tawyagyi Wildlife Sanctuary and monastery as new destinations for river-based tourism.



Fig. 3.40. Myit Kan Gyi life. Above: A farmer uses a large, ox-driven, pestle and mortar to extract oil from peanuts. Below: The farmer's wife with a bowl of peanut oil.



Fig. 3.41. Above: A view of Tawyagyi Wildlife Sanctuary from the Ayeyarwady River. Below: A view of the Ayeyarwady River from Tawyagyi Monastery.

3.13 Destination 11: Tawyagyi Wildlife Sanctuary and Monastery (also known as Sheinmaga-Tawyagyi or Sheinmaka-Tawyagyi)

Background: Tawyagyi Wildlife Sanctuary (c.o. 22° 16'N, 95° 59'E) is situated on the right (west) bank of the Ayeyarwady River in Sagaing Division. It was founded by King Mindon in 1852, is the oldest protected area in Myanmar, and is a 'High Priority' Key Biodiversity Area (KBA 122). As noted in Bates et al. (2015a: pages 40-42), it is one of the very few remaining areas of intact lowland tropical dry broadleaf forest, which has a 'regionally outstanding biological distinctiveness' and conservation status of 'critical'. Amongst other fauna, the Sanctuary is home to a small herd of the endangered Eld's deer (*Rucervus eldii thamin*).



Fig. 3.42. Above: Part of the historic Tawyagyi Monastery. Below: Children from the monastery school.

The Monastery has a small community of monks and a school for young children from the local village of Nga Yè. It also dates from the 19th Century and some of the oldest buildings are in urgent need of

repair (Fig. 3.42). The Abbot is a strong supporter of the conservation of wildlife in the Tawyagyi Wildlife Sanctuary.

Current tourism: There are a few tourists visiting the Tawyagyi Monastery each year.

Potential for community-based tourism: The Wildlife Sanctuary needs financial support to help with projects such as replanting trees and the study and protection of the Eld's deer and other rare biodiversity. If organised in a responsible manner, nature tourism would provide a useful way to generate income for the sanctuary.

The Tawyagyi Monastery is of great cultural interest and is situated in a commanding position with panoramic views across the Ayeyarwady River. It would be of considerable interest to Myanmar and international tourists. However, increased tourism to the monastery would have to be handled sensitively to ensure that visitors contributed to the aims of the monastery, for example through charitable donations to the school, rather than destroyed the current atmosphere of religious peace and learning.



Fig. 3.43. A water tanker pulled by two oxen being refilled at Sheinmaga, which is a small town adjacent to Tawyagyi.

Recommendations: An integrated, well planned, community-based tourism project in Tawyagyi, supported by a trained team of conservationists and community tourism specialists would be invaluable for the protection of the cultural and natural heritage of Tawyagyi Wildlife Sanctuary and associated areas.



Fig. 3.44. Above: Mingun from the Ayeyarwady River. Below: Tourists at Mingun.

3.14 Destination 12: Mingun

Background: The village of Mingun ($22^{\circ} 02.587'N$, $96^{\circ} 01.456'E$) is situated on the right (west) bank of the Ayeyarwady River, some 11 km north of Mandalay City. It is famous for the monuments erected on the orders of King Bodawhpaya who was the most powerful ruler of the Konbaung dynasty. Bodawhpaya was trying to ensure his claim to the status of Bodhisatta. The giant stupa, the Mantara Gyi (Figs. 3.44 and 3.45), was begun in 1790. Its construction was suspended by his successor King Bagyidaw on the death of Bodawhpaya in 1819. What remains, is a mighty block of bricks, about 50 meters high, which is said to be the biggest of its kind in the world. On 23 March, 1839, the block was split by an earthquake. The same fate befell the two guardian lions (33 meters high), which were already completed. Only a giant bell miraculously survived the quake undamaged (Fig. 3.45). With a



Fig. 3.45. Above: The building of the giant stupa, Mantara Gyi, began in 1790 and was abandoned in 1819. It was severely damaged in an earthquake in 1839. Below: A late 19th century photograph of the giant bell at Mingun (sourced from Singer, 1993). Today, it is a popular tourist attraction.



Fig. 3.46. Tourists striking the giant bell, which weighs some 90 tonnes.

weight of 90 tonnes it is the biggest in the world and can be admired in a pavilion not far from the stupa (Fig. 3.46). Close by is the shining white Myatheindan stupa, an effigy of the Buddhist Universe (Dr Axel Bruns pers. comm.).

