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Study of Pyu Ancient City Maingmaw (Pinle)

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Abstract

Myanmar scholars classified and studied the Pyu Civilization, which flourished in Myanmar from 1st-9th century A.D. The famous Pyu cities in Myanmar are Maingmaw (Pinle), Beikthano, Hanlin and Sriksetra. Among these Pyu cities Beikthano, Hanlin and Sriksetra listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. However, Maingmaw (Pinle) remained outside the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Pyu cities. As an attempt, to investigate how scholars were investigate this city, and how archaeological excavation works were carried out and what were finds in the excavations and how these were defined to the standards of their excavated finds of Pyu cities like Beikthano, Hanlin and Sriksetra, this research paper is examined.

Keywords: Pyu cities, Maingmaw and archaeological excavations

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Introduction

The Pyu were Tibeto-Burman language family. The cultural related evidences found in the inhabitation sites of Pre Pyu since the beginning of the first millennium A.D during the highest point of Pyu culture and economy were closely affinities with the objects found in Yunnan, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia. Later on, the populated Pre Pyu villages started to build walls and palaces in their urbanized cities¹. They had settled down in Myanmar along Ayeyawaddy River from Shwebo to Pyay. The earliest records about the Pyu were the Chinese records written between 3rd-7thcenturies A.D. In the Old and New Tang History, it is mentioned that the Pyu were called *P'iaoby* the Chinese and they called themselves *T'u-lo-chu*. The Javanese called them *T'u-li-ch'ü*. In Kyansittha's Old Mon Palace Inscription, the Pyu were mentioned as *Tircul*, which could be identified with the Chinese record of the name of *T'u-lo-chu*for the Pyu.²

Myanmar scholars classified and studied the Pyu Civilization, which flourished in Myanmar from 1st-9th century A.D.³ The famous Pyu cities in Myanmar are Maingmaw (Pinle), Beikthano, Hanlin and Sriksetra. Among these Pyu cities Beikthano, Hanlin and Sriksetra listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites at 38th World Heritage Conference on 22 June 2014. In 46 Cultural Zones of Myanmar, Maingmaw (Pinle) Old Pyu City in Maingmaw Village in Myittha Township was included as one of 27 Culture Zones which need to be safeguarded. Although Maingmaw was one of the Pyu Old Cities, it was not listed in World Heritage Site.

Maingmaw Old City

The late U AungMyint, Aerial Photographer of Myanmar Ancient Cities and Retired Commissioner of Forestry, investigated Maingmaw Old City. He found Maingmaw Old City at the mountain in the west of old cities of MyinZaing, MyinnKhonTaing, Makhara (1) and Pinle (Makhara (2)). The find of Pinle Old City

¹Bob Hudson, "A Pyu Homeland in the Samon Valley : a new theory of the origin of Myanmar's early urban system", Myanmar Historical Research Center, 2005, pp. 3-6 (Hereafter cited as Bob Hudson, "A Pyu Homeland in the Samon Valley")

²G.H. Luce, 'The Ancient Pyu', *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, Vol. XXXVII, III, 1937, p.242 (Hereafter cited as Luce, 'The Ancient Pyu')

³Bo Hmu Ba Shin, *အရှေ့ရထားအရင်ကမြန်မာနိုင်ငံ(Myanmar Before Anawrahta)*, Third Edition, Yangon, InnwaSarpe , August 1998, p. 78 (Hereafter cited as Ba Shin,*Myanmar Before Anawrahta*)

was a significant change of finding in Myanmar history. As an ancient city named Pinle had already available in Myanmar history, he gave the name of Pinle what he had found as Maingmaw.⁴

Maingmaw (Pinle) Old City was situated in deepest part of Maingmaw Village between Unne Pot and Maingmaw Village. Maingmaw (Pinle) Old City is situated at five miles Southeast of Kume, Myittha Township, Kyaukse District, Mandalay Region. It is situated between latitudes 21° 20' north and longitudes 96° 12' east. When historical researched on Kyaukse, Myittha 11 Districts were made by scholars in 1956, they have found Maingmaw Old City but they did not judge this as an old city. However, that Old City was written partly in Gazetteer of Kyaukse District in 1925. Since the ancient time, Kyaukse was abundant with lands and irrigation network but ancient Maingmaw (Pinle) was not mentioned in Myanmar chronicles like HmanNann (Glass Palace) Chronicle and KonbaungzatMahaRazawin (Great Chronicle of Konbaung Dynasty).⁵

