



The First Millennium Artifacts of Suvannabhūmi

TERRACOTTA  
VOTIVE TABLETS  
OF  
THATON

Nan Hlaing

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VOTIVE TABLETS  
OF  
THATON



Nan Hlaing

Ph.D.(Yangon)

Printing Record

First Edition 2016

Cover Design

moore phyu

Printer

U Soe Aung (00487)

Kyonemange Printing Services

No. 1377-78, Coner of Hlaing River Street & Moe Makha Road, 63 Quater, Zone (2),  
South Dagon Township, Yangon.

Publisher

U Tun Yi @ Dr. Min Nwe Soe (01777)

Building - K, Thirimingalar Ward, Thirimingalar Housing, Mawlamyaing.

Phone: 09 8725364

Distribution

Bhadradevī Books, Mawlamyaing

09449005099, 09796212800, 09793893684

dr.nanhlaing9@gmail.com

Frontispiece

Enthroned Buddha in *abhaya mudrā* flanked by Bodhisattva on either side, Great  
Miracle scene depicted on terracotta votive tablet found at  
Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton

Price

5000 Kyats ( 8 US\$ )

Circulation

1000 copies

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form or any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any  
other information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from  
the publisher.

ISBN 978-99971-0-239-3

Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

730.09591

Na Nan Hlaing

The First Millennium Artifacts of Suvāṇṇabhūmi: Terracotta Votive  
Tablets of Thaton / Nan Hlaing. - - - Mawlamyaing : Bhadradevi Books,  
2016.

XIII, 183p.:ill., maps, photos.; 22cm.

Includes Bibilography and Index.

1. Myanmar Sculpture

I. Title



## Acknowledgements

I wish to express my thanks to all those—Buddhist monks, my teachers and friends—for their kindness in giving me valuable help. They are:

1. Bhaddanta Tikkhañāṇa, Abbot of Catubhummika Satipaṭhān Hn-gak Twin Monastery, Thaton, to whom shows in this work, ones immeasurable debt.
2. Bhaddanta Indaka, Abbot of Maggin Tawya Monastery, and his lay man Ko Khant Zaw Aung, Publisher of Ū:chokpan: Books, Hpa-an who first introduced to Bhaddanta Tikkhañāṇa, and the votive tablets unearthed at Catubhummika Monastery,
3. Dr. Min Nwe Soe, Minister, Planing and Economics Ministry, State Government, Mon State, who gives me great assistance in holding research seminars and workshop during 2010-2015 in Mon State, and the publication of this work,
4. Nai Lawi Aung, Minister, Electricity Ministry, State Government, Mon State, who gave me great assistance,
5. Professor U Tun Aung Chain, Retired Head of History Department, Yangon University, who supervised in my doctorate dissertation and has helped me with the editing of my manuscripts in Myanmar and English,
6. Professor Dr. Kyaw Win, Secretary, Myanmar Historical Commission, Archaeology and National Museum Department, Ministry of Culture, who taught me in the M.A, and Ph.D. classes and always gives me assistance and active encouragement,
7. Professor Dr. Toe Hla, Member of Myanmar Historical Commission, Archaeology and National Museum Department, Ministry of Culture, who taught me in the Ph.D. class and give me assistance and academic supervison,
8. Professor U Ni Tut, Retired Head of History Department, Yadan-apon University, who attended the Suvannabhūmi Seminar and Workshop and share his knowledge with me,



9. U San Win, Retired Deputy Director, Historical Research Department, Ministry of Culture, who has given me encouragement and great assistances for my work,
10. Professor Dr. Aung Myat Kyaw Sein, Acting Rector, Mawlamyine University, who acted as Chairman of the research seminars held in Mon State,
11. Professor Dr. Tha Tun Maung, Pro-Rector, East Yangon University, who enthusiastically welcomed my endeavour,
12. Nai Maung Toe, Retired Director, National Archive Department, Mawlamyine Office, who attended the Suvanṇabhūmi Seminar and Workshop and give me his advice,
13. Professor Dr. Htay Myint, Head of History Department, East Yangon University, who taught me in B.A (Hons.) class, and currently my immediate head, who encouraged me in my studies and in research work,
14. Professor Daw Khin Ma Ma Myo, retired, Department of Archaeology, Dagon University, who attended my seminar and gives me textual assistance,
15. Professor Dr. Yin Yin Aye, Head of Geology Department, Mawlamyine University, who gave me geological assistance in my studies,
16. U Saw Htwe Aung, Chief Engineer, Yangon Division, who give me his permission to use his drawing,
17. Dr. Myint Htwe, Lecturer, Department of Mathematics, East Yangon University, who taught me statistical graphs,
18. U Thein Zaw Win, Lecturer, Department of Geography, East Yangon University, who gives me geographical assistance,
19. Librarian and staff of Research Library, Department for the Promotion and Propagation Sāsana, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Kaba Aye, Yangon,
20. Curator and staff of Buddhist Art Museum, Development for the Promotion and Propagation Sāsana, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Kaba Aye, Yangon,

21. Curator and staff of National Museum, Archaeology and National Museum Department, Ministry of Culture, Yangon,
22. Curator and staff of Bagan Archaeological Museum, Ministry of Culture, Bagan, Mandalay Division,
23. Curator and staff of Archaeological Museum, Hmawzar, Pyay,
24. Daw Nu Nu San and Daw Ni Ni Naing, Librarians and staff from Universities' Central Library, Yangon University,
25. Daw Nway Nway Thida, Librarian and her staff from India Embassy Library, Yangon,
26. Daw Khin Soe Thaik, my wife,
27. U Thant Zin, Chief Mate, F.G. who assisted me with nautical calculation,
28. U Soe Naing, a native of Thaton, who sent me to his native town, Thaton,
29. Ko Kyaw Phon Hlaing, B. A., Myanmar, Hpa-an University, who is my colleague,
30. Ko That Oo and his group, Photographers, Department of Information, Thaton who took the photographs of votive tablets used in this work,
31. Ko Kyaw Thuya, a computer graphic designer and photographer who took the photographs of votive tablets used in this work and patiently gave me his help in this work.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

### FIGURE

1. Thaton in relations to Śrī Kṣetra, Dvāravtī and Śrīvijaya From Jan M.Pluvier, 1995, *Historical Atlas of South-East Asia*, New York: E.J. Brill, p.5
2. Location of Thaton
3. Place where votive tables were found, the Mounment of Funeral Urn of the Panti-ta at Catubhummika Monastery, Thaton.
4. Min Nwe Soe, State Minister, Mon State Goverment observ the site where the votive tables here found, Catubhummika Monastery, Thaton.
5. Bhaddanta Indaka, Bhaddanta Tikkhañāṇa, Nan Hlaing and Khant Zaw Aung observing the votive tables found at Catubhummika Hngak Twin Monastery, Thaton.
6. The Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā* and *Pralambanāsana* flanked by two standing Bothisattva holding a lotus in his hand, found at Catubhummika Hngak Twin Monastery, Thaton.
7. The Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā* and *Pralambanāsana* flanked by two standing Bothisattva holding a lotus in his hand, found at Catubhummika Hngak Twin Monastery, Thaton.
8. The Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā* and *Pralambanāsana* flanked by two standing Bothisattva holding a lotus in his hand, found at Winka, Mon State, and displayed at Mawlamyine Museum.
9. The Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā* and *Pralambanāsana* flanked by two standing Bothisattva holding a lotus in his hand, 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, found in Batujaya, Kariwang, West Jave province, in 2006, Clay (8×6×0)cm, Pusat Arkeologi Nasional, Indonesia.From Gay, *Lost of Kingdom*
10. The Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā* and *Pralambanāsana* flanked by two standing Bothisattva holding a lotus in his hand, 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, found in Thailand.  
From G.Coedes, *Siamese Votive Tablet*
11. The Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā* and *Pralambanāsana* flanked by two standing Bothisattva holding a lotus in his hand, 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, found in Kawgun Cave.  
(From R.C Temple, 1894, *Notes on Antiquities in Ramannadesa*.)



12. The Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā* and *Pralambanāsana* flanked by two standing Bodhisattva holding a lotus in his hand, 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, found in Sri Ksetra (Hmawzar). From U Mya, *VTB*
13. The Buddhist Triad, Fashde Karle Panel between entrance, c. 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centry AD.
14. The Buddhist Triad, India, c. 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centry AD.
15. A Seated Crowned Buddha in *dharmacakra mudra* flanked by bodhisattvas in *lālitāsana*, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton
16. A Seated Crowned Buddha in *dharmacakra mudra* flanked by bodhisattvas in *lālitāsana*, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton
17. A Seated Crowned Buddha in *dharmacakra mudrā* flanked by bodhisattvas in *lālitāsana*, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton
18. A Seated Crowned Buddha in *dharmacakra mudra* flanked by bodhisattvas in *lālitāsana*, Buddhist Museum, Shwesaryan Pagoda, Thaton
19. A Seated Crowned Buddha in *dharmacakra mudra* flanked by bodhisattvas in *lālitāsana*, relief, at the Trāp Old Mon Inscription, Shwesaryan Pagoda, Thaton
20. A Seated Crowned Buddha in *dharmacakra mudrā* flanked by bodhisattvas in *lālitāsana*, sand stone, relief, at Kawgun Cave, near Hpa-an
21. Wall-painting depicting the scene of the Great Miracle of Buddha, Old Mon glosses, Pahtotharmyo temple. Early Bagan
22. A Seated Crowned Buddha in *dharmacakra mudrā* flanked by bodhisattvas in *lālitāsana*, Terracotta Votive Table, Śrī Kṣetra. From U Mya, *VTB*
23. Earth-touching Buddha Flanked by small stupas, 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.
24. Earth-touching Buddha Flanked by small stupas, 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.
25. Earth-touching Buddha flanked by small stupas, Budh-Gaya, displayed at Berlin Museum, Germany.
26. Earth-touching Buddha flanked by small stupas, with inscription in Nāgarī script under the seated Buddha, Narlanda, India.

27. Earth-touching Buddha flanked by small stupas, Bago, From R.C Temple, 1894, *Notes on Antiquities in Ramannadesa*.
28. Earth-touching Buddha Flanked by small stupas, 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.
29. Earth-touching Buddha Flanked by small stupas, 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.
30. Earth-touching Buddha Flanked by small stupas with inscription in Nāgarī script along the bottom edge. 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Catubhummika monastery, Thaton
31. Earth-touching Buddha under the Bodhi tree and umbrella, (14×7) cm, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.
32. Earth-touching Buddha under the Bodhi tree and umbrella, (14×7) cm, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.
33. Seated Buddha, from South India, Limestone, height 71'', 9th century A.D., Boney Collection, Tokyo (from Zimmer, 1955, *The Art of Indian Asia*)
34. Inscription in Pallava script under the Earth-touching Buddha on the reverse of votive tablet, c. 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Catubummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton
35. Earth-touching Buddha seated under Śikara, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton
36. Earth-touching Buddha seated under Śikara, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton
37. Earth-touching Buddha seated under Śikara, flanked by Bodhisattva, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton
38. Earth-touching Buddha seated under Śikara, flanked by Bodhisattva, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton
39. Earth-touching Buddha seated under Śikara, flanked by Bodhisattva in *vyākhyāna mudrā* and *virāsana*, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton
40. Earth-touching Buddha seated under Śikara, flanked by Bodhisattva in *vyākhyāna mudrā* and *virāsana*, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton

41. Seated Buddha in *dharmacakra mudra*, flanked on either side of seated figure in *dharmacakra mudra*, seated three figures: the one on the left in *virasana*, the one in the middle in *lālitasana* and the right one in undertermined position, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.
42. Seated Buddha in *dharmacakra mudra*, flanked on either side of seated figure in *dharmacakra mudra*, seated three figures: the one on the left in *virasana*, the one in the middle in *lālitasana* and the right one in undertermined position, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.
43. The Eight Scenes depicted on votive tablet, c. 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., at Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.
44. The Eight Scenes depicted on votive tablet, c. 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., at Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.
45. The Eight Scenes of the Buddha's Life, Sāmāth, India, 5th century A.D., Indian Museum, Calcutta
46. Crowned-standing Buddha and *abhaya mudrā* with the body in *samabharṅga* position, found at Catubhummika Hngak Twin monestary, Thaton.
47. Crowned-standing Buddha and *abhaya mudrā* with the body in *samabharṅga* position, found at Catubhummika Hngak Twin monestary, Thaton.
48. Crowned-standing Buddha and *abhaya mudrā* with the body in *samabharṅga* position, Kurkihary Patna Museum, India
49. Enthroned Buddha Preaching the First Sermon flanked by small under śikhara, Catubhummika monastery, Thaton
50. Enthroned Buddha Preaching the First Sermon flanked by small under śikhara, Catubhummika monastery, Thaton
51. Enthroned Buddha Preaching the First Sermon flanked by small under śikhara, Shwesaryar Pagoda Museum, Thaton
52. Enthroned Buddha Preaching the First Sermon flanked by small under śikhara, , Kawkathaung Cave, east of Hpa-an



53. The Enthroned Buddha in Preaching the First Sermon flanked by small stupas under śikhara, the tower of Gaya, Thailand From G. Coedes, Siamese Votive Tablet
54. The Enthroned Buddha in Preaching the First Sermon flanked by small stupas under śikhara, Śrīkṣetra
55. Descent of the Buddha from Tāvātimsa, found at Catubhummika monastery, Thaton
56. Descent of the Buddha from Tāvātimsa, found at Catubhummika monastery, Thaton
57. Descent of the Buddha from Tāvātimsa sand stone, 11<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D., Anadar Temple, Bagan
58. Descent of the Buddha from Tāvātimsa bronze, 9th-10th century A.D., Calcutta Museum, India
59. Reverse of votive tables, found at Catubhummika monastery, Thaton
60. A Terracotta Votive Tablet (8×4×1)in., depicted a seated Buddha in meditation posture flanked by Mucalinda Buddha found at WK 8 and 11, Winka Excavation sites, Bilin, Mon state
61. Fragments of votive tables found at WK-8 excavation site, Bilin, Mon State
62. Laterite Artifacts unearthed at Catubhummika Hngak Twin Monastery, Thaton
63. Mouth of Terracotta Pot, Catubhummika Hngak Twin Monastery, Thaton
64. Dr.Win Win Phyoe, Daw Khin Ma Ma Mu (Retired Professor) Prof. Dr. Toe Hla, U Hla Thaung, Baddanta Tikkhanana, Prof. Dr. Kyaw Win, Nan Hlaing, Nan Kyi Kyi Khaing, U San Win, taking a group photograph at Catubhummika Monastery, Thaton on 31 December 2015 (from left to right)

## CONTENTS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Forword by Dr. Min Nwe Soe  | x   |
| Preface   | xii |
| Part I  |     |
| Coming of Culture   |     |
| a. Suvannabhūmi on Seaport of Southeast Asia  | 5   |
| b. Different Opinions on Suvannabhūmi   | 6   |
| c. Retrospective Background of the Mons   | 22  |
| d. Origin of the Mon  | 22  |
| e. Origin of the Mon: Luce's Hypothesis   | 26  |
| f. The Mons in Kyaukse  | 27  |
| g. The Mon Inscriptions in Myanmar and Thailand   | 28  |
| h. Scholarly Interest in the Mons   | 32  |
| i. The Mon Periods-Periodization  | 33  |
| j. The Studies of Mon Votive Tablets  | 37  |
| Part II   |     |
| Terracotta Votive Tablets: Resent Finds at Catubhummika Hng-<br>ak Twin Monastery, Thaton in 2015 |     |
| a. Introduction   | 41  |
| b. Views of Scholars on Thaton  | 42  |
| c. Michael Aung-Thwin's <i>Mists of Rāmañña</i>   | 44  |
| d. Demystifying the "Trāp" and Paṇiṭ  | 46  |
| e. Terracotta Artifacts in Ancient World History  | 50  |
| f. Inscribed Votive Tablets   | 51  |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| g. Tradition of Votive Tablets   | 54  |
| h. Recent Finding at Catubhummika Hangar Twin Monastery,<br>Thaton     | 58  |
| i. Votive Tablets (Type I) of the Ancient Thaton                       | 64  |
| j. Mahāyāna Buddhist Triads  | 65  |
| k. Location of Triads Votive Tablets                                   | 66  |
| l. Differences among the Votive Tablets                                | 68  |
| m. Type (I) and Cultural Relations                                     | 68  |
| n. The Crowned Buddhist Triads (Type II)                               | 69  |
| o. Mahāyanist Triads or Great Miracle                                  | 69  |
| p. The seated Buddha in <i>bhūmipaśra mudrā</i> (Type 3)               | 73  |
| q. The seated Buddha in <i>pralambanāsana</i> (Type 4)                 | 76  |
| r. Aṭṭha Mahāṭhāna (Type 5)  | 78  |
| s. Descent of the Buddha from Tāvātimsa (Type 6)                       | 80  |
| t. Buddhist Triads (Type 7)  | 81  |
| u. Standing Buddha and Mojaghāñjavaḷa Lokitesvāra                      | 82  |
| v. Conclusion  | 83  |
| Terracotta Votive Tablets excavated at Winka (c. Suvaṇṇabhūmi) in 2012 |     |
| <i>Bibliography</i>  | 93  |
| <i>Index</i>   | 107 |



## **FOREWORD**

by

**Dr. Min Nwe Soe, State Minister of Mon State**

Suvaṇṇabhūmi is a prominent region in Pāli Buddhist scriptures, and historical accounts in Mon and Myanmar because it was a place journeyed by the Buddha in the eighth year of his ministry after attaining his Enlightenment. The Buddha stayed in the region for a week and preached the people and celestial beings or devas. When Asoka sent his missions to nine foreign countries, Soṇathera and Uttrathera were sent to the Mon Country which was also called Suvaṇṇabhūmi. The two Buddhist monks established the Religion in Suvaṇṇabhūmi and attained parinibbāna or Great Decease there. Moreover, Suvaṇṇabhūmi was a native town of learned Mahābuddhaghosa who translated the Sinhalese Pitaka into Mon.

Therefore, Thaton (Suvaṇṇabhūmi) was a centre of Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar chronicles. With the advise of Shin Arahāṇ, a Mon Buddhist Monk who became a Preceptor of King Anawratha and resided in Bagan for propagation of Buddhism, as King Anawratha established the Religion in Bagan in the eleventh century A.D, Theravada Buddhism flourished in Upper Myanmar. The king sent his troops, occupied Thaton, and brought Pali Pitaka cannons to his kingdom. From that time, Suvaṇṇabhūmi came to an end.

Although archaeological excavations were carried out in Mon state, there is no sufficient attempt to provide the evidences, which indicate Suvannabhūmi. Fortunately, thousands of votive tablets were uncovered at the Catubhummika Hnak Twin monastery in Thaton. Many scholars and journalists were interested in the artifacts and interpreted them according to their knowledge.

Among them, Dr. Nan Hlaing, historian and assistant lecturer of history department, East Yangon University, also took part. He presented his study on the votive tablets of Thaton at Reseach Conference and Workshop on Suvannabhūmi of the Mons which was held at Computor University in Goh village, Thaton. His research on this work which can be published provides cultural heritages of the ones who love Suvannabhūmi.

From the new findings, we will continue to do research on Suvannabhūmi.

**Dr. Min Nwe Soe**

**19 March 2016**

## **PREFACE**

**History is the study of events, which happened in the past. If you ask the question, Why do we study history? The answer is that history is a subject to be studied for the understanding of humanity. It is a major key to understand human beings at present time and lives in every person, every race, and every nation.**

**History cannot be built on conjecture or on the myths, legends, distortion, hagiography or hearsay. Only scientific evidences can reveal history. In a study of the sources, the acid taste is historicity (the truth of history). Accordingly, if a certain people want to reveal their history, the evidences must stand up to the acid test of historicity. Furthermore, we have to accept the history based on the evidence. Whether we accept history or not, the impact of history is always with us. As humankind developed from barbarism once in early civilization, no one needs to feel pride, which leads to discrimination.**

**In Myanmar, there are over a hundred ethnic peoples migrating into the land now called Myanmar and now settled all over the country settling scatterly since pre-history. The main stocks are the Kachin, the Kayah, the Kayin, the Chin, the Bamar, the Mon, the Rakhine, and the Shan. Only the peoples settled along the river valleys and coasts were all to develop their civilization, based on influences coming from the eastern part of South India. This began no more than two millennium BP with developing in Southeast Asia with the stimulus of cultural influence based on the sea voyage in the early Christian era.**

**When I do research, the view is the most important theme and leads to my studies. This work is made up of two parts: the first deals with the coming of culture to Myanmar and the second with the**



terracotta votive tablets: recently found at Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery in Thaton and votive tablets excavated at Winka in 2012. Attempt is made in the Part I to trace the coming of culture from India to Myanmar by sea and land routes. This knowledge is fundamental to the studies of early Southeast Asia, including Mon studies. However, I confess that I believe my studies done by other scholars.

Part II forms the major portion of my study, which is of the votive tablets unearthed from Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery in Thaton in 2015 and I reproduce the votive tablets excavated at Winka, near Thaton in 2012. In this Part II of two research papers, which I completed recently, my main task has been iconographic study and epigraphic decipherment. I provide a relative dating and cultural significance of the votive tablets. An attempt has been made of correlational studies with artifacts from Śrīkṣetra, Bagan, and Tagaung in Upper Myanmar, Kawgun in Lower Myanmar as well as motifs in India, Thailand and Indonesia. As epigraphs provide the best evidence, I have attempted to decipher inscriptions stamped on the votive tablets as much as I can. Giving attention to the learned scholars' in this field, I took care to avoid bias in my work. This work is merely to be cover a preliminary study of the terracotta votive tablets found at Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, northwest of the Shwesaryan pagoda in Thaton. The plethora of votive tablets found at the monastery helps to establish Thaton as the major seat of the Old Mons in Myanmar. Much more needs to be done in early Mon studies and I look forward to further investigation and research in the field.

For the work on this book, I am placed under the gratitudes of Pañca Ananta Guṇa: the Buddha, the Dhamma (His Teachings), the Saṃgha (His Disciples), My Parents and Teachers.

**Nan Hlaing**

Yangon, January 29, 2016

**PART I**  
**THE COMING OF CULTURE**

**To**  
**the Mons**

## **THE COMING OF CULTURE**

Myanmar is part of mainland Southeast Asia; although it looks as if it is an outstretched hand of India. Myanmar geographically tied to the Indochinese peninsula. It is sandwiched between the two great cultures of India and China and is also between two great oceans the Indian and the Pacific Oceans and anthropologically and linguistically more closely related to Southeast Asian than to India. But, the south of Myanmar is open to approach by the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. With the exception of the south Myanmar is surrounded by mountains on all sides and Upper Myanmar is separated from India by the highly inaccessible terrain of the Manipur Plateau and the Indian Ocean is substantially more of a highway than the landmass in the north. Seasonal winds have an important role in the Indian Ocean. The southwest monsoon from April to October helped sailing ships to voyage eastward in the Indian Ocean, but it reverses into the northeast mon-

soon from November to March which makes a westward journey more convenient.

