



ANCIENT MYANMAR PHU CITY SRIKSETRA IN BUDDHISM

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ABSTRACT

This article traces the remarkable record of urbanisms at sits in Myanmar. This researching aims or objective to maintain the understanding of pre-historic: historical heritage, archeological Art Heritage, Buddhist culture Heritage, literary heritage, Historical dates back show that is the largest cities of Myanmar's (known as Burma) early period, were operational early in the First Millennium CE. This paper presents to note the brief different stages of religious structures such as stupas, temples so on, value of archaeology for the largest of the city Sriksetra. Furthermore, the paper is alike to highlight these Buddhist cultural remains of SriKsetra have been evaluated into the outstanding universal value when Pyu Ancient Cities of Halin, Beikthano and SriKsetra¹ were World Heritage Site enlisted. The article is not only evidence on the date and type of contacts relate to the Pyu, India and other areas of southeast Aisa but also new witness for ancient city of Sriksetra.



KEYWORD- Heritage, Buddhism, Culture, Literary.

INTRODUCTION TO MYANMAR

Myanmar (officially called Republic of the Union of Myanmar) is a country in Southeast Asia that has a long history. Many different tribes have been living in Myanmar. The number is one hundred and thirty-five ethnic groups altogether. it is better to describe the location of Myanmar firstly because the study of this content is related to the geography of all of population in Myanmar. Myanmar covers an area of 677,000 square kilometers, or 261,228 square miles, ranging 936 kilometers (581 miles) from the east to west and 2051 kilometers (1275 miles) from north to south. It is a land of hills and valleys and is rimmed in the north, east and west by mountain ranges forming a gaint horseshoe. Enclosed within the mountain barriers are the flat lands of *Ayeyawady*, Chindwin and Sittaung River valleys where most of the country's agricultural land and population are concentrated. "The state is organized into the seven states and seven divisions and nationwide have over 45 million majority of peoples.

Here, there are some disagreements between Myanmar historians who study the history of Sriksetra (Pyu) and Bagan and hold it for the beginning of Myanmar and who research the modern history of Myanmar. Modern Myanmar historians claim that Konbaung dynasty is the beginning of Myanmar. The researcher believes that Konbaung dynasty belongs to colonial history, while Pyu and Bagan refer to pre-colonial period in the history of Myanmarⁱ According to historical records, the old city of Sriksetra is determined to be the ancient capital of Pyu. There were three famous capitals in Myanmar; *Magwe in Vishnu (Beikthano)*, *Shwe Bo in Hanlin* and *Twandin Gyin Pyay in Sriksetra*.

¹ Than Tun, Dr, introduction to Myanmar, Myanmar Heritage Publication 197 (b), 33 rd Street, Yangon, Myanmar.2001

I will explain the situation of the ancient Sriksetra city around the five miles in the east of Pyay. It was founded by the guidance of Thera Gavampati at buddha's Sāsana. Era 101 from the 3rd century to the 11th centuries. It was the city that *King Duttabaung* first throned. The city is shaped more or less like a circle. The whole city wall is eight miles and five furlongs long covered with bushes. Some of the remained city walls are 15 ft. and 4 ins in height and 17 feet in breadth. The city area is an average of 5.5 square miles. It is wider than most other Pyu cities such as Hanlin and Beikthano. The palace site is 1700 feet in length and 1125 feet in breadth. There are many rectangular mounds called 'PhyThaik' around its surrounding. As a result of the Archaeological Survey in Sriksetra, it includes not only the buildings on earth but also underground buildings. It cannot be expected that all religious buildings were related with Buddhism for only pure Buddhism did not flourish in Sriksetra. In 1926-27, a small Hinduism building was excavated at a mound near Kalarkan village. It is however, so ruined because of bad weather that its figure can hardly be seen nowadays. These religious buildings are divided into two sorts - stupa and temple. Bawbawgyi, Phayargyi and Phayamar are stupas and East Zegu, Bebe temple and Laymyetnhar are temples. NyinbarHu and Settaing are stupas mixed with modern architecture. Bawbawgyi stupa, Pharyagyi stupa and Phayamar stupa were massively built with brick.