Myanmar historian U MaungMaung Tin claimed Maingmaw was PinlePyu city mentioned in Myanmar chronicles. Myanmar ancient cities MyinnSaing, Makhaya and Pinle flourished in 14th Century were mentioned in Myanmar chronicles. However, Maingmaw was not recorded. It seemed that this old city was not recorded because this city was much earlier than the above cities.⁶

Thus, Maingmaw (Pinle) Old City has not be described in Myanmar chronicles but Myanmar historians guessed contemporary Pyu city of Beikthano existed in 2nd Century AD might be this Maingmaw (Pinle) Old City based on Chinese records. Myanmar-Chinese histories expert U Yi Sein suggested 'Htu Min' which was one of the nine Pyu forts of SriksetraPyu City recorded in Tan Dynasty history was Maingmaw (Pinle). This Htu Min fort was situated on main trade route of Pyu and India.⁷

Nine forts of SriksetraPyu City recorded in Tan Dynasty history were as follows:

⁴U AungMyint, *ကောင်းကင်ခါတိုင်းပုံများမှမြန်မာ့ရှေးဟောင်းမြို့တော်များ*, (Ancient Myanmar Cities from Aerial Photos), Second Edition, Yangon, SweDaw Press, 2012, p.24 (Henceforth as AungMyint, *Ancient Myanmar Cities*)

⁵Ibid, pp.24-25

⁶*ပျူလူမျိုးနှင့်ပျူနိုင်ငံတော်*(Paper Reading of Pyu and Pyu Kingdom) from 31 July 2012 to 1 August 2012, Published from Tun Foundation, First Edition, Yangon, Myanmar Times Press, 2016, p. 88 (Hereafter cited as *Pyu and Pyu Kingdom*)

⁷Ibid, p.88

1. Tauk Lin Wun (Lin Yan) TaungdwinGyi
2. Yei Li Yi (Yei Li, Siri) Hsipaw
3. San Htaw (Halin)
4. MimawTauk Li , NgwarHtooGyi)
5. Htu Min, Near Kume, Maingmaw,
6. Ti Kye , HteeChaint,
7. Tar Li Mo, Maw Za East Thee Kone,
8. KanHtan, KannThidar and
9. Maw Hpu, near Mwe Yin, Mawriya.⁸

Excavation of Maingmaw (Pinle) old city was conducted by Assistant Director of Archaeology Department U SeinMaungOo starting 1978-79 Financial Years. The team made following excavations:

- (1) Mound No. 1 which was locally called Chin cemetery at the southwest of outer city wall,
- (2) Mound No.1, 2,3, and 4 near Central Sima of the old city and Mound No.5 at eastern city wall,
- (3) Mound No. 6 at the south of central city wall,
- (4) Mound No. 7,8, and 9 at the southeast of outer most part of city wall,

In the Financial Year of 2008-2009, Director U AungMaung from the Archeological, National Museum and Library Department (North) from Mandalay continued to excavate the following areas of Maingmaw old city:

- Mound No. 10 at eastern part of old city wall from the outer part of Kume-Kin Tar Dam Road,
- Mound No. 11 at the northwest of outer city wall of old city
- Mound No.12 at the southwest of Nann Taw YarPagoda,
- Mound No. 13 and 14 about 500 yards away from the east of outer city wall.