Indians might have reached the seaboard of Myanmar and of other countries in Southeast Asia in the pre-Christian era and there was probably some amount of seaborne trade.<sup>1</sup> Whether or not the Āryan of the Ṛg Vedic period knew the sea, by the time of Buddha, hardy sailors had probably circumnavigated the sub-continent and perhaps made the first contacts with Myanmar, Malaya and the islands of Indonesia.<sup>2</sup> Jātaka stories (The Buddha's Former Births) mention that the voyages were frequent.<sup>3</sup> And later texts of about the third century B.C. speak of voyages down from Benares to the Ganges to its mouth and thence across the Bay of Bengal to the coast of Myanmar.

As few illustrations of ships surviving in the early Christian era at Cave no.2 Ajanta give one with three masts. A contemporary source is the depiction of the ships on the column of the great Buddhist temple of Borobudur in Java; they are small; the largest one containing only fifteen people. Moreover, there are pictures of ships on coins struck during the period of the Āndhra dynasty in India.

Economic stimulus -- small yields of gold, precious stones, musk, rare woods, and other items of interest--persuaded Indian traders to voyage to Southeast Asia. The Mauryan kings depended to a large extent on the tribute paid by the peasantry, but a considerable portion of the state revenues came from traders as well; they therefore built ships and let them out for the transport of merchandise.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> U K Nambiar, 1975, *Our Seafaring in the Indian Ocean*, Bangalore: Jeeran Publication, pp.12-13,44ff.

<sup>2</sup> A.L Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, New Delhi: 2001, Reprinted, p.226.

<sup>3</sup> T.W. Rhys Davids, 1950, *Buddhist India*, Calcutta, the Base Press, p.59f.

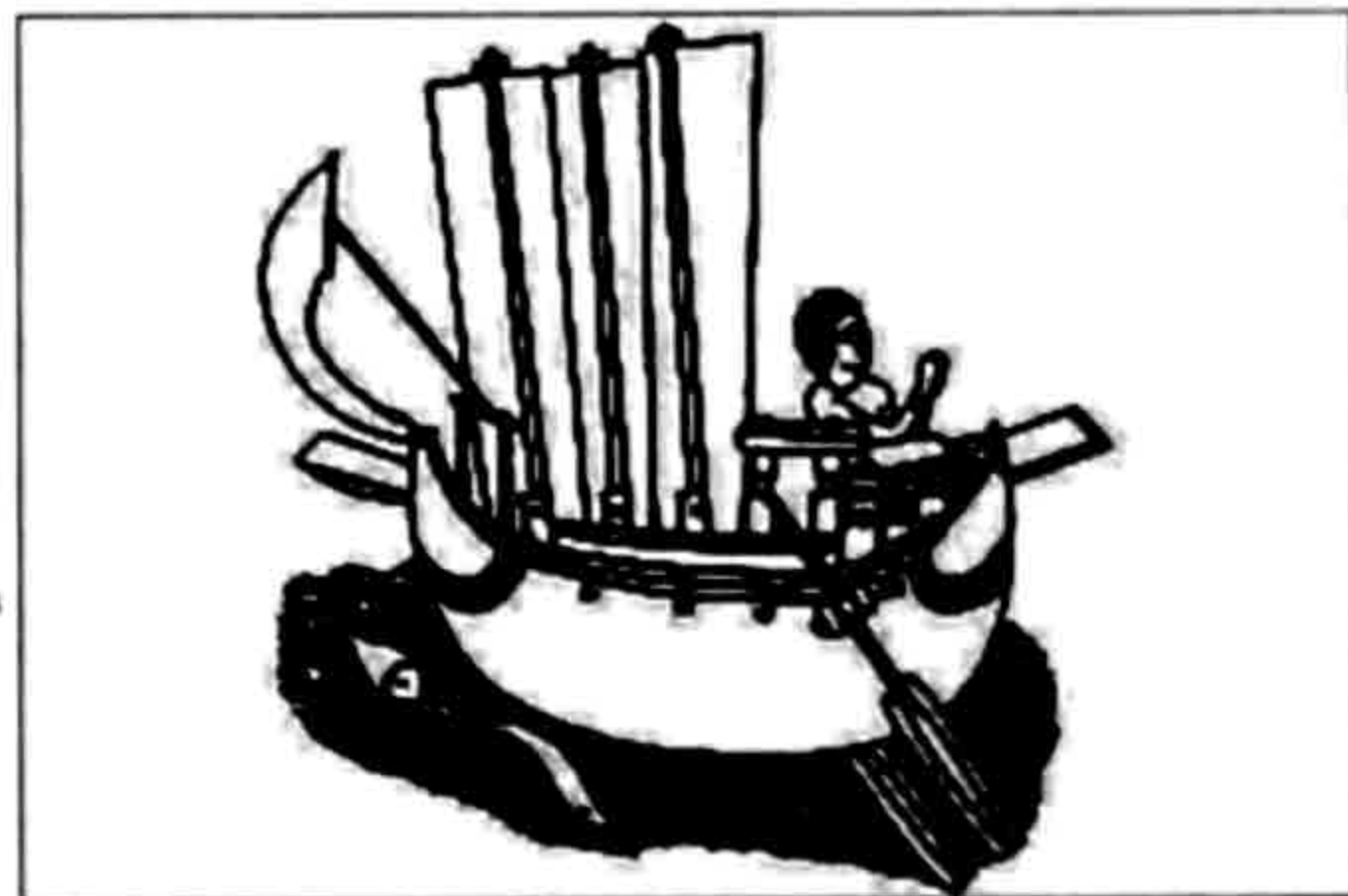
<sup>4</sup> R.C Majumdar & Pusalker, 1952, *Vedic Age*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,p.137.





Ship, stone relief of Borobudur (760-830 AD) stupa during the Sailendra dynasty, Java  
 Nick Burningham, (2015), "The Borobudur Ship", *National Geographic*, Retried November, 2015

Ship, c 6th century A.D. (From Cave II, Ajanta)\*  
 \* A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, New Delhi, Rupa & Co., 2001



Indian maritime enterprise and seaports were founded along the Bay of Bengal. The Āndhra kings followed the Mauryan kings. They developed several ports and built large ocean-going vessels for trade and the transport of passengers to Southeast Asia. The Pallava kings who rose to power in South India and gained control of navigation in the Eastern Sea followed them. When the Chōḷa revived their power under King Rājendra Chōḷa (985-1014 A.D.), South Indian navigation became more venturesome. The King sent out naval expeditions to Myanmar, Malaysia and Indo-China. He claimed to have defeated Samgramari jotturigavarman, King of Kadaram, Manakkavaram, i.e., the Great Nicobar Island, Madamalingam, i.e. Mottama, and the great Poppalam which, according to the *Mahāvamsa*, was a seaport in Rāmaññadesa.<sup>5</sup> On the Bago-Thanatpin road two octagonal gran-

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Superintendent: *Archaeological Survey, Burma*, 1910, Yangon: Govt. Printing, pp.14f. (Hereafter cited as *ASB*).

ite pillars, measuring about 11 and 5 feet, were found and one of them was later re-erected on a masonry plinth in the compound of the district court house at Bago. They may be identified with the pillars of victory set up by Rājendra Chōḷa I who overran Bago in 1025-1027 A.D.

In a mid-1st century CE, the Europeans compiled geographical texts with *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* in Greek as the earliest one. It mentioned the trade between Indian ports and countries further in the east. In 165 A. D. or possibly earlier Klaudios Ptolemy (A.D. 5-165), the Alexandrine geographer, wrote the *Geographia* in which he provided more definite information. He mentioned coastline roughly approximate to that of Rakhine and Myanmar as far as the Gulf of 'Sabara' (Mottama).<sup>6</sup> He recorded the name of regions in Myanmar as follows:

Argyre (Rakhine)

Attabass (Dawei River)

Besynga (Patheingyi River)

Khryse (Suvannabhūmi/ Golden Land)

Khrysoana (Yangon arm of the Ayeyarwady)

Rasang (Tharrawady at the head of the delta)

Taungma (Tagaung)<sup>7</sup>

His route hugged the Coromandel coast as far as the river Mahanadi dividing Kalinga from Orissa and thence crossing the north end of the Bay of Bengal due east towards sea front of Sittwe (Akyab). The route then followed the coast of Myanmar and Malaysia to Cambodia and the land beyond. The people of Ukkala (Orissa) were the pioneers in

<sup>6</sup> G.H. Luce, 1936, "Burma Down to the Fall of Pagan", *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Vol. XXIX, Part III, Yangon: p. 386.

<sup>7</sup> Mc. Crindle, 1927, *Ancient India as described by Ptolemy*, Cultutta, Baptist Mission Press, pp. 205, 208ff, 221, 131ff.

this brave enterprise.<sup>8</sup>

From the second century A.D. the sea route brought Mediterranean merchants to the shores of India and Śrī Laṅkā (Ceylon), to parts of mainland Southeast Asia and to China. However, A. L. Basham in his *A Cultural History of India* says:

"... Whether Mediterranean and Middle Eastern trade brought Indians into Southeast Asia, or the West were exploiting routes which Indians had already pioneered is an issue which is now impossible to resolve."<sup>9</sup>

### Suvaṇṇabhūmi on Seaport of Southeast Asia

Etymologically the word for ship in Myanmar and several other languages of Southeast-Asia and Madagascar is derived from the word *samuau* in Old Malay; it is *sambo* in Old Javanese, *sambau* in Khmer and *Sambhau* in Thai. The word *saṅphew* in Old Myanmar appears in an ink-inscription, legend of the Mahājanaka Jātaka story, on the wall painting of Lokahteikpan temple in Bagan.<sup>10</sup>

In the Pāḷi canon the *Questions of Miliṇḍapaññā*, probably a work of the first century A.D., mentions the possibility of a merchant sailing to Alexandria, Myanmar, Malaysia, or China.<sup>11</sup> Another Piṭaka Scripture for the evidence of Sea voyages in the Indian Ocean, is the Mahājanaka Jātaka, in which the Bodhisattva went on board a ship with some merchants bound for Suvaṇṇabhūmi. His ship left

<sup>8</sup> R. K. Mookerji, 1949, *History of Orissa*, Delivered by Sri Harekrushna Mahtab, Lucknow University Press, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> A. L. Basham, (ed.), and et. al., *A Cultural History of India*, Oxford University Press, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> p.445. Daw Po, ed., "Ink-Inscription at Lokahteikpan Temple", *Anthology of Myanmar Literature*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Govt. Press, 1991 Reprinted, p.109.

<sup>11</sup> *Miliṇḍapaññā*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Dept. of Religious Affairs Press, 1997, p.338. T.W. Rhys Davids, trans., 1894, *the Questions of Miliṇḍapaññā*, Part II, New York: Dover Publication, Inc., p.300-303.

from Tamalinda and sailed across the Indian Ocean. In seven days the ship began to sink in the middle of the ocean. After that the Bodhisattva crossed through the jewel coloured waves for seven days.<sup>12</sup> It may be consider that from the middle of the eleventh century, relations between India and Southeast Asiatic countries have been extraordinarily close and that there were no real obstacles with repared to navigation-al.<sup>13</sup>

### Different Opinions on Suvāṇṇabhūmi

Suvāṇṇabhūmi is the Land of Gold, the Eastern equivalent of El Dorado where the legendary country or city in South America between the Amazon and Orinoco said to be rich in gold and treasure. Wilhelm Geiger in his translation on the *Mahāvamsa*, suggests that Suvāṇṇabhūmi might be the country in Bengal called by Hiuen-tsang 'Ka-lo-na-su-fa-la-na (Karna suvarna, or the country along the river Son, a river in Central India, and tributary of the Ganges on its right bank, which is also called Hiraṇujayavaha 'the gold-bearer'.<sup>14</sup> According to *the Buddha Thathanika Pathawiwīn* (Geography of Buddhist Sāsana), the treatise of the learned Taung Pauk Sayadaw, Suvāṇṇabhūmi is situated about 1400 nautical miles between Tamalitta (near Southeast Calcutta) and Sumatra (now Indonesia). Therefore, it embraces Southeast Asia: Java, Borneo, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Rāmaññadesa in Myanmar.<sup>15</sup> G. Coedès was inclined to place Suvāṇṇabhūmi on the Isthmus of Kra while Gerini

<sup>12</sup> E.B. Cross & W.H.D. Rouse, trans, 1957, *The Jataka Stories of the Buddha's Former Birth*, Vol. VI, London: The Pali Texts Society, Reprinted, p.22.

<sup>13</sup> G.H. Luce, "The Advent of Buddhism to Burma", *Myanmar Studies Journal*, no. 2, June, 2014, Reprinted, p.20.

<sup>14</sup> Wilhelm Geiger, trans., 1950, *The Mahāvamsa*, Colombo, Ceylon Government, p.86.

<sup>15</sup> Ashin Cakkapāla, 1958, *The Geography of Buddhist Sāsana*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Thudhammawady Press, p. 23.

placed it near Takua Pa.<sup>16</sup> Charles Edmund Godakumbura in his *Relations between Myanmar and Ceylon* mentions that the actual place of Golamattida corresponds to Mihinte near Anurādhapūra in Ceylon (Sri Lanka).<sup>17</sup>

At the Golden Suvāṇṇabhūmi Regional Seminar held at Mawlamyine on 4 November 2012 Professor Dr. Toe Hla, one of the Chairpersons at the Seminar, said in his speech at Opening Ceremony:

...although the dispute about the location of Suvāṇṇabhūmi has been going on among the scholars, no one can claim to provide a valid solution of the location. The earliest document in South-east Asia is that of King Dhammaceti who indicates the location of Suvāṇṇabhūmi as geographically situated in Mon State, coastal Myanmar.<sup>18</sup>

There is also a claim that Chin-Lin source or Suvāṇṇakudya is on the Gulf of Thailand. Along the coast of the gulf, the inhabitation of the people were Mons since the ancient time.<sup>19</sup> Rāmañña, "the Mon Country", is mentioned in the *Cūlavamsa*, the thirteenth century Sinhalese Chronicle.<sup>20</sup>

The names of seaports in Myanmar are mentioned in the New History of T'ang Dynasty as follows:

<sup>16</sup> *ASB*, (1919), p. 25.

<sup>17</sup> C. E. Godakumbura, 1966, "Relation between Burma and Ceylon", *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Vol. XLIX, 1966, p.145-162.

<sup>18</sup> The statement was repeated in the Mon- Suvāṇṇabhūmi Research Seminar and Workshop held at Computer University, Thaton on 30 December 2015.

<sup>19</sup> R. Halliday, "Immigration of the Mons into Siam", *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. 10, Part 3/b, p.2.

<sup>20</sup> *Cūlavamsa being the more recent part of the Mahāvamsa*, Part I, tran. Wilhelm Geiger & C. Mabel Rickmers, Colombo, the Ceylon Government Information Dept., 1953, pp.1-23.

| Chinese Name | Identification            |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| Lau-man      | Zokthok                   |
| Mi-cho       | Rakhine Coast             |
| Mo-Ti-Po     | Mottama                   |
| Pai-ku       | Bago                      |
| She-Li       | Vesali                    |
| Tanausiri    | Tanintharyi <sup>21</sup> |

Though China belongs to the Pacific Ocean, Chinese navigation penetrated into the Indian Ocean during the Han dynasty (206 BC-- AD 220), when a Chinese ambassador came by sea to the Pallava, capital of Kanchipuram, South India. Around the beginning of the Christian era, a Mon centre of importance was Lp̄r-ciñ (Sea Elephant) sea port. The name was sinicized as Fu-kan-tu-lu. By the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. the centre had changed to Bago.<sup>22</sup> Chinese ships sailed as far as India and further west during the Southern Song period (12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries). During the reign of Kublai Khan (1215-1294), a European traveller, Marco Polo (1254?-1324), sailed from China to Persia.

Southern Indian seafarers sailed from Bengal and Orissa (Kalinga) to Lp̄r-ciñ (now Kyun Sein near Mawlamyine). They called the seaport (Pugāmā Dvāra), Doorway to the Land of Pyu.<sup>23</sup> Moreover the vicinity along the Tanintharyi, the southern tail of Myanmar, and the Malay Peninsula sheltered an entrepot and a transpeninsular route joining the west with the east coast where it reached the region of the Thai town Kiri Khan. Vessels from Āndhra coast could sail either along the coast or directly to Dawei. The travellers landed there and then,

<sup>21</sup> Than Tun, 2007, 'TDA BAM ( Dwattabaung), A Pyu Hero of the 4th Century B.C.', *A Miscellaneous Term-Papers*, Yangon: Monywa Press, pp.101f.

<sup>22</sup> Chen. Yi Sein, 1999, 'Lin-Yang'(Visnu City), translated by Than Tun, *Studies in Myanmar History*, Vol. I, Yangon: Inwa Publication House, p.77.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p.71f.



crossing the mountains by the Pass of the Three Pagodas, proceeded to the delta of the Menam by the Kanburi River near the bank of which ancient ruins have been found at P'ong Tük and Pra Pathom. There was also a practicable route from the port of Mawlamyine to the town of Raheng, on one of the branches of the Menam.<sup>24</sup> For evidence of the former presence of the entrepot port, there have been found over 250 unbroken vessels of Chinese ceramic ware belonging to the Southern Song period (12th – 13th A.D.).<sup>25</sup>

The sea voyages have figured as the means for the introduction of culture from India to Myanmar. It was the most active way because it was character than the land route and Myanmar entrepot ports were easy and safe even for small vessels. There was, however, a northern land route between India and China through Assam, Upper Myanmar and Yunnan. Thus, Myanmar was a half-way house between the two countries. The silk of Chinese origin was first introduced into India. The earliest certain references to the silk are found, in the *Bhikku Vinaya Pāḷi* (Code of Conduct of Buddhist monks) in which it is called *koseyya*, "The silk-cloth".<sup>26</sup> The *Vinaya Saṅgaha Aṭṭhakathā* (Pāḷi Commentary) alludes to the overland route between the two nations. The word *cinapatta*, "the Chinese lower garment"<sup>27</sup> in this commentary indicates the source. The silk was brought from China to India and transported on to Rome using caravans. The Indians realized that they could make great profits by acting as intermediaries

<sup>24</sup> Majumdar, *Vedic Age*, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'h, 1999, "In Quest of the Entrepot Ports of Mergui—Tenasserim Myiek-Taninthayi Beginning of the Christian Era End of the 13th Century A.D.", *Myanmar Two Millennia Conference*, Yangon: Universities Historical Research Center, Dec., p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> A.P. Buddhdatha Mahathera, 1954, *English-Pali Dictionary*, Colombo: The Pali Text Society, pp. 482-4. (b) T. W. Rhys Davids, *PTSPED*, Part A, p. 230.

<sup>27</sup> Sariputra Thera, n.d., *Vinaya Saṅgaha Aṭṭhakathā Nissaya*, (in Myanmar), Vol. II, Ashin Paṇḍita (trans.), Mandalay: Padaythar Pitak Press, pp. 501-525.



in the business transaction. Thus, traders in India and northern Myanmar became part of the Silk Road between India and China.

The topography of Myanmar and northeastern India—Manipur and Assam—are almost of a similar nature.<sup>28</sup> The mountains of the region form a continuous curve from northeastern Assam to Cape Negrais. In the north, the Patkoi Hills demarcates between the two countries; then it broadens out into the Naga Hills and the Manipur Plateau, sending a broad branch westward into Assam. This branch starts as the Barail Range, Southward from Manipur are the Lushai Hills and Chin Hills and then again a narrower wall known as the Rakhine Yoma. From India to Myanmar there are half a dozen routes; none of them much used. The Hukaung Valley route and the Tu-Zu Gap route lie in the north of Myanmar.<sup>29</sup> An easier route is through Manipur,<sup>30</sup> Myanmar kings used it as a military route.<sup>31</sup> This is known as Tamu-Morey-Imphal road. A parabaik manuscript describes the road a good for transportation between Tamu and Manipur. The manuscript gives further routes between Myanmar and India, i.e. Khantee to Assam road and, Thaungthut to Manipur road.<sup>32</sup> The Kabaw Valley broadens along the River Yu while the Kalay Plain lines along the Manipur and Myitha Rivers. On the side of the Indian drainage is the great plain of the Ganges Valley. Traders going from Bharukaccha west round the coast to Myanmar and from Benares down the Ganges River to

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<sup>28</sup> Dudley, L. Stamp, 1962, *Asia: A Regional & Economic Geography*, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., pp.197f.

