

## Study on Votive Tablets from Sri Ksetra

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**Abstract:** Sri Ksetra is the largest Pyu ancient city in Myanmar. Religious monuments of Sri Ksetra testify that Buddhism had flourished in Sri Ksetra. Countless numbers of terracotta votive tablets have been uncovered in Sri Ksetra. Although there are a few exceptions, almost all the terracotta votive tablets from Sri Ksetra are associated with religions. These votive tablets expose the religions of Sri Ksetra. Not only Buddhism but also Hinduism had flourished in Sri Ksetra. Terracotta votive tablets reveal that Sri Ksetra Pyu had also accepted both Mahayana Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism. Popular shapes of terracotta votive tablet from fifth to ninth century CE are circular shape, rectangular shape with rounded top and Banyan leaf shape. Some of Pyu terracotta votive tablets bear inscriptions and these inscriptions had been written in Nāgarī script and Pyu script. They had also used Sanskrit language, Pali language and Pyu language. *Yedhammā* stanzas on the votive tablets were written in Sanskrit language and Pali language but they had used only Nāgarī script. Some tablets bear hand writings on the reverse and base. Some of them are written by using southern India script and some of them are Pyu script.

**Keywords:** Mahayana Buddhism, Mudrā, Sri Ksetra, Theravada Buddhism, Votive Tablets

**Received :** 29 September 2022

**Revised :** 24 October 2022

**Accepted :** 14 November 2022

**Published :** 31 December 2022

### TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Thant, W.W. 2022. Study on Votive Tablets from Sri Ksetra. *Journal of History, Archaeology and Architecture*, 1: 2, pp. 165-180.

## INTRODUCTION

Long after the time of the Buddha, the earliest Buddha images had appeared in Gandhara and Mathura of India in the first century CE. From that onwards Buddha images have played a vital role in Buddhism. Like other countries of Asia, Buddha images have been found in the archaeology contexts of Myanmar. In Myanmar, the earliest Buddha images had been made in Pyu Period especially in Sri Ksetra. Pyu period is followed by Bagan period. In Bagan Period, Buddhism had far more popular than ever. People of Bagan period had also made the Buddha images. In Pyu and Bagan periods, Buddha images had been made of assorted materials such as stone, metal, stucco, terracotta and wood. The art of making terracotta votive tablets had been popular in those periods, and that art had flourished from fifth to fifteenth century CE in Myanmar.

Today, terracotta votive tablet is called *aut khvak* in Myanmar. Although the original name of terracotta votive tablet in Pyu period has not yet been known, in Bagan period it was called *paṭimam*, which was derived from Pali language. Meaning of *paṭimam* is image. In Bagan

period, Mon called the terracotta votive tablet as *kyāk means Buddha* One of the inscriptions on votive tablets written by King Anawrahta (1044-1077 CE) of Bagan period says that “*um itiniyam rāṇa śrī anuruddha devasya*” in Nāgarī script. It means this terracotta votive tablet, *pumtau*, was made by King Anawrahta. Therefore, terracotta votive tablet was called as *pumtau* in Bagan period, literally image. Before the word *aut khvak* was used, it was known as *mrepum bayāh*. By pressing a mould on the wet clay and firing, it is now called as *aut khvak* in Myanmar.

Donors of Pyu and Bagan period used to write their names, wishes and donated material lists on the reverse or base of the terracotta votive tablets before firing. They had used Pyu, Mon, Myanmar and Pali languages. Their hand writings on the reverse or base of the votive tablets are the earliest evidences of writing systems in Myanmar.

The art of making terracotta votive tablets has been started since Pyu period, and still made until now. However, the most popular times of making terracotta votive tablets are Pyu and Bagan Periods. A host of terracotta votive tablets are found in Tagaung, Bagan, Thaton, and Kawgun cave of Hpaan.