In 2009-2010 Financial Years, a team led by U MyoNyunt excavated at Mound No. 15, 16 and 17 at the eastern part of city wall. He continued his excavation at Mound No. 18 and 19 for the city wall and gateways. Altogether 19 mounds has been excavated from the Department of Archaeology.⁹

⁸Dr. Than Tun, *ပျူတွေဘယ်ရောက်သွားသလဲ*, (*Where Pyu has gone?*), First Edition, Yangon, Monywa Press, 2006, p.85 (Hereafter cited as Than Tun, *Where Pyu has gone?*)

⁹*Pyu and Pyu Kingdom*, pp.88-89

Finds from Excavations

The excavations found the shape of Maingmaw old city is oval surrounded by moat. This brick city wall is concrete evidence of Pyu culture. Estimated measurements of oval old city wall above two miles from east to west and its diameter from south to north was one and half miles. The circumference of the old city wall is about five and half miles. Three city walls in Maingmaw is the outstanding feature of Maingmaw old city. The shape of outer wall is oval and second city wall is in square while innermost part of city wall is in circular. The second city wall could not figure clearly and the outer and innermost parts of city walls are clearly visible¹⁰.

The brick from the city wall is approximately 17 inches in length, 8 ¾ inches in wide and 2 inches in thickness. It is approximately 45 x 20 x 6 centimeter. It is conjectured Maingmaw old city was built at about 2nd Century AD. As the city wall was built with massive and concrete bricks, it can be seen today.¹¹ Some excavated bricks have finger marks. These finger marks bricks were not for the decoration but for some kind markings. Finger marks bricks were also found ancient Buddhistic sites in Buddha Gaya in India and Pakistan. Mud with paddy husks were used by baking bricks. Some paddy seeds are found in bricks from Maingmaw, Beikthano, and Sriksetra ,Hanlin and Wati. The finds of paddy seeds and husks clearly witness paddy cultivation was available at that time¹².

Finds of Pagodas

Religious buildings in Maingmaw old city found during excavations showed the flourishing of Buddhism in Maingmaw (Pinle) old city. TheinGyi Pagoda was situated at west and south of Maingmaw Village. Another ancient pagoda named Nann Taw Yar Pagoda was available in Maingmaw old city. This pagoda might have been built in the heyday of Maingmaw city. This pagoda seemed to be earlier than TheinGyi Pagoda. Although TheinGyi Pagoda was renovated by the villagers, Nann Taw Oo Pagoda was remained untouched for renovation.¹³

Worshipping pagoda or Ceti has been originated after the Parinarvanna of Lord Buddha. Firstly, the relics of Lord Buddha were enshrined as DhatuCeti.

¹⁰AungMyint, *Ancient Myanmar Cities* , p. 28

¹¹Ibid, p. 29

¹²Man ThitNyein (Archaeology), *လက်ရေးစင်းပါအမှတ်အသား အုတ်ချပ်များ၏ ခေတ်ပြုသမိုင်း* ,
(History which showed from Finger Marks Bricks, www.moi.gov)

¹³AungMyint, *Ancient Myanmar Cities* , p. 29

Originally, Ceti (pagoda) was in the form of a mound. The most earliest pagoda was built by Emperor Asoka (BC 237-242) was Sanchi Pagoda in hemisphere type. The great pagoda in Amaravati of India built in is also Sanchi type. The worship and building of Pagoda spread from India to Pyu cities from India. Southeast Asia including Myanmar became Indianized States. Funan in present Cambodia became first Indianized kingdom in Southeast Asia from 5th Century to 7th Century. The presence of Hindu temples in Angkor areas witnessed the arrival of Palava merchants to Southeast Asia. Apart from maritime trade, inland trade with Pyu cities and northern India was also flourished since the beginning of the 1st Century AD.

Finds of Religious Edifices

Most ancient religious edifices in Myanmar are found in old Pyu cities of Beikthano, Hanlin and Sriksetra. Moreover, scholars presumed the finds of buildings in Mound No. 7, 8 and 14 are religious buildings. It is confirmed by an excavation of silver Buddha image in Mound No. 8 and similarity of Buddhist religious structural styles from other Pyu cities and Maingmaw. The plans of these buildings, some decorated bricks and two step brick lines which are supposed to be terraces and concrete foundations of the buildings were built.¹⁴

Finds of Utensils

Terracotta beads are mostly found from the excavations. The shapes are like long and short drums and square forms. These beads are portrayed with different designs of white strips in black colour.¹⁵ As the finds of earthen earring and terracotta beads have holes, these were used as beads to wear as necklace.¹⁶ These terracotta beads are now called as Chin Pati or necklace worn by Chin women from hill tracts as their favorite these beads necklaces. The Chin Pati or terracotta beads found from excavation sites in Maingmaw are closely resemblance with the finds from Wati Old City. Such kinds of beads were also discovered from Sriksetra, Hanlin and Beikthano. Apart from these beads, earthen beads and fragments of potsherd and earthen pipes were unearthed.

