

## RECTANGULAR SHAPED BURIAL STRUCTURES OUTSIDE THE CITY WALL OF BEIKTHANO

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### Abstract

Beikthano, 900 hectares, is approximately 18 kilometers west of Taungdwingyi Township, Central Myanmar. The different shapes of burial structures were found in Beikthano through the many times of excavation. This paper intends to do the research into the detailed burial practices of rectangular shaped structures found outside the city wall of Beikthano. This paper was undertaken based on the collected data and typological analysis. The rectangular shaped structures were found more outside the northern city wall, the cremation burial system were uncovered much more than the inhumation in the rectangular shaped burial structures outside the city wall and the burials were only found inside the structures. Consequently, the Beikthano Pyu used the northern side more than other sides for burial, the cremation burial system than the inhumation and inside the structure than outside in the rectangular shaped burial structure outside the city wall.

**Key words:** cremation, inhumation, terracotta urn

### Introduction

In Myanmar, the three Pyu cities: Sri Ksetra, Halin and Beikthano are World Heritage sites and burial custom of Pyu is different from any other sites flourished whenever and wherever in Myanmar. The practice of burial urns buried in the structures found at Pyu cities was not found in the Southeast Asia before Pre-Islamic period, and urn burial was not only found in the burial practices of Pyu cities, but also inhumation found. The different shapes of burial structures were found in Beikthano through the many times of excavation. This paper describes the rectangular shaped burial structures outside the city wall of Beikthano. There are some questions for the rectangular shaped burial structures outside the city wall of Beikthano: which side of city wall was chosen more for burial by Beikthano Pyu; which burial system was used more; which place of the structure was used for burial; which form and size of urn was used; and are the plans of structures similar to each other.

## RECTANGULAR SHAPED BURIAL STRUCTURES OUTSIDE THE CITY WALL OF BEIKTHANO

Beikthano (95° 22' 46" E 20° 0' 14" N), 900 hectares, is approximately 18 kilometers west of Taungdwingyi township. The ancient wall site lies immediately north of the village of Kokkogwa, with the village of Innywagyi on the northwest and the Shweyaungdaw stupa on the northeast just outside the city wall. The walls of Beikthano form a three-sided squarish area with rounded corners surrounding the site on the north, south and west, which aligns neatly with the watershed of the Yin and Sadoun River on the north and the Yanpe Rivers and its many feeder streams on the south. In some sections the walls are still almost two meters high; in others they have been eroded through continued cultivation. The numerous canals within this watershed additionally draw from and drain into the large in-gyi or seasonal lakes, such as the Innywagyi on the west, In-gyi, Gyogya-kan and Kokkogwa-in lakes and ponds and two additional lakes known as atwin thauktawkan (inside lakes for drinking water) and apyin thauktawkan (outside lake for drinking water) thought to have been part of the original water supply of the city.

The excavated mounds were named as KKG-1-25 before (1959-1963) and they are now named as BTO1-42(1995-2015). Among the excavated sites, human skeletons and terracotta urns were uncovered at KKG- 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 18, and 24, BTO- 5, 6, 7, 8,

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9, 10, 12, 16, 19, 20, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34 and 37. The burial sites are the different shapes of brick structures: rectangular, square, stupa-shaped and unidentified structures. The rectangular shaped burial structures are KKG-1, BTO-19, 30, 31, 33, 34 outside the northern city wall, KKG-2, 11, BTO-8, 9 inside the northern city wall, BTO-28, 29, 32 outside the southern city wall, KKG-9, 10, BTO-27 inside the southern city wall, BTO-23, 37 outside the eastern city wall. This paper presents the rectangular shaped burial structures outside the city wall of Beikthano.