## STUDY ON VOTIVE TABLETS FROM SRI KSETRA

Terracotta votive tablets were made at the places of India associated with Buddhism in second and third centuries CE. Local people of those places had made terracotta votive tablets to sell pilgrims as souvenirs. If someone has mould, it is easy to make terracotta votive tablets. Moreover, the cost of making tablets is cheap. Terracotta votive tablet molds were made of different materials such as metal, stone and clay. In making terracotta votive tablets, wet potter's clay is pressed with mold. After that the clay is let dry and then the clay tablet is fired. In this way, terracotta votive tablet can be got but sometimes the clay tablet is not fired. Ancient pilgrims who made a pilgrimage to Buddhist sites of India had liked to buy terracotta votive tablets and take them back their homes because they were cheap and portable. When they reached their respective homes, they shrined these terracotta votive tablets as a remembrance of their good deeds at the Buddhist sites. (Fraser-Lu 2002:194). Some of them took not only terracotta votive tablets but also molds to their homes.

The earlier votive tablets in Pyu period and Bagan period were directly imitated the votive tablets from India. Pyu had imitated the votive tablets of late Gupta Period (sixth century CE) and later they had produced their own styles. Like Pyu, people of early Bagan period had imitated the votive tablets of Pala period (eighth to twelfth century CE). Terracotta votive tablets can be found abundantly in Myanmar. They have been found between Tāli, near the confluence of Shwe Li River and Ayeyarwaddy River, in the north and Myaik in the south, Mon State in the east and Rakhine State in the west. (Fraser-Lu 2002:194-5)

Various forms of votive tablets which bear different designs which are associated with Buddha's life are found in archaeological contexts of Myanmar. In Myanmar, not only votive tablets associated with Buddhism but also votive tablets associated with Hinduism are encountered. In Buddhism, both Mahayana and Hinayana votive tablets are found in Bagan.

Votive tablets also bear embossed Buddhist stanzas at the bottom of the tablets. Most of them were written with Nāgarī script in Pali and Sanskrit languages. Moreover, donors who made the tablets used to write their names, wishes and their donated material lists at the base and on the back of the votive tablets. People of Bagan period had used Mon and Myanmar languages to write on the votive tablets. Donors of votive tablets include both commoners and royal families. They had made various sizes and shapes of votive tablets. The smallest votive tablet is only 1.5 inches high and the largest one is 2 feet 7 inches high. Shapes of the tablets are also varying from circular to square and from oval to pointed top with rectangular base. (Yin Kyay Hmu Sar Saung 2005:102). Banyan leaf shape is also popular.

*Yedhammā* stanza had been very popular in making votive tablets in Pyu and Bagan periods. The stanza was written in two lines beneath the throne on which the Buddha sits. It is a summarized of the Buddha's teaching which was taught by Venerable Assajimato a brahma who would be Venerable Sariputtara. The stanza runs as follow,

*“Yedhammā hetuppabhavā tesam hetum tathāgato āha  
tesaṃ ca yo nirodho evaṃvādī mahāsamaṇo”* (Mya 1961: 5).

This stanza is the extraordinary conciseness of the Buddha teaching and it means that the things which arise from a cause, of these the *Tahtāgatā* has stated the cause. Of these also there is a means of suppression. Such is the teaching of the great Ascetic. (Luce 1969:18)

Some votive tablets of King Anawrahta bear two lines of Nāgarī script instead of *yedhammā* stanza. The two lines of Nāgarī script run as follow,

*“Saccaka dānapati mahārāja sri aniruddha  
devena katobhagavā”*

The meaning is that the donor, the Great King Aniruddha who always says the truth makes these terracotta votive tablets. (Mya 1961:13). Later people of Bagan Period had used Myanmar script instead of Nāgarī script to write the donors' names by using Pali, Mon and Myanmar languages on the tablets. (Yin Kyay Hmu Sar Saung 2005:103).

Different sizes, styles and designs of terracotta votive tablets have been recorded in Sri Ksetra. These votive tablets are associated with Mahayana and Theravada (Hinayana) Buddhism. Some of these are related with Hinduism. One of the most remarkable points in Sri Ksetra is that Sri Ksetra Pyu also made terracotta votive tablets which bear Jataka stories. Terracotta tablets which are rarely found bear only decorated designs.