Current tourism: Each year, Mingun is visited by thousands of Myanmar and international tourists. The vast majority make the journey from Mandalay by boat and in the high season (Dry Season), numerous craft of all shapes and sizes leave the Mingun jetty in Mandalay for the one hour journey to Mingun.

Potential for community-based tourism: In view of the current visitor numbers, there would appear to be little need, or potential, to develop further tourism in Mingun.



Fig. 3.47. Above: Mandalay Hill with the moat of the Royal Palace visible in the distance. Below: The moat around the Royal Palace.

3.15 Destination 13: Mandalay

Background: Mandalay (c.o. 22° 02'N, 96° 05'E) is the second city of Myanmar and is situated on the left (east) bank of the Ayeyarwady River. It has a population of 1.23 million and is the economic hub of Upper Myanmar, with close links to China.

The city was founded on the 13 February, 1857 on the orders of Kingon Mindon who decreed it should be built at the base of Mandalay Hill (Fig. 3.47). In the centre of the city, a magnificent palace was built, which was/is surrounded by a moat and four walls, each of which is over 2 km in length. The former royal palace of Amarapura was moved by elephant from Amarapura and placed within the new



Fig. 3.48. Monks at the Sandarmuni Pagoda, Mandalay.

palace compound. Mandalay remained the capital of the Konbaung Dynasty for 26 years until the defeat of King Thibaw Min on 28 November, 1885 in the Third Anglo-Burmese War. The British sent the King and his wife, Queen Supayalat, into exile in India.

Throughout the colonial years, Mandalay was the centre of Myanmar culture and Buddhist learning, and as the last royal capital, was regarded by the Burmese as a primary symbol of sovereignty and identity. Between the two World Wars, the city was Upper Myanmar's focal point in a series of nationwide protests against the British rule.

During the Second World War, Mandalay suffered from devastating air raids. On 3 April, 1942 fires started during the assault of the city by the Japanese led to the destruction of two-thirds of the houses and the death of 2000 civilians. Subsequently, in March 1944, the Allied forces bombed the city during fierce fighting to recapture it (for movie footage see <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060033781>).

After the War and Independence from Britain in 1948, Mandalay was characterised by periods of decline, catastrophic fires, and extensive immigration of Chinese from Yunnan Province. However, today, Mandalay is a major centre of economic activity, learning, medicine, religion and arts and crafts.

Current tourism: Mandalay receives many thousands of Myanmar and international tourists each year (also Chinese business traders). It has a large airport with extensive national and international air links. The road to Yangon has also been greatly improved. For tourists, Mandalay is not only the gateway to



Fig. 3.49. Mandalay is famous for its craft industry, including: Above: Brass work, especially for the decoration of pagodas. Middle: Marble, especially Buddhas. Below: The production of gold leaf.

Upper Myanmar but also has its own attractions, including Mandalay Hill, the extensive Royal Palace, numerous monasteries and pagodas (including the Mahamuni Pagoda and Shwe Nan Daw [Golden monastery]), the U Bein Bridge and the old city of Amarapura, and interesting handicraft activities. Mandalay is also the base for nearly-all river-based tourism, be it local day trips to Mingun or longer trips to Bagan or cruises north towards Bhamo. For details of cruise operators operating out of Mandalay (and Sagaing) see Appendix 2. For details of the numerous tourist attractions of Mandalay



Fig. 3.50. Above: U Bein Bridge in Amarapura, southern Mandalay. Below: View from the U Bein Bridge of Taungtaman Lake.

see a range of guide books such as Lonely Planet (2014), DK (2014) and Zatko (2015) and/or websites such as Anon (2015i).

Potential for community-based tourism: The scale of tourism in Mandalay means that there is no opportunity for community-based tourism within the city. However, on the margins, there are some good opportunities to encourage tourists to travel to see lesser known but interesting sites, such as the wetlands of Peleik Inn (Fig. 3.51; for details see pages 58-60 in Bates et al., 2015a). Here community-based tourism linked to bird watching could provide invaluable resources for conservation.



Fig. 3.51. Peleik Inn, which lies between Mandalay city and the international airport, offers a great opportunity for community-based tourism that could contribute to both natural and cultural conservation.

Recommendations: As noted in Bates et al. (2015a), it would be invaluable to promote a community-based tourism project at Peleik Inn to help conserve the cultural heritage and the wildlife of this Key Biodiversity Area (KBA 60).



Fig. 3.52. Above: The monasteries and pagodas of Sagaing as seen from the Ayeyarwady River. Below: The two bridges at Sagaing, one for road and one for road and rail.