## **Outside the Northern City Wall**

### **Rectangular shaped structures**

KKG-1 locates outside the northern city wall and was excavated by U Aung Thaw in 1959. Findings found from this excavation are terracotta urns, charred pieces of bones and ashes, two iron nails of medium size, two terracotta sling balls or marbles, irregular shaped terracotta hopscotch, and two pieces of fossilized wood. The structural plan of KKG-1 is a rectangular structure containing seven low brick compartments, six rectangular ones around a central square. Both ends of the structure, at the time of excavation, were badly eroded by modern village carts. The six burial urns were found inside the structure; most of the compartments contained multiple urn burials, but the central compartment\_a square\_ was empty. The urns are of unglazed and unslipped common red ware, with medium fabric and texture but different shapes and sizes. But for one simple bowl they are decorated with moldings and notches. Once more, there were large and magnificently formed drum-shaped urns present together with bowl shaped urns. Three of them have knobbed lids intact while the bowl has a simple lid. Any stair and entrance were not found at KKG-1.

BTO-19 locates at the place known as *Odeintaung* (Potter's mound), outside the northern city wall. It was excavated by U Thein Lwin in 2003-2004. The unearthed findings are forty one terracotta burial urns and oil lamps. The structural plan of BTO-19 is a rectangular brick structure with an entrance projecting on the south side and a square platform in the centre. The forty one terracotta burial urns were found inside the structure and one urn was decorated with birds around the rim of lid.

BTO-30 locates at the place known as *Odeintaung* (Potter's mound), about 70 yards away from South-east of KKG-18, outside the northern city wall. It was excavated by U Thein Lwin in 2009-2010. The excavated artifacts are terracotta urns and oil lamps, storage pot, cooking vessel, spouted pottery and fossil woods. The structural plan of BTO-30 is a rectangular shaped structure with 12 compartments. The south-west and north-west corner of the structure have pieces of fossil woods suggested as boundary pillars of Sima (ordination hall). The burial urns were buried inside the structure and it wasn't known where the entrance of this structure got on any side. The forms of burial urns are bowl shaped urns.

BTO-31 locates at the place known as *Odeintaung* (Potter's mound), about 100' away from North-west of KKG-18, outside the northern city wall. It was excavated by U Thein Lwin in 2009-2010. The artifacts uncovered in the excavation are fifteen terracotta burial urns, twenty-three terracotta oil lamps, a group of human skeletons, and terracotta beads. The structural plan of BTO-31 is a rectangular shaped structure with compartments and a square platform. The burial urns and a group of human skeletons were found inside the structure.

BTO-33 locates nearly straight line east of BTO-30, east of *Odeintaung* outside the northern city wall. It was excavated by U Thein Lwin in 2009-2010. The findings from the excavation are terracotta urns, potsherds, oil lamps and fossil woods. The structural plan of BTO-33 is a rectangular shaped structure with 10 compartments. The fossil wood pillars were erected at the north-east, south-east and south-west corner of the structure suggested as boundary pillars of Sima (ordination hall). The structural plan of BTO-33 is similar to that of BTO-30, but BTO-33 has 10 compartments and BTO-30 has 12 compartments. The body of

burial urn shaped water pot found in the center of structure was decorated with stamping of birds, fishes and conchs, and deer within the square blocks. The burial urns were found inside the structure.

BTO-34 locates at about 300 yards away from west of *Odeintaung* outside the northern city wall. It was excavated by U Thein Lwin in 2009-2010. The artifacts found from the excavation are terracotta burial urns, oil lamps, beads, and pipe, water pot and various sizes of pottery. The structural plan of BTO-34 is a rectangular shaped structure with a square platform and 23 post holes and the entrance facing to the west side. The burial urns are various sizes and forms. One urn was decorated with alternative making of bird and flower reliefs. The burial urns were found inside the structure.