## THERAVADA VOTIVE TABLETS

Theravada Buddhism is a set of Buddhism that perpetuates the true teachings and practices of the Buddha. Theravada Buddhism does not change, add and omit anything from the Dhamma and it accepts the original teachings of the Buddha. Nowadays, Theravada Buddhism is flourished in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Laos, Thailand and Cambodia. The earliest evidences of Theravada Buddhism are found in Pyu sites as terracotta votive tablets.

A terracotta votive tablet was found at Nga Shint Kan Kone, near Moat Htaw Village, Hmaw Za Village Tract. The tablet is drop shaped and dimension of the tablet is 3.5 inches x 2.5 inches x 0.25 inches. A seated Buddha in *Dharmmacakrā mudrā* is on the obverse, and the Buddha is sitting on the lotus throne. There is a reredos behind the Buddha. The Buddha image is proportionate and *ushnisha* can be seen clearly on the head of the image. The Buddha is sitting in cross-legged position and both of the soles can be seen. Yellow robes is only covered the left shoulder. The robes are so thin that only scroll edge of the robes on the left shoulder and at the left wrist can be observed.



Plate I: Votive Tablets from Nga Shint Kan Kone, Sri Ksetra

Photo from Sri Ksetra Museum collection inventory

Reredos has not square tower and Bodhi tree like the reredoses of the later period. The throne is like a front part of crouching elephant. There is a trunk which is raising a small stupa. A *makara* figure is standing on the shoulder of the elephant. Its face is facing outward and its head is lifting the lower edge of reredos. Another head of makara is on the lower edge of reredos. There is a halo behind the head of the Buddha image. A small umbrella can be seen above the halo. There is an emboss line beneath the throne. The first five letters are worn out so they cannot be read. However, other letters can be read. The line runs as *itipiso bagavā araham*. Style of the script is similar to the fifth to seventh century CE southern Indian script style. According to the script style, the tablet might be belonged to fifth to seventh century CE. (Mya1961:14-5).

A banyan leaf shaped terracotta votive tablet was also recovered at Nga Shint Kan Kone.



Plate II. Votive Tablets from Nga Shint Kan Kone, Sri Ksetra

Photo from *YinKyay Hmu Sar Saung*

Size of the tablet is similar to the previous two tablets but the tablet seems smaller because of the pointed top. Obverse of the pointed top is adorned with decorated designs. There is a seated Buddha image on the obverse. The robe covers only the left shoulder, and wrinkle of the robe can be seen. The image is sitting in cross-legged position, and one leg is resting on the other leg. Wrinkle of the robe and cross-legged position are different from above two tablets. Another interesting point is that there are floral and creeper designs in the spaces among the halo, makara figure and umbrella. There is an emboss line which was inscribed in Pyu script which was derived from the southern India script. The line is as follow,

*“Bamḥ co ya co”*

All the Pyu scripts cannot be deciphered but the word “*Bamḥ*” at the beginning of the gloss and the word “*co*” in the middle and at the end of the gloss can be deciphered. It may mean that “The God is King of the Kings”. That Buddha image is known as the crowned Buddha (*Jambūpati*). In later periods, the Buddha images are depicted with kingly attires such as ear-ornaments, torque, sacred thread, armlets, wristlets, girdle, etc. However, the image on the tablet wears nothing but the plain robes of a monk. Although the image wears plain robes other features around the image are the attributes of king. (Mya 1961: 15-6)

Another banyan leaf shaped terracotta votive tablet was also uncovered at Nga Shint Kan Kone. On the obverse of the tablet, there is a seated Buddha image in *dharmacakra mudrā* at the center of the tablet. The Buddha is sitting in cross-legged position on the lotus throne. Robes cover both shoulders, and the robes are so thin that the body can be seen clearly. The image is flanked by two crouching elephants. A lion is standing on the head of the elephant. Makara figure is on the lion. Two makara figures are lifting the lower edge of the reredos. Trunks of the elephants are rising lotus stalks and there is a small stupa at the end of the lotus stalk. (Mya 1961:16). Dimension of the tablet is 3.5 inches x 2.7 inches x 0.5 inches. The tablet is being housed in Sri Ksetra Museum.