3.16 Destination 14: Sagaing

Background: Sagaing (c.o. 21° 53'N, 95° 59.500'E) is a town of about 70,000 inhabitants situated on the right (west) bank of the Ayeyarwady River some 14 km south-west of Mandalay city. Today, it is capital of Sagaing Division. Previously it was capital of the Sagaing Kingdom (1315-1364) and a royal capital between 1760 and 1763 during the reign of King Naundawgyi (Anon, 2015j).

Sagaing is characterised by its numerous Buddhist monasteries and pagodas, which can be seen dotted throughout the slopes and ridge of the Sagaing Hills. There are also two impressive bridges that cross the Ayeyarwady River.

Current tourism: Sagaing receives many thousands of visitors each year who make the short boat or coach journey from Mandalay city. The vast majority come to enjoy the panoramic views of the river and the tree lined hills and pagodas. A sizeable minority come to meditate in the monasteries.

Potential for community-based tourism: There is already much tourism to the area. There would appear to be rather limited opportunities for community-based tourism linked to conservation, although as Khin Win Myaing (2013) reported (see page 36 in Bates et al. 2015a), there is some surprisingly interesting wildlife still living in the remnants of forest in the Sagaing Hills.



Fig. 3.53. Above: Most tourists arrive in Inwa by a small ferry, which crosses the Myingye River. Below: They explore the few, widely dispersed, remaining sites of the former capital by horse drawn cart.

3.17 Destination 15: Inwa (also known as Ava; also spelt as Innwa)

Background: Inwa (c.o. 21° 50.500'N, 95° 58.800'E) is situated on the west bank of the Myingye River, a small southern tributary of the Ayeyarwady River. It is some 17 km by boat south-west of the Mingun Jetty, Mandalay city.

Inwa was founded as a capital city by King Thadomibya on 26 February, 1365 and served as an imperial capital on five separate occasions. In its turbulent history, it was sacked and rebuilt several times and was at its height in the Ava period from 1365 to 1527. This period was characterised by its literature and its architecture. In March, 1839 it was virtually completely destroyed by a major earthquake. It was then abandoned and the capital was transferred to Amarapura in 1842 (Anon, 2015k).

Current tourism: Despite its somewhat limited number of ancient buildings, Inwa is popular with day-trippers who come to the ancient capital by coach or boat from Mandalay city.

Potential for community-based tourism: There are rather limited opportunities for community-based tourism at Inwa.



Fig. 3.54. There is relatively little of historical interest left to see at Inwa. However, three sites include: Above Maha Aungmye Bonzan Monastery built in 1822 on the orders of Nanmadaw Me Nu, Chief Queen of King Bagyidaw. Below, left: The leaning Nanmyin Watchtower; built in 1821 it is all that remains in Inwa of the former palace of King Bagyidaw. Below right: Entrance to the Bagaya Monastery, built in the 1770s.



Fig. 3.55. Yandabo is well known for its pottery industry (Photograph sourced from <http://www.myanmarstours.us/destinations/mandalay/malay-attractions/yandabo-pot-making-village/>).

3.18 Destination 16: Yandabo

Background: Yandabo (c.o. 21° 38'N, 95° 22'E) is situated on the east bank of the Ayeyarwady River, near its confluence with the Chindwin River. Today, the village comprises some 350 houses, each of which is home to between 5 and 10 family members. About thirty of the families are potters and Yandabo is famous for its pot making. Other villagers are farmers, fishermen/fisherwomen and suppliers of raw materials such as clay or wood for the pottery kilns (Anon, 2015).

On 24 February, 1826, Yandabo hosted the signing of a peace treaty that ended the First Anglo-Burmese War. This concluded two years of hostilities, which had begun on 5 March, 1824. It had cost the lives of some 15,000 European and Indian soldiers and probably many more Burmese. At £13 million, it was the most expensive campaign ever fought in 'British India' (with an equivalent cost of \$18.5 billion in 2006 terms) and was to lead to a severe economic crisis in 'British India' in 1833. The British conditions for the Treaty of Yandabo crippled the court of Ava. Amongst other things, it forced the Court to cede to the British, Assam, Manipur, Rakhine and the Taninthary coast and pay an indemnity of £1 million. This proved an intolerable financial burden and following two more Anglo-Burmese Wars, the Second in 1852-1853, and the Third in 1885, the British annexed the whole of Myanmar (Anon, 2015m).

