A STUDY ON OLD THATON CITY

Ph.D. (DISSERTATION)

LÈ LÈ WIN

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

UNIVERSITY OF YANGON

MYANMAR

FEBRUARY 2010

ABSTRACT

The archaeological landscape of Thaton, in Lower Myanmar is a landscape of continuity in a view of pre-historic past. Finds of Upper Paleolithic cave site in Weiponla, near Hpa-an and Neolithic village communities at Mayangon, HsinbyuKyun and Kyaikkatha suggest the existence of a distinctive prehistoric Stone-age culture along the coastal region of the Gulf of Mottama where old Thaton civilization rooted during the early first millennium A.D human adaptation of the landscape. Traces of Bronze and early Iron age village sites are observed from the aerial photographic investigations, but they are not recorded yet. The subsequent appearance of the urban system of walled central places contemporary with that of Pyu urbans in central Myanmar is seen as the result of recently observations in the region. They are Kyaikkatha, Zothoke, Winka, Kadaikgyi, Thaton and Sanpanago. The leaders of these centres adopted Indic symbols and Sanskrit modes of Kingship, introducing Pāli Theravada Buddhism, from India and Ceylon. Finger-marked bricks, silver coins, stone beads and saddle quern witness the early Indian influences to this area. The old inscription, hair-relic enshring stupas, Buddha statues of old types, terracotta plaques and stone relief depicting *Jataka Maha-nipata*, votive tablets bearing *Yehamma* verse and other work of art are connected the Pyu civilization of Sriksetra, Early Mon civilization of Dvaravati, Early Rakhine and Bagan civilizations. A newly discovered votive tablet bearing King Aniruddha's seal from Ayetthama proved the relation between old Thaton and Bagan. Since Old Thaton was under studies by the colonial scholars, some doubts are thrown the existence of Thaton city because "this tradition is difficult to reconcile with the paucity of archaeological remains discovered in

the area of Thaton". Now we are setting up a new phase of studies on the area. There have been archaeological excavations and explorations around Thaton area. Meanwhile, a pre-Bagan period founding date for Thaton, and its claim to be centre that inspired Bagan had been in dispute. The argument was crystallized by some scholars because of their misinterpretations and lack of field surveying. Obviously, still existing evidences of Thaton, mostly unexcavated, may prove the existence of old Thaton.

CONTENTS

			Page
Abstract			iv
List of Illustrations			vi
List of Maps			xiv
List of Aerial Photos			xv
List of Satellite Images			xvi
List of Drawings			xvii
Introduction			xiii
Chapter I	-	TOPOGRAPHY AND EARLY HUMAN SETTLEMENTS	1
Chapter II	-	THE FOUNDING OF OLD THATON	42
Chapter III	-	BUDDHISM IN THATON	102
Conclusion			148
Bibliography			154