**Plate III. Votive Tablet from Nga Shint Kone, Sri Ksetra**

Photo from Sri Ksetra Museum collection inventory

The terracotta votive tablets in plate (I) to Plate (III) are slightly different from each other but they were made by using same technique. Moreover, they were recovered at the same place. Therefore, they might be belonged to the same period. These types of votive tablets are found abundantly in Sri Ksetra. (Mya1961:16).

Another pointed oval shaped terracotta votive tablet was uncovered at Nga Shint Kan Kone. There is a seated Buddha image with reredos in the center of the obverse. The Buddha is sitting in *bhūmiphassa mudrā* on the lotus throne. There are four small stupas arranged in vertically on both sides of the Buddha image. The reredos is shaded with a small umbrella. Banyan leaves and branches are on both sides of the umbrella. There are two lines of Nāgarī script beneath the lotus throne. Emboss lines of script are worn out but the words in the lines and arrangement of the words reveal that it might be the stanza of “*Yedhammā hetuppabhavā*”. The style and arrangement of the features of the tablet is closely resemblance with Bagan period. (Mya1961:19). Dimension of the tablet is 4.5 inches x 2.5 inches x 0.5 inches. The tablet is being displayed in Sri Ksetra Museum now.



Plate IV. Votive Tablet from Nga Shint Kan Kone, Sri Ksetra

Photo from *Yin Kyay Hmu Sar Saung*

A pointed oval shaped terracotta votive tablet was reported from Hmaw Za Village Tract. The tablet bears a seated Buddha image in the center. The Buddha image is sitting in *bhūmipharssa mudrā* on the lotus throne. The left hand of the image is resting on the lap and the right hand is touching the earth. There are three lotuses on both sides of the image. Halo can be seen behind the head of the image. (Mya 1961:35). Dimension of the tablet is 1.5 inches x 1.5 inches x 0.25 inches. This tablet is the smallest votive tablet in Sri Ksetra, and this type of tablets is found abundantly in Sri Ksetra. It is being housed in Sri Ksetra.



Plate V. Votive Tablets from Hmawza, Sri Ksetra

Photo from *Yin Kyay Hmu Sar Saung*

A terracotta votive tablet was uncovered at PyoKhinGyi Kone, Hmaw Za Village Tract. A seated Buddha image is in the center of the tablet. Hand gesture of the Buddha image is *bhūmisphassamudrā*. The image is sitting in cross-legged on the lotus throne, and one leg is resting on another. A small *unḥissa* can be seen on the top of the head. These features are the earlier Buddha image style of Sri Ksetra. (Mya 1961:26). Height of the tablet is 6 inches, width is 4.5 inches and thickness is 1 inch. The tablet was made without frame. Now, it is being displayed in Sri Ksetra Museum.



**Plate VI: Votive Tablet from PyoKhinGyiKone, SriKsetra**

Photo from Sri Ksetra Museum collection inventory

Terracotta votive tablets are found in the city enclosure wall of Sri Ksetra. One of the votive tablets which was found in Sri Ksetra bear Buddha image on its reverse. The Buddha image on the tablet is seated Buddha image in *bhūmiphassa mudrā*. Left hand of the Buddha is on the lap and the right hand is touching to the earth. Back of the image is adorned with reredos. Five bosses are decorated on both sides of the reredos. Now the tablet is being displayed in Sri Ksetra Museum.



**Plate VII: Votive Tablet from Sri Ksetra**

Photo from Sri Ksetra Museum collection inventory

A broken part of terracotta votive tablet was also reported from Sri Ksetra. It might be a broken part of square tablet. The broken part of the tablet bear 11 small seated Buddha images. Each Buddha image is about one inch high. There are small stupas among Buddha images. Pyu inscriptions can be seen on the base and reverse of the tablet. Dimension of the broken tablet is 4 inches x 3 inches x 1 inch. The tablet is now being housed in Sri Ksetra Museum.