Current tourism: Some tourist boats stop at Yandabo on the Mandalay-Bagan-Mandalay route.

Potential for community-based tourism: Yandabo was not visited during the current study and it is not known if there is potential for community based tourism linked to the conservation of cultural or natural heritage.

Recommendations: Further study is required at Yandabo to assess the potential for community-based tourism linked to cultural and nature conservation.

3.19 Destination 17: Pakokku

Background: Pakokku (c.o. 21° 20'N, 95° 05'E) is a large town (population in excess of 100,000) situated on the west bank of the Ayeyarwady River in Magway Division, some 30 km north of Bagan. It is a centre for weaving cotton and also has some sandstone carving (Beatrix Lanzinger pers. comm.). In 2014, a new road bridge was completed at Pakokku. This is the longest river crossing of the Ayeyarwady.

Despite being in one of the hottest and driest areas of Myanmar, Pakokku is also important for agriculture, which includes the growing of peanuts (groundnuts), millet, sesame, rice, peas, beans, tobacco, and maize. It also trades in timber and palm sugar (from the toddy palm).

Current tourism: A small number of tourist boats stop at Pakokku on the Mandalay-Bagan-Mandalay route.

Potential for community-based tourism: As with Yandabo, Pakokku was not visited during the current study and it is not known if there is potential for community based tourism linked to the conservation of cultural or natural heritage.

Recommendations: Further study is required at Pakokku to assess the potential for community-based tourism linked to cultural and nature conservation.



Fig. 3.56. Above: Today, there are over 2,000 pagodas, large and small, to be seen at Bagan. Traditional agriculture is still practised within historical Bagan.

3.20 Destination 18: Bagan (in the past was often called Pagan)

Background: Bagan (c.o. 21°09'N 94°52'E) is situated on the east bank of the Ayeyarwady River. There are numerous books, articles, reports and websites published on the history and attributes of the city, including Anon (2015n); Stadner (2005) and Strachan (1996). Today, it is a proposed World Heritage Site and one of six 'flagship' tourist destinations in Myanmar.

Its history dates back to the 2nd century but the city that can be seen today originates from 11th century when in 1057 King Anawrahta conquered Thaton and brought back to Bagan, Buddhist



Fig. 3.57. Above: Monks walking through the small town of New Bagan. Below: The Ayeyarwady at Bagan.

scriptures in Pali, a large number of Buddhist monks, artists and craftsmen (Feuerstein-Praßer et al. 2006). For the next two centuries over ten thousand pagodas were built in Bagan and the surrounding area. The exact reason(s) for the eventual decline is not known but is probably linked to the Mongol invasions of 1287 (although the Mongols never reached Bagan). Today, there are in excess of 2,000 pagodas still visible, most of which date from 11th to 13th century.

Current tourism: Currently visited by 27.5% of all international tourists to Myanmar, it has the potential to become one of the most culturally significant centres for tourism in Southeast Asia (Anon, 2015n). However, there is a need to manage this increase of tourism and ensure that it is sustainable.



Fig. 3.58. Above: Some of the 3,500 Indian flying foxes (*Pteropus giganteus*) that roost at Naung-Hla. Below: Wetland habitat for birds at Bagan (photograph taken in November after the rains [May to October]).

In various places at various times, such as sunset at the Shwesandaw Pagoda in the Dry Season (November to March), there is already overcrowding (Fig. 3.60). Elsewhere, there is a rapid expansion of building, especially of hotels, although currently this has not impinged on most of the historic, archaeological area (for details see Bates, 2015).

Potential for community-based tourism: In addition to the existing cultural tourism, there is great potential to develop nature tourism that will support and encourage the conservation of the wildlife of Bagan. This is particularly suited to birds but also, to a lesser extent, Indian flying foxes (*Pteropus giganteus*) [LC]. As reported in detail in Bates (2015), there are numerous bird species known from



Fig. 3.59. Bagan has a diverse bird fauna including 4 endemic species. Above: The endemic Burmese bushlark (*Mirafra microptera*). Middle: Bird watching in Bagan on the banks of the Ayeyarwady River. Below: A Blue rock-thrush (*Monticola gularis*) near Kyauk Gu, Bagan.

Bagan, including 4 species endemic to Myanmar. There are also two very large colonies of flying foxes, one at Naung-Oo and one at Nyaung-Hla.

Recommendations: As noted in Bates (2015) and Bates et al. (2015a), it is important to ensure that the current interest amongst local authorities in good environmental practice and nature within the archaeological area of Bagan is maintained, especially if visitor numbers continue to increase rapidly.