¹⁴*Pyu and Pyu Kingdom*, p. 75

¹⁵AungMyint, *Ancient Myanmar Cities* , p. 35

¹⁶SannyNyein, *ပျူဒီဇိုင်းများကပြောသောပျူအတွေးများ*, (*Pyu Ideas and Thought as Spoken by Pyu Designs*) First Edition, Yangon, SeikKuu Cho Cho Press, 2016, p. 23

Four silver coins were discovered together with beads. Apart from one coin, other three coins were similar to the coins found in Sriksetra and Hanlin. Three types of coins are found from Maingmaw. The first coin has Srivatsa symbol on the obverse which is similar those found in Beikthano, Hanlin and Sriksetra. On the reverse of this type of coin Bandu or rising sun which has six rays above and below. A BanduPrak or dot is placed in the interval of two rays and altogether 14 dots are placed. The second type of coin has Srivatsa with conch in the center on the obverse and Badapidha or throne on the reverse. This coin is resemblance with the coin unearthed at Hanlin excavation. Srivatsa of the third type of coin is interesting because the base of Srivatsa is narrower than other types of coins.¹⁷

Four kinds of different reliefs with different sizes were excavated from Maingmaw (Pinle) excavation. First relief is a man hold *Thanhlyatsword* is riding a lion-like animal. Two breast ties are flying to the back of this person. This terracotta relief was 13 inches length in square form and 3 inches in thickness. The second type of relief was 12 inches length and wide in square form and 4 inches in thickness standing lion-like or To Naya mythical animal which head and breast are decorated in detail and its mane is portrayed with floral designs. Third type of relief is a man riding a tiger-like animal and that man was wearing a turban. Fourth type of relief is 7½ inches length and wide and 2½ inches thick terracotta relief lion-like animal looking backward. BanduPrak or dots are placed at the foot and neck of this animal.¹⁸

Field excavation of Maingmaw (Pinle) old city found ten iron furnaces above five miles away from southeastern side of Maingmaw (Pinle) old city. Some of these furnaces were in underground and fragment of the walls of these furnaces and funnels can be seen. The types of funnels found in these furnaces are similar to funnels of old PyuSriksetra city and ThaeKone old town. The soil near furnaces is rich in iron minerals that furnaces were built where iron was easily extracted. Iron utensils found in Maingmaw excavations suggested raw iron was extracted from these iron furnaces.¹⁹

¹⁷AungMyint, *Ancient Myanmar Cities* , p. 35

¹⁸မြန်မာ့အလင်းသတင်းစာ, *MyanmaAlin Newspaper*, 11 July 2017

¹⁹Ibid

Find of Inscription

Pyu inscription of ten lines which was 5 feet 11 inches length and 2 feet 8 inches height is kept with an inscription house at the compound of ShweMudaw Pagoda in MyitTha Township. Thickness of this inscription was 3 inches to 5 inches. This inscription was found at MyitNadi Village at the bank of PaungLaung River which is four miles away straightly in map to the east of Maingmaw (Pinle) old city. As it was found in MyitNadi Village, this inscription was known as MyitNadi Inscription.

Conclusion

It is concluded the excavated religious buildings, Buddha images, terracotta beads, potsherds, finger marks bricks and coins unearthed from Pyu old cities of Beikthano, Hanlin, Maingmaw and Sriksetra are closely resemblance with each other. The shape of city wall in Maingmaw old city is more wider than that of Beikthano, Hanlin and Sriksetra. Pyu civilization which had been flourished in Myanmar from 1st to 9th centuries had a high standard of civilization. Among these four Pyu cities, three Pyu cities, Beikthano, Hanlin and Sriksetra are now listed as World Heritage Sites. Thus, it should endeavor Maingmaw (Pinle) old city to be included in World Heritage Sites.

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