

# **Sri Ksetra: The Ancient City of Pyu Rising in a Marvelous Dignity for Myanmar-Buddhism**

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## **Abstract**

All nations and nationalities in the world stand on their own dignities with some prominent buildings, renowned places, beautiful culture and legendary heroes. With splendid dignity, each land persists in elegance on the world's map. Every dignified building or renowned place narrates about its respective ancient story. Some of them connected with religions are especially more fabulous than other things in the world. It is because religious buildings or places enable visitors to bear faith and peace as going there. In Myanmar, Pyu Ancient Cities includes the remains of three brick, walled and moated cities of Halin, Beikthano and Sri Ksetra located in vast irrigated landscapes in the dry zone of the Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) River basin. They reflect the Pyu Kingdoms that flourished for over 1,000 years between 200 BC and AD 900. In this paper, Sri Ksetra, one of the magnificent ancient city in Myanmar, which are put in the list of the world's heritage, will be made known as how long has been existed, how becomes eminent, and how importance for the Buddhism and human.

**Keywords:**Sri setra,Ancient,Marvelous,Dignity,Myanmar, Buddhism

## **Introduction**

All nations and nationalities in the world stand on their own dignities with some prominent buildings, renowned places, beautiful culture and legendary heroes. For example, Shwedagon Pagoda in Myanmar, Great Wall in China, Liberty Statue in New York, and Gaya in India are very illustrious figures for each country. With splendid dignity, each land persists in elegance on the world's map. Every dignified building or renowned place narrates about its respective ancient story. Some stories express for being blue and terrible, but others for being proud of one's ancestors' endeavor for humanity. Whether these are pleasant or unpleasant stories, needless to say, all these buildings, places and culture are the pride of lands' inhabitants. Of them, some connected with religions are

The Pyu language is an extinct Tibeto-Burman language that was mainly spoken in present day central Burma (Myanmar) in the first millennium CE. It was the vernacular of the Pyu city-states. Its usage declined starting in the late 9th century when the Myanmar people of the Kingdom of Nanzhao began to overtake the Pyu city-states. The language was still in use, at least in royal inscriptions of the Pagan Kingdom if not in popular vernacular, until the late 12th century. It became extinct in the 13th century, completing the rise of the Burmese language, the language of the Pagan Kingdom, in Upper Burma, the former Pyu realm.<sup>1</sup> The Pyu script was a Brahmic script. The most recent scholarship suggests the Pyu script may have been the source of the Mon script used to write Mon and Burmese.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Flourished Buddhism in Pyu**

The book named Twayankawkyi, a Chinese historical book come out in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, said a kind of cultured race called “Phyuk” inhabited in the north-west place from Yinchuan district and they used to treat in all respect each other. In accordance with a record compiled in the period of Han, it was known that the race “Phyuk” called by Chinese was reckoned as “Thulawkyu” by themselves, then they are called “Tulechu” by the islanders of Java. Assuredly, the word “Bhirhsul” comprised of Nantawyar stone inscription of King Kyansittha engraved in Mon language in the 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE proved the race “Phyuk” or “Thulawkyu” mentioned in the old Chinese record that was called as “Hahsul” in the chronicles of Pashan and Arab in the 9th century CE were “Pyu”<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, in an ancient Chinese chronicle written in the 8th century BCE, it was noted thus: “In the Pyu region, there is a very white statue which is over one hundred height. There are over hundred monasteries decorated with gold, silver and metal, fragrance and soft carpets. Boys and girls who are between 7 to 20 years of age study in the monasteries. Disgusted killing others’ lives they adore and treasure lives. There is no law to give the punishment like binding the guilty persons with iron ropes. Regarding restraining from killing, they never wear the silk

<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/pyu\\_language\\_\(Burma\)#cite\\_note-mha-5-152-2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/pyu_language_(Burma)#cite_note-mha-5-152-2)

<sup>2</sup> Aung-Thwin, pp. 167–177.

<sup>3</sup> The article named “Sri Ksetra, the ancient city of Pyu that included in the list of world’s heritage, dignified for Myanmar” by Dr Aung Than Win (Oriental Studies), Myanmaralin Newspaper, 5. 8.2014.

clothes on account of desire for not killing even small beings.”