**Plate VIII: Votive Tablet from Sri Ksetra**

Photo from Sri Ksetra Museum collection inventory

A banyan leaf shaped votive tablet was also uncovered in Sri Ksetra. A seated Buddha image in *bhūmiphasaa mudrā* is on the obverse of the tablet. There are three small stupas on both sides of the Buddha image, and there is a small stupa over the image. A line of Pyu inscription is on the base of the tablet and the inscription is worn out. Dimension is 3 inches x 2 inches x 0.25 inches. Now, it is in Sri Ksetra Museum.



**Plate IX: Votive Tablet from Sri Ksetra**

Photo from Sri Ksetra Museum collection inventory

A pointed top with square base shaped votive tablet was also found in Sri Ksetra and now housing in Sri Ksetra. The tablet bears a seated Buddha image. The image is sitting on the throne in *bhūmiphassa mudrā*. There is a reredos and halo on the back of the image. The tablet is 3.5 inches high, 3 inches wide and 0.5 inches thick.



**Plate X: Votive Tablet from Sri Ksetra**

Photo from Sri Ksetra Museum collection inventory

A broken part of votive tablet was also uncovered in Sri Ksetra. It is a base part of the tablet. A seated Buddha image in *bhūmiphassamudrā* is at the center of the tablet. The Buddha image is flanked by two monks. They are rising their hands in *añjali mudrā*, and they are paying respects to the Buddha image. There is a pedestal beneath the seated Buddha image. In pedestal below, central figure of possibly an ogre flanked by two crouching guardians holding club in his right hand. In outer section, a figure on each side, facing outwards, likely lion. Dimension of the broken tablet is 3 inches x 2 inches x 0.25 inches. Now, the tablet is being housed in Sri Ksetra.



**Plate XI: Votive Tablet from Sri Ksetra**

Photo from Sri Ksetra Museum collection inventory

Another tablet was uncovered in Sri Ksetra. A Buddha image is sitting in cross-legged position on the lotus throne in the center of the tablet. There is an alms bowl on the palm of the left of the Buddha image. Reredos is adorned with floral designs. There is a halo on the back of the Buddha image. *Uṇhissa* can be seen clearly and it is hemisphere in shape. The tablet is 8.75 inches high, 6 inches wide and 2 inches thick. It is being housed in Sri Ksetra Museum now.



Plate XII: Votive Tablet from Sri Ksetra

Photo from Sri Ksetra Museum collection inventory

A banyan leaf shaped terracotta votive tablet was found at U Toke Paw's farm, east of Tharawati gate, Sri Ksetra in 1928-1929. There are three panels on the reverse of the tablet. A seated Buddha image in *dharmasakra mudrā* is in the upper panel. There is a reredos on the back of the Buddha image and the reredos is topped with an umbrella. Moon and sun are on both sides of the Buddha's head. In the middle panel, wheel figure can be seen beneath the Buddha image. Five monks (*pañcavaggi*) are on the left of the wheel and gods are on the right of the wheel. They are listening to the Buddha's teaching. The tablet is slightly worn out. Now, the tablet is in Sri Ksetra Museum. The tablet is 4 inches high and 3.5 inches wide.



Plate XIII: Votive Tablet from at U Toke Paw's farm, Sri Ksetra

Photo from Sri Ksetra Museum collection inventory

Another votive tablet which bears a seated Buddha image was also reported from Sri Ksetra. The Buddha is sitting on lotus throne in *dharmasakra mudrā*. One of the most remarkable points is that the right of the Buddha is on the lap and the left hand is touching to the earth. There is an alms bowl on the right hand of the Buddha. Uṇhissa is hemisphere in shape. This tablet is being displayed in Sri Ksetra now.



