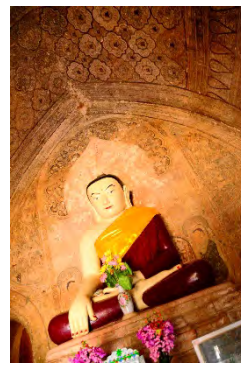


Day 2 Bagan Jan 7

Gupyaukgyi

And off to the next temple, Gupyaukgyi, a temple with exquisite mural paintings which are believed to be from 1113. There is a story here. In 1899, a German collector removed and stole many of the panels on which the frescoes were painted. You can still see where he sawed at the wall. Those that are still there are in great shape.



And outside the temple were all the vendors selling many souvenirs, but mostly sand paintings, common and famous in this area, and some quite beautiful.



And then it was time for lunch at the Eden BBB. We chose this place because they have both an Asian menu and a European menu. What did I have? Sardines! And they were quite delicious. Straight out of the can. This is a lovely restaurant. One wall was open to the backyard which had a stage where they must have shows. But this made it airy and light. And we ate there again the next day (I had Chinese food the second day).



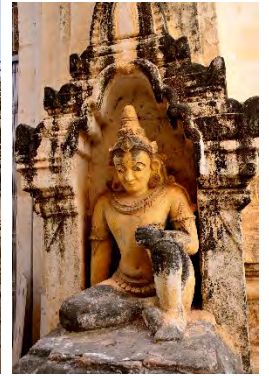
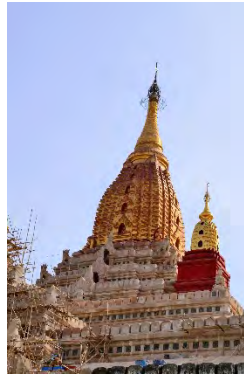
We drove back to Old Bagan through the Tharabar Gate which is the main gate of the east wall and the only structure left of the old city built by King Pyinbya. It was built in 849 A.D during the 9th century. The western and northern part of the city wall were washed away by the river. There was originally twelve gates during that time. Tharabar is derived from the Pali term "Sarabhanga" meaning "shielded against arrows". Although most of the structure is ruined, stucco carvings of the ogres can still be found. The gate is known to be guarded by spiritual beings. On the left is the side of the gate is the brother "Lord of the Great Mountain" and on the right side is the sister "Golden face".

Old Bagan

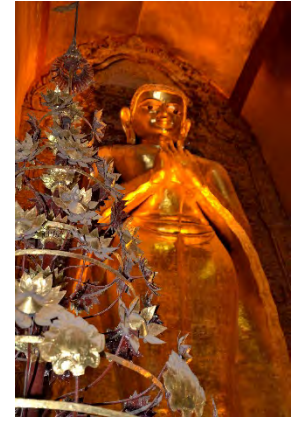
We drove through old Bagan on a road I called Temple Road (really should be Pagoda Road). We would go back and forth on this road a few times. There were fields on both sides and thousands and thousands of pagoda (temples and stupas), one after the other. This is Bagan. There were once 5000 pagodas here. Now there are 2217. I had heard it described as “temple-studded plains.’ That is the perfect image.



The afternoon began with a visit to Ananda Temple, an architectural masterpiece and one of Bagan’s most beautiful temples. It was covered in scaffold as it was being cleaned and repaired. On its 900th anniversary, the spires of the temple were gilded. The rest of the temple is white, and is often whitewashed to keep it clean.

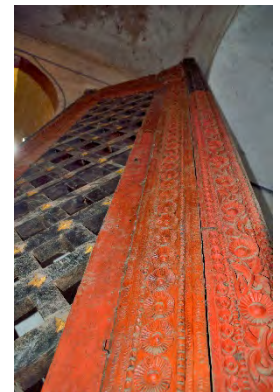


Built in the early Mon-style, Ananda contains four Buddhas, one facing each direction. Two are particularly unique Buddha images as their expressions seem to change depending on the distance from which the statue is viewed. It is said that every Myanmar should visit Bagan and without visiting Ananda you cannot be said to have visited Bagan. It has been called the “Westminster Abbey of Burma.”



Ananda Temple is like a museum. The temple has over 500 glazed ceramic tiles and large teak doors. The four Buddha’s are also made of teak but covered in gold leaf. You can study all kinds of Myanmar art here — architecture, stone sculpture, stucco, glazed plaques (which all tell a story), terra cotta, wood carving, artwork of blacksmith etc. It is also famous for using keystones to build the arches.





Ananda Temple was constructed in 1091 by King Kyansittha. He was also known as Hti Hlaing Shin. His regnal title was "the King of Justice who shines like the sun over three auspicious worlds."

There are three different versions regarding the name of this temple. Of course there is no way to know which is true as the original stone inscription gives no clue about the origin. But the temple has been called "Ananda" for generations. The three versions are:

1. When King Kyansittha asked eight Arahats (Saints) to provide him with a design for the religious monument he was about to build, they created the image of Nanda Mula Cave Hall believed to be in the Himalayas. So the temple was constructed on the model of that image and it came to be known as "Nandamu" which in course of time corrupted to sound "Ananda."
2. The Sanscrit word "Anand" means "very beautiful." The name "Ananda" must have been derived from this Sanscrit word. The Temple is extremely beautiful.
3. There is a Pali word "Ananta Panna" which means "the endless wisdom of the Buddha." The temple symbolizes this attribute of the Buddha. Hence it is called "Ananta Temple."

A word about the temples, and the vendors. Outside each temple there are rows and rows of vendors, local people selling "antiques," paintings, longyi, scarves, boxes, balls, and anything else you might think of. Some of it was beautiful. Some not so much. Generally they were not aggressive, but rather smiled and offered you something, and if you said no, they understood. Perhaps they were gentle because Toe was with us. Perhaps that is just their way. We bought some things ever so often, but mostly to help the economy. To help the locals. A dollar for them is a lot of money. A dollar for us, not so much.

And for me, it was yet another opportunity to watch the people. After all, look at that smile!