BRIEF HISTORY OF SRIKSETRA

Sriksetra is the largest and latest Pyu city, once the capital of unified sovereign of early Myanmar might have been entitled it in Sanskrit. The word *Sriksetra* literally means "full of charm and Blessing place or Royal Place" that *Sriksetra* is derived from Indo-Āryan language (Sanskrit). and in Myanmar called as *Thaye Khittya* means "Field of Glory" or "Auspicious Land". *Sriksetra* is the ancient capital of the Sriksetra Pyu Cultural Heritage Region, is about five miles south of Bago Region's Pyay City. It is located about 180 miles northwest of Yangon. It is situated five miles east of recent modern city Pyay and stands north latitude 18° 50' and 95° 20' east latitudes. As existing as the largest ancient city, Sriksetra owns numerous archaeological heritages of city plan and landscape, religious and ritual buildings, It is an ancient Myanmar city that flourished between the 3rd and 11th centuries AD. The old city of *Sriksetra* was founded by King Duttabaung under the command of Lord *Gavanapati* and was ruled by a *dynasty*. In the description extracted from the Great History of country, there are 27 dynasties of Sriksetra.

In connection with the establishment of the *Sriksetra* kingdom the *Shwezigon* Pagoda inscription records: The Lord Buddha smiled and Ananda asked the cause of this smile; and the lord spoke unto Ananda. Ananda, hereafter a sage named Bishnu, great in supernatural power, great in glory, possessing the five transcendental faculties, together with my son Ganapati and King Indra and *Bissukarmadevapat* (putra) and *Katakarmmanagaraja*, shall build a city called Sisit Srikhetra! After the sage Bishnu has built the city of Sisit, he shall depart from thence (and) in the city of *Arimaddanpur* (Pagan) he shall become king *Sri Tribhuvanaditya Dharmaraja*.ⁱⁱ

The ancient name attributed to old Prome is *Sriksetra*, so often mentioned in the Mon records as *Sikset* or *Srikset*, and by the Chinese pilgrims as *Si-li-cha-ta-lo*; and Sriksetra is the holy land of Puri on the ancient Kalinga coast. The name *Sriksetra* given to old Prome may be apocryphal, but attribution itself is significant.

Another characteristic form of Pyu architecture found at *Hmawza* (old Prome) is the type of building with an inner chamber surmounted by a tapering superstructure known in India as *Sikhara*, which also has its origin in the architecture of Orissa.ⁱⁱⁱ It is observed that the Sikaras of the monuments of Prome are remarkable in similarity with the *temples* at *Bhubaneswar*. The style and language of two gold plates bearing Pali inscription of 5th and 6th centuries A.D. discovered near Prome had similarity with inscription of *Mathara* and early Ganga kings of Kalinga.^{iv} It is believed that Burmese Mahayana and Tantric sect of Buddhism came from Orissa and Bengal.^v

BUDDHIST HERITAGE AT SRIKSETRA

Many accounts about *Sriksetra* were described in the traditional chronicles in which briefly says- the founders of *Sriksetra* were the descendants of *Tagaung* in the north, upper *Ayeyarwaddy* region, - during the time of King Duttabaung (101st year of Buddhist Era, some two thousand four hundred years ago) the city of *Sriksetra* was founded, - the 25 kings are accounted with their reign for about 600 years. In the time of *Sriksetra* City the surrounding area are exploited naturally the forest

resource, built *stupas* and *viharas* on the tops of hills, burial urn grave yards on the slopes, *Pyutaiks* in the lower ridge-plains and basically provided the rain-water from the hills fill up to the lakes, canals and moats. The city's interior areas of East, North and Northwest join the plain of *Nawin River Valley*. Today the seasonal gardening and rice fields are covered in these areas, hence the landscape of Sriksetra is built up of agricultural lands outer and interior of city wall, spread of ancient water tank, pond, drainage and canal, traditional villages and backing ground with little high hill-range. Many ancient pagodas built by the Pyu people can still be seen in the south of the old city of Raya Cheetah. Some of the prominent Pyu period can see Bawbawgyi, Bebegyi Pagoda and laymyathana pagoda which the three Pagoda have been surround the city outside the city walls.

STUPAS (CAITYA) IN SRIKSETRA

The old city of Sriksetra is circular rather than oval in shape. City wall with the moat religious buildings; Statues etc are found. The city wall is (8 miles and 8 furlongs) and has an area of 5.5 square miles. What is remarkable in the Sriketira (W) Magic Lace Museum is the Pali Burmese version of *Phyusa Khinba Shwe Pechap*. In addition, within the museum, the Pyu period gold and flower cloud, the skills and crafts of silver flower cloud, white beads, the architectural works and the bronze figures of the artists can't be bored if you take time to look at them. In fact, among the ancient Pyu cities on the World Heritage List, Sriksetra the largest and longest.