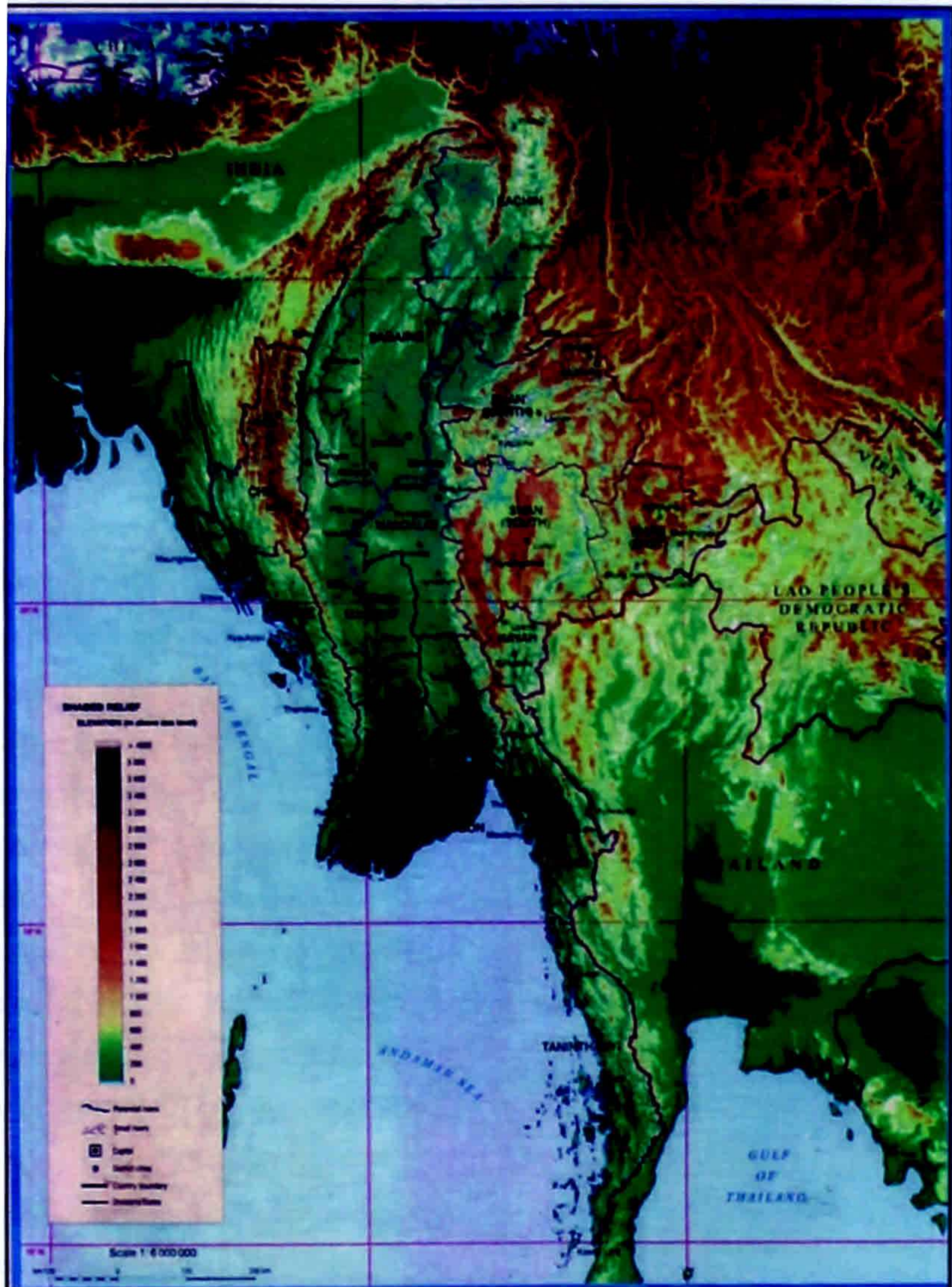
<sup>29</sup> A military road ( the Stillwell Road) was constructed from Upper Assam into the Hukawng Valley during the World War II.

<sup>30</sup> This was the main route followed by the Allied Europeans who drove the Japanese out of Myanmar in 1945.

<sup>31</sup> Dr. Than Tun, 2005, *Myanmar Historical Atlas*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Universities Historical Center, pp.71, 75, 107.

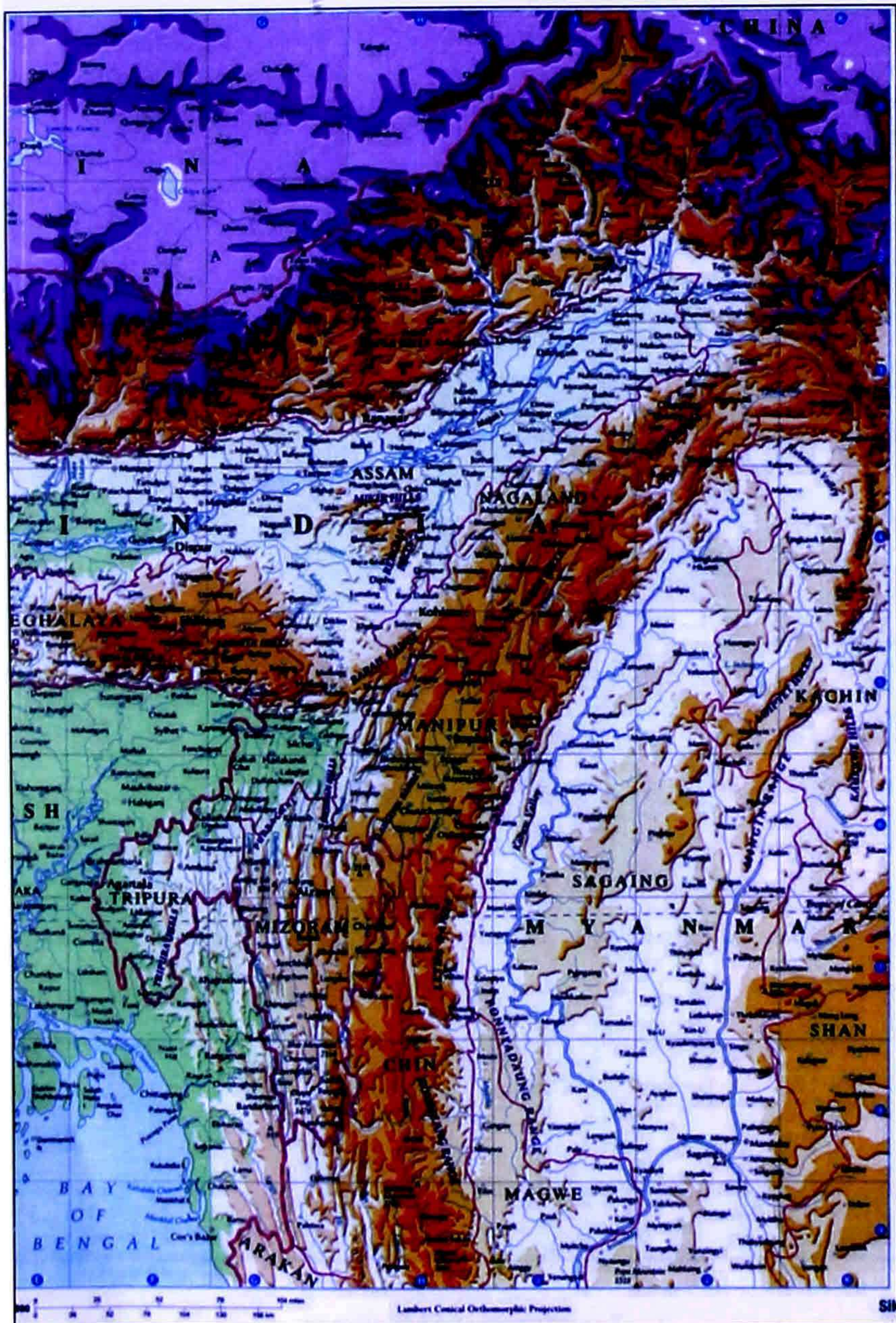
<sup>32</sup> *A List of the State's Bordon Gates*, (in Myanmar), Parabaik manuscript no. 726, National Library, Yangon.





Topography of Myanmar





### Indo-Myanmar Orographic Barriers

(Oxford Reference Atlas for India and the World, 2010, New Delhi: Oxford University Press)



its mouth and thence on to Myanmar. The Manipur River flows from the Manipur Hills of India and continues to the northern Chin Hills and joins the Myittha at Kalay town. The Myittha continues to combine with the Chindwin, the main tributary of the Ayeyawady River.

The frontier station of the Brahmaputra Valley into China is by the pass of the Dohans, the Mishmi route, the Phungan pass to Manchee and China, the route by Manipur to the Ayeyawady and the Patkoi Pass to Bhamo on the Ayeyawady. The most important and easy route was on the northeastern side over the Patkoi to the upper districts of Myanmar and thence to China.<sup>33</sup> The trade route through Bhamo and Kaungton was the regular trade route by land between Eastern India and China through Upper Myanmar and Yunnan. This was testified by the report which Chang-Kien, the Chinese ambassador to the Yue-Chi country, submitted in 126 B.C. At the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Kia-tan described in detail the route through Bhamo. Starting from Tonkin, the southernmost of the commercial centres of China, the route passed by Yunnan and Ta-Li, going westwards it crossed the Thanlwin at Yung ch'ang on the west of the river. The route bifurcated east of Momein, between the Shweli and the Thanlwin, it crossed the frontier of Pyu (Myanmar) near Lo, the frontier town of Nan-Chao and, passing through the country of mountain tribes, reached Tagaung. The route then passed by Bagan and reached Śrīkṣetra (Pyay). Leaving Pyay it crossed a range of Black Mountain to the west (now Rakhine range) and so reaches Kammapura (Assam). Buddhagupta, an Indian Buddhist monk in the sixth century, in his biography indicates the existence of a well-known land route connecting Assam in Northeast India with Myanmar. He himself followed this route in the journey from Gauhati, a major riverine port city in Lower Assam, to Bagan in Central

<sup>33</sup> B.K.A. Barua, 1951, *Cultural History of Assam*, Vol. I, Madras, India, p.101.

(b) G.W. Dawson, 1960, *Burma Gazetteer: the Bhamo District*, Yangon: Govt. Press, pp.16.99

Myanmar.

Although the natural boundary between Assam and Myanmar is composed of mountains, the geographical barriers are not insuperable; the passes crossing these mountainous regions are actually not very difficult. Therefore, Assam played an important part as a transmitter of Aryan civilization into Myanmar, Tibet, and Nepal. Also, along the Sino-Myanmar border, the Tapain and the Shweli, the eastern tributaries of the Ayeyawady Valley are navigable, and meet with the Ayeyawady, which flows through the cultural heart of Myanmar. In contrast, K.R. Dikshit and Jutta K. Dikshit in their *North-East India: Land, People and Economy* mentioned that the Eastern Himalayas, attaining a height of 6,000m., bend southward and merge into the Indo-Myanmar orographic chain, effecting separating the East and Southeast Asia region from South Asia. For millennium, this region has been one of the most inaccessible region of the world.<sup>34</sup>

Indian toponyms for Myanmar point to long lasting relationship between India and Myanmar. Northern Indians called Myanmar Brāhmavastu and Puvastu while Southern Indian called it Pugāma. Also, Śrīkṣetra was named Brāhmadesa.<sup>35</sup> In *Glass Palace Chronicle of Myanmar*, Abhirāja, a prince of the Śākya clan of Kapilavastu, marched with his troops to Upper Myanmar founded the city of Tagaung on the Upper Ayeyawady, and set himself up as the king of the surrounding region.<sup>36</sup> After thirty-one generations had passed, a second band of Kṣatriyas from the Gangetic Valley occupied the kingdom. This tra-

<sup>34</sup> K.R. Dikshit and Jutta K. Dikshit, 2014, *North-East India: Land, People and Economy*, New York: Springer, p.21.

<sup>35</sup> Dawson, 1960: *Burma Gazetteer: The Bhamo District*, Yangon: Government Printing, 16. Reprinted.

<sup>36</sup> *Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*, translated into English by G.H. Luce and Pe Maung Tin, Yangon: Burma Research Society, 1960, p.1.

(b) *Myanmar Kings' Horoscopic Chronicle*, (in Myanmar), ed., U Hla Tin, Yangon: Archaeology Department, 1960, p.35.

ditional account, however, has not been recognized as historical. The propagation of Indian religions— Buddhism, Brahmanism, and Jainism—was based on inter-Asian trade. This trade was conducted by sea voyages as well as by overland routes. It resulted in the diffusion of Indian religions in Myanmar and other countries in Southeast Asia.

With the routes from India to Myanmar favourable, Indian influence arrived in Myanmar as well as in other countries of Southeast Asia. There are two root causes why Indian influences arrived in Myanmar:

- a. the propelling forces in India,
- b. the forces of attraction in Myanmar

The idea of propelling forces in India driving Indians oversea to Myanmar is based on the hypothesis that a large number of Indians firstly fled their motherland due to the attack of King Aśoka (c. 269-232 B.C.) in the Kalinga campaign and secondly, from the Kushan invasion of northern India during the first century A.D. Indologists, however, dispute the two theories. G Coedès arguing against the two hypotheses, gives the view that a large number of Indians might not have migrated into Southeast Asian countries but that the Indian influence in Southeast Asia might be based on commercial relations between India and countries in Southeast Asia.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the politics of India did not act as a propelling force. Moreover, on the side of Southeast Asia, there are no real archaeological or literary evidences of significant Indian cultural influence until the opening of the Christian era. It seems more probable, that Indianization started in the period from the first century B.C. to the first century A.D.

On the side of Myanmar, there must have been strong forces of attraction based on powerful economic and intellectual factors. A

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<sup>37</sup> G. Coedès, 1971, *Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, ed. Walter F. Vella, trans. Susan Brown Cowing, Honolulu: the University Press of Hawaii, pp.19f.

theory suggests that the Indian Brahmans chose Myanmar in preference to their native land,<sup>38</sup> and were able to extend an influence in the Myanmar court because they were given a high position at the Myanmar court. Therefore D.G.E Hall in his *A History of South East Asia* writes:

. . . The South-East Asian people over a long period of their early history absorbed into their traditional culture patterns imported Buddhist and Hindu elements.<sup>38</sup>

Also, R.C. Majumdar uses the term ancient Indian colonies for the nations of Southeast Asia and notes:

. . . They were peopled by primitive races and held almost a monopoly of the world's spice trade. These fertile tracts were also rich in minerals and soon drew attention of the Indians.<sup>39</sup>

According to R. C. Majumdar, the national resources in Southeast Asia were richer than in India and attracted the Indians to Myanmar. When the sea route between India and Myanmar developed in the early Christian era, it coincided with the founding of city-states in Southeast Asia. The city-states gave an impetus to nation building and the royal residences developed a new culture with the blending of native customs and Hindu and Buddhist elements.

G.Coedès enumerates the four points that rose with the coming of Indian influence in Southeast Asia:

- (a) a conception of royalty characterized by Hindu or Buddhist cults,
- (b) literary expression by means of the Sanskrit language,
- (c) a mythology taken from the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābharata, the Purāṇas and other Sanskrit texts containing a nucleus of royal

<sup>38</sup> D.G.E Hall, 1964, *A History of South East Asia*, London: Mac millan & Co. Ltd.,p.211.

<sup>39</sup> R. C. Majumdar, 1955, *Ancient Indian Colonization in Southeast Asia*, Culcatta: University of Baroda Press, p. 211.

families of the Ganges region, and,

- (d) the observance of the Dharmaśāstras, the sacred law of Hinduism and in particular the Manava Dharmaśāstras or "Law of Manu".<sup>40</sup>

Coedès view sounds reasonable and coheres with the cultural configuration in Southeast Asia. He also points out that it was the Indian priests and literati who chiefly disseminated Indian culture in Southeast Asia.<sup>41</sup>

The fact of Indian cultural influence in Southeast Asia must not be taken to mean that the original inhabitants of the region were devoid of all culture.

The acceptance of Indian culture in Southeast Asia resulted in the interaction of native and foreign cultural elements in the region.<sup>42</sup> Firstly, looking at the art of writing, the people of the region adopted Indian scripts to write down their various languages. Southeast Asian scripts have a South Indian origin with the Pallava script having a predominant influence. The earliest surviving Southeast Asian inscriptions found in Myanmar, Borneo and Malay dating from the 4th or 5th century imitated Brahmi-derived scripts: Kadamba, Pallava and Devanagari etc. In Myanmar, the paleography of the fourth to sixth century A.D. found in Vesālī (Rakhine) is in Sanskrit mixed with Pāli. The script is similar to the Gupta script descended from Brāhmī.<sup>43</sup> Pyu writing of A.D. 400 to 600 as found in stone inscriptions and extracts

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<sup>40</sup> Hall, *HSEA*, p. 18.

(b) Coedes, *ISSEA*, p. 33,254.

<sup>41</sup> Coedes, *ISSEA*, p.22.

<sup>42</sup> qP.N.Z. Chopra et. al., 1979, *History of South India*, Vol. I, New Delhi: S. Chand Z. Co.Ltd., p.215.

<sup>43</sup> San Tha Aung, 1974, *Alphabet of Rakhine in the pre-Sixth and Sixth Century A.D.* (in Myanmar), Yangon: Thinn Books, pp.91-96.



from the Theravāda Piṭakas on gold plates—is found along the Ayeyawady Valley.

The earliest Mon writing and script are similar to the Pallava script of the sixth century A.D.<sup>44</sup> A three-line inscription of 'Śri Para-meśvara' dated by Dr. Barnett was sixth to seventh century A.D. remains on the lime stone scarp of Kawgun Cave, 38 miles above Martaban.<sup>45</sup> Thus, paleographical evidences show that Southeast Asian scripts were not free of the influence of contemporary Indian scripts. Moreover, the oldest Buddhist image found at Thaton is the Late Gupta bronze standing Buddha now at Saddhammajotika monastery, coated with greenish enamel.<sup>46</sup>

Secondly, Indian cultural influence in Southeast Asian is shown in the form of Brahmanical and Buddhist icons in the Gupta style. Amarāvātī (A.D. 150-250)'s prestige was also associated with epigraphy as shown in the name "Saṅghasiri" on a seal excavated at Viṣṇu city of central Myanmar. A stupa plinth at Viṣṇu is reminiscent of the stupas of Nāgajunakonda, Guntun district, South India. An image of the Buddha excavated at Śrīkṣetra can also be identified with the Gupta style.

Thirdly, Indian toponyms in Myanmar and other countries of Southeast Asia belong both to south and to north India, viz:

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Ayeyawady: | The river Ayeyawady, an ancient name of the Indian river Ravi                        |
| Ālavī:     | An extensive tract of Shan States – Moe-tha, Khantee Maing Lon, Moe-sit, Htat Khaung |

<sup>44</sup> *ASB*, (1926-27), p. 178-180.

<sup>45</sup> G. H. Luce, "Advent of Buddhism in Burma", p. 20.

(b) G.H Luce, "Mons of the Pagan Dynasty", p.4.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p.21.

- Aparanta:** A Bama province – Saku, Salin, Baunglin, Legaing, Thaung-Thwut
- Asitañjana:** A town near the present Yangon
- Avanti:** A town in Rakhine, to the west of the Kacchapa River; its capital was Ujjeni (Ujin) also called Avanti.
- Baranasī:** A small place in Taunggu District; it derived its name from the famous Varanasi in India
- Beithano – myo:** An equivalent of Viṣṇupūra, that is, the City of Viṣṇu
- Campanago:** The name of Bhamo; it was derived from Campanagara, about four miles from Bhagalapur on the Ganges
- Dhaññawatī,** One of the names of Rakhine; it is also said to have been a name of Sittway
- Dvāravatī** Name of the modern Thantwe in Rakhine, probably the earliest capital of Rakhine. The name has been taken from the Ghata Jātaka (No. 454)– This Jātaka mentions Dvāravatī as being the same as Dvāraka. Dvāravatī is now Dwarka in Gujerat
- Gandhalarij:** A small town in Rakhine, to the west of the Kacchapa River. This name is better known to the Myanmar as an appellation of Yunnan
- Gantaravatī:** Name of the Eastern Kayah State. “Gantara” is also taken as a form Gandhāra
- Hamsāvatī:** The Bago Province, it has no counterpart in India. The old site of Halingyi was also known as Hamsanagara
- Jeyavaddhana:** The name of Taung-gu region; it does not appear in ancient Indian geography.

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Kamboja    | Shan States in the extreme north-west of India and part of Afghanistan   |
| Kusimā     | The modern Pathein; Kuśimāpūra was one of the names of Pātaliputra, now Patna, India.  |
| Mahimsaka  | Moegoke, Kyatpyin and several other small towns; it was the name of the country of the Āndhras. It is mentioned several times in the Jātakas.  |
| Mithilā:   | Name of the well-known Meithila  |
| Pokkhara:  | An old name of Dala; it is taken from the ancient capital of Gandhara  |
| Rājagiri:  | Kaletaung-nyo in the Kale Township, Upper Chindwin is also called Yazagyo. It is also taken from modern Rājagiri, the capital of Magadha (Bihar), founded by King Bimbisāra  |
| Śrīkṣetra: | A very close approximation to the Sanskrit Śrīkṣetra; the Panjab was known to the Panjab Hindus of the period of the Yajur-veda; Śrīkṣetra is also probably on the analogy of Kuru-Ksetra, the scene of the great battle which forms the main subject of the Mahābharata |
| Ukkala:    | South-west of Yangon to and beyond Twantay. It was the name of Orissa. "Ukkala" is derived from Sanskrit. In this land, there is a race of cultivators even today known as Kaliṅga   |
| Veśālī:    | Name of the old capital of Rakhine; it is identified with the old Indian City of Veśālī is modern Basarh in the District of Mozaffarpur. <sup>47</sup>   |

<sup>47</sup> *ASB (1923)*, pp. 17-22.

(b) Radha Kumad Mookerji, 1949, *History of Orissa*, Lucknow: Lucknow University Publishing, pp.1-9.

Also, an Indian scholar, D.P. Singhal in his *India and World Civilization*, his account that the land route between India and Myanmar began in very ancient times but communications developed by sea rather than by land because Myanmar lay across the highly inaccessible Assam and Manipur hills and the Rakhine hill ranges. In contrast, the sea route to Lower Myanmar was relatively easy. Furthermore, historical evidences of Indo-Myanmar cultural contact about the fifth century onwards are definite.<sup>48</sup> He shows the six main waves of Indian cultural expansion as follows:

1. the Amarāvati in the second and third centuries,
2. the Gupta from the fourth to the sixth centuries,
3. the Pallava from about 550 to 750 A.D,
4. the Pāla from about 750 to 900,
5. post-Nalanda University ( 12th-13th centuries A.D), and
6. Indian Islam (12th-13th centuries A.D.)<sup>49</sup>

Before the eleventh century A.D, in otherword the pre-Anuruddha period, Myanmar, especially Lower Myanmar, has a well trade route by sea voyage. Consequently, there can be studied contemporary records written by travellers from Arab, Persian and Turkish. They tell us that, Bago, the Rahmā or Mon kingdom was a great and prosperous country, possessed a numerous army in which are formed with elephants and numerous camp followers who numbered nearly 10,000. There were frequent wars between Rahmā (Ramaññadesa) and Indian princes due to the outbreak of invasion the country for its products. During the second half of the 11th century the pestilence devastated the land. At that time of this pestilence, the country was governed by a queen. Their voyage travelogues mention the major export commodities from Ramaññadesa, i.e. gold powder, silver, rhinocer-

<sup>48</sup> D.P. Singhal, 1972, *India and World Civilization*, London: Rupa & Co.,p.95.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid,p. 94.

os' horns, aloe<sup>50</sup>, cloth, gold and silver ornaments which they much prized.<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, Lower Myanmar was more easily accessible by sea than Upper Burma, through the mountains on its north-western and north-eastern frontiers.

### **Retrospective Background of the Mons<sup>52</sup>**

Fundamentally, *Homo sapiens*, direct ancestor of our own subspecies, evolved about two hundred thousand years ago in east Africa, so that all humankind derived from the same in origin.

Subsequently, a large number of human races have evolved their own systems of culture due to two major factors: the geographical complexion in which they settle and their own inherent strength. Also, languages, oral gestures, developed in different races, i.e. subdivision of a species. We can identify several racial groups, namely the Caucasians, Mongolians, Negroes and Austroloids.

