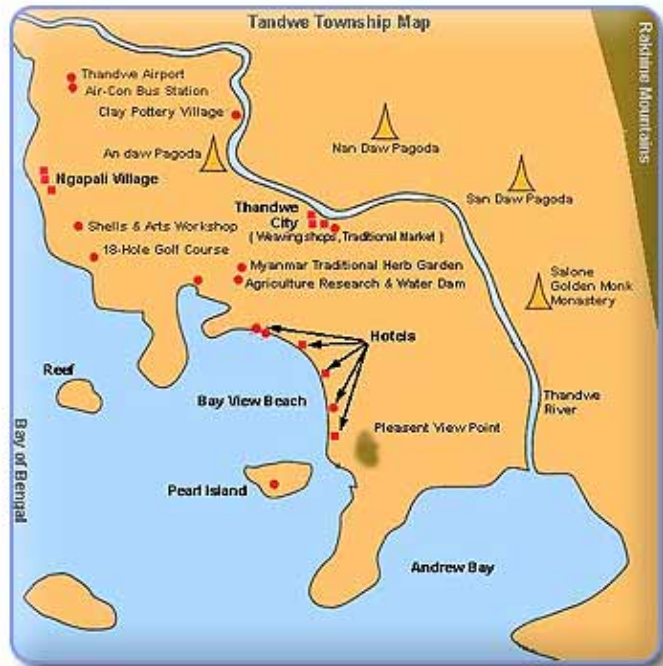


All plans started in October 2001. It took some time to look for useful information and finally with the help of Dan, NA7DB, we were able to contact responsible authorities at Myanmar. After a lot of paperwork, letters, faxes and emails we received the first positive answers in mid of January. A new challenge was the idea of an IOTA activation. It again took some time to get the required nautical charts for documentation and a new permit from Myanmar authorities to stay on Apaw-Ye Kyun (Arrakan Group).

It has been a great help that one of our group members, Jani YBOUS, offered to travel to Myanmar for consultations and to check the local situation at Ngapali referring our possible and needed equipment. With these information (from April) we decided to put up lowband antenna systems at the beach and the Yagis on a 24 m high dam behind our hotel, the Linn Thar Oo Lodge. Now we started to plan the materials and tried to contact possible sponsors. Without the sponsors help it would not have been possible to do this operation and we are very thankful about. Asking for support is not a simple job and we remember to have send a lot of requests to wellknown foundations or manufacturers, until now we still wait for some "no" as an answer. Today it seems that just a short "no" is too much work ...

Finally we were well equipped and had 10 operators willing to go to Myanmar. Because of no support through any airway we had to split up the materials in two groups. One going with the members in totally overloaded luggages and another group which needed to be send to Myanmar as airfreight. More than 400 kg in the luggages and 300 kg, mostly antennas, masts, power supplies, in the airfreight boxes. Both, airfreight boxes and freight charges has been substantial.



3 kg paperwork were send on first request

Four Yagis, three masts, 300 m control cables, 600 m coaxial cables, lowband antennas ... needed to be prepared and put for safe transport into the boxes. All freights were finally send at end of July. Until this date all preparations (correspondence, documents, permits, clearance, freight forwarding, flight tickets, coordination ...) took more than 1250 hours of work !

Beginning on August 1 the different group members started their trip. Hiroo, XW0X, arrived at Yangon, followed by Jani, YBOUS and Joe, AA4NN on the next day. The freights arrived the capitol on August 03, when also the European members started their travel. The Italian and German members met at Greg's, DF2IC, home close to Frankfurt where all entered a chartered bus for going to Frankfurt Airport. The following security controls where efficient and quite amusing, all transceivers where checked for explosives. The boarding wasn't amusing any more, some of us had no problems with their carry-ons, three others were begged for new check of the weights. 7 kg were allowed, but 13 - 19 kg were inside ... At least all entered the aircraft without paying for excessive weights ! After a short stop at Bangkok Airport (with frustrating smoking zones !) the group proceeded with direction Yangon. Because of a quite short runway at Mingaladon Airport, Yangon, the pilot mentioned a "strong landing". What a nice comment ! At the Airport we were awaited by our "liaison officer" and with the friendly help of another officer we had no problems with clearance. A real VIP first class service for the complete group ! Also Jani was waiting for us and we all transferred to our Yangon hotel, the Inya Lake Hotel, where we was welcomed by Hiroo. There we started to check our luggages and the already arrived freight boxes for some damages, but fortunately all was still ok. On the next day we had to find solutions for some problems. Our total weights was too high for the domestic flight to Mazin Airfield, Thantwe (earlier known as Sandoway), but with the friendly help of MTT we had a conference with the Chief Operating Officer Mr. Selvakumar of Air Mandalay and got his ok. Now we were able to put up further stations and antennas at our hotel, otherwise the materials would have gone by truck on the next day.