Plate XIV: Votive Tablet from Sri Ksetra

Photo from Yin Kyay Hmu Sar Saung

A host of terracotta votive tablets were found at a mound which is situated on the TarvatimThaKyweKyaung Kone Pagoda, Hmaw Za Village Tract. One of the tablets is circular in shape. The tablet bears a seated Buddha in *dharmasakra mudrā*. The image is so proportionate. There is a halo behind the head of the Buddha. The robes cover only the left shoulder. There are a few branches and leaves of Bodhi Tree over the halo. The number of branches and leaves of Bodhi Tree on the tablets of Pyu period is fewer than the number of branches and leaves of Bodhi tree on the tablets of Bagan period. A small stupa with umbrellas can be seen on both sides of the shoulders of the Buddha image. The shape of stupa on the tablet is different from the stupa on the tablet of Bagan period. Bell shaped dome of the stupa on the Pyu period tablet is plump in shape while bell shaped dome of the stupa on the Bagan period tablet is slightly elongated. *Yedhammā* stanza can be found beneath these stupas. The stanza is inscribed with Nāgarī script. Style of the script is belonged to eighth toninth century CE. Diameter of the tablet is 3 inches. (Mya 1961:23-4)

A square shaped terracotta votive tablet was found at a mound which is situated on the Pada Lay Hill, Hmaw Za Village Tract. The tablet is framed except at the base because lower part of the tablet is broken off.



Plate XV: Votive Tablet from Pada Lay Hill, Hmaw Za

Photo from *Yin Kyay Hmu Sar Saung*

A standing Buddha image is at the center of the tablet. The Buddha image is standing on the lotus but the lotus is seriously worn out. Hands of the Buddha image are also worn out. The right hand is hanging down in *varada mudrā*. The left hand is carrying an alms bowl. Robes of the image are so thin that lower edge of the robes can be seen. Reredos is flaming and the flames are radiated. (Mya 1961:27)

Two small votive tablets each nearly two inches high, were excavated from Myin Bha Hu pagoda. There are standing figures wearing robe like garment. The two hands are also placed on the chest in the same posture. These votive tablets are damaged, so it does not seen clearly. It looks like the Buddha statue of the Chinese people. (Mya 1961:23)

Another interesting, the shape of the votive tablet is oval. The upper part is slightly damaged. It would have been about 4 inches high if it had not been damaged originally. It is only about 2 inches wide. On the face side, if it is the original, there will be about six Buddha images. However, the image in the upper part was included in the result, so only 5 images can be seen. They are also inconspicuously bruised. Among the remaining images, the middle image is larger than the other images. He is sitting cross-legged on a throne. On the side of the statue, there are two tiers up and down on one side, and the statues in the lower part are standing. The statues can be seen with various mudras. There was also a small votive tablet made of unbaked clay, marked as having been obtained from Thailand. (Mya 1961:28)

## MAHAYANIST VOTIVE TABLETS

Archaeological evidences reveal that not only Theravada Buddhism but also Mahayana Buddhism had flourished in Sri Ksetra. The set of Mahayana Buddhism originated in India in first century CE. From that time onwards, it spread from India to other parts of Asia especially Japan, Korea, China, Tibet, Vietnam, Taiwan and Central Asia. One of the most important concepts in Mahayana is that to the Bodhisattva, enlightenment being. Followers of Mahayana Buddhism aspire the Bodhisattva. They believe that *Bodhisattva* can make possible the salvation of all other sentient beings. Before the *Bodhisattva* entries into final *nivāna*, he protects the world with compassion and loving-kindness.

Mahayana Buddhists worship different bodhisattva like *Maitreya* and *Avalokītesvāra*. *Maitreya* represents the Buddha's loving-kindness and *Avalokītesvāra* represents the Buddha's

compassion. They have become the focus of popular devotional worship in Mahayana. (Demott,Paul2009:Microsoft® Encarta®[DVD]). Mahayana Buddhists have made the images of *Maitreya* and *Avalokiteshvara* with assorted materials such as precious metals, stone and terracotta. Along with Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism had flourished in Sri Ksetra and Mahayana Buddhism might be introduced to Sri Ksetra directly from India via Rakhine mountain ranges.(Kyaw Din Han 2000:23) Ones of the concrete evidencewhich reveal the flourishing Mahayana Buddhism in Sri Ksetra are terracotta votive tablets which are found in and around Sri Ksetra.