## **Outside the Southern City Wall**

### **Rectangular shaped structure**

BTO-28 locates at the area of Kokkogwa High School, north of Yan Pe stream outside the southern city wall. It was excavated by U Naing Win in 2007-2008. The uncovered findings are terracotta urns, a human skeleton orientated towards the east, eight terracotta oil lamps and thirty-eight bronze oil lamps. The structural plan of BTO-28 is a rectangular brick structure facing to the east side with three phases. The three phases are the lowest is enclosure wall, the second is the main building and the third is a square platform. The burial urns were found between enclosed wall and main building, and between main building and the square platform. A stair case with three steps was found on the north side of the main building. The 8 post holes were found within the main building. The oil lamps (thirty-eight bronze and eight terracotta) were found between the main building and the square platform. A human skeleton orientated towards the east was found in the north corner of main building. The burial urns are various sizes and forms.

BTO-29 locates at area of Kokkogwa High School near BTO-28 north of Yan Pe stream outside the southern city wall. It was excavated by U Naing Win in 2007-2008. The excavated findings are terracotta burial urns and oil lamps. The structural plan of BTO-29 is a rectangular shaped structure with a square platform near the south enclosed wall. The burial urns were found inside the structure.

BTO-32 locates at about 200' away from North-east of Gyok Gon village outside the southern city wall. It was excavated by U Thein Lwin in 2009-2010. The artifacts of excavated work are forty terracotta burial urns, potsherds, iron miscellanies, spouted pottery and painted pottery. The structural plan of BTO-32 is a rectangular shaped structure with compartments and a square platform and the entrance facing to the west. The post holes were found around the enclosed wall. The brick forms used are simple and gadrooned brick. The burial urns were found inside a single room. The sizes of urns are various sizes from about 6" in height to 30" in height. The shards of burial urns were decorated with figures of birds, circles, arrow heads, lotus, and dots.

## **Outside the Eastern City Wall**

### **Rectangular shaped structure**

BTO-23 locates at 200' away from south of Shweyaungdaw Pagoda, outside the eastern city wall. It was excavated by Daw Aye Mi Sein in 2007-2008. The excavated findings are seventy-nine terracotta burial urns, gold cup (3.3 cm in diameter, 1 cm in height), gold bead (circumstance 3.1cm, length 1.3cm, and width 0.9cm). The structural plan of BTO-23 is just a brick line: the form of the structure cannot certainly be said, but it may be a rectangular shaped structure. The burial urns are various forms and sizes: the drum-shaped urns, the water pot urns, many urns are with lids and the bowl urns and the smallest is 8cm in height and 25cm in circumference and the biggest is 45cm in height and 85cm in circumference.

BTO-37 locates at about 200' away from outside the eastern city wall, (19° 99' 925" Lat N, 95° 39' 984" Lon E), 250'away from south-east of BTO-36 and 150' away from south-west of BTO-15. It was excavated by U Kyaw Myo Win in 2011-2012. Findings found from the excavation are terracotta burial urns. The structural plan of BTO-37 is a rectangular shaped structure with inner rectangular structure. The forms of burial urns were bowls and drum-shaped burial urns. Some urns were decorated on the base and the rim with making folds and one was decorated with four birds on the body. The three burial urns were just found inside the inner structure and others were found outside the inner one, inside the main structure.

### Conclusion

KKG-1, BTO-19, 30, 31, 33, and 34 are rectangular shaped structures outside the northern city wall; BTO-28, 29 and 32 are rectangular shaped structures outside the southern city wall and BTO-23 and 37 are rectangular shaped structures outside the eastern city wall. So, it may be that Pyu of Beikthano city used more for burying outside the northern city wall in that period. The urns were only found in all rectangular structures outside the city wall, except BTO-28 and 31 found both urns and little skeletons, at Beikthano. In every rectangular shaped burial structure outside the southern and northern city wall of Beikthano, all burial practices were found inside the structures. So, it may be that Pyu people of Beikthano used the burial practices that the cremation burial system was specially used for burying more than inhumation burial system and the urns and skeletons were buried inside the structures more than outside the structures. The uncovered terracotta urns are different shapes, forms and sizes. The plans of some structures covered compartments, some have each square platform, and some have both compartments and each square platform. Consequently, Pyu people of Beikthano used the different shapes, forms and sizes of urns and built the rectangular shaped structures with the different plans for burial. The most find of associated findings uncovered in those structures are oil lamps and the metal objects are rarely found.