For wildlife, it is vital to show the value of the habitats of archaeological Bagan in terms of conserving Dry Zone bird species and especially the four endemic species. Currently, Bagan has good quality habitats (although highly modified) with relatively little disturbance and only limited hunting pressure in most areas. Much of the agriculture within the area is still traditional in style and low impact. Although bats have been excluded from many pagodas, they still find refuge on the ceilings of the ambulatoria of the largest temples. The two large flying-fox colonies at Nyaung U and Nyaung-Hla are also a high priority for conservation and would also be of interest to tourists interested in the conservation of natural heritage.



Fig. 3.60. Above: Crowds gathering for the sunset at Shwesandaw Pagoda, Bagan. Below: Crowds climbing on one of the smaller pagodas to observe the sunset: photograph taken from the Shwesandaw Pagoda.

3.21 Discussion/Recommendations

Currently there are six destinations, which are regularly used by tourist boats. Three of these are closely grouped around Mandalay, namely: Mingun, Sagaing, and Inwa (Fig. 3.1). All these destinations function well for tourists on day-trips or half-day-trips and receive many thousands of visitors each year. There is some potential for further community-based tourism, for example at Peleik Inn. However, in general, it could be said that all these sites are mature tourist destinations.

1. Recommendation: Explore the possibility of developing Peleik Inn, south of Mandalay city, as a community-based tourism project that supports the conservation of the natural heritage, especially the migratory water birds of this Key Biodiversity Area (for details, see above and Bates et al., 2015a, pages 58-60). It is believed that this would have considerable appeal to visitors based in Mandalay, who wish to see some interesting wildlife to complement their cultural site-seeing.

There are two outlying destinations, Bhamo in the north and Bagan in the south of the study area, which also receive river-based tourists (currently, many more travel to Bagan than to Bhamo). Both of these destinations have considerable potential for further community-based tourism.

2. Recommendation: Explore the possibility of developing Nampha Inn, adjacent to Bhamo town as a community-based tourism project. This could support the conservation of the interesting cultural heritage (especially diverse traditional fishing and agricultural practices) and the natural heritage of this wetland, which is situated in a Key Biodiversity Area (for details, see above and Bates et al., 2015, pages 12-14). It is believed that this would have considerable appeal to visitors arriving in/departing from Bhamo by boat and also to those that have arrived by air for a short stay.
3. Recommendation: Explore the possibility of developing a number of community-based, nature tourism projects in Bagan that complements the on-going cultural tourism. These new tourism projects could focus on bird watching and in addition support two village communities that are home to large colonies of Indian flying foxes (several thousand individuals) – for details see Bates, 2015, Appendix 5).

There are three destinations to the north of Mandalay that are currently being developed as new destinations for river-based tourists. These are the fishing villages of Hsithe and Myit Kan Gyi and the wildlife sanctuary and old monastery at Tawygyi.

4. Recommendation: Hsithe, Myit Kan Gyi and Tawygyi, together with Kyaukmyaung are potentially interesting destinations for those who would like to learn more about the culture of the river-side communities, especially relating to fishing co-operatively with the Irrawaddy dolphin (for details of this activity see Appendix 3). They would also appeal to those who would like to contribute towards the conservation of endangered and critically endangered species (for details, see above and Bates et al., 2015, pages 30-35).
5. Recommendation: In the north, Sinkan, near to Bhamo also has considerable potential for cultural and especially nature-based tourism linked to the Irrawaddy dolphin and the forests and natural beauty of the Second Defile.

There are four destinations, Kathar, Tagaung, Thabeikkyin and the Anya Thiha Taw Pagoda that to a greater or lesser extent could have some appeal to river-based tourists and which would benefit from a better understanding of their cultural history and significance.

As noted in the Introduction, in the Upper Ayeyarwady River Corridor, tourism has a great potential to help with the development of Myanmar and with the preservation of its cultural and natural heritage. However, this will only be achieved if the development of tourism is carried out responsibly and with an understanding of, and sympathy with, the environment.

To date, this would appear to be the case in most places, although it is early days. We would encourage all those involved in tourism, the government, local authorities, the travel business, conservation organisations, universities, and local communities to work together in order to maximise the benefits and minimise the risks and to learn from the good practice and the mistakes of other countries in the region.

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Appendix 1: Description of the Ayeyarwady River

This description of the Ayeyarwady River is sourced from the on-line Encyclopedia Britannica <http://www.britannica.com/place/Irrawaddy-River> . It has been slightly modified in places.