Now limited operations started with two stations, a FD4 and a doublet with open feeder line for the next days. Limited operations because there were still some logistic jobs to do and parts of the group went for a short sightseeing trip to the famous Bagan until the first possible flight which should bring us to our main operation place at Ngapali.

During the next days Frank DL4KQ, Jani YBOUS and Hiroo XW0X operated from Yangon. An additional 6 m Yagi was build up (200 qso's on from Yangon) and Jani did some 6 m eme tests. He was copied in the US by Dave KJ9I, unfortunately it was only a one way contact because of the small 6 m Yagi which was used. The next days kept all busy, operating at night, preparing freight forwarding during the dayhours and a conference with high authorities. The pile-ups from Yangon have been great and the propagations were quite good, therefore we all had the hope to make a high number of contacts as soon we would arrive at Ngapali and would be able to work with all stations, amplifiers and yagis.



On August 09 the complete

DL8KBJ's garden was the "freight centre"



DL8KBJ's garden was the "freight centre"

with station no.3 (digi modes).

group started to go to Ngapali at the Myanmar westcoast. First all materials needed to be transferred from our Yangon Hotel to the Mingaladon Airport. A little nightmare for the hotel staff until the guys of "MIMS", the local excellent forwarding agency, arrived. At the airport we had a (unplanned) weights check and were billed for 840 kg of luggage. The forwarders made some "funny" comments about the weights and our airplane but finally the airplane started ! After a 40 minutes flight we arrived at Mazin Airfield, the little airport of Thandwe. The weather was windy, a bit rainy, but still ok. All freights were put into a truck, the group entered a bus and 20 minutes later we reached the Linn Thar Oo Lodge.

Meanwhile the weather had changed rapidly and the "fun" started: Ten days of heavy monsoon storms and extreme rainfalls !

The sea was reaching the little houses, no more free space at the beach for building up the planned antenna systems. At high tide the waves came up just half way of the shack room windows and we had very often about one inch of sea water inside ! The following two days we started to setup the G5RV and the 2 element SteppIR Yagi during the short "good" weather periods. Both antennas now were placed not at the best, but only possible, places.

Finally we were ready, first with two, later on with 3 stations. The "noisy" ssb operators had an own shack room, the cw operators were sharing their room



Setup of 3 ele SteppIR Yagi



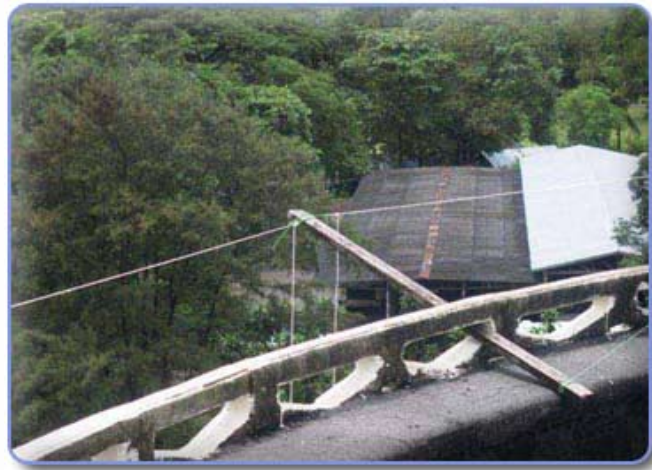
Now we started the operations running all stations with linear, after rewiring the voltage lines and breakers of the shack rooms. The antennas were doing good jobs, the 2 element only up 6 m in very close diastance to some palm trees and the G5RV was only up 8 m.

The next day started with a terrible information: We would have to go back to Yangon 2 days later, because all domestic flights would have been canceled for the next weeks ! The whole group was totally frustrated, we stopped further antenna setups and tried to find solutions, either other ways of back transfer to the capitol (by cars and trucks) or to go back and start again operations from our Yangon hotel. Fortunately the following day we received the information that the airline would start again with flights exactly on the day when the group would have to leave Ngapali, only some members which had to leave earlier now had the problem how to go.

Cartrip (up to 18 h, very uncomfortable, later on up to 40 h !!!) and not safe, because some streets and bridges were damaged of strong monsoon rainfalls.



The Aircraft of Air Mandalay



Lw antenna on hotel roof

Now we started again with further antenna setups and put up the 3 element SteppIR Yagi. Its planned location had to reconsidered and now it was build up further away from the beach in a distance of 120 m from the shack rooms. Unfortunately the NA pathes were now blocked a little bit by a 24 m high dam behind of the lodge. The coax and control cables needed to layed through a terrain with snakes (as we heard afterwards). The new location wasn` t very safe and we had to do daily checks, because the waves were still reaching the antenna and we had to secure the mast against the waves, same for our cables which needed to be put up in the air, because the waves also reached them.



pictures of the QTH were taken in april

This setup took much longer as we planned, rainfalls were very heavy and we were happy to finish it in the evening ! Finally we were now able to work with 3 stations at the same time. The SSB station using the excellent working 3 element Yagi, the CW station using the 2 element and the digi/cw station using the G5RV. But now the propagations went down ! Also the signals for the lower bands were very weak on the G5RV and we tried to put up a simple vertical for this job, because we had no free space to put up the planned lowband systems.