### **Origin of the Mons**

The Red river valley of Vietnam probably was the homeland of the Austroloids and the people became linguistically divided into two groups namely the Austroasiatic, who live on the mainland of Southeast Asia, and the Austronesians who went on to the islands. Based on linguistic diversification within the same group, racial diversity appeared in the peoples. Again, the Austroasiatics diversified into eight families:

1. the Mon in Myanmar and Thailand,
2. the Khmer in Cambodia,
3. the Annam in the Red River valley in North Vietnam,

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<sup>50</sup> Thick leaf in tropical plant

<sup>51</sup> *Report of the Superintendent, Archaeological Survey, Burma, 1916*, Yangon: Government Printing, p.17.

<sup>52</sup> Read at Historical Heritages of the Old Mon Conference, with Professor Dr. Aung Myat Kyaw Sein, Pro-Rector, Mawlamyine University, U San Win, Part-Time Member, Myanmar Historical Commission, Ministry of Culture in the chair, held at Konzidiun Hall, Mawlamyine, on 28 January 2014

4. the Palaung or Ta'ang on the Shan Plateau, Yunnan Province of China and Northern Thailand,
5. the Lawa (now Laos) on the eastern bank of the Thanlwin River,
6. the aboriginal Munda in Assam, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh,
7. the Nicobar in the Nicobar Islands,<sup>53</sup>
8. the Khasi in Assam and in the West of Manipur of India and Bangladesh, etc.<sup>54</sup>

With regard to the origin of the Mons, the Rakhine scholar U Shwe Zan Aung put forward the hypothesis of a linguistic connection with the Monghir in Bihar on the southern bank of the river Ganges (Bengal). He made a studied guess. Their original homeland probably was in the Mon-yul district of Tibet before they migrated into the plains of Indo-Myanmar. The Pyus followed them. After arriving in Myanmar, they were introduced to South Indian civilization before Pali was introduced. They later influenced Myanmar and were influenced by the Burmans.<sup>55</sup> His hypothesis had a match in Luce who showed that there were Mon loanwords in the languages of racial stocks of Myanmar. Similarly, some rounded edge-ground axes, stone tools in the Neolithic period founded in Assam, belong to the Mon-Khmer of Malaya. About the tools, Indian archaeologists suggest that some

<sup>53</sup> Kaushal Kumar Mothur, 1967, *Nicobar Islands*, New Delhi: National Book Trust, p.45f.

<sup>54</sup> U Pe Maung Tin, 1958, *World Philology*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Sarpay Biman Books, pp.33ff.(b) S.L. Baruah, 2002, *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, New Delhi: Munshiram Monoharlal Publisher Pvt. Ltd. pp. 59.

(c) P.R.T. Gurdon, Lieutent Colonel, 1914, *The Khasis*, London: Macmilan and Co. Ltd., pp. 17, 200f.

<sup>55</sup> Shwe Zan Aung, 1921, "The Influence of Bengal on the Mon Language of Indo-Burmese", *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Vol. II, p.119-122.

branch of the Mon-Khmers may have passed through the Naga Hills and eastern Bengal before they had learnt the use of iron.<sup>56</sup>

Among the ethnic families, the Mons had their homeland in Si T'ep, P'ra Pathom, and P'ong Tük in the Menam valley as far north as Lamp'ün (Haripuñjaya), founded by Cāmadevī about the 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. In Lower Central Thailand, Dvāravatī founded by the Mons became a Theravada stronghold and the source of Mon inscriptions. Also, the iconographic style of the kingdom belongs to the people. During the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Mon kingdom of Dvāravatī was at its height. In the Lower Menam, Lopburi (Lavapura, city of Lawas) was founded by the Wa-Palaung whose language is cognate to the Mons. Also there, the Mons left behind their inscription, which belongs to the 8th century A.D.<sup>57</sup> Scholars in Thailand think that the art of Dvāravatī flourished in Southern Myanmar although it was conquered by the Myanmar in the eleventh century.<sup>58</sup> If that was so, the Mons probably migrated into Myanmar by fanwise ways: one from the West of Myanmar into the Ayeyarwady valley, the other, from Annam to the Menam valley and then continuing to Lower Myanmar. In this regard, also, Nai Pan Hla has suggested that the homeland of the Mons was the Tonkin basin as hypothesized by Luce, his teacher.<sup>59</sup> I think that the Mons traditionally have a memory of their migration in their old songs. Their

<sup>56</sup> Baruah, 2002: 59-66.

(b) K.R. Dikshit and Jutta K. Dikshit, 2014, *North-East India: Land, People and Economy*, New York: Springer, p. 274.

<sup>57</sup> Reginald Le May, 1938, *A Concise History of Buddhist Art in Siam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 21.

(b) D.G.E. Hall, 1964, *Southeast Asia History*, London: Mac Millan & Co. Ltd., p. 36.

(G. H. Luce, 1953, "Mons of the Pagan Dynasty", *Journal of Burma Research Society*. Vol. XXXVI, Part, 1, p. 2)

<sup>58</sup> Aschwin Lippe, 1961, "A Dvaravti Bronze Buddha from Thailand", *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. XIX, P. 125. (125-131)

<sup>59</sup> Dr. Nai Pan Hla, 2013, *A Short Mon History*, Yangon: MKS, p.2.

mothers sing three nursery songs when they put her child to sleep.<sup>60</sup> The text of the songs bear on their origins and the causes why their ancestors migrated to the present settlements. The first route was the way of the Mon Daih [one of the Old Mon families] who migrated from the bank of the river Godavari to Balu Kyun (Island of Orgers) in Zayyar [Tanintharyi]: it was an unfortunate separation from their lord. The second route was that of the Mon Duih, it was from the river Ganges akin to the Mahānadī to Lagum [Trigumba/Yangon]: it was an unfortunate separation from their parents. The last route originated from Tilaṅgaṇa (Tiuk Luṅgaṇa): as their lord fell in battle, unfortunately they fled into Suvannā, splendid land, where was a laterite cape. The three cradle songs show the origin of the Mon Nā.<sup>61</sup>

When the Mons founded Suvannabhūmi (Thaton), the Rakhasī, sea orgers who probably were cannibals on the Sumatra archipelago, often attacked them. Ptolemy, Alexandrian scholar, mentioned in his record that the cannibals also lived in the Ayeyarwady delta.<sup>62</sup> Scholars guess that the cannibals probably were the Salon, sea-gypsy, and the Negritos. Accordingly, among the spirits of Mon tradition

<sup>60</sup> Dr. Nai Pan Hla, 2011, *Archaeological Aspects of Pyu-Mon and Myanmar*, Yangon: Thin Sapay Books, p.69f.

<sup>61</sup> U Mya, 1961, *Old Myanmar Scripts*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Govt. Printing, p.17.

<sup>62</sup> Taw Sein Ko, ed., 1892, *Kalyani Inscriptions erected by King Dhammaceti at Pegu in 1476 A.D.*, Yangon: Govt. Printing, p.47f.

(b) D.G.E Hall, *History of Burma*, translated into Myanmar by U Oun Maung, Yangon: Seitkoo Cho Cho Books, 2015 Reprinted, p.2

*Mon Yazawin*, (in Myanmar), palm-leaf manuscript no. *lin* 135, p. *ka* tecto, II. No. 1-7, National Library, Yangon.

See also *Mon Yazawin*, (the Mon Chronicle in Myanmar), Yangon: MKS, 2014, p.25f.

See also *A Chronicle of the Mons*, translated into English by Tun Aung Chain, Yangon: SEAMEO, 2010.



there is a *kalok dāk*, 'water demon', *balu* in Myanmar.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, 'Balukyun', Island of Orger at the mouth of Than lwin river, was called 'Semang' in Old Mon. According to the song, Balukyun was an island of the Salon people.<sup>64</sup>

Although the three nursery songs are merely part of folklore, these are very reliable in the view of modern historians. In the folklore, their places are located on laterite soil and created their art out of laterite. Their ancestors left behind their settlements in Mon, i.e. Krikumbha for Yangon, Guswaygatuim for Thaton, Motlamlem for Mawlamyine, In Siñ for Insein, Twān de for Twante, Kruñ braw for Kyunpyaw etc.<sup>65</sup>

### Origin of the Mons: Luce's hypothesis

In addition, they occupied around the Gulf of Mataban. Their archaic name Rmañ left behind on the Old Mon Inscription erected by King Kyansittha in 1102 A.D. Professor G. H. Luce believes that the Mons were the oldest people of the present inhabitants of Myanmar and must once have spread all over Myanmar where they were pioneers in the cultivation of beans and rice. Luce linguistically found some Mon loanwords in the other national races of Myanmar, i.e Kachin, Kayin (Sghaw, Pwo, Pa-O and Kayan), Chin (Northern and Southern Chin),

<sup>63</sup> R. Halliday, 1917, *The Talaings*, Yangon: Govt. Printing, p.94f.

<sup>64</sup> Dr. Nai Pan Hla, 1985, "Valuable and Historic Votive Tablets" *Journal of History*, in Myanmar, Vol. III, Pt. I, December, *A Collection of Research Papers*, Yangon: Ahmanthit Books, 2006 Reprinted, in p.296.

<sup>65</sup> U May Oung, 1917, "Some Mon Place-Names", *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Vol. VII, pp. 143-145.

(b) R Halliday, 1930, "Talaing Place-Names in Burmese", *Journal of Burma Research Society* Vol. XX, Pt. I, pp.22-23.

© Saya Lun, 1905, *History of Moulmein*, (in Myanmar), Mawlamyine: Myanmar Times News Press, p. 106. 2016 Reprinted.

Bamar, and Shan. Mon influence, he points out, is very deep in Kayin language. He says, "The more you study the languages of Myanmar, the more widespread you will find the culture of the Mons."<sup>66</sup> The different ethnic groups—the Mons, the Pa-O, the Sghaw and the Pwo Kayins, the Bamar etc.—settled together in different parts of modern Thaton; perhaps, there had been a plural society since proto-history but it also quite certain was that there had been undesirable struggles against one another.

According to contemporary source of the Chinese annals, the Pyus, aboriginal Tibeto-Burman who were linguistically close to the Pwo Kayins, settled in Thaton. Chinese annals mention the name of the city as Louman.<sup>67</sup> However, Than Tun who referring to U Yi Sein's "Pyu Outpost Towns" is of the opinion that the Chinese who left their records that never visited Myanmar and had to depend on frontier informants with whom they came in contact. For instance, Fan Ch'o, author of the *Man-shu* (863 A.D), thought that the Chintwin flowed into the sea.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, there are no remains of Pyu inscriptions in Lower Myanmar.

### The Mons in Kyaukse

There were old Mons villages in north and northwest Kyaukse, at the confluence of the two rivers Myitnge and Samon where the place was called "taluiñ rwāma arap" (a large village of the Talaings, now the Mons) in Myanmar Inscriptions of A.D 1264.<sup>69</sup> The two important

<sup>66</sup> G. H. Luce, 1953, "Mons of Pagan Dynasty", *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Vol. XXXVI, Part, 1, p.1.

<sup>67</sup> Dr. Than Tun, 2006, *Where did the Pyus disappear?*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Thiriswe Books, p.99.

<sup>68</sup> G. H. Luce, 2014, "The Advent of Buddhism in Burma", *Myanmar Study Journal*, No. 2, June, p. 18.

<sup>69</sup> U Nyein Maung, ed., 1965, *Ancient Myanmar Inscriptions*, Vol. 3, p. 9-12f. (in Myanmar)

words of Theravāda Buddhism, *Mahāthe* (the Elder Monk) and *bhaddasimā* (Permanent Ordination House), are mentioned in an old Mon Inscription found at Kyaukse.<sup>70</sup> Luce believes that Myanmar adopted, not Pyu writing, but Mon although the two peoples were closely kin to the Pyu in language.<sup>71</sup>

On the basis of their settlement in close proximity Myanmar was settled not only by the Mons but also by other ethnics and nationalities, i.e.

- the Chin in the Chindwin valley,
- the Cakraw ( Sghaw Kayin),
- the Ciun ( Chinese),
- the Kantū ( Kadu),
- the Kayin,
- the Kulā ( Indian),
- the Krwam (Cambodia),
- the Mirma ( the Myanmar called as by the Mons),
- the Rakhiñe,
- the Sew (?),
- the Syam ( Shan),
- the Taruk (Mongolian),
- the Tircul ( the Pyu called by the Mons) and
- the Yao.

### Mon Inscriptions in Myanmar and Thailand

"Epigraphy is the safest evidence in protohistory," said C.O. Blagden who was a pioneer of the decipherment of Pyu and Mon inscriptions

<sup>70</sup> U Chit Thein, ed., "Kyaukse Mon Inscription", *Ancient Mon Inscriptions*, (in Mon & translation into Myanmar) p. 58.

<sup>71</sup> G.H Luce, 1953, Mons of the Pagan Dynasty, *Journal of Burma Research Society*. Vol. XXXVI, Part 1, p.3.

in the early 1900s. As early writing provides vital facts, chronological, communications, titles, totems, notices, names, religious and biographical, epigraphy is indeed the most important source of early history.

Old Mon inscriptions in coastal Myanmar show that there had been an ancient Mon civilization established there. In Kawgun Cave, not only is the name Śrīparamesvāra (sixth century A.D.) inscribed but also is a longer Mon inscription on the inner hem of the robe of a standing Buddha in high relief. The inscription reads as follows-“This image of the Buddha (kyāk), it was I, queen of Martaban (?) dwelling in the town of Du’wop, who carved it and made this holy Buddha. The (votive tablets?) of earth and Buddhas of stone which dwell either in Du’wop or (elsewhere?) in the kingdom, it was I and my followers alone who carried them. May there come (or There will come) other teachers who carve Buddhas of stone.”<sup>72</sup> There is identical inscription at Shwesaryan pagoda in Thaton. Paleographically, the two inscriptions belong to the early eleventh century A.D.<sup>73</sup>

Other important inscriptions in Old Mon are the two on the reverse of votive tablets found at Kyaikkathar in 1979, the largest walled-habitation in Lower Myanmar, near the mouth of Sittaung River, which is possibly Old Thaton. According to Nai Pan Hla, the two inscriptions are close to the Old Mon inscription found at Dvāravatī.<sup>74</sup> Regard the short Mon inscriptions, Donald M. Stadtner also believes that the presence of Mon Buddhist culture in the Thaton area emerged in the first millennium.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p.5.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p.5 (b) G. H. Luce, 2014, “The Advent of Buddhism in Burma”, *Myanmar Study Journal*, Vol. 2, Yangon:, p.20.

<sup>74</sup> Dr. Nai Pan Hla, 1957, *A Collection of Recent Papers*, (in Myanmar), p.300,

<sup>75</sup> Donald M. Stadtner, 2011:38.

Three contemporary inscriptions are vital for the early Mon period. These are placed under shelter in the precinct of the Shwesaryan Pagoda, Thaton. One is almost illegible. Another inscription which has reliefs of three seated Buddha at its top in *dharmacakra mudrā* has some Old Mon words, Krom, Syam, Lwa and Ja'ba—referring to the racial names of neighbouring countries of the Mons: the Lwa (Wa) for Lava (Lopburi), Krom(Gyun) for the Khmers in Cambodia, Syam for the Thais and Jaba for possibly Javanese. The inscription is also partially illegible and is called the Trāp (Lord) inscription. The third inscription is in mixed Pali and Old Mon.<sup>76</sup>

Mon inscriptions are found not only at Thaton but also Upper Myanmar. At Bagan, King Kyansittha [Thi Lwin Mañ, 1084-1113A.D] writing in Old Mon, left behind these inscriptions; all of high literary standards:

- a. Inscription at the Shwezigon pagoda, Nyaung Oo,
  - b. Palace Inscriptions now at the Bagan Museum,
  - c. other inscriptions in Lower Myanmar,
- e.g. those on the lower platform of the Shwesandaw pagoda, Pyay, at Myatheindan pagoda, Ayetthema village (now in the Yangon University Library), and at Kyaiktè pagoda, Alugalè village, Thaton district at Myathabeik pagoda, and Nyaung Waing monastery, (now in the *Dhammayon Wat*, Shwesaryan pagoda) Thaton etc. are all in Old Mon of high literary standard. With regard to the Mons in Bagan, Luce and Ba Shin comment as follows:

... apart from a little Pyu, Pali and Sanskrit, Old Mon, therefore, was then the language of the inscriptions and probably the official language at the court of King Kyansittha. This is the period when "Old Mon" type of architecture, the "Old Mon" type of sculpture

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<sup>76</sup> U Chit Thein, ed. & trans., 1965, *The Anthology of Mon Inscriptions*, (in Mon & Myanmar), p.1-5.

and painting and Old Mon writing flourished and it has been appropriately called "the Mon Sub-Period" of Bagan dynasty by G.H. Luce.<sup>77</sup>

The geographical range of Old Mon epigraphs extends from Upper Myanmar to Thailand. Mon inscriptions have been found in the following areas:

1. Ayetthema village (near Bilin),<sup>78</sup>
2. Bago ( Hamsavati),
3. Bagan (Arimaddhanapura),
4. Botahtaung ( in Yangon),
5. Chaiyā ( southernmost Thailand),
6. Hpa-kat in Hpa-an (Donwun),
7. Kalay in the Chindwin basin,
8. Kyuntu, Waw,
9. Kyaukse,
10. Kyaikkathar, ( Old Thaton),
11. Kyaikmaraw,
12. Lamphum (Haripuñja),<sup>79</sup>
13. Lopburi (Lavapūra, in 30 miles due N. of Thailand),
14. Mawlamyine,
15. Moe Mait in northern Shan,
16. Mokti in Dawei district,
17. Myeik (Mergue),
18. Myittha, Kyaukse district (recent finding in Petaw Parahita Monastery on 4 November),
19. Nakhòn Sī Thammarāt ( Southernmost Thailand),

<sup>77</sup> Ba Shin, 1962: *Lokahteikpan*, 23.

<sup>78</sup> See Pe Maung Tin, 1938, "A Mon Inscription by Kyanzitha at Ayetthema Hill", *Journal of Burma Research Society*. Vol. XXVIII, p.92-94.

<sup>79</sup> U Mya, 1961, *Ancient Myanmar Alphabets* (in Myanmar), Govt. Printing, p.4f.

20. Pa Thein ( Kusimā in the Ayeyarwady delta),
21. P'ra Pathom ( Nakon Pathom/ Nagara Pathama),
22. P'ong Tük ( in Thailand),
23. Shwesandaw Pagoda (in Pyay),
24. Shwedagon Pagoda,
25. Si T'ep (in Thailand),
26. Tharzi,
27. Thaton ( Suddhammavati/Suvaṇṇabhūmi),
28. Twante (Tala), and
29. Ū Thòng ( in Thailand)
30. Wann Twin, and
31. Winka village ( near Bilin)

### **Scholarly Interest in the Mons**

With Mon cultural remains are rich in mainland Southeast Asia, their studies has had great academic attraction. Scholars who undertook Mon studies include Europeans, Thais, Mons and Myanmars—U Mya who was for years Duroisele's assistant, tireless and self-effacing, G.H.Luce, George Coedes, ( scholar in Thailand), Dr. Hla Pe ( scholar in Myanmar language and literature), Charles Otto Blagden, John.Alexander Stewart, Robert Halliday, Harry Leonard Shorto, a Mon epigraphic lexicographer, Nai Pan Hla, Bohmu Ba Shin who did research on Bagan and assisted his teacher Luce, Pe Maung Tin, U Shwe Zan Aung, a Rakhine scholar who did Mon toponum), U May Oung, U Lu Pe Win, Hmawbi Sayar Thein and, Dr. Than Tun, who was a great historian etc.—have produced academic writings dealing with Mon loanwords in Myanmar, Mon toponyms, Mon Inscriptions, and

Mon folklore.<sup>80</sup>

Of these scholars, a deep gratitude is owed for the study of Old Mon to the scholar C.O Blagden who has been termed a Sherlock Holmes in the study of Pyu and Mon epigraphs by Luce. He was a brilliant pioneer and linguist who provided the key to the reading of the Old Mon and deciphered what we know of Pyu. No one so far has been able to go further in the study of the Pyu language. His scholarship rised the cultural prestige of Myanmar and encouraged further researchers. However, he has at modest with regard with his achievement. He noted that his endeavor of decipherment had made ones a very little progress. However, it is sad that the two scholars— C.O Blagden and G. H. Luce—has been accused of who fabrication with regard to Myanmar history.

### The Mon Period-Periodization

Scholars usually specialize when they do research on Mon studies: history, polical science, sociology, linguastics, anthropology, archaeology, culture, iconography, epigraphy and so on. Their field of study is usually limited to a certain duration or location because research must have a defined scope. Accordingly, H.L Shorto, a prominent lexicographer in Mon inscriptions, he provides the following the Mon chronological order on the basis of epigraphy:

1. Nakhon Pathom( sixth century A.D),
2. Lopburi: (seventh century A.D),
3. Three-line Inscription of 'Parameśvāra' on the scarp of Kawgun Cave, two miles from Hpa-kap,<sup>81</sup>
4. The Trāp Inscription at the Shwesaryan pagoda, Thaton (elev

<sup>80</sup> *Journal Burma Research Society*, Vol. 36: 1953-Vol. 12: 1922-Vol. 22: 1932-Vol. 5: 1915-Vol.11: 1921-Vol. 7: 1917.

<sup>81</sup> It is not mentioned in the list of Mon Inscriptions done by H.L Shorto.