As stated by this record, it can be known that the Buddhism flourished since that time and they had strong faith in the Buddha, the *dhamma* and the *sa<sup>3</sup>gha*. For decorated grand monasteries with jewels, we can imagine how much great generosity of them. Knowing that boys and girls studied under the monks highlights us to pride ourselves on the monastic education had been started since Pyu period. Owing to the guidelines of spiritual teacher monks, Pyu people might have good ethics and prosperousness. Besides, Pyu people observed the precepts willingly and strictly, that can be known by seeing they abstained from killing even very small beings. Seeing the point that they valued lives, the images of their great sympathy upon the poor, lower and weak beings can be envisioned. Doubtlessly, they might spread loving-kindness toward all beings owing to the clues of observing precepts and without making harm to others.

In 1906-190, Department of Archaeology, National Museum and Library of Myanmar started to excavate the ancient Pyu city, Sri Ksetra. Remains include excavated palace citadels, burial grounds and manufacture sites, as well as monumental brick Buddhist stupas, partly standing walls and water management features some still in use that underpinned the organized intensive agriculture. In accordance with the valuable antiquities found there, Sri Ksetra was the proving ground for architecture, art of gold-smith, art of carving wood and literature of Pyu had got the superb level. The stupas in Pyu region such as BhoBhoGyi and Payama, the decorated statues made by gold, silver, bronze and mud and the religious structures in those stupas verified absolutely that the Buddhism thrived in Pyu in the ancient time.

Of being found religious heritages, the most significance is the gold parchments found in the place named Maungkan and Khinbhakone near Mhawzar village. On those gold parchments, some Pā'li words from three baskets (Tipiṅkaka) of Theravāda Buddhism were inscribed. To show the proof, some of the striking evidences are –

(1) Paṅicasamuppāda taken out from Mahāvagga (VinayaPiṅkaka) is seen in the gold parchments of Khinbhakone,

(2) Bodhi Pakkhayadhamma come from Mahāparinibbānasutta

of Dīganikāya (SuttantaPiṅka) is seen in the gold parchments of Maungkan.

(3) Some Pāli words from Vibha<sup>3</sup>ga of Abhidhamma Piṅka are seen at the second terrace of BhoBho Gyi stupa<sup>4</sup>. These gold parchments are effective evidences endorsed that Buddhism became high-point at the period of Pyu.

### **Sri Ksetra added as the Cultural Sites to the List of World Heritage**

The inscriptions of the 1000th site and Myanmar's first property on the World Heritage List, were among the highlights of the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee, held in Doha (Qatar). During its ten-day meeting, the Committee added a total of 26 new sites into the List to bring the number of World Heritage Sites to 1007, in 161 countries.<sup>5</sup>

From Myanmar, three ancient cities of Pyu: Sri Ksetra, Halin and Beikthano are added as new cultural sites to the list of world heritage for the following evidences – these Pyu ancient cities developed modern civilization in the earliest time, Theravāda Buddhism arrived at those places earlier than others; these cities distinctly endured as the earliest developed ancient cities in the South East Asia; and the art of architecture of Pagan is originated from the heritage of the architecture of Pyu. The additional main facts advocated by twenty-one countries are also supportive to become the cultural sites in the list of world heritage. The facts are as follows: these cities were established since 2000 years ago so that those are the earliest developed cities in Myanmar; for being very old and deficient in maintaining, the heritage on and under the earth becomes decreased; declining to treasure the national heritage even Myanmar citizens.

### **Conclusion**

In the today's world, while some people have been inventing the new things, others love to research the old things. The antique materials such as painting, coins, pots etc., are of high value. Some materials are auctioned off by high price. The reason why the antique

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

materials is can be produced in no more days should be kept or maintained as cultural heritage and art. For choosing the certain elegant buildings and sites as world heritage which is one of the functions of UNESCO world Heritage Centre, like seeing the Shwedagon pagoda, Myanmar is known before, in the future Sri Ksetra and other two ancient Pyu cities will be known as Myanmar as well as treasured for the ancient civilization and for the flourished Buddhism. UNESCO strengthens action to take out precious sites for maintaining culture heritage and to reveal the unrevealed relationship of the social behavior of a particular people or group. Knowing the ancient history of a valued place, there would be reduced disagreement between countries or nationalities by calling back happier times of memory lane of late interrelationship between them because the world is a huge village and the globe is round from that time up to so far.

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