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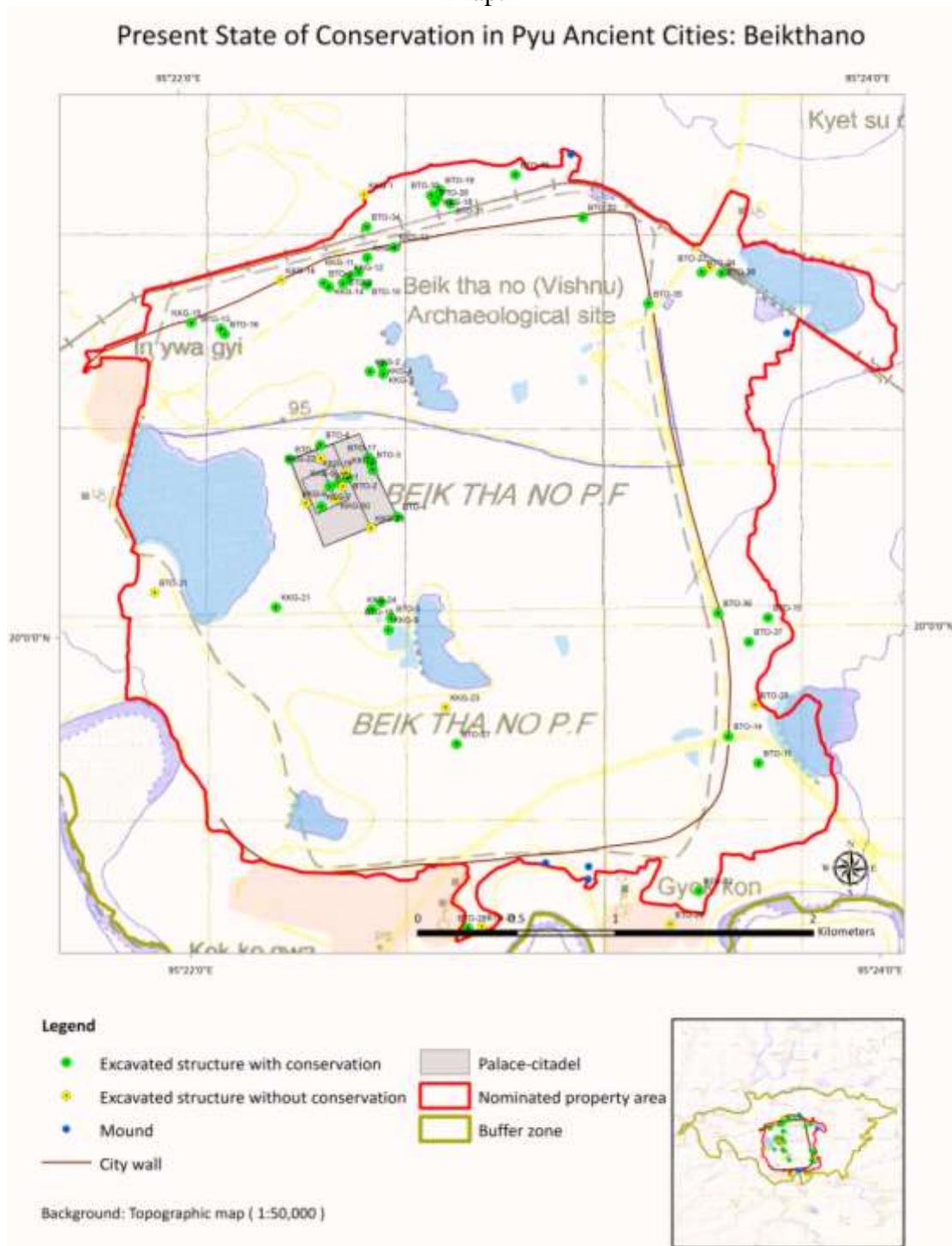
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Map.1