- enth century A.D),
5. The Paṇḍit Inscription at the Shwesaryan pagoda, Thaton (eleventh century A.D),
  6. Thaton III: parallel text to 4, at the Shwesaryan pagoda, Thaton (eleventh century A.D),
  7. Pl. 360a: on the robe of a standing Buddha at Kawgun cave, Hpakat, IB, and Portfolio IV. Cf.7, (eleventh century A.D),
  8. Pl.360b: on a carved stone at the Shwesaryan pagoda, (eleventh century A.D),
  9. On the robe of a brahmanical statue at Kawgun cave (four lines) (eleventh century A.D),
  10. Pl.360d: at the Shwesaryan pagoda, referring like 6-8 to a town Du'wop, IB, Portfolio IV,
  11. Pl. 360c: on a boundary pillar at the NW, corner of the Kalyani Thein, Thaton, Ib.,
  12. Thirty seven Old Mon lithic and Ink-Inscriptions of Kyansittha in Bagan (1084-1113),
  13. Eleven Old Mon Inscriptions of Lamphun (early thirteenth century),
  14. Twenty seven Middle Mon Inscriptions of Dhammaceti, and
  15. Eleven Later Middle Mon Inscriptions.<sup>82</sup>

Regarding to the Old Mon Period, Emmanuel Guillon, a French scholar who is a friend of G.H Luce and Nai Pan Hla, divided it into four periods:

1. Old Mon I or Proto-Mon (5th-6th century A.D),
2. Old Mon II( mid-11th-end of 12th century A.D),
3. Old Mon III ( I and II and the end of 13th century A.D),

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<sup>82</sup> H.L Shorto, 1971, *A Dictionary of the Mon Inscriptions*, London: Oxford University Press, p.XXVIII-XXXI

4. Old Mon IV or Middle Mon (13th-14th century A.D).<sup>83</sup>

In the first stage, the first three periods--Old Mon I, II and III Periods--range from Thailand to the whole Myanmar. Thai scholars, therefore, usually label the Periods pre-Thai period because during the seventh to the ninth century the Mons were the major ethnic group in the Central Plain before the establishment of the Thais. There were Sanskrit and Pāli influences in the writing of Old Mon I Period. In art, the Amarāvati school of India (2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century A.D) dominated in Ū Thòng. Reginald Le May names it Pure Indian Period from India itself-up to the fifth century A.D. A small bronze statue of the Buddha in the Amarāvati style has been found in P'ong Tük, about 10 miles along the road to Kānburi in 1927. It is the most ancient artifact of the Old Mon Period.<sup>84</sup> In addition, he showed that there was a link between Amaravati and P'ong Tük which passed through to Martaban, which, rather than Mawlamyine a useful port for Thailand for a long time, and the starting point of the overland caravan route from Lower Myanmar to Chiangmai in Northern Thailand, via Kawkareik and Raheng. This area was probably as the earliest place of Mon Buddhism. However, Le May is unwilling to accept it as such because no inscriptions have been found there. Following him, Thai scholars believe to be the earliest homeland, with the ships from India firstly landing at Martaban and then continuing in their journey from.

In the Old Mon Period II, mid 11th --end of 12th century A.D, reached Mon civilization a climax during the reign of Kyansittha. The Ananda temple, Kyansittha's masterpiece, is the "Old Mon" style of architecture. Luce gives us his analysis of Mon architecture based on

<sup>83</sup> Emmanuel Guillon, 1989, *The Mons: A Civilization of Southeast Asia*, translated into English by James v. Di Crocco, Bangkok: the Siam Society, p.81ff.

<sup>84</sup> Reginald Le May, 1938, *A Concise History of Buddhist Art in Siam*, Cambridge: at the University Press, p.15f.

three obvious points:

1. the round “Bell” or the mitre-shaped Śikhara,
2. the dark central temple, and
3. perforated windows or Corridor windows.

There are many structures in “Old Mon” style in Bagan, i.e.

1. Abeyadana,
2. Alopyi,
3. Hlaing Shè Gu, S.E. of Alopyi,
4. Kyazin (no.55), N. E. of Nagayon,
5. Mon Gu, a small temple, S.E. of Lokananda,
6. Myakan Stone Library, N. W. foot of Mt. Tuywindaung,
7. Myingaba Gupyaukgyi,
8. Nagayon,
9. Pahtotharmyar
10. Pitakat Taik
11. Seinnyet Nyima, S. of the Naagayon etc.<sup>85</sup>

A strict consideration is needed for Thaton, an ancient center of the Mons, and its vicinity—Kawgun Cave 28 miles above Martaban, Zokthok, Kawkareik, and Three Pagoda Pass because Paramesvāra inscription the sixth-seventh century is on the scrap of Kawgun Cave. It therefore belongs to the Old Mon I Period. Moreover, Nai Pan Hla also divides the periods of the Mon:

1. Dvārāvātī Period ( 600-1000 A.D),
2. Thaton Period (1000-1100 A.D),
3. Bagan Period , heyday of the Old Mon, (1100-1200 A.D),
4. Haripuñcaya Period or Lamphun ( 1200-1300 A.D),
5. Hamsāvātī Period or Bago ( 1300-1500A.D),and

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<sup>85</sup> Luce, *OBEP*, I, pp.258-401.

## 6. Modern Mon Period ( 1500-1900 A.D) <sup>86</sup>

However, his determination of the Mon chronology should be corrected because the Thaton Period, which he gives as starting from 1000A.D, is very late. Instead, we should start the Thaton Period, which began in the eighth century.

In his chronological order, Reginald Le May shows the Dvāra-vaṭī Period after P'ong Tūk (2nd century A.D) to be a period of pure Indian art. He believes that Gupta art must have come via the port of Tāmralipti in Bengal to Martaban in Lower Myanmar in order to reach Thailand.<sup>87</sup> On this route, Martaban was a major seaport throughout the succeeding periods. The Telegus in India even gives the name of the seaport. The Mons calls it Mūtaman. Europeans recorded it as Martaman, Martabano, Martauan, Mortavan, Merdebani, Merdebania, Martavana in the 1500s-1600s.<sup>88</sup>

## The Studies of Mon Votive Tablets

In many numbers of excavations carried out in Bagan and its vicinity, a large number of remains are terracotta votive tablets with inscriptions in Pyu, Mon and Myanmar.<sup>89</sup> Among the artifacts, there are one thousand and five hundred votive tablets with inscription in old Mon script<sup>90</sup> but the work on study of Mon votive tablets does not appear. U Myint Aung, an outstanding archaeologist in Myanmar, mentioned as follows in his *Anthology of Archaeological Articles* (in Myanmar):

<sup>86</sup> Dr. Nai Pan Hla, 1969, 'Mon Language and Inscriptions', *A Collection of Research Papers*, (in Myanmar), p.141.

<sup>87</sup> Le May, 1938:30.

<sup>88</sup> Col. Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, 1886, *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd.,p.559ff

<sup>89</sup> U Aung Thaw, 1960, "Archaeological Research and Bagan", *Weekly Lectures in Bagan*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Archaeological Department, p.86, 2008 Reprinted.

<sup>90</sup> Thein Pe Myint, 1975, *We, the Mon-Bamars*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Thuriya Books,p. 85, 2013 Reprinted.

... U Mya wrote two volumes: *Terracotta Votive Tablets of Burma* [in Myanmar] published in 1961. It is not completed work because his work does not contain the votive tablets found in Mon State, Lower Myanmar. This needs continuous.<sup>91</sup>

After U Mya's *VTB*, G. H. Luce in his *Old Burma-Early Pagán* mentioned the votive tablets found in Śrīkṣetra and Bagan referred to by U Mya. Khin Ma Ma Mu wrote her M.A. thesis on votive tablets found at Śrīkṣetra, but her work is not been published although she has got credit for her attempt.<sup>92</sup>

In Thailand, George Coedès did his research on votive tablets "Les débuts de l'art bouddhique" in French published in the *Journal Asiatique*, January 1911. Nine years later, W. A. Graham translated it into English. In addition, it is published in the *Journal of Siam Society* in 1920. Ml Pattaratorn Chirapravati did a work namely, *Votive Tablets in Thailand* published by the Oxford University Press in 1996.

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<sup>91</sup> U Myint Aung, 2015, *Śrī Kṣetra seen by excavation and othe articles* (in Myanmar), Yangon: Yan Aung Publishing, p.25f.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Professor Daw Khin Ma Ma Mu, retired Professor, Department of Archaeology, Dagon University

**PART II**  
**TERRACOTTA VOTIVE TABLETS:**  
**RECENT FINDS**  
**AT CATUBHUMMIKA SATIPAṬHĀN HNGAK TWIN MONASTERY,**  
**THATON IN 2015**

## **Terracotta Votive Tablets: Recent Finds at Catubhummika Sati- paṭhān Hngak Twin Monastery, Thaton in 2015 <sup>93</sup>**

### **Introduction**

As humid weather attacks the cultural heritage of the Mons in Lower Myanmar, the region in the proximity of Thaton is subjected to the damage caused by weather. Accordingly, not much remain of cultural heritage of the Mons in the early centre of Mon civilization. Notwithstanding, in the mid-2015, there was an archaeological find at the Catubhummika Hangak Twin monastery. Over two thousands of votive tablets including 1345 in good condition, were found there at a dept of ten feet in Catubhummika Mahāsatiṭṭhān Hngak Twin monastery, northeast of the Shwesaryan pagoda.(see figure.2) Hence, it becomes not only an Aladdin's cave in Rāmaññadesa but also provides material to recieve the history of Thaton, as view by early historians.

Care of the finds was not undertaken by the Department of Archaeology but Bhaddanta Tikkhañāṇa, Presiding Monk of the Catubhummika Monastery, however, has been taking care of the finds—a plethora of votive tablets, a few fragments of earthen pots, in carinated shape and parts of pillars in laterite—as if he were an archaeologist.(see figure.62-63) His endeavor has not yet come to an end.

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<sup>93</sup> Read at Research Seminar and Workshop on Suvannabhūmi of the Mons, held at Computer University, Thaton with Professor Dr. Toe Hla, Member of Myanmar Historical Commission, Professor Dr. Kyaw Win, Secretary of Myanmar Historical Commission, Professor Dr. Aung Myat Kyaw Sein, Acting Rector, Mawlamyine University, Professor Dr. Zaw Lin, retired Rector, University of Foreign Languages, Mandalay in chairs on 30 December 2015.

Tikkhañāṇa would not have continued with excavation unless he had interest in these artifacts.<sup>2</sup> I believe that his attitude toward the artifacts is similar to that regarding sacred images of the Buddha enshrined in the relic chamber of cetiya pagoda which is here placed underground as well as being a cultural heritage of the nation. He thought that the sacred relic chamber under the monument of the late founder of the Catubhummika Satipaṭhān Hngak Twin Sect is a blasphemy against the Buddha. He considers that the votive tablets should not be replaced there but should be removed from under the monument. His elder monks accept his view. I think he is willing to establish an archaeological museum, at his monastery. We indeed are a debt of gratitude to him for the work he has done regarding the finds. (See Figure.3)

I visited the Catubhummika monastery, met with him in July 2015 and sent a message to Dr. Min Nwe Soe, State Minister of Mon State, and U San Win, part-time member, Myanmar Historical Commission, Ministry of Culture. In September, San Win, tireless and self-effacing, and his student Nan Kyi Kyi Khaing, a Ph.D. candidate of Kanazawa University, visited the monastery and conducted an experiment in an archaeological contexts, i.e. establishing the stratigraphy and categorizing the finds. San Win urged me to do iconographic research for a proper interpretation of this abundant. (See figure. 4-5-63-64)

### **Views of Scholars on Thaton**

A profusion of votive tablets have been found in Myanmar historical sites, i.e. Bagan, Śrīkṣetra, and Tagaung. Despite the fact of Thaton being accepted as a center of the Mons in Lower Myanmar, votive tablets have not been found there. Therefore, Reginald Le May in his work in 1954, the *Culture of South-East Asia* wrote that votive tablets had been found all over Upper Myanmar, Thaton had not been sys-



tematically excavated, yet.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, G. H Luce noted that their archaeological record of Rāmaññadesa was far more incomplete.<sup>95</sup> In 1958, Luce and Bohmu Ba Shin carried out their explorations of many archaeological sites of Myanmar. On their return, Ba Shin mentions his frustration over mindless vandalism in archaeological sites throughout Myanmar. According to him, some people vandalized the ancient wall and its laterite remains in Thaton.<sup>96</sup> George Coedès in his two works—the *Indianized States of Southeast Asia* and *Making of South East Asia* mentioned that Suvannabhūmi, the “Land of Gold” generally identified, rightly or wrongly, with the ancient land of the Mons, and especially with the town of Thaton—and there were no traces of Indian penetration before about 500 A.D. The city of Sudhammavatī (Thaton), centre of the Mons in Rāmaññadesa, has unfortunately either disappeared or been rebuilt or enlarged during the course of centuries.<sup>97</sup> Also, a well-known Indian scholar Nihar Ranjan Ray in his *Theravāda Buddhism in Burma* mentioned the absence of any archaeological finds of an early date or of other evidences to which a more or less early and definite date could be assigned at Thaton to support to any assumption.<sup>98</sup>

In Myanmar, U Tin Gyi in his *Gazetteer: Thaton District* mentions that the early history of Thaton was veiled in darkness because

<sup>94</sup> Reginald Le May, 1954, *The Culture of South-East Asia*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., p. 25,61.

<sup>95</sup> G. H. Luce, 1965, “Dvāravtī and Old Burma”, *Journal of the Siam Society*, 53(1),p.25.

<sup>96</sup> Bohmu Ba Shin, 1958, “Vandalism to Our Heritages”, in *Myawaddy Magazine*, Vol. 6, Part 12,( 41-43),( in Myanmar).

<sup>97</sup> George Coedès, 1962, *The Making of South East Asia*, trans. by H. M. Wright in 1966, London: University of California Press Ltd. p. 111.

(b) G. Coedès, 1964, *Indianised States of South East Asia*, trans. by Susan Brown Cowing, Honolulu: East-West Center Press, p. 17.

<sup>98</sup> Nihar Ranjan Ray, 1946, *Theravada Buddhism in Burma*, Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, p. 76.

the Archaeological Department has not yet been able to extend its exploration beyond casual visits to the place.<sup>99</sup> Than Tun, a very well known historian, in his *Khit Haung Myanmar Yazawin*, mentioned that the land of Mons was under monsoon deluge so that the climatic conditions could easily obliterate to archaeological remains. Rather, young is linguistic study of the Mon.<sup>100</sup> Toe Hla, Retired Professor of History Department, Mandalay University, in address to the audience in the Research Seminar and Workshop on Suvāṇṇabhūmi of the Mon held at Computer University, Thaton on 30 December 2015 said as follows:

...Among scholars, the location of Suvāṇṇabhūmi have been a matter of dispute but there is no record which indicates the El Dorado of the Southeast Asians with the exception of the Kalyāṇī Inscription of 1479 erected by King Rāmādhīpati (r.1472-92). Only does his Kalyani Inscription describe Suvāṇṇabhūmi as being located at the foot of Mt. Kelāsapabbata<sup>101</sup>

Thaton, a major seat of the Mons in Myanmar chronicles, has not attracted archaeological investigation until 1975-76, when excavations were introduced at Winka and Ayyethama led by U Myint Aung.

### **Michael Aung-Thwin's *Mists of Rāmañña***

Ancient history can be studied only by remains, i.e. inscriptions, paintings, monuments, statues, building structures, terracotta artifacts etc. Historians, therefore, sometime have to draw conclusions based on incompleting artifacts. Sometime their interpretations turn to induc-

<sup>99</sup> U Tin Gyi, 1931, *Burma Gazetteer: Thaton District*, Vol. A, Yangon: Govt. Printing, p. 8. Hereafter cited as Tin Gyi, 1931, *BGTD*.

<sup>100</sup> Than Tun, 1972, *Ancient Myanmar History*, (in Myanmar), p.102.

<sup>101</sup> Opening Speech at Research Seminar and Workshop on Suvāṇṇabhūmi of the Mon held at Computer University, Thaton on 30 December 2015

tion rather than deduction so that there is uncertain. Since much of ancient history can be uncertain, some new ideas can be advanced against older ones.

Among those challenging the view of earlier scholars, the most prominent historian was Michael A. Aung-Thwin who published the work, *the Mist of Rāmañña: the Legend that was Lower Burma*, in 2005. Regarding his work, Tun Aung Chain, a well-known historian of Myanmar, mentioned that Michael Aung-Thwin's complaint against Suvannabhūmi in his work was a challenge to Myanmar historians.<sup>102</sup>

Aung-Thwin in his work mentioned that there was no Rāmaññadesa and Thaton and that it was a place, which the Mon-speakers inhabited in later. He showed that the town appeared, for the first time as Suduim in original Middle Mon epigraphy in 1479, in King Dhammaceti's Kalyāṇi Inscriptions.<sup>103</sup> With regard to this view, I would comment that his attempt is mistifying. He cleverly conceals the safest evidences important for both history and linguistic study of Old Mon—the Trāp and Paṇḍit<sup>104</sup> Inscriptions of c. 1050. They have been under the care of Archaeological Department throughout the period, from the British Burma Government to the governments of the

<sup>102</sup> U Tun Aung Chain, 2013, Preface, in *Historical Research on Suvannabhūmi*, (in Myanmar), by U San Win, Yangon: Bhadradevī Books, p.kam

<sup>103</sup> Michael A. Aung-Thwin, 2005, *The Mist of Rāmañña the legend that wa in Lower Burma*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, p. 82ff.

<sup>104</sup> Mr. Taw Sein Ko, Superintendent of Archaeological Department visited Thaton on 28 December 1891. In 1930s U Mya in his report of ASI, mentions that he visited Thaton and reported the objects of his examination of the old inscriptions found within the precincts of the Shwesaryan pagoda there and the inscribed slabs are now sheltered under the roof of a small vat or tazaung within the precinct of the pagoda (ASI, 1934-35: 50). In the same year, U Mya records *photo-negative of Burma*, 1935, Delhi: Government of India Press, p. 62f.). G.H. Luce and Bohmu Ba Shin inspected there on 24, April 1958 and register no. 7774 is given by Archaeological Department(ASB, 1957-58, pp. 7, 83). The two Mon inscriptions were named Trap and Pandit by Luce, Ba Shin and their staff Maung Sein. (Luce, "A Century Progress of History and Archaeology in Burma", *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Vol. 32, 1948, pp. 79-94). Also, it appears in *Report of Archaeological Survey, Burma, 1930-34* its epigraphic no. taingyin Myanmar 358-359.

post Independence period as well as Old Mon writing inscribed on the votive tablets found at Winka—significant documents for history. Moreover, he made Thaton an imagined center of the Mons. He mentioned in his work regarding the inscriptions at the Shwesaryan pagoda, “Their provenance is unknown”.<sup>105</sup> The cardinal epigraphic sources are made invalid by Aung-Thwin.

### Demystifying the Trap and Paṇḍit Inscription

With regard to Old Mon epigraphy in Thaton, Taw Sein Ko mentioned that five Mon inscriptions were found at Thaton. Four were in the enclosure of the Shwesaryan pagoda, and the remaining one found under a banyan tree southeast of Daw Shwe Mi's compound, Nyaungwaing and later moved to the pagoda.<sup>106</sup> In 1930s Mya in his report on *the Archaeological Survey, India*, mentioned that he visited Thaton and reported on his examination of the old inscriptions found within the precincts of the Shwesaryan pagoda. The inscribed slabs are now sheltered under the roof of a small tazaung within the precinct of the pagoda.<sup>107</sup> In the same year, Mya recorded in *Photo-Negative of Burma*.<sup>108</sup> Luce and Ba Shin inspected on 24 April 1958 and register no. 7774 given by the Archaeological Department.<sup>109</sup> The two Mon inscriptions were named Trāp and Paṇḍit by Luce, Ba Shin and their staff

<sup>105</sup> Aung-Thwin, 2005: 87.

<sup>106</sup> Taw Sein Ko, 1913, *Burmese Sketches*, Yangon: British Burmese Press, p. 112.

(b) Tin Gyi, 1931, BGTD, p. 25.

(c) Chit Thein, ed., 1965, *A Collection of Mon Inscriptions*, (in Mon, translated and edited into Myanmar), Yangon: Archaeological Department, p. n.

<sup>107</sup> (*ASI*, 1934-35: 50).

<sup>108</sup> U Mya, 1935, *Photo-Negative of Burma*, New Delhi: Government of India Press, p. 62f.

<sup>109</sup> *ASB*, 1957-58, pp. 7, 83.

Maung Sein.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, they were also published in *the Report of Archaeological Survey, Burma, 1930-34* as epigraph no. *taingyin* Myanmar 358-359.

From geological points of view, not only the Old Mon inscriptions in the Shwesaryan Pagoda but also the Mon Inscriptions erected by King Thiluin Mañ at Kyaik Talan pagoda belong to sandstone. Yin Yin Aye, Professor and Head of Geology Department, Mawlamyine University, states that the stone used for making the artifacts of Shwesaryan pagoda—high reliefs of the Buddha and inscriptions—belong to quartzose sandstone in Martaban (16°31'53"N-97°36'40"E) and Paung (16°37'22"N-97°27'37"E) between Mottama and Zin Gyaik (16°24'03"N-97°25'29"E).<sup>111</sup>

In his study of the Mons in Lower Myanmar, I found weaknesses in the archaeological evidences and tried to identify Thaton was a land of the Pyus in ancient times prior to the reign of King Dhammaceti. He implied that there was no ancient history in Thaton. Although his critical view should be welcome from an academic point of view, I question his attempt to ignore the vital evidences related to the Mons in Lower Myanmar: evidences should not be mystified.

In contrast, Aung Thaw, Director of Archaeological Department, believed that Thaton was a flourishing port in ancient time and that there was constant intercourse between Southern India and the region around Thaton and Bago.<sup>112</sup> Also, R. Chhibber in his *Geology of Burma* mentioned as follows:

the south coast of Burma is gaining ground, as the rivers bring down detritus and deposit it in the sea, thus making it shallower.

<sup>110</sup> G.H. Luce, 1948, "A Century of Progress of History and Archaeology in Burma" *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Vol. 32, 1948, pp. 79-94.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with Professor Dr. Yin Yin Aye, Head of Geology Department, Mawlamyine University on 29 December 2015.

<sup>112</sup> Aung Thaw, n.d., *Historical Sites in Burma*, Yangon: Ministry of Culture, p. 34.

and ultimately converting the coastal fringes into land. At the mouth of Sittang the sea has eroded away a fairly large tract of land in the Kyaikto subdivision of the Thaton district, while a large area has been added to the Pegu district as a result of the shifting of the Sittang River towards the east. The sea has gained considerably higher up the river, and its effect is felt over much greater areas to the north than it was about two decades ago.<sup>113</sup>

According to his view, Thaton and its seaport, Martaban, could not have been far from the sea in the first millennium.

Thin Kyi, Professor of Geography, Yangon University, believed that Thaton was built with the Martaban Range on its eastern side, and with the sea on the west. She wondered that the town was as an ancient center depending on double walls forcing, an inner and an outer defense-line and with a fortress between the northern wall and the outer one, built when an invasion threatened from the north.<sup>114</sup> (See figure.2). Mabel Haynes Bode, pioneer Pāli scholar, says that Rāmaññades coastal region was greatly affected from the impact of India and Śrī Laṅkā (Ceylon). The region became a refugees when Buddhism was persecuted in India after the eighth century. Bode supposed that a strong Buddhist community in the maritime province of Rāmaññadesa had probably been established in very early times.<sup>115</sup>

In regard to Rāmaññadesa C. O Blagden pointed to the toponym *Rman* its contemporary evidence. Two inscriptions dated Saka 943 era (A.D. 1021) from Malaysia and mentioned ethnic name

<sup>113</sup> R. Chhibber, 1934, *The Geology of Burma*, London: Mac Millan and Co. Ltd., p. 90.