A terracotta votive tablet which bears *Avalokiteshvara* image was reported from Kan ThoneSint near Hmaw Za. The tablet is oval in shape. On the obverse of the tablet, *Avalokitesvara* is sitting in *lālītāsana* on lotus throne. The hanging leg is resting on a lotus. Both of the hands are putting on the knees, and the left hand is holding lotus with stalk. A lotus stalk sprouts from the lotus throne on which *Avalokiteshvara* is sitting. The lotus from that stalk is on the side of *Avalokiteshvara* image and there is a small stupa on the lotus. An inscription can be seen between the stupa and edge of the tablet. The inscription is inscribed in Nagari script and says “*Yedhammā hetuppabhavā*”. Height of the tablet is 2 inches and the width is also 2 inches. The script is dated between eighth to tenthcentury CE. Similar terracotta votive tablet was uncovered associated with that votive tablet. There are three lines of Pyu handwritings on the reverse of the tablet. The inscription is beginning with a Pyu word “*Bamḥ*”. Although all the words in the inscription cannot be deciphered, the word “*Bamḥ*” exposes that the inscription might be the name of donor and about his good deeds. (Mya 1961:23)

Another votive tablet which bears *Avalokiteshvara* image was found at MyinBha Hu Pagoda, Hmaw Za Village Tract. *Avalokiteshvara* image on the obverse of the tablet is standing and wearing kingly attires. There are four arms. Lower right arm is hanging down and resting on the end of a spear which is sticking on the ground. Upper right hand is holding up a fan. Both of left hands are holding a stalk which bears a bunch of flowers. Dimension of the tablet is 3.5 inches x 1.5 inches x 1 inches. It is safe to say that the image on the tablet is *Avalokiteshvara* because almost all the Bodhisattvas which are found in Myanmar archaeological contexts are *Maitreya* and *Lokanātha*. It can be assumed that *Lokanātha* and *Avalokitesvara* are the same Bodhisattva. Moreover, *Lokanātha* images are also found in Bagan period. Some of terracotta votive tablets which bear *Lokanātha*image were made by King Anawratha. (Luce 1985:151)Thistablet is on display at Sri Ksetra Museum.



Plate XVI. Votive Tablet from MyinBha Hu Pagoda, Hmaw Za

Photo from Yin Kyay Hmu Sar Saung

An oval shaped terracotta votive tablet was also uncovered found at MyinBha Hu Pagoda, Hmaw Za Village Tract. Some parts of the edge of the tablet are broken off. The edge of the tablet is adorned with string of beads. On the obverse, there are two panels. In the upper panel, there is a seated Buddha image. The image is sitting in cross-legged position on lotus throne in *dharmacakra mudrā*. The image is flanked by two standing Buddha images and these images are standing on lotuses. The right hand is hanging down in *varada mudrā*. The left hand is bending and palm is spreading outward in *abhaya mudrā*. The composition of the images is depicted the scene of twin miracle, one of the great eight scenes from the Life of the Buddha. There are three images in the lower panel. Middle image is sitting in cross-legged position. There is a hair knob on the head of the image. Right hand of the image is hanging down and putting on right knee. Left hand bends and palm is spreading outward. There is a halo behind head of the image.

There are two lotuses, which are sprouting out from the lotus throne, on both side of the lotus throne. Profile figures of two ladies are sitting on these lotuses. Ones of their knees are rising. The lady on the right of the image is raising her hands in respect manner (*añjalī mudrā*). The lady on the left of the image has four arms. Upper two hands are holding the stalks of lotuses. Lower right hand is resting on her lap and lower left hand is resting on her hip. There is something, which cannot be identified, in the lower right hand. The image in the middle might be *Avalokiteshvara*. The lady on the right might be Sarasvati and the lady on the left might be *Tārādevī*. Dimension of the tablet is 4.5 inches x 3.5 inches x 0.5 inches. There are some traces of emboss inscription on the tablet but they are seriously damage. (Mya 1961:21-2) This tablet is now displayed in Sri Ksetra Museum.



Plate XVII: Votive Tablet from MyinBha Hu Pagoda, Hmaw Za

Photo from *Yin Kyay Hmu Sar Saung*

Another broken piece of terracotta votive tablet was also found at Nga Shint Kan Kone, Hmaw Za Village Tract. Upper and lower parts of the tablet are broken and missing. By studying the middle part of the tablet, it is a broken piece of an oval shaped tablet. Height of broken tablet is 3 inches and width is 3 inches. There are two panels on the broken tablet. Figures on the tablet are worn out.