Source from PYUCOM

Map.2

## Rectangular structures outside the city wall at Beikthano

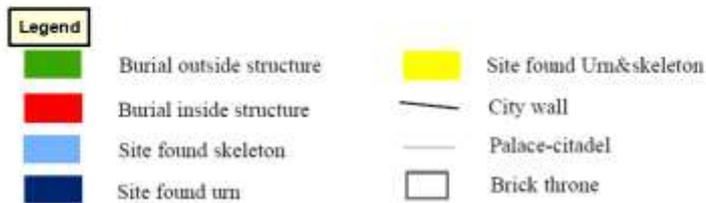
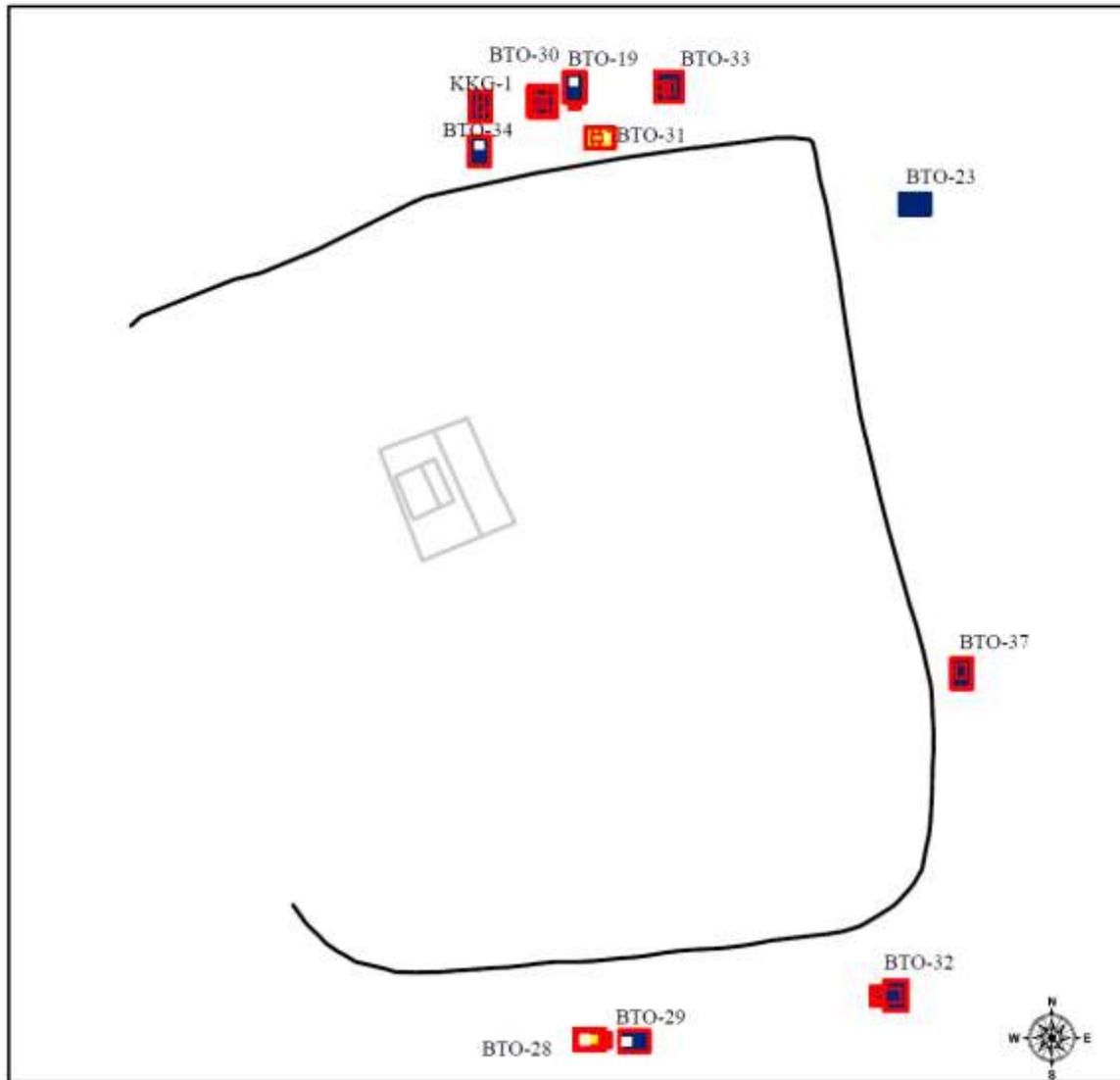
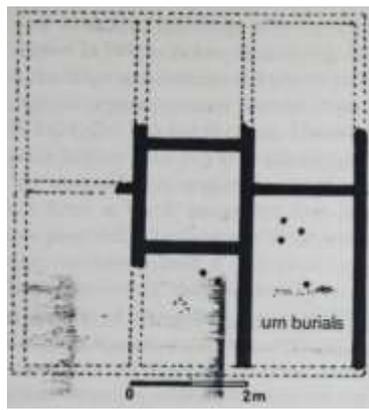
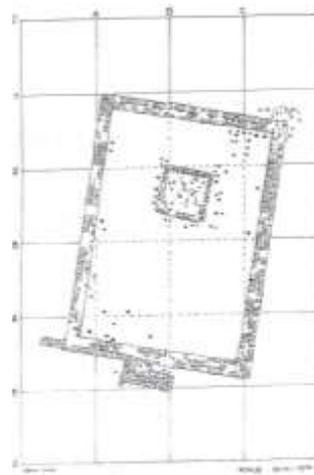