<sup>114</sup> G. H. Luce, 1969, *Old Burma-Early Pagan*, Vol. I, New York: the Institution of Fine Arts, p. 15.

<sup>115</sup> Mabel Haynes Bode, 1909, *The Pali Literature in Burma*, London: the Royal Asiatic Society, 1965 Reprinted, p. 10f.

"*Rěmĕn* or *Rmĕn*. Blagden suggested that *Rman* stands for "rah man the Mon country".<sup>116</sup> Moreover, Mya and Lu Pe Win referring to the Jardine prize essay of Emil Forchhammer considered that the Mon had no doubt occupied the western coast of the Indo-Chinese peninsular and that their inscriptions ranged over a period of 14 centuries.<sup>117</sup>

In the mid 8th century A.D, Nan chao attacked the Pyu city-states in Upper Myanmar and the Mons in Suvannabhūmi, Lower Myanmar. Unlike the Pyus, the Mons resettled their kingdom with the assistance of their ally, the Haripuñjaya kingdom. During the eleventh century, their center was Thaton has defened with city-wall.<sup>118</sup>

Over one decade after Luce had written his *Old Burma-Early Pagan* in 1975-76, the staff of the Archaeological Department led by Myint Aung carried out excavations at Ayetthema and Winka in Suvannabhūmi. The antiquities found at the two sites were not numerous. One hundred and thirty one terracotta votive tablets were discovered at a depth of 9 and 10 feet at the sites.<sup>119</sup> Again, an archaeological excavation led by U San Win was undertaken there in 2014 and 2015.<sup>120</sup> In this fiscal year, Kyaw Myo Win, Assistant Director of the Archaeological Department, is carrying out excavations there, again.

<sup>116</sup> C. O. Blagden, 1912, "Notes on Talaing Epigraphy", in *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Vol. II, Part I, Yangon:,p. 27.

<sup>117</sup> Lu Pe Win, 1958, *Report of the Director, Archaeological Survey, Burma, 1956*, Yangon: Govt. Printing, p.19.

(b) U Mya, 1961, *Ancient Myanmar Scripts*, (Preliminary Unit), (in Myanmar), Yangon: Govt. Printing,p.4.

<sup>118</sup> Bohmu Ba Shin, 1967, *Statecraft founded by the Early Myanmar*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Pyi Zone Books,p.7-100<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>119</sup> Myint Aung, 2012, *Revealing Myanmar's Past: An Anthological Articles*, Yangon: Tun Foundation, p. 73.

<sup>120</sup> U San Win, 2014, *Preliminary Report: Excavation in Suvannabhūmi*, unprinted, in Myanmar, Historical Research and National Library Department, Ministry of Culture, p 1ff.

Among the scholars—Michael W. Charney<sup>121</sup> (2006), Jacques P. Leider<sup>122</sup> (2006), Victor Lieberman(2007)<sup>123</sup>, Robert L. Brown<sup>124</sup> and Tilman Frasch<sup>125</sup> — who became involved in the confusing over *the Mist of Rāmañña*, Donald M. Stadtner, a former Associate Professor of the University of Texas<sup>126</sup>, was one of the most prominent.

Recently, a plethora of new archaeological evidence has been found at Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, northeast of the Shwesaryan pagoda in Thaton which has a bearing on the controversy on *the Mists of Lower Myanmar*.

### **Terracotta Artifacts in Ancient World History**

Terracotta ('baked clay') is an art of earthen sculpture and unglazed earthenware appears in many early cultures, such as in ancient Greece, in Egypt, in Mesopotamia, in China, in Polynesia and in pre-Columbian America. In Egypt, terracotta figures have been made in the great monumental sculptures in stone, bronze and wood during the periods, i.e., Proto-Dynastic period (5650-4777 B.C) to the Ptolemaic Period (331-30 B.C). In ancient Greece, terracotta objects were for purpose as well as spiritual offerings to the temples and shrines. The Nude Goddess was acropolis in Egyptians. Earth Goddess by Mesopotamians and Indians, seated Men and Women and 'Mother and Child' effigies by Mexicans. The Egyptians made terracotta objects from about the 5th century B.C. In China, terracotta objects have been discovered in ancient tombs of the Han Period (206B.C.-25

<sup>121</sup> Professor of Asian and Military History, University of London, member of Centre of Buddhist Studies

<sup>122</sup> Professor, Rakhine History expert

<sup>123</sup> Professor of history at the University of Michigan

<sup>124</sup> Professor, Art History, University of California

<sup>125</sup> Research Fellow, Asia Research Institute, Singapore

<sup>126</sup> dstadtner@gmail.com, Walnut Creek, CA 925-256-7423



B.C.). The terracotta, figures of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas—Am-itāyus, Amitābha, Gautama Buddha, Mañjuśrī, Vairocana, and Tārā—appear in Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhist art.<sup>127</sup> In India, the mother of Southeast Asian civilization, terracotta effigies are presented in Indus Valley culture of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa which emerged (c. 2000 B.C.).<sup>128</sup> In Cambodia, terracotta artifacts made by the Khmers—roofs, pottery jars, lids and elephant effigy jars—are prominent in ancient Angkor art and architecture.<sup>129</sup> Terracotta votive tablets of Khmer Buddhism are found at Wat Rang, and Khao Ok Thlu<sup>130</sup> in Phattalung<sup>131</sup>. They are the same as more of the Old Mons and the Pyus in Myanmar and the Dvāravatī in Thailand. In Thailand,<sup>132</sup> the Thai Buddhists made terracotta icons and gave the name *Brah Bimb* or “sacred imprints” to certain small Buddhist effigies.

### Inscribed Votive Tablets

Terracotta artifacts are prominent feature of many ancient cultures. In Myanmar, epigraphic verses on terracotta votive tablets either on the below the obverse or its reverse on the figure of the Buddha can reveal much about early history and cultural heritage. The writing is either in Sanskrit, or in Pāli and written with the script Nāgarī originat-

<sup>127</sup> Alice Getty, J. Deniker and Henry H. Getty, (1914). *The Gods of Northern Buddhism* Oxford: the Clarendon Press. Pl. III, (a, b and d), LXIII(a,b,c,e and g). Hereafter cited as Getty: GNB, 1914

<sup>128</sup> (a) O.C Gangoly, (1959), *Indian Terracotta Art*, p.1ff. A Ghosh, edited, *Indian Archaeology, 1954-55 A Review*, p. 15.

(b) Radhakamal Mukerjee. (1959), *The Culture and Art of India*, London: George Allen and Unwin, p.52.

<sup>129</sup> Michael D. Coe, (2003), *Angkor and the Khmer Civilization*, Thames & Hudson, Singapore, pp. 155, 174.

<sup>130</sup> Phatthalung's mountain, having a height of around 250 m.

<sup>131</sup> Southern province of Thailand

<sup>132</sup> Nandana Chutiwongs, (2002). *The Iconography of Avalokiteśvara in Mainland South East Asia*, New Delhi: Aryan Books International, Pl. 100-103 Hereafter cited as Chutiwongs, 2002: IAMSEA.

ing in Northern India during the eighth and eleventh centuries.(See fig. no 31). The script, which followings Brahmi script family starting in the 1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> century and fully developing about the end of the first millennium spread from Pāla, Bihar and Bengal to Rakhine and was at first regularly stamped on the obverse of votive tablets of Śrīkṣetra, Tagaung, Bagan, Kyaik De-ap (Botahtaung) and Thaton.<sup>133</sup>

Indian scholars claim that some of the early writings found in Myanmar are in the Nāgarī, Bengali or proto-Bengali scripts. Mya believes that votive tablet with inscriptions in Nāgarī script were doubtlessly distributed from Nālanda University.<sup>134</sup> Ba Shin is the view that the Nāgarī script was replaced later by local scripts—Pyu, Mon and Myanmar.<sup>135</sup> The Nāgarī script continued use to be in the 'Seal' on many terracotta votive tablets during the reign of King Aniruddha and his son and successor, Mañ Lu Lañ (Saw Lu 1077-1084 A.D.). Sanskrit and Pali inscriptions in Nāgarī and Old Mon scripts are found at Bagan, Mandalay, Tagaung, and Kanthida in Katha district. Furthermore, it followed in the Malay, Sumatran and Celebes languages of archipelago Southeast Asia and became a national script of Nepal.<sup>136</sup> Taw Sein Ko suggests that the script stamped on the votive tablets showed the influence of the Chōla king Rajendra Choladeva,(r. 1025-27 A.D) which had first been established in Martaban and Bago, and was extended to Bagan in the 8<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>137</sup> Dr. Than Tun

<sup>133</sup> G. H. Luce, 1969, *OBEP*, Vol. I, pp. 97, 175.

<sup>134</sup> U Mya, 1961, *VTB*, II, p. 36.

<sup>135</sup> Ba Shin, 1962, *Lokahteikpan: Early Burmese Culture in a Pagan Temple*, Yangon: Burma Historical Commission, pp. 21,22,24 Hereafter cited as Ba Shin, 1962, *Lokahteikpan*.

<sup>136</sup> Suniti Kumar Chatterji, ed., 1937, *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. V, Calcutta: the Ramasrishna Mission, 2001 Reprinted, pp. 702, 760.

(b) Reginald Le May, 1954, *Culture of South East Asia*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., p.79.

<sup>137</sup> Taw Sein Ko, 1916, *Report of the Superintendent, Archaeological Survey, Burma*, Yangon: Government Printing, p.16f.

states that on the other hand, the Nāgarī script under the relief of Buddha is connected with the fourth century A.D.<sup>138</sup>

G. Coèdès who has studied the votive tablets with Sanskrit inscriptions in Nāgarī script, claims that the Nāgarī in Myanmar is dated, according to C. Duroiselle, from the tenth or eleventh century A.D.<sup>139</sup> G. H. Luce in his "Mons of the Pagan Dynasty" took the view that the Nāgarī script reflected the inchoate and floating culture of the time with the language Pāli or Sanskrit, and not Myanmar, Pyu nor Mon. The script appears on terracotta votive tablets from scattered places from Kathar and Tagaung in the north as far as Dawai in the south, around Bagan near Salin, and Tharzi, at Śrīkṣestra and between Twante and Yangon.<sup>140</sup> Than Tun says that the script was used in the Pyu period and its succeeding Bagan period.<sup>141</sup>

A votive tablet was found at Catubhummika (see fig.49) with an earth-touching Buddha in relief and two lines seal of Pallava script of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. (See figure. 34)

The inscription is the well-known stanza uttered by Thera Assaji when he preached to a Brahman, Sāriputtra, the Coming Apostle of the Buddha at the right, The keynote of the Buddha's teaching is given in the stanza as follows:

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesam hetum Tathāgato āha Tesam ca  
yo nirodho evaṃvādī Mahāsamano ti

The conditions which arise from a cause, of these the Tāthagata  
have stated the cause, Also the way of suppressing these same:

<sup>138</sup> Dr. Than Tun, 2006, *Where did the Pyus disappear?*, (in Myanmar), Yangon Thiriswe Books, p.132.

<sup>139</sup> G. Coedès, "Siamese Votive Tablets", Tr. By W. A. Graham, *J.S.S.* Vol.20, Part 2, No.2 .p.13. Hereafter cited as Coedes, 1926, SVT.

<sup>140</sup> G.H. Luce, (1953), "Mons of the Pagan Dynasty", *Journal of Burma Research Society*, XXXVI (I), p.8.

<sup>141</sup> Dr. Than Tun, 1972-73:64.

This is the teaching of the Great Ascetic.<sup>142</sup>

### Tradition of Votive Tablets

In Myanmar, the use of terracotta objects began in the Neolithic Age.<sup>143</sup> As Myanmar civilization developed under the influence of the sea voyages in the Day of Bengal led by Southerners of India in the early Christian era, terracotta was used not only for secular but also for spiritual purposes. Bricks were used for both religious buildings i.e. temples and stupas and for secular construction, i.e. residences for living and city-wall for defence. When, the people in Myanmar became Buddhists they used terracotta for Buddhist art and architecture, i.e. funeral urns for ashes after cremation, Jātaka plaques in inner walls of temples, statues and votive tablets dedicated for *Uddissana cetiya* (a kind of stupa the images of the Buddha in various postures are on shrined) made. Early Myanmar cities—Vesālī in the west, Śrīkṣestra, Halin, Viṣṇu and other cities in central Myanmar, and Suvāṇṇabhūmi in Lower Myanmar—have yielded terracotta remains. At Śrīkṣestra, votive tablets with the Aniruddha's seal have been collected near the Baw Baw Gyi pagoda.<sup>144</sup> The votive tablets are of importance to both Buddhism and the history of Buddhist Myanmar. There are only a few other name for votive tablet in Myanmar. They are also called *sac-cāthā: bhurā* in Old Myanmar meaning the Buddha Image, the Law of Dhamma, and also *Catusaccadhamma* (the Four Noble Truths).<sup>145</sup>

Votive tablets have been found throughout Myanmar from as far north as Nwatale Ywazo near the confluence of the Ayeyarwady

<sup>142</sup> G. Coédès, 1926:5.

<sup>143</sup> Than Tun, (1975), *New Insight into Myanmar History*, (in Myanmar), Yangon, Hnalun Hla Publishing, p. 47.

<sup>144</sup> Ba Shin, 2004:130.

<sup>145</sup> Interview with Dr. Toe Hla, Member of Myanmar Historical Commission, Archaeology and National Museum Department, Ministry of Culture on 31 December 2015.

and Shweli Rivers to as far south as Myeik ( Mergui).<sup>146</sup> Among ancient artifacts, the votive tablets, and Buddhist iconographic miniatures, were either Buddhists made locally in various places of Southeast Asia, or were imported from India. These tablets probably originated with visiting pilgrimage at bringing back mementos from Holy Buddhist Land in Central India (*majjhimadesa*) from such places as Kapilavastu where the Buddha was born, Budh Gāyā where the Buddha attained Omniscience (*sabbaññutañāṇa*), Migarāvana (Deer Park) near Banaras where he preached his first Sermon, Wheel of the Law (*Dhammacakkapavattana*), Kusināgara where he attained the *Nibbhāna* or other places associated with the life of the Buddha. Since these votive tablets were easily portable souvenirs, pilgrims brought them from these their first to the four principal holy places.<sup>147</sup>

With regard to the origin of the votive tablets in Myanmar Luce is of the opinion that the art of making them came to Myanmar in the 7th century from early Pāla Bengal.<sup>148</sup> Furthermore, the tablets have made of potter's clay, so that cost and price of making the tablet was low for the Buddhists who wanted to make an offering. They were made by means of moulds made of bronze, stone or clay wheel were possibly imported from India.<sup>149</sup> Thousands of the terracotta tablets can be produced in a short time at little expence so that the Buddhists of different levels in the community could give expression to their piety. Accordingly, Than Tun says as follows:

<sup>146</sup> *Journal of Burma Research Society*. Vol. LXI, Part I & II, p.165.

<sup>147</sup> G. Coédès, (1923), "Siamese Votive Tablets", By W. A L Graham, *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. 20, Part 2, No. 2, p. 2ff. Hereafter cited as Coédès: SVT:1923

<sup>148</sup> Gordon H. Luce, 1969, *Old Burma-Early Pagan*, New York: the Institute of Fine Arts, p. 97. Hereafter cited as Luce, *OBEP*, 1969.

<sup>149</sup> Stone, metal and clay moulds are displayed at the National Museum, Yangon and the Archaeological Museum in Bagan. U Aung Kyaing, (2011), *Ancient Votive Tablets*, (in Myanmar), Vol. III, p.6ff.



...if a Buddhist built a wooden monastery, he could not participate in his dedicative construction because the carpenter must lead it. If a Buddhist built a brick pagoda, he could not participate in the construction because masons must do the work. In contrast, the Buddhist could be able to make terracotta votive tablets dedicated and then as his meritorious deeds by himself. The votive tablets are, therefore, discovered from Rakhine to Annam in Southeast Asia.<sup>150</sup>

In Lower Myanmar, the art of terracotta occupies a prominent position in the Mon culture. The Mons dedicated the terracotta votive tablets for the propagation of the Sāsana and for adornment. Terracotta plaques of the Jātakas with Old Mon glosses decorate Shwesaryan in Thaton as well as East (1030/420) and West Petlieik pagodas (1031/421) located close to the Lokananda pagoda about 3 miles south of Bagan.<sup>151</sup> These plaques depict in high relief, the scenes from the Jātaka as secular adornment. There are two lions at Winka, horse jousting, bull fighting and dancers found at Kyuntu, Waw Township, E. of Bago. In regard to depictions of sacred life of the early inhabitants there, Mya<sup>152</sup> considered them to belong to the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and Than Tun pre-5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>153</sup> In addition these fingers-marked bricks are found widespread in northeastern India, central and Northeast Thailand and the whole of Myanmar.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>150</sup> Dr. Than Tun, 1972-73: 47.

<sup>151</sup> Gordon H. Luce, 1975, "Pali & Mon Ink Glosses in Pagan Temples", *Journal of the Burmese Research Society*, Vol. LVII, Part II, Dec. p. 231ff.

Than Tun, (2002), *Buddhist Art and Architecture with Special Reference to Myanmar*, Yangon, Monywa Publishing, p. 40.

<sup>152</sup> U Mya, 1961: 60.

<sup>153</sup> Dr. Than Tun, 1972-73:45.

<sup>154</sup> Donald M. Standtner, 2011, 'Demistifying Mists: The Case for the Mons', *The Mon over Two Millenium*, Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, p.40.

Among the votive tablets found in Myanmar, the sacred artifacts stuck on the scarp before the Kawgun Cave<sup>155</sup> located two miles from Hpa-kap village on the west bank of Thanlwin River and its walls inside the cave, is the rich profusion of terracotta votive tablets in Myanmar. About this amazing act of donation by the Mons, Howard Malcolm in his account of 1835 mentions that a ship of 500 tons could not carry away the half of them.<sup>156</sup> They are part of the Old Mon contribution in the culture of Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, the weather is unkind to the preservation of there antiquities.<sup>157</sup>

In Myanmar, with the exception of Rakhine where the artifact is found in very few number,<sup>158</sup> votive tablets are usually found piled up as a large number of quantities a places which possibly represented ruined pagoda, having been enshrined in the relic chamber of the pagoda. Aung Kyaing, Director General of Archaeological Department, in his work mentions that a great number of votive tablets, about five cartloads, were found at the Shwezigon pagoda in Tagaung.<sup>159</sup> Similarly, a large number of votive tablets have been found in Tadagale village, half a mile North of the former Tadagale Mental Hospital between Mingaladon and Yangon.<sup>160</sup> Mon and Myanmar Buddhists usually en-

<sup>155</sup> 16°49'22.2"N and 97°35' 38.4"E

<sup>156</sup> Rev. Howard Malcom, (1894), *Travels in South-Eastern Asia*, Vol. I, Boston, Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, pp.143f.

(b) U Mya, *Terracotta Votive Tablets in Burma*, Part I, (in Myanmar),Yangon: Govt Printing, p. 63.

<sup>157</sup> U Tun Aung Chain, Foreword to, Nan Hlaing, *Sacred Kawgun Cave*, Hpa-an, Uichokpan: Books, 2013.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Dr. Kyaw Win, Secretary of Myanmar Historical Commission, Ministry of Culture on 30 December 2015.

<sup>159</sup> U Aung Kyaing: 2011:3.

<sup>160</sup> U Mya, 1960, *BVT*, Vol. I, pp.61f.

(b) *ASB (1938-39)*, 1940, p.6f

shrined votive tablets in relic chamber, śikhara (pyramidal tower) of temples and the throne of the seated Buddha. Moreover, votive tablets were usually placed in the brickwork of walls of temple and terraces of stupa.<sup>161</sup> During the reign of Bodawpaya, *myebon payah* was the name given to votive tablets. When the king built Amarapūra, his capital city, 512,028 votive tablets (*saṃ buddhe aṭṭhaviṣāṇca dwāra saṇca saḥassa* in Pāli) were enshrined in each, relic chamber of the corner stupa pagoda built at the four corners of the walled city on 8 March 1784.<sup>162</sup> These votive tablets are of an iconographic, paleographical and architectural value<sup>163</sup> and are important for the study of history.

### Recent Findings at Catubhumika Monastery, Thaton

In July 2015, Bhaddanta Indaka, head of the Maggintawya monastery, Hpa-an and Khant Zaw Aung, publisher of Ū:chokpan: Books, gave me news about the votive tablets which had been uncovered at the Catubhumika Mahāsatipathān Hngak Twin<sup>164</sup> monastery. The area is a monument enshrining the Funeral Urn of His Eminence Paṇṭa-vamahāthe (b.AD 1831-1910), the Founder of the Hngak Twin Bud-

<sup>161</sup> U Bo Ke, 1971, *Guide to do Research on Bagan*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Lwin Oo Books, p. 47. Reprinted.

<sup>162</sup> Nāṇissara, 1961, *Amehdawbye*, (Answers to the King's Questions), (in Myanmar), Mandalay, Zabhumaitsway Press, p. 43.