Some of theravada buddhi development of Sriksetra, Bawbaw Gyi Pagoda, is located near the southern city wall of the old city of Sriksetra. It rises straight up on the 5 steps of the low circular piccayan, and the umbrella is placed on the top of the pagoda. There is a tunnel inside the pagoda. From the base of the top pillar, there is a hole to enter the entire pagoda tunnel. The height of the pagoda is 153 feet high, and it is said to be an ancient pagoda built by King Duttabaung during the good times of the era. It is said that the Phayama Pagoda, located in the northeast corner of the old city of Sriksetra, is the merit of King Duttabaung. It is a pagoda that is gradually pointed upwards on a low piccayan, and a umbrella is placed on the top of the pagoda. It remains the same as before. Furthermore, according to Buddhist traditional record, it is note that can see Rayanta Gu and Bebegyi like a Pagoda at the ancient city of Sriksetra.

LITERARY HERITAGE IN SRIKSETRA

The golden Pali text has been carefully analyzed by Lu Pe Win and Harry Falk, and dated, palaeographically, by Falk to the period from the 4th-5th century CE.^{vi} This makes it the earliest source of Pali in the world, and is presented briefly here because it documents the historical significance of Pyu literacy in preserving one of the two great Indian traditions of Buddhism: the Pali- based tradition.

Epigraphic evidence of the Pyu script, derived from Brahmi scripts such as the Iksvaku, is known from the discovery of seals and sealings, inscribed stone slabs and urns, inscribed solid gold palm-leaf shaped manuscript plates, inscribed silver ritual objects such as a gilded silver reliquary casket and from Pyu numbers and letters on bricks and on the rim of some pottery.^{vii}

As noted, during the 3rd to 4th century CE, the Pyu had adopted and adapted the *Iksvaku* scripts of south India traditional language, *Amaravati period Nagajunakonda*^{viii} for their own use in transcribing Buddhist texts pāli and some words in their own language. The longer Pyu Pali texts demonstrate that monks were not only well-versed in Pāli but also acquainted with the rules of Sanskrit orthography. This tradition of being able to recite by heart the Pāli texts by the Buddhist monks of Myanmar has been sustained since the Pyu period to the present day in annual recitation competitions held by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This longevity is well supported by the existence of extensive libraries of ancient manuscripts and continues today with the rigorous observance of recitation and propagation of the Pāli canon by the *Sangha* communities.^{ix}

Among the finds in the Khin Ba Mound chamber were twenty solid gold palm-leaf shaped manuscript plates whose inscriptions include eight compressed excerpts from all three main canonical texts, including the chain of causation, the praises of the Buddha, and qualities of Enlightenment. Other gold palm-leaf shaped manuscript plates have been found in the region of Sriksetra, all inscribed with extracts from the Pāli canon. Two were found in 1897 at Maungan Mound 11 km south of the city wall, each was inscribed with three lines of Pāli including the emblematic *Yedhamma* stanza associated with conversion of one of the principal disciples of the Buddha and other sacred verses. A single gold plate

was found in 1928 at the village of Kyundawzu, within the wall of Sriksetra inscribed with two lines of Pali containing the text from one of the dialogues of the Buddha, the same as one of the eight excerpts found on the 20 solid gold palm-leaf shaped manuscript plates within the Khin Ba Mound hoard discovered in 1926-27. This wealth of epigraphic finds in Sriksetra can be dated broadly between the 5th to 8th century CE which together with the other inscribed objects from Halin and *Beikthano* correlates well with the radiocarbon sequence described above and a chronology from at least the first century CE.^x

SRIKĀSETRA DYNASTY

It could be also said that Sriksetra dynasty is time of getting back Myanmar early Bagan. In 3rd to 11th century, Duttabaung was a local leader who succeeded winning the throne using an occasion in Burmese history. In fact, Duttabaung is the founder of Sriksetra dynasty. In Sriksetra dynasty, there were twenty-five kings from Duttabaung to Supannanagarachindha.^{xi}