There are five figures in the upper panel. The one in the middle is larger than others. The middle one is a Buddha image. The image is sitting in cross-legged position on the lotus throne in *bhūmipharssa mudrā*. Right hand is touching the earth and left hand is on the lap. Faint *uṇhissa* can be seen on the head of the Buddha. Reredos behind the Buddha is like flame. The Buddha is flanked by four gods. They are depicted in profile and facing to the Buddha image. They are holding umbrellas and shading the Buddha. They are wearing headgears. They are sitting on the clouds because their lower parts cannot be seen. There are five figures in the lower panel, three on left side and two on right side. They are sitting on their knees and paying seen clearly. One of the two on right side has four arms. He is wearing headgear and there is a halo behind his head. Two hands are rising in respect manner and other two are holding up the offering material. The figure behind that one is fabulous creature with a man's body and a horse's head. In Mahayana Buddhism, man with horse head represents *Shiva*. According to *SādhanaMālā* text, horse head covers the furious man face. Both of its hands are bent and left hand is put on chest. Palm of left hand is spreading but the figure is seriously worn out. If the figure is *HayaShiva*, the one sitting in front of him is *Avalokiteshvara*. The three on the right are their entourages. There are faint traces of two lines of *Nāgarī* script. According to the script, the tablet is dated to eighth century CE. (Mya1961:18-9)

### Significant Terracotta Votive Tablet

An oval shaped terracotta tablet was also recovered in Hmaw Za Village. It is 3.5 inches high and 4 inches wide. There are two panels on the obverse of the tablet. There is a palace structure in the upper panel. There are three upper structures on the palace structure. Roof of the middle one is three tiers roof. There is a sitting man on the throne in the palace structure. A woman is sitting on the throne which is lower than the throne of man. There is a figure of baby between man and woman. There are five figures on both sides of the man and woman. They cannot be identified whether men or women because the figures are worn out. However, they might be women because there are hair knobs on their heads. They are dancing. There is a pedestal bowl in the lower panel. Four women are sitting on both sides of the bowl. The figures on the tablet might be the depiction of the scene of palace. It is the rarest tablet and the tablet might be earlier Bagan period. (Mya 1961:29)

## DISCUSSION

Pyu produced different shapes of terracotta votive tablets. Almost all the themes on the votive tablets are associated with religions. Only one tablet bears the scene of palace and it is a glimpse to know the social life of Pyu. Some terracotta votive tablets from Sri Ksetra testify that Pyu had relationship with neighboring countries. Terracotta votive tablets of *dvāravatī* period of Thailand are also found in Sri Ksetra. Therefore, Sri Ksetra Pyu had relationship with Thailand. Likewise, terracotta votive tablet with Chinese style Buddha image is one of the evidence of the relationship between China and Sri Ksetra. Styles of Buddha images on the votive tablets expose the influence of art of Gupta period of India.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, archaeological evidences from Beikthano and Halin reveal that Buddhism was introduced at the beginning of the common era. At that time, Pyu had a good common of creating art but there is no evidence of making terracotta votive tablets. The art of making terracotta votive tablet can only be seen in Sri Ksetra. A votive tablet which bears Chinese style Buddha image is one of the evidences of relationship between China and Sri Ksetra.

Terracotta votive tablets from Sri Ksetra also reveal that not only Buddhism but also Hinduism had flourished in Pyu period. Pyu people accepted Mahayana Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism. Actually, terracotta votive tablets are not merely the evidences of religion of Pyu period. They are of equally important to study the art and epigraphy of Pyu period. Therefore, terracotta votive tablets of Pyu period have played an important role in study of Pyu culture.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am much thankful to put on record U Win Kyaing, Principal, Field School of Archaeology (Pyay), Library staffs from Field School of Archaeology (Pyay) and Sri Ksetra Museum staffs for all their help, regarding to letters, depicted on the photographs of this paper, respectively and to all those who deserve my gratitude.

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