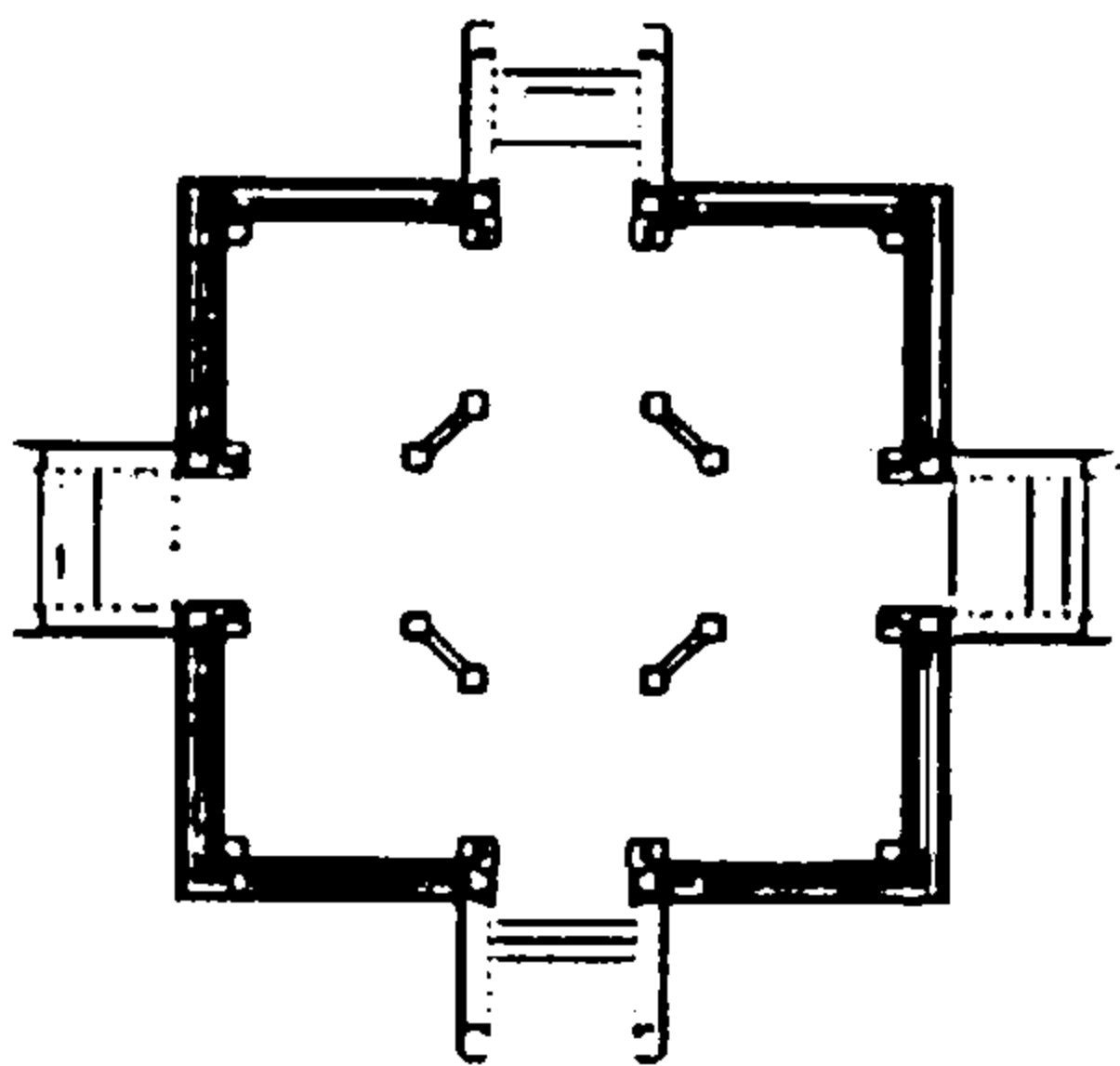
(b) Dr. Than Tun, 2003. "History in the Answers to the King's Questions", *Investigation for History of Myanmar*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Daung Books, p.92.

<sup>163</sup> Taw Sein Ko, 1916, *ASB(1916)*, p.40.

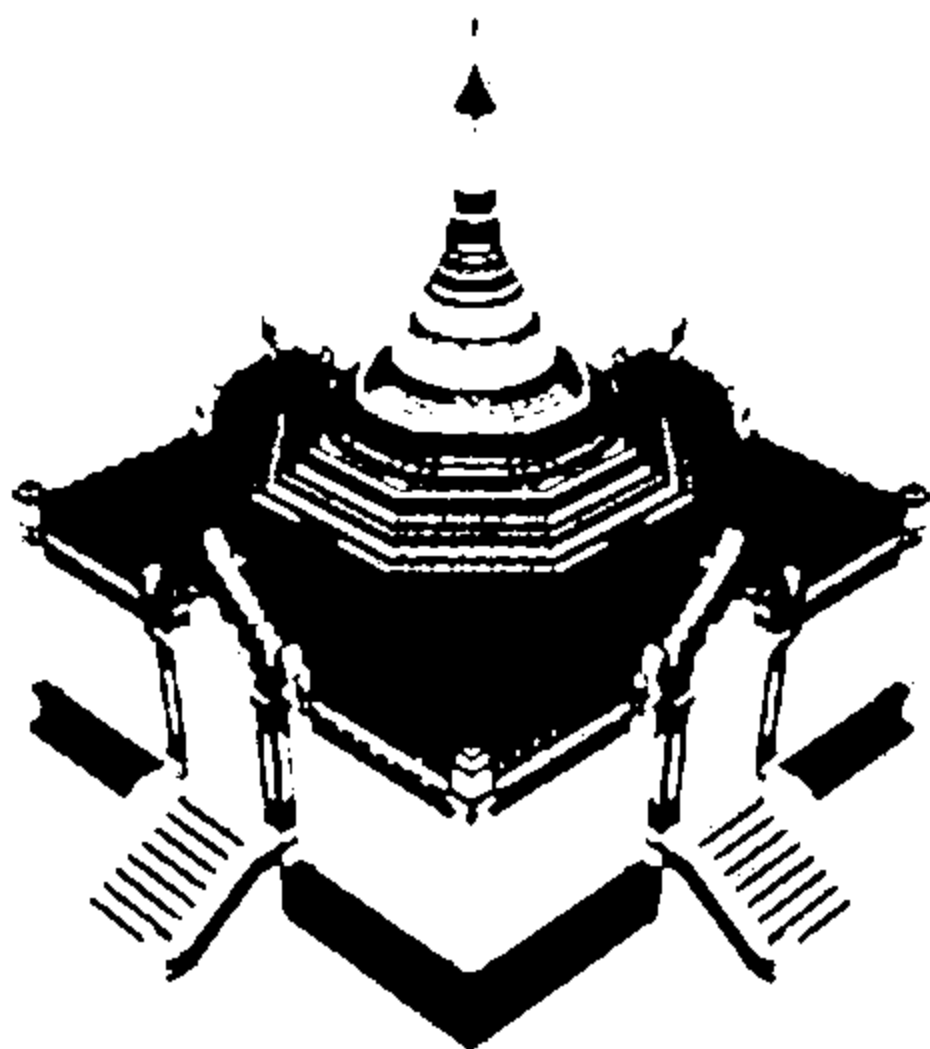
<sup>164</sup> A Buddhist sect founded by Paññādīpakavidajadisāpāmokṭipīṭakālaṅkāra (b.1831-1910) in 1888.

See figure no.1-3.

dhist Sect), Southwest Shwesaryan,<sup>165</sup> Thaton (16°55' 01.10"N- 97° 22' 15.41"E). (See Figure. 5)



Cetiya enshrining Funeral Urn of His Eminence Bhaddanta Paṇṭava Monument, found at Catubhummika Monastery, Thaton



Ground Plan of His Eminence Bhaddanta Paṇṭava Monument, at Catubhummika Monastery, Thaton

The find area undergoing construction work of the monument led by U Saw Htwe Zaw, chief engineer of Yangon Division, was being excavated, a great number of votive tablets. The largest number of vo-

<sup>165</sup> Kyāk Sadhuī[m] Rāñ in Mon or Thaton Payah Gyi is described in the bronze Bell Inscription of 1862 AD in Mon dedicated by U Myat Kaung, a thagyi or chief of village, and his family placed at Shwesaryan pagoda. As R.C Temple in his *Antiquities in Rammanadesa* mentions Shwesaryan so that it had been renamed in 1890s. (U Sein Maung Oo, 2013, *Selected Bell Inscriptions in Myanmar*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Archaeology and National Museum Department, p.275.) ( Temple, 1894: 20.)

tive tablets were the south and southeast of the site of the monument; the second largest one in the north and northeast.<sup>166</sup>

The majority of the terracotta votive tablets found at the Catubhummika monastery in Thaton can roughly be divided into three according to size: the smallest (6×4.5 cm.), the medium (7.6×4.5cm.), and the large (15×6.5 cm.).

There are seven types of votive tablets found at the monastery. Most of them are fig leaf in shape. Unlike the shape of votive tablets found at Dvāravatī in Thailand, Śrīkṣetra, Bagan and other sites in Upper Myanmar, the votive tablets found at Catubhummika in Thaton are ovoid in shape (See figure 59). MI Pattaratorn Chirapravatī in her *Votive Tablets in Thailand: Origin, Style, and Uses*, mentions that the shape shows the strong influence of India and Myanmar tablets: it seems to be the latest version of the Dvāravatī tablet (c. tenth century).<sup>167</sup> I think her estimate to be late.

The Catubhummika Monastery has always been located in the precinct of the Shwesaryan pagoda; the pagoda precinct was later reduced in its extend, so that the find area belongs to the pagoda.<sup>168</sup> (See fig. 1-2). In fact, this is not for the first finding of votive tablets at Thaton. In 1932-33, five fragmented-votive tablets with the Old Mon Inscription—*kyakkalan pīmakanta boymidas kyak*<sup>169</sup>—were found and displayed at vat or archaeological shelter in the precinct of Shwesaryan pagoda. There are similar to this in the Binji cave, now Bayint Nyi

<sup>166</sup> Interview with Bhaddanta Tikkhañāṇa on 31 December 2015.

<sup>167</sup> MI. Pattaratorn Chirapravati, 1997, *Votive Tablets in Thailand: Origin, Styles, and Uses*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, p. 16. Hereafter cited as Chirapravati: 1997.

<sup>168</sup> Interview with Bhaddanta Indaka, Head of Maggin Monastery, Hpa-an, Kayin State on 30 December 2015.

<sup>169</sup> Translation into English: The Buddha Image dedicated by Kalanpy: May [I] be the Buddhahood. (U Mya: 1961:55)



Cave, situated 11 miles from Thaton.<sup>170</sup> Now, nothing remain there. Mya, Special Officer of the Archaeology Department, made a comparative study of the votive tablets and found differences between the votive tablets found at Shwesaryan and Bagan. He attempted a relative dating and votive tablets belong to the 8th-10th century or the pre-Anuruddha period. However, the dating was complicated by the fact that iconography of the tablets was earlier while the inscription paleographically belonged to the post-Aniruddha Period (c. A.D. 1044-1077). Mya, therefore, suggested the need for the study of further evidences, for a more reliable dating of the votive tablets. Now, I truly miss the absence of Mya and the other who have made a study of votive tablets scholars. I wish Mya were also to study the votive tablets and wish to hear that comments he would made.

I visited the site of the find four times, looked at the votive tablets and interviewed Bhaddanta Tikkhañāṇa who is provisionally carrying out the archaeological works of collecting, cleaning, identifying and categorizing the finds. According to my interview made on 20 August 2015, the votive tablets were discovered for the first time on 15 June 2015 while digging the foundation, is 10 ft. in depth, for the enlargement of the funeral urn monument. Votive tablets were possibly enshrined in the relic chamber, which is covered by laterite-bricked wall (1×0.6×0.4ft.). On study the tablets, Bhaddanta Tikkhañāṇa temporarily stopped the construction and continued to excavate the votive tablets.

Now, 1354 votive tablets have been recovered which are good in condition as well as fragmented-earthen pots. Only four votive tablets have inscriptions in Devanāgarī script at the base. On the obverse of votive tablets, there is an image of the Buddha in bas-relief or

<sup>170</sup> U Mya, 1961, *Terracotta Votive Tablets, Part I*, p. 56

scenes of the life story of the Buddha. The scenes depict the Buddha in four postures—reclining for the Great Decease (Parinibbāna), sitting (for preaching, discussion, meditation or Enlightenment ) seated, European fashion ( for discussion or his First Sermon), and standing (for the subjugation of Nālāgiri, the Descent from Tāvātimsā, the Great Miracle)—and, various *mudrā* (hand-attitudes):

- *Bhūmiṣparśa mudrā* — witness or earth touching attitude, calling upon the Earth to bear witness when Māra (the embodiment of temptation, illusion, and death in Buddhism) or Genius of Evil and his personal enemy came to attack the Buddha immediately after the Enlightenment. The right arm is pendant over the right knee with the palm turned inward and all fingers touching the Padmāsana, lotus throne,
- *Abhaya mudrā* — the attitude of protection or the blessing of fearlessness, where a slightly bent right arm is raised to the breast level with all fingers extended and the palm showing outward,
- *Samādi mudrā* — a hand posture of meditation illustrated for the statue of Bless One,
- *Mahākaruṇa mudrā* — a hand posture of compassion with left hand pressed against the right breast,
- *Varada mudrā* — a hand posture of blessing or Bestowing favors,
- *Namāskara mudrā* – a hand posture of prayer with both hands joined and,

- *Dharmacakra mudrā* or *Vyākhāna mudrā* — preaching or turning of the wheel of *dharma* (Law) with both hands against the breast, the left covering the right hand or *Vyākhāna* : left hand is on knee and right hand rises near chest on the left).

Furthermore, *āsana*(attitude of feet), four varieties can be found in these images depicted on votive tablets. They are:

- *Dhyānāsana*—meditation poses with both legs closely locked and their soles visible,
- *Lalitāsana*—sitting in ease with one leg pendant, sometimes supported by a lotus flower and
- *Paryāṅkāsana*—sitting cross legged with left leg above the right; it signifies serenity,
- *Pralambanāsana*— the Buddha seated in the European posture, either turning with his two hands the “Wheel of the Law”, or else making with his right hand the gesture of Instruction, also known as posture of the ‘Great Miracle’ in Thailand.
- *Rājālilāsana*—royal ease with right knee raised and right leg slightly forward and bent
- *Vīrāsana*—royal ease with right knee raised and left by folded loosely.

In these votive tablets, most of them are the Buddha effigies portrayed in *pralambanāsana* which is peculiarly illustrated at profile and sideway and sometime is flanked a Bodhisattvas side by side, *bhūmiṣparśa mudrā*, and *dharmacakra mudrā*. *Namāskara mudrā* is

found only one which is depicted the Descent of the Buddha from Tāvātimsa. The crowned Buddha, the seven jewels (*saptaratna*) of the ideal king which is also known as *zabubadi* in Myanmar and a popular image in medieval north India, is also found on some of the tablets. In my paper, attempt is made for iconographic and epigraphic decipherment on the reserve of votive tablets.

### The Votive Tablet (Type 1) of the Ancient Thaton

Among the votive tablets found at the Catubhummika monastery, the *pièce de résistance* I believe is the votive tablet (c.3in.×3 in.) depicted a bas-relief of the enthroned Buddha formed in *abhaya mudrā* (hand attitude of Fearlessness) and *pralambanāsana* (European seat). He is flanked by each standing Bodhisattva in *tribhanga*, (graceful bent) posture, on either side and three Dhyāni-Buddhas<sup>171</sup> added at the top of the plaque. (See fig.6-7) Above the triad there are two seated Buddha in *dyāna mudrā* (meditation posture). At the top of them there is an Earth-touching Buddha flanked by his Great Apostles: kneeling Sāriputra and Moggallāna in *namaskāra mudrā* (praying hand posture). At the foot of enthroned Buddha, kneeling reliefs in *namaskāra mudrā* are attended on either side: the two figures may be laymen. It is a scene of Yamakaprāṭihārika (Twin Miracles of the Buddha). In regard to the scene, Mya has a discussion of the Scene of Twin Miracle, based on G. Coedes "Siamese Votive Tablets" and mentions in his work that it is a popular scene of the Mons in Dvāravatī, Thailand during the 7th -8th centuries A.D.<sup>172</sup> (see figure.10)

<sup>171</sup> Mahāyāna Buddhism believes the five Dhyāni-Buddhas and five Dhyāni-Bodhisattvas. Dhyani-Buddha is the form of abstract body of absolute purity, in the Dharma-kāya state of essential Bodhi. (Getty: *GNB*, 1928:11-23.)

<sup>172</sup> U Mya, 1961, *Votive Tablets of Burma*, Part I, Yangon: Govt. Printing, p. 62. Hereafter cited as U Mya, *VTB*, I, 1961.

(b) *ASB*(1938-39), 1940, p.4-6.

(c) Dr. Than Tun, 1972-73: 55.

### Mahāyānist Buddhist Triad

From the Mahāyānist point of view, the Buddhist triad is the most prominent element on votive tablets. Mahayanist art usually depicts Maitreya, the Coming Buddha, with Gautama Buddha and Avalokiteśvara; and accompanied by the two goddesses, Kurukulla and Bhṛikuṭī or his two attendants, or the Surya Bodhisattvas (Sun bodhisattva) and Chandra Bodhisattva (Moon bodhisattva). According to the Alice Getty's *Gods of Northern Buddhism*, this iconographic form belongs to the depiction of Maitreya in Tantra Buddhist School: "he wears the monastic garment, with the right shoulder bare, is seated in the European fashion and his left hand forms the Fearlessness gesture. Statues of him are found in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand, usually in company with Gautama Buddha."<sup>174</sup> In this Buddhist triad, it is firstly certain that the two attendants of the Buddha are not the Great Apostles—Sāriputtara and Moggallāna<sup>175</sup> theras—in Pāli Buddhism as the two attendants are shown in the *tribhaṅga* (graceful-bent) posture which is usual of. On the south wall, east of the entrance of Wan Fa Hsia Cave of the ninth century AD and a painted scroll by Tucci, Tibet in China, Bodhisattva figures of the Buddhist triads—the Buddha between the standing Bodhisattvas on each side—on the cave.<sup>176</sup> According to George Coedès, it belongs to the coming of the Pāla dynasty in Bengal and Magadha around the middle of the eighth century.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>173</sup> A Sanskrit word meaning literally 'treatise'. The Tantra, or mystic treatises comprise twenty two volumes. It forms of the gods often have several heads and always more than two arms.

<sup>174</sup> Getty, 1914: *GNB*, p. 22.

<sup>175</sup> Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana in Sanskrit

<sup>176</sup> Langdon Warner, 1938, *Buddhist Wall-Paintings: A Study of a Ninth Century Grotto at Wan Fa Hsia*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Pl. IX

(b) *The Way of the Buddha*, 1958, Chapt. VI, Pl. I.

<sup>177</sup> Coedès, 1964, *States of Indianized South-East Asia*, trans into English by Susan Brown Cowing, Honolulu: East-West Center Press Ltd. Press, p. 96. Hereafter cited as Coedès, 1964, *ISEA*.

Regarding the Theravada Buddhist triad—Moggallāna, the Buddha, and Sāriputtara—in Myanmar, it can be found in Taungdwingyi, Aungmye, Hpowunduang and Bagan. In these tablets two small *aggasāvaka* form half-kneeling with back knee raised, turned to the Buddha but facing front with hands in *namaskāra mudra*.<sup>178</sup> Nihar-Ranjan Ray confirms that Maitreya is the only Bodhisattva, the Coming Buddha, worshipped in Myanmar both by Theravada and Mahāyana Buddhists; his worship seems to have been very popular.<sup>179</sup>

### Locations of Triad Votive Tablets

At this Catubhumika monastery, there are six tablets of Buddhist triad in this scene. Prior to the recent finds, an identical tablet had been excavated from Winka, at the foot of the Kelatha Range in Bilin Township; is now displayed at Mawlamyine Museum.<sup>180</sup> The same figures are also found in Thailand. G. Coèdes in his *Siamese Votive Tablets* mentions that identical tablets (c.2 in.×1in.) are found at Wat Han and Khao Khao in the province of Trang<sup>181</sup>, Tham Kao Khrom near Jaiya<sup>182</sup>

<sup>178</sup> Luce, *OBEP*, II, p. 47.

<sup>179</sup> Nihar-Ranjan Ray, 1936. *Sanskrit Buddhism in Burma*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta. p.42.

<sup>180</sup> a) Elizabeth H. Moore.2007. *Early Landscapes of Myanmar*, Bangkok. River Books.p.198. (see figure.8)

b) Dr. Lei Lei Win, 2012. Terracotta Votive Tablets in Thaton. In *Myanmar Historical Research Journal*, 22.p.7.

c) Myint Aung. 2012. "Significances of Some Votive Tablets found at Suvannabhumi". In *Revealing Myanmar's Past: An Anthology of Archaeological Articles*. Yangon: Tun Foundation. p.121.

d.) Elizabeth Moore and San Win.2012. The Gold Coast: Suvannabhumi? Lower Myanmar Walled Sites of the First Millennium A.D. In *The Pyu Landscape: Collected Articles*. Yangon: Ministry of Culture. p.300.

<sup>181</sup> Major seaport of Śrīvijaya Kingdom in southernmost part of Thailand

<sup>182</sup> it is geographically situated nearly 100km southwest of Takua Pa, southernmost part of Thailand or Tanitharyi peninsular.



, and Khao Ok Dalu, and Tham Guhā Svarga at Badalung<sup>183</sup> and P'ra Pathom. He labels it as 'the Great Miracle' and Type 2. (See figure. 10).

He mentions an identical tablet in Kawgun Cave, thirty miles above Mawlamyine, and about thirty miles from east of Thaton, which appears in R. C. Temple's work<sup>184</sup> and estimates the date of the votive tablets belonging to the fifth—seventh centuries AD. (See figure. 11)<sup>185</sup>. Now, nothing remains of the tablet in Kawgun cave. There is a duplicate in the Indian Museum, Calcutta which comes from Hmawza (Śrīkṣestra). Mya in his *VTB* plate no. 53 provides a similar oval plaque.<sup>186</sup> (See figure. 12) Similar votive tablets (8×6×0.8 cm.) have been unearthed in Batujaya, Karawang, east of Jakarta, West Java province, in 2006. They are displayed at Pusat Arkeologi Nasional, Indonesia (See figure. 9).<sup>187</sup> The recent find in 2008 is very significant for the history of Southeast Asia and the Buddhist kingdom of Śrīvijaya. The find shows that Thaton and Śrīkṣestra in Myanmar were closely connected and that they had with Śrīvijaya, whose power extended over the whole of Sumatra, the western part of Java, and the greater part of the Malay Peninsula, where is (located 1638 nautical miles (3033,5 km.) distant from Muttama, west of Thaton).<sup>188</sup> Similar votive

<sup>183</sup> Near southeast Trang

<sup>184</sup> R. C Temple. 1894. *Notes on Antiquities in Ramannadesa*, Bombay Education Society Steam. PL. XVI. Top right  
Gordon H. Luce. 1965. "Dvaravati and Old Burma". In *Journal of the Siam Society* 53(1):17.

<sup>185</sup> Coedes, *SVT*, p. 9.

<sup>186</sup> U Mya. 1961. *Votive Tablets of Burma*. Yangon: Archaeological Department p 29. plate no. 53-54. (in Myanmar).

<sup>187</sup> John Gay, 2014. *Lost Kingdoms: Hindu-Buddhist Sculpture of Early Southeast Asia*, New York: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, p.117, Pl. 84 Hereafter cited as Gay, *Lost Kingdoms*.

<sup>188</sup> Reginald Le May, 1954, *the Culture of South-East Asia the Heritage of India*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., p. 77.

tablets have also been found in Vietnam. Originally, the scenes can be found on a panel between the entrances of Fashade, Kārle, Ellora cave no. 10 and Kanheri in India. (See figure. 13-14)<sup>189</sup> Hence, the conclusion can be drawn that the earliest Buddhist images of South-east Asia belong to the Mahāyāna Buddhism.