CONCLUSION

The former society of humans who constructed and maintained the ceremonial structures, rice fields, and enormous walls of urban regions for more than a thousand years tells the story of Sriksetra's archaeological evidence. The innovative Pyu script, which is descended from Brahmi, the religious building, and the wide range of sculpture found nearby all serve as tangible examples of the outcomes of this social collaboration and ecological awareness. According to the combined introduction of Buddhism and urbanization to the proto-urban sites of the Ayeyarwaddy Valley in Central Myanmar in the third and second centuries BC, these cultural relics have survived for a very long time. Since then, numerous structures and artefacts uncovered during archaeological digs have provided evidence that Pyu The design of Buddhist stupas and Pyu alphabets, which are derived from Brahmi, are currently on par with that of Northwest and South Indian Buddhism. The ancient Pyu cities of Halin, Beikthano, and Maingmao in Lower Myanmar shared characteristics with coastal urban areas at the same period. The initial and most significant centres of Buddhism in Southeast Asia from the second century BC to the ninth century AD are known to be Sriksetra and modern-day Pyu Cities, where the religion was practised by all social groups. The conversion from older timber building techniques employed in ceremonial or funerary structures of mortuary practise and image hall to permanent material, brick, was permitted for the construction of religious buildings through royal and common sponsorship. Additionally, after the spread of Buddhist doctrine and monastic practise into other regions of mainland Southeast Asia, the religious institutions of Sriksetra and Pyu Cities serve as justifiable precedents for eventual state creation. It is included in the 2012 nomination dossier for Pyu Ancient Cities to be added to the World Heritage List, and it was successful in being added to the World Cultural Heritage list in 2014.

In conclusion, beyond the Buddhism-rooted country of India, the Buddhist cultural relics of Sriksetra played a key role in the advancement of Buddhist art and architecture in the first millennium AD. Over the course of the city's lengthy history, the monumental features functioned as defining stylistic, iconographic, and transformational phases. Finally, the city's interactions with many religious and ethnic groups gave rise to its cosmopolitan status. The city managed to exist with a variety of religious practises, including ancestor worship, Theravada, Mahayana Buddhism, and Brahmanism, as evidenced by the late period of structural and cultural activities. The city's decline may have begun in the ninth century AD, shortly after the transfer of political authority from Sriksetra to Bagan. With the success of elite support in the socioeconomic sector to the ongoing residents of the ancient city of Sriksetra, however, the city was not abandoned. In contrast, Sriksetra's cultural characteristics more or less aided in the establishment of Bagan as the new empyreal capital and the later development of Myanmar and regional Southeast Asia.

ⁱ Robert Ha Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*, Singapore, 2002, p. 330.

ⁱⁱ P.C. Ratt, *Maritime Activities of Kalinga*: journal of kalinga Historical Research Society: 1947, Vol 04, PP351-352

ⁱⁱⁱ D.G.E. Hall, *op.cit.*, p.150; Hall has wrongly called it as Udayagiri; W.S. Desai, *A Pageant of Burmese History*, Calcutta, 1961, p.19.

^{iv} Referred to by P.P. Mishra, Orissas cultural contact with South-East Asia in: P.K. Mishra(ed.) Comprehensive History and Culture of Orissa, vol. I, opt.-II, New Delhi,1997, p.719.

^v U. Thakur, A Historical Survey of the Elements of Hindu Culture in Burma, in: Imprints of Indian Thought and Culture Abroad, Madras,1980. p.149.

^{vi} Lu Pe Win, *Report of the Superintendent*; Janice Stargardt, “The Four Oldest Surviving Pali Texts,” 199-213; Oskar von Hinuber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature. Indian Philology and South Asian Studies*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 205, note 737; Harry Falk, “Die Goldblatter aus Sri Ksetra”; Janice Stargardt, *Tracing Thought through Things: The Oldest Pali Texts and the Early Buddhist Archaeology of India and Burma. 7th Gonda Lecture* (Amsterdam: Monograph of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2000), Appendix, Contents of the relic chamber.

^{vii} Duroiselle, Chas. (1927). A Short Survey of the Religious aspect of the History of Burma Prior to the 11th Century AD, Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India 1926_27. Delhi: Manager of Publications.

^{viii} Luce, G. H. (1985). Phases of Pre-Pagan, Burma Languages and History. Vol. 1, Oxford University Press.

^{ix} Hudson, Bob. (2012). A thousand years before Bagan: radiocarbon dates and Myanmar’s ancient Pyu cities (Revision 2). Early Myanmar and its Global Connections Conference. Bagan: Myanmar.

^x Win Kyaing. (2012). A reconsidering of Bagan temple origin: a critical change of tradition and reappraisal on emergence of Bagan glory, *Early Myanmar and its Global Connections Conference*. Bagan.

^{xi} Than Tun. Dr, Where is Phu, 2006, July, first print, Yangon, Myanmar



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