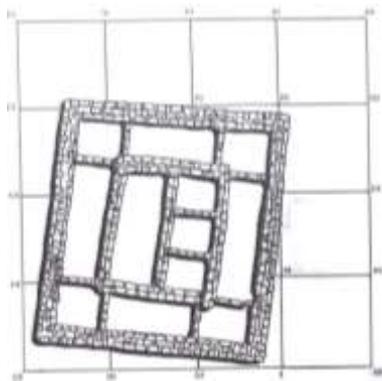
Fig.1 Site plan for rectangular shaped structures outside the northern city wall  
 KKG-1 BTO-19



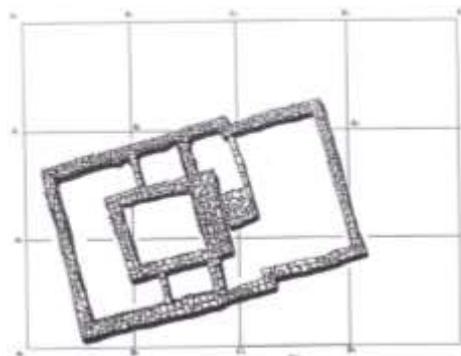
BTO-30



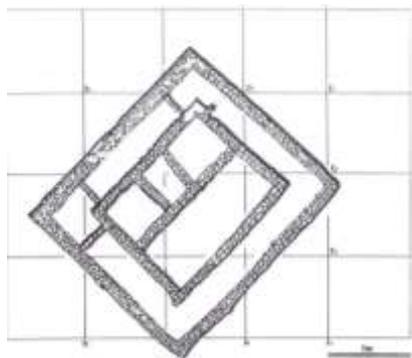
BTO-31



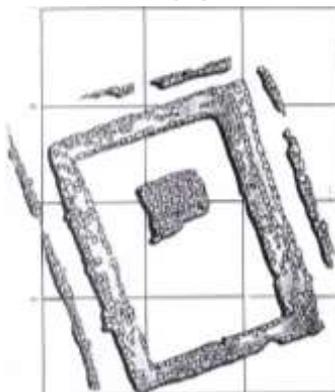
BTO-33



BTO-34



BTO-28



BTO-29

Source from Janice Stargardt, Reports and PYUCOM

BTO-32

Fig.2 Site plan for rectangular shaped structures outside the southern city wall



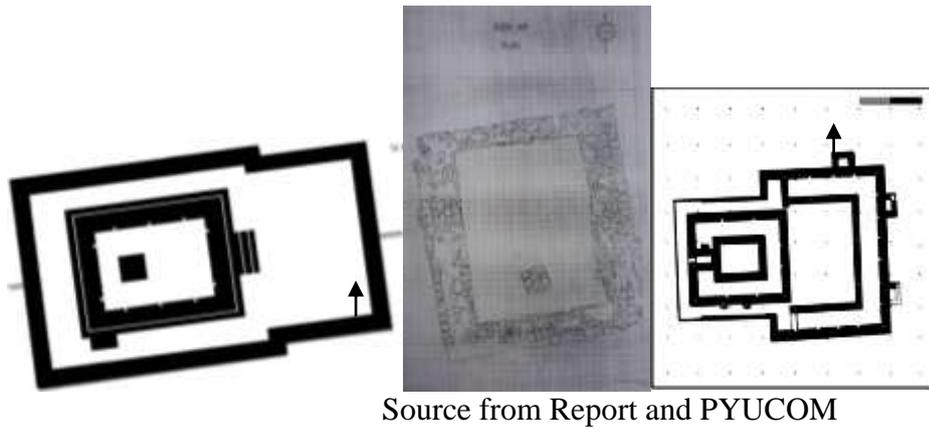


Fig.3 Site plan for rectangular shaped structures outside the eastern city wall

BTO-23

BTO-37

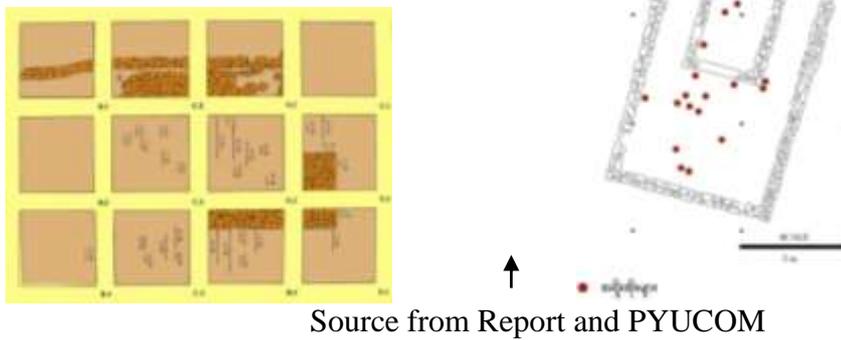


Fig.4 Burial urns of rectangular structures outside the northern city wall

BTO-19



BTO-33



BTO-34



Source from PYUCOM

Fig.5 Burial urns of rectangular structures outside the southern city wall

BTO-28



BTO-32



Source from PYUCOM & private photos

Fig.6 Burial urns of rectangular structures outside the eastern city wall  
BTO-23