IN3ZNR + IN3QBR in ssb shack



Preparing the XP406 and generator for IOTA activation

But this vertical was damaged by the waves during high tide immediately, also a second one build the next day ! Therefore we still had to work on the low bands with the G5RV which couldn` t be placed at a better location. The conditions weere now changing daily. Good

propagations were followed by bad ones on the next day and we were really frustrated about conditions to NA on most of the days. Meanwhile we had to prepare our IOTA activation from Apaw-Ye Kyun which was planned between august 15 - august 19. Transports for materials (truck and boat), generator rental and test, gasoline and fuel, transfer for shifts (car and boat), equipment, accomodation, food and so one needed to be arranged.

All was prepared and we were ready to go. The weather was still bad and there were only a time window of 1 hour for landing on Apaw-Ye Kyun. The trip was still a bit dangerous because of the waves but all decided that they want to try it.

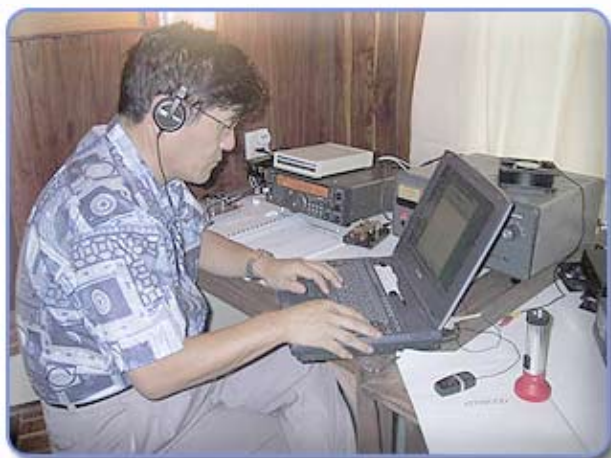


The bus with 34 seats for a group of 10 persons (Germany)



Departure from Frankfurt Airport

It took a lot of boat trips to transport all equipments to the island. Also the heavy generator needed to be carried for some hundred meters from the landing point to the IOTA shack rooms. Earlier the island was used by a pearl company, today some buildings are still in use as a little museum for pearl cultivation. There the station was build up, the XP406 Yagi at a distance of 80 m and a FD4 at somer closer distance. Finally 2 stations were on the air, again with additional cooling for the operators (seawater in the rooms), basic sleeping rooms but excellent food provided by the staff of the lodge. The following photos do not need to be explained !



XW0X at 3rd station



Shack with 2 stations

Dinner time for hungry operators; front view of house at low tide; on the way to the shacks

During the next 4 days all worked shift, either from the lodge or from the island. At this time there has been up to 4 stations qrv, 2 from the mainland and 2 from Apaw-Ye Kyun (AS-165). The conditions were good during these days and more than 4800 contacts were made from the island. All antennas were setup at good places and therefore the XP406 and also the FD4 were doing very good jobs. Unfortunately one linear got damaged (and another one on the mainland) nearly at the same time.



The IOTA activation ended after 4 days of activation with about 4800 contacts. Meanwhile the operation on the mainland had to fight with some damages (linear amplifier and one transceiver). But slowly the weather improved and we had the chance to build up a simple lowband vertical for lowband use. With a height of 15 m, resonating at 3.1 MHz, it survived the last days and worked very well. It was fed as an end fed and we added some "chicken wire" and 200 m of radials to improve the radiation.

Because of the disappointing numbers of contacts to NA we rented a third shack room and build up the XP406 Yagi on the 24 m high dam with the hope to improve our signal at NA. The line length was about 80 m, we had to cross a road and a voltage line with the coaxial cable and we were not able to switch from LP to SP. The comparison between the Yagi situated on the dam and those close to the beach showed an improvement of less than 3 db for NA contacts, but now the EU signals were



down for 4 s-units. The higher isn't always the better ... But we forced NA contacts on this antenna and Jani was happy to use his "own" antenna for digi contacts during the last days.

Close to our departure the SteppIR Yagis was put down

first, the second day the XP406. We were still running 2 and at least one station before we had to leave on August 23. The last antenna, the G5RV, was put down just one hour before we had to leave Ngapali. This last day said good-bye to us with beautiful weather, blue sky and sunshine and all were very unhappy to leave just now. It has been a long and partly difficult trip for all with more than 24,000 contacts. Not as much as we had hoped, but a good result for the bad weather situation we have had. We have seen a lot (but not enough) from a wonderful country with friendly and helpful people. For some of us it will not be the last time to visit (and operate)



DXpedition QSL card



Smiling AA4NN contacting a friend