“The Ayeyarwady is the principal river of Myanmar, running through the centre of the country. It is Myanmar’s most important commercial waterway and is about 2,170 km long. Its name is believed to derive from the Sanskrit term *airāvati*, meaning “elephant river.” The river flows wholly within the territory of Myanmar. Its total drainage area is about 411,000 km². Its valley forms the historical, cultural, and economic heartland of Myanmar.

The Ayeyarwady is formed by the confluence of the Nmai and Mali rivers. Both branches rise in the glaciers of the high and remote mountains in northern Myanmar in the vicinity of 28° N. The eastern branch, the Nmai, rises in the Languela glacier on the border with Tibet (China) and has the greater volume of water but is virtually unnavigable because of its strong current. The Mali, the western branch, has a gentler gradient and, although interrupted by rapids, has some navigable sections.

About 50 km south of the confluence is Myithyina, the northernmost limit of seasonal navigation by the Ayeyarwady steamers. Bhamo, about 240 km south of the confluence, is the northern limit for year-round navigation. Between the confluence and Bhamo, the width of the river during the low-water season varies between 400 m and 800 m. The depth of the main channel averages about 9 m.

Between Myitkyinā and Mandalay, the Ayeyarwady flows through three well-marked defiles (narrow passages or gorges). About 65 km downstream from Myitkyinā is the first defile. Below Bhamo the river makes a sharp westward swing, leaving the Bhamo alluvial basin to cut through the limestone rocks of the second defile. This defile is about 90 m wide at its narrowest and is flanked by vertical cliffs about 60 to 90 m high. About 100 km north of Mandalay, the river enters the third defile.

Between Tagaung and Mandalay, the course of the river is remarkably straight, flowing almost due south, except north of Kyaukmyaung, where a sheet of lava has caused the river to bend sharply westward. Leaving the third defile at Kyaukmyaung, the river follows a broad, open course through the central dry zone—the ancient cultural heartland—where large areas consist of alluvial flats. From Mandalay (formerly the capital of the kingdom of Myanmar) the river makes an abrupt westward turn before curving southwest to unite with the Chindwin River, after which it continues in a southwesterly direction. It is probable that the upper Irrawaddy originally flowed south from Mandalay, discharging its water through the present Sittang River to the Gulf of Martaban, and that its present westward course is geologically recent. Below its confluence with the Chindwin, the Ayeyarwady continues to meander through the densely populated dry zone to the vicinity of Yenangyaung, below which it flows generally southward. In its lower course, between Minbu and Prome, it flows through a narrow valley between forest-covered mountain ranges—the ridge of the Rakhine Mountains to the west and that of the Bago Mountains to the east.

The delta of the Irrawaddy begins about 93 km above Hinthada and about 290 km from its curved base, which faces the Andaman Sea. The sides of the delta are formed by the southern extremities of the Bago Mountains on the east and the Rakhine Mountains on the west. The westernmost distributary of the delta is the Bassein River, while the easternmost stream is the Yangon River, on the left bank of which stands Myanmar’s largest city, Yangon. Because the Yangon River is only a minor channel, the flow of water is insufficient to prevent Yangon Harbour from silting up, and dredging is necessary. The relief of the delta’s landscape is low but not flat. The soils consist of fine silt, which is replenished continuously by fertile alluvium carried downstream by the river. As a result of heavy rainfall and the motion and sediment load of the river, the delta surface extends into the Andaman Sea at a rate of about 50 m per year.”

Appendix 3: Co-operative fishing with dolphins



Fishermen/fisherwomen on the Ayeyarwady River fishing co-operatively with an Irrawaddy dolphin. Photographed sourced from http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=23085

Below is a description, sourced from Smith and Mya Than Tun (2007: page 34), which explains how cast-net fishermen/fisherwomen have traditionally fished with the Irrawaddy dolphin.

“Fishermen search for dolphins and summon them by tapping the sides of their boat with a conical wooden pin called a Labai Kway. If the dolphins “agree” to help the fishermen, one animal slaps the water surface with its tail flukes. One or two lead dolphins then swim in smaller and smaller semi-circles, corralling the fish towards the shore, while the other animals remain outside to guard against escapees. With a wave of their half-submerged flukes, the dolphins then deliver a concentrated mass of fish to the fishermen and “signal” them to cast their net. The dolphins are believed to benefit from this activity by preying on fish whose movements are confused by the sinking net and those that are momentarily stuck on the mud bottom after the net is pulled up”.