BTO-37



Source from PYUCOM

Chart for different side of rectangular shaped structures outside the city wall

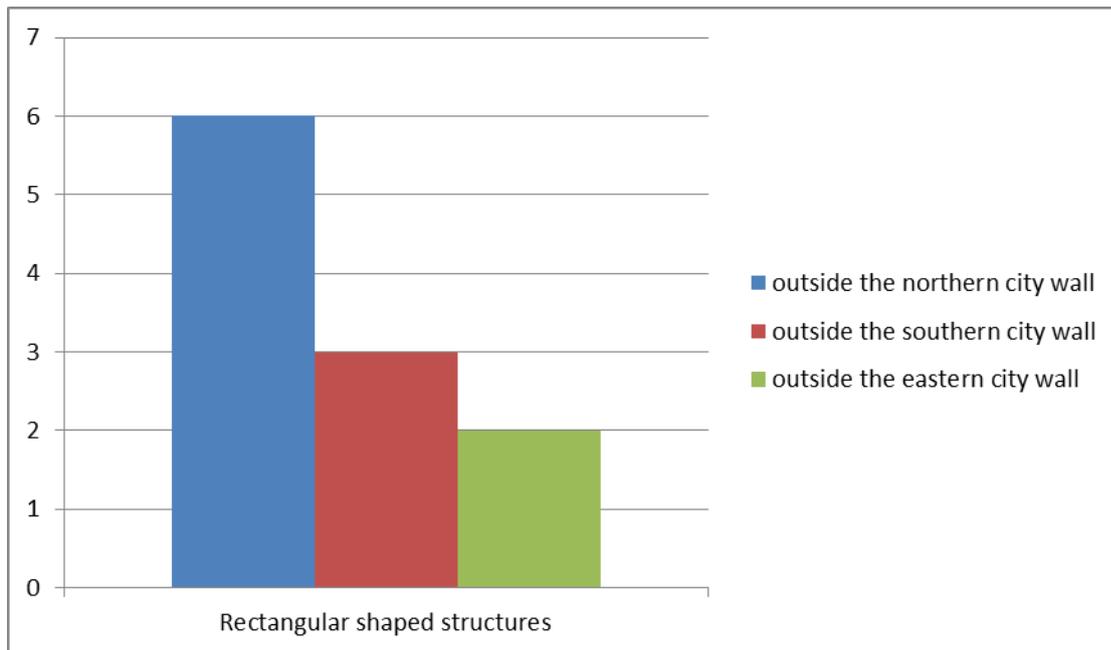


Chart for burial urns and skeletons found in rectangular shaped structure

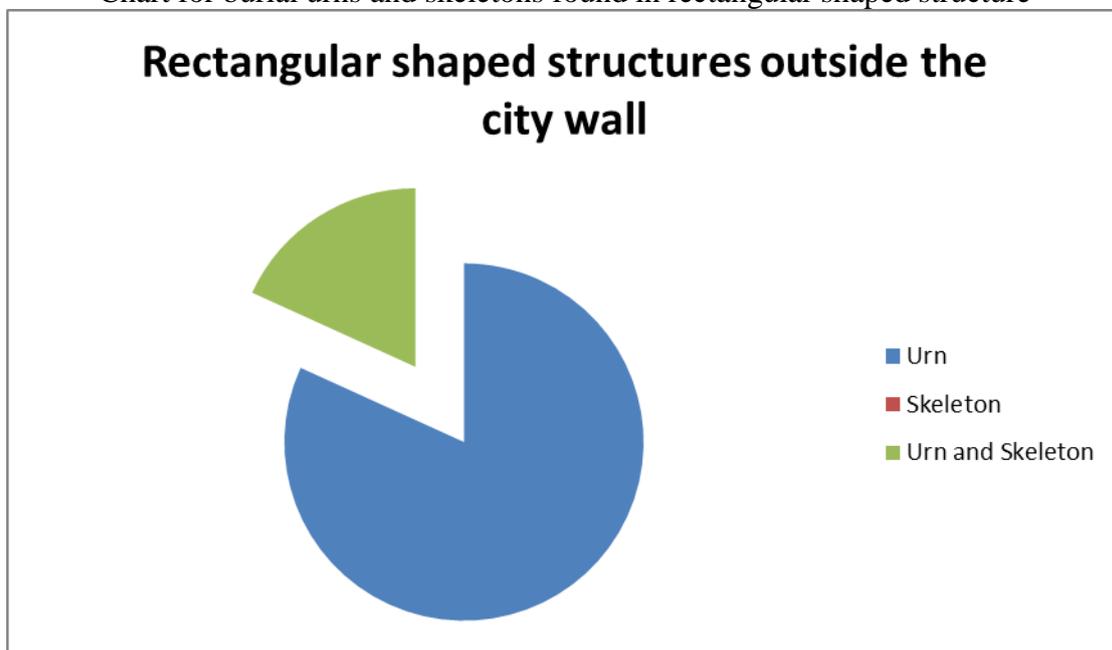


Chart for Burial practices found inside and outside the rectangular shaped structures