### Differences Among the Votive Tablets

A comparison of the votive tablet (type 1) of Catubhummika, Thaton, and similar ones found in Thailand and Java is needed for discussion. I believe that the one from Thaton is more artistic than the ones found in Thailand, and Java and it is more elaborate than the others. In the votive tablets from Thailand and Indonesia—the enthroned Buddha in *abhaya n jdrā* with attendant Bodhisattvas on either side, and the seated three Buddha reliefs in meditation are portrayed above the Buddhist triads. In contrast, the Earth-touching Buddha flanked by his Apostles in *añjalī mudrā* at the top, and kneeling Buddhist laymen at the foot of enthroned Buddha—can be noticed only in the votive tablet found at Catubhummika monastery in Thaton.

### Type (1) and Cultural Relations

We can say that the votive tablets of type I found at the Catubhummika monastery, Thaton provide evidence regarding cultural relations in many parts of Southeast Asia—for instance, Buddhist area of Dvāravtī, the old Mon kingdom in Central Thailand and Śrīkṣetra, the Pyu kingdom, at the head of the Ayeyarwady delta, and Java in Indonesia. There were early cultural relations between Śrīvijaya-Tha-

<sup>189</sup> Sukumar Dutt, 1962, *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. Pl. 10, p. 161.

(b) Jeannine Auboyer, 1983, *Buddha: A Pictorial History of His Life and Legacy*, New Delhi: Roli Books International, Pl. 69.

*The Way of the Buddha*, 19556, Pl.42

ton-Dvāravtī and Śrikṣestra during the fifth-eighth centuries A.D. (See figure.1). Their religious character apparently developed and the early phase of their civilization evolved along lives.

### The Crowned Buddhist Triad (Type 2)

Among the votive tablets recovered at the Catubhummika monastery, Thaton, there are some with the seated Buddha flanked by two seated figures in *lalitāsana* (sitting in ease) on either side is illustrated in bas-relief. These are five. In the centre is a seated and crowned figure in *dharmacakra mudrā* on a lotus. His two attendants on the left and right are also crowned and in the *dharmacakra mudrā* and *lalitāsana* posture. The Buddhist triad is seat under śkhara- pyramidal spire temple. In the *śikhara*, there is a miniature identical traids. At the upper left and right side, a seated Buddha in *dharmacakra mudrā* (Preaching his Sermon is depicted). There are eight-seated Buddhas: they represent the Twins Miracle of the Buddha. (See figure.15,16,17)

### Mahāyānist Triad of the Great Miracle

In Buddhist iconography, the triad images were popular in both Theravāda and Mahāyāna sects. They represent the Three Jewels. the Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha, or the Buddha with his two Apostles or *aggamahāsāvaka*. Sāriputtara and Mahāmoggallāna, who attend in *namaskāra mudrā* in Therāvada and the Tri-mūrti (Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, and Vajrapāṇī) in Mahāyāna. The Buddhist triads differ according to location.

- a. the triad in Java show Mañjuśrī—Dīpaṅkara Buddha –Vajrapāṇī;
- b. the triad in Sri Lanka show Avalokiteśvara—Dīpaṅkara Buddha—Vajrapāṇī;
- c. the triad in Nepal and Tibet, show Śakyamuni—Dīpankara

Buddha—Maitreya, called the “Three White Buddhas.

The Buddhist triad in this form doubtlessly belongs to Mahāyāna Buddhist art because the central figure is crowned and his hands are in *dharmacakra mudrā* flanked by and it is two crowned figures in *lalitāsana*. Mya suggests as follows:

...royal-ornamented images represent Bodhisattva Only does the Bodhisattva dress royal regalia The image first appeared during the Pala dynasty of Bihar, in Bengal, India (AD 800-1200) coinciding with the period, from King Pyinbya to Htilo Minlo of the Bagan dynasty in Myanmar.<sup>190</sup> Later, the Crowned image between as the depiction of Gautama Buddha and Bodhisattva has developed about in both the Mahayana and Theravada schools.

The generally similar aspect of the Bodhisattva has been developed as one of the members of a triad. The crown, royal regalia, is the chief iconographic peculiarity of this figure because the Buddha figure is generally in a monastic costume without royal regalia.<sup>191</sup> Accordingly, crowned image does not usually represent the Gautama Buddha in Theravāda Buddhism. However, it is hard to decide whether it represents either Maitreya or Dīpaṅkara Buddha.

Likewise, the two identical bas-reliefs can be found on the pediment of the ‘Trap’ Inscription, where paleography belongs to the early eleventh century. (See figure.19). With regard to this triads in relief on the inscription, G. H. Luce in his *Old Burma-Early Pagan* and

<sup>190</sup> U Mya, 1960, “Rising Bagan, Beginning the Myanmar”, In *A Weekly Lectures at Bagan*. ( in Myanmar ) Archaeological Department, Yangon, p. 76, 2008 Reprinted. Hereafter cited as U Mya, 1960, RBBM

(b) U Mya, 1961, *Report of the Director, Archaeological Survey, Burma*, 1959, Yangon, Govt. Printing, p. 37.

<sup>191</sup> Ananda K. Coomarmraswamy, 2001. *The Origin of the Buddha Image*, New Delhi: Monshiram Monoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. p.18. Hereafter cited as Coomaraswamy, 2001: *OBI*.

Lu Pe Win in his *Archaeological Report in 1956* mention both thought that the scene represented the Twin Miracle. However, below the lotus seat appears the Wheel, with a deer on each side, i.e. a representation of the First Sermon! The Buddha in the relief is flanked on each side, by figures seated in *lalitāsana*. They sit sideways but face front a *nirmāṇa* Buddha, crownless. (See fig. 16-19)<sup>192</sup>

There is a stone depicting the Descent from Tāvātimsā, probably belonging to the first 1st half of the 11th century or the pre-Aniruddha period. Luce supposes that it came from the Kawgun Cave. (see figure.20)<sup>193</sup> and, therefore, fixed the date in the pre-Aniruddha Period. In the upper part of this relief, there are two similar triads on either side. (See fig. 18) A similar scene of the Great Miracle is also found as a wall painting in *Pathotharmya* (1605/913) temple that belongs to the early Bagan period.<sup>194</sup> (See figure.21) and is attributed to Mañ Lu Lañ (Saw Lu). Luce suggests that it belongs to AD 1080.<sup>195</sup> The figure of the Buddha, however, does not have a crown on the head so that it is probably a scene from the life of the Buddha of Theravāda School Mya in his *VTB* mentions a similar tablet (c.4 in. in height) found in Hmawza (Śrikṣestra) and provide fixed as 9th—10th centuries AD. (See figure. 22)<sup>196</sup>

To decide on the matter, I made a comparative study of the

<sup>192</sup> Luce, 1969, *Old Burma-Early Pagan*, Vol. I, New York: the Institution of Fine Arts, p. 174. Hereafter cited as Luce *OBEP*.

(b) Lu Pe Win, 1958, *Report of the Director, Archaeological Survey, Burma, 1959*, Yangon: Govt. Printing, Pl. 62.

<sup>193</sup> (a) H.L. Shorto, 1971, *A Dictionary of the Mon Inscriptions*, London: Oxford University Press, p. xxix.

(b) Luce, 1969, *OBEP*, I:185.

(c) Than Tun and U Aye Myint, 2011, *Ancient Myanmar Designs*, Bangkok: iGroup Press Co. Ltd. p. 15.

<sup>194</sup> Luce, 1970, *OBEP*, III, Pl. 167.

<sup>195</sup> Luce, 1970, *OBEP*, II, p.98.

<sup>196</sup> Mya, 1961, *VTB*, II, Pl. LXXIII.

five similar representation from the five places, i.e.

1. Kawgun Cave,
2. Trap Inscription,
3. votive tablet from Śrikṣestra,
4. wall painting on the inner wall of the *Pathotharmya* and
5. the Lokahteikpan in Bagan.<sup>197</sup>

With the exception of the paintings in the Pathotharmya and the Lokahteikpan, the rest are the same as the Buddhist triad on the votive tablet found at the Catubhummika monastery in Thaton. In the wall painting of the Pathotharmya, the triad in the center closely resembles that of the votive tablet. However, in the scene there are two standing Buddha figures on both left and right sides and monks, attendants, as well as Buddhist laymen on both sides seated in the *namaskāra mudrā*. The legend in Old Mon of the painting is fragmentary but it indicates that the scene presents *iddhipāṭihāriya*, or *iddhivīdha abhiñāṇ*,<sup>198</sup> the Great Miracle, performed by the Buddha on his return to Kapilavatthu in the year after his Enlightenment. Hence, the picture resembles the Mahāyāna triad but the triad on the votive tablet does not represent the Great Miracle.

Accordingly, the Buddha triad possibly belongs to the old Mon culture of the pre-tenth century AD or pre-Anirudha period. Although it is a mere hypothesis I deduce from my comparative study that the Mon Buddhist art might have spread to Śrikṣestra, the land of the Pyus. Furthermore, my assumption is that the Buddhist culture probably flowed either from the Mons to the Pyus or from the coastal region to inland area. Otherwise, it might have spread from Thaton to Śrikṣet-

<sup>197</sup> Ba Shin, 1962, *Lokahteikpan*, Pl. 17 (a).

<sup>198</sup> Sirisaddhammālaṅkāra, 1772, *Tathāgataudānadīpanī*, (in Myanmar), Vol. I, Yangon, Panshwepyi Publishing, 2011 Reprinted, p. 196f.

(b) T.W Rhys Davids and William Stede, 1905, *The Pali-English Dictionary*, New Delhi: Asian Education Service, 1997 Reprinted, p. 64.



ra because of the present inhabitants of Myanmar the Mons are the oldest.<sup>199</sup> Śrikṣetra and its vicinity might become an area where not only the Pyus but also the Mons and other ethnic people lived together. The Old Mon inscription erected by King Kyansittha mentions the name of Śrikṣetra and its background history.<sup>200</sup> Even in Halin, an old Pyu city-state near Shwebo, the native salt makers still use some Mon loanwords in their salt making.<sup>201</sup> According to the evidence, the two peoples were had cut off from each other in early Myanmar history. The view has been put forward by Reginald Le May, that the peoples in the two cities—the Mons with their capital of Thaton and the Pyus, a Tibeto-Burman people with their capital at Śrikṣetra—came in close contact.<sup>202</sup>

However, Pyu inscriptions of Śrikṣetra are in the Kadamba script of the fifth century A.D. so that it is earlier than the Mon script in Lower Myanmar.

### The seated Buddha in *bhūmipaśra mudrā* (Type 3)

The finds at the Catubhummika monastery include eight types of terracotta votive tablets. One of these (11.5cm×7cm.) depicts the seated Buddha in *bhūmipaśra mudrā* backed by a reredos. This type has been unearthed in the largest number. The seated Buddha in major relief is at the center and is surrounded by five miniature stupas on each side. Above the image, there is a Bodhi or Bo-tree (*ficus religiosa*) to repre-

<sup>199</sup> G.H. Luce. 1953. *Journal of Burma Research Society*. XXXVI(I).p.1.

<sup>200</sup> 'Shwesandaw Payah Inscription', Pl. 48, l. no. 16. U Chit Thein, ed. 1961. *Ancient Mon Inscriptions*. Yangon: 2 parts. Ministry of Culture, p.45. (Myanmar translation)

<sup>201</sup> Personal Interview with Dr. Tha Tun Maung, Pro-Rector, East Yangon University, on October 2, 2015.

<sup>202</sup> Reginald Le May. 1938. *A Concise History of Buddhist art in Siam*. Cambridge University Press, p.90.

sent Enlightenment. (See figures. 23,24,28,29,31,32,35,36)

Each of the stupa at left and right sides of the Buddha forms four tarrace (*paccayam*) at this base and above then is a bell shaped dome with a *Chatrāvālī* (umbrella) at the top. In the history of Buddhist art, this belongs to the 6th -7th century A.D.<sup>203</sup> and, it represents the Great Decease or Parinirvāṇa. The interpretation of the scene in which the Buddha flanked a five stupas difficult because stupa also represents the Buddha Universe—five or six Dhyāni Buddhas or Devine Buddhas— in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The depiction of the Earth-touching Buddha may be of the Akṣobhya Buddha because the Buddha is in *bhūmisparśa mudrā*. Beneath the votive tablet there is an inscription in Nagari script which is illegible. Identical votive tablets with Old Mon inscription on the reversed side observe are found in Bagan, Upper Myanmar.

Similar, although not identical, votive tablets have been found in Śrīkṣetra and Shwemawdaw pagoda in Bago(Hamsāvatī)<sup>204</sup>. Moreover, an identical tablet collected from Khantee, northern Sagaing Division, Upper Myanmar, is displayed at the Buddhist Art Museum, Department for the Promotion and Propagation of the Sāsana, Ministry of Religious Affairs at Kaba Aye, Yangon.

This iconographic style of these votive tablets possibly belongs to the fifth—eighth centuries in Upper and Lower Myanmar. With regard to the presence in Thaton, G.H. Luce estimates that it could have date much earlier than 1000 A.D. by virtue of a bronze statue of a standing Dīpankara Buddha. It spread to the Pyus and at the start of the Bagan period in the early eleventh century, extended an influence on the sculptural style there.

<sup>203</sup> Dr. Than Tun, 1972-73: 60.

<sup>204</sup> Luce, *OBEP*, Pl.33(a and b)

The art style of the votive tablets, depicted an Earth-touching Buddha flanked by miniature ceityas on either side are found at Catubhummika monastery, Thaton—to which were added the Bodhi-tree, the fig-tree, and śikhara, spire of the Mahābodhi temple at Gayā and the four corner towers by the Myanmar king<sup>205</sup> —probably initiated at Nalanda University built in the 4th century AD during the reign of Kumargupta I of the Gupta dynasty because the identical tablets are also found there.<sup>206</sup> (see figure. 26) The votive tablets are found in Śrīkṣetra. A pretty certain that the style of Buddhist art is derived from Bodh-Gayā in Central India during the fifth—tenth centuries AD because Albert Grünwedel and Jas. Burgess in their work, *Buddhist Art in India* mention an identical figure from Budh-Gayā displayed in the Berlin Museum. (See figure.25) Luce mentions an identical tablet which is brought from Myanmar displayed at Indian Museum in Calcutta. Also, Chit Thein is of the opinion that Suvannabhūmi (Thaton) and Dvāravatī were founded at about the same time in the sixth-tenth century A.D.

It is possible to trace the continuity of the Buddhist art from Thaton to Bagan. There is a certainty of that early cultural contact between the two ethnic peoples. The more artifacts that are uncovered in Thaton, the more scholars can confirm the antiquity of the old city.

There is a votive tablet (5×5cm.) depicting a seated Buddha with missing head in *bhūmipaśra mudrā* on *padmāsana* (lotus throne) flanked by acolytes, standing or Bodhisattvas.(see figure. 37-38). The two attendants may be Maitreya and Avalokiteśvāra as the style can also be found on a painting on the wooden cover of a manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, dated in the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>207</sup>

<sup>205</sup> *The Ways of the Buddhism*, 2500AB, Culutta. Govt. Printing, Chapt. IV, Pl.69,p. 312.

<sup>206</sup> N. a, *Nalanda University*, India Government Press, p.10.

<sup>207</sup> *The Way of the Buddha*, Colour Pl. 1.

The three figures confirm to the Mahāyāna Buddhist triad. The seated Buddha and his attendants, the standing Bodhisattva, are standard portrayal of the Mahaynist Buddhist pantheons of Ellora Cave no 10, India.<sup>208</sup> However, my studies of the subject, the figure is rare in Śrīkṣetra and Bagan where a large number of votive tablets remain.

There is a votive tablet (16×6 cm.) showing on Earth-touching Buddha under a *chatrāvālī* (umbrella) and Bodhi tree. It shows the influence of the Buddhist art of Bihar of the 10th century A.D.(see figure.31-32) There is a similar limestone statue, a seated Buddha, 71 in. high, 9th century A.D. found in South India, which is possibly dated 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>209</sup> (See figure.33).

In October 2015, there were found at the Catubhummika monastery in Thaton the votive tablets with the Buddhist triad—an Earth-touching Buddha with attendants on either side—crowned and triad portrayed in the *vyākhyāna mudrā* which is closely the same as *dharmacakra mudrā* and in the *virāsana* sitting posture. The Bodhissavta is probably Sāadhanamālā, one of the forms of Avalokiteśvāra.<sup>210</sup> (see figure. 39-40)

#### **The seated Buddha in *pralambanāsana* (Type 4)**

Among the votive tablets recovered at the Catubhummika monastery in Thaton, an oval tablet, fig leaf in shape showing the Buddha seated in the European Fashion (*pralambanāsana*), with feet resting on a lotus footstool and his hands in the position of Preaching of the First Sermon (*dharmacakramudrā*). He is under a pyramidal tower (śikhara) of Mahābodhi temple in Budh-Gayā in India. His robe falls

<sup>208</sup> Jeannine Auboyer, 1983, *Buddha: A Pictorial History of His Life and Legacy*, New Delhi: Roli Books International, pl. 67.

<sup>209</sup> Hugo Munsterberg, 1970, *Art of India and Southeast Asia*, New York: Harry N-A Brams, INC, p. 74.

<sup>210</sup> Bhattacharyya, 1924. *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, pp. 84f.

squarely over the double lotus on which he sits. The Buddha is flanked by miniature stupas in tiers along the outer side of the archway. Below the lotus seat is an inscription of Buddhist 'creed' in Nagari script. (See figures. 49-50) This type of votive tablets is the second largest in number of the votive tablets found in the Catubhummika monastery in Thaton. Similar votive tablets have been found in the other places of Southeast Asia. The places are Jaiya, and at Dong Sak, near P'ong Tük (see figure 53) Rājaburi in Thailand and in the Malay peninsula dominated by Śrīvijaya, Śrīkṣetra in Pyay, Pyilonchanthashwenyaung monastery in Twante (now in Yangon University Library), Chitsagon, Myinkaba in Bagan, Upper Myanmar, and Kawkathaung Cave, east of Hpa-an. (see figure. 52) Prior to this find of votive tablets at the Catubhummika monastery in Thaton, identical tablets were found at the Lewun Kyaungdaik monastery headed by Bhaddanta Candimā in Thaton. The votive tablets are in the Buddhist Art Museum in Kaba Aye, Yangon in later.

This type of votive tablet had in origin is now on display at Ajanṭā, Kaṇheri, Kārli and Elūrā and generally throughout all rock temples in India. George Coedès says that moulds for the making of the votive tablets were bought by pilgrims, for a trifling sum enabling them to easily made the tablets which they might either take away as a souvenir or deposit in the Temple as a votive offering.

It is difficult how this figure on the votive tablets is to be interpreted. The enthroned Buddha preaching his First Sermon flanked by stupas is popular throughout the history of Myanmar Buddhist art. It is on votive tablets found at Bagan, where there is the greatest survival of the cultural heritage in Myanmar. Perhaps, it belongs to pre-Bagan period and represents Avalokiteśvāra, a Bodhisattva of Mahāyāna Buddhist iconography because the figure is portrayed in preaching the First Sermon with both his legs pendant on a double lotus. However,

the figure has no crown on his head. It is supposed that the iconography belongs to the Mahāyānist school. According to Coedès, Mahayanist tablets belong to the last quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> century because in that period the teachers of the University of Nālanda established a definite foothold on the peninsula and in the Malay archipelago of Southeast Asia.

The votive tablets with the Buddha in *pralambanāsana* and hands in *dharmacakra mudra* have been found in widespread range from Thailand and coastal Myanmar and also recently unearthed at Catubhummika monastery in Thaton. It is a significant item in the art of the Mons of coastal Myanmar. A large number of the votive tablets depicted the Buddha in the same posture still in remain at Kawgun Cave, Kyaik Kathar (17° 22' N-96° 55' E) on the east of the Sittaung River.<sup>211</sup>

The scene, the Buddha in *pralambanāsana* and *abhaya mudrā* flanked by his two Apostles Mahāmoggalāna and Sāriputtara standing in namaṣkāra mudra, is quite different in type. In my opinion, the image of the Buddha in *pralambanāsana* was still in popular among the Mons in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. There is the Great Image of Kyai-kmayaw, dedicated by Queen Shin Sawbu (AD 1453-1472). There is another at P'rapatnom. These perhaps show that the Buddha seated in European fashion possibly belongs to the cultural heritage of Mons of Thaton and Dvāravatī rather than that of the Pyus.

### **Aṭṭha Mahāthāna (Eight Scenes of the Buddha's Life, Type 5)**

The word *saṁvejaniya* is Pāli for the Four Sites or holy places of Buddhists, those of his Birth in Kapilavastu, his Enlightenment in Bodhi-Gaya, his First Sermon in Benares, and his Parinirvāṇa in Kuśinagara.

<sup>211</sup> U San Win, 2013, Research on Suvannabhūmi, (in Myanmar) Mawlamyine: Badra Devī Books, RP. 195, 256



In Indian Buddhist iconography groups of scenes from the Life of the Buddha appear soon after the first single images. The aim was to tell the story of Buddha. The Four Scenes—Nativity, Enlightenment, First Sermon and Parinivāṇa—started at Sārnāth under the Guptas. (See figure. 45). Later, the group of scenes increase with a further four scenes, i.e. Descent from Tāvātimsa, Pārileyyaka, Twin Miracles, and Nālāgīri Elephant. For the Buddhists outside of India, the eight scenes corresponded to the eight chief places of pilgrimage. The term, *aṭṭhamahāthāna* bears in the two incomplete lines of Pali in Old Mon script on a votive tablet found at a ruined temple east of Upali Thein (*sīmā*) on Bagan-Nyaung Oo road in 1955-56.<sup>212</sup> It reaches minimum to portable size, for sale to pilgrims who came from Myanmar and other Southeast Asian countries. G. H. Luce and his colleague Ba Shin believe as follows:

...from the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards the Buddhists art of the Pāla dynasty of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa, must have had a powerful influence on Myanmar.<sup>213</sup>

The same date is given by Mya in 1960. Luce says that the plaque is the earliest specimen of the Eight Scenes on the observe of terracotta votive tablets in Myanmar. Dr. Than Tun in his work mentions that the eight scene depiction are not found.<sup>214</sup> Furthermore, in Bagan Eight-Scenes with short Mon writings on votive tablets, and wall paintings remain.<sup>215</sup>

Among the artifacts uncovered at Thaton, votive tablets (11.5×6.5×2cm.) depicting Eight scenes of the Buddha's Life. They number in sixteen. In this type the seated Buddha in *bhūmipasra*

<sup>212</sup> Ba Shin, 1962, *Lokahteikpan*, Yangon: Burma Historical Commission, p.12f.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, p.12

<sup>214</sup> Dr. Than Tun, 1972-73: 57.

<sup>215</sup> Ba Shin, 1962: 189f.

*mudrā* is in the centre, is representing his Enlightenment. A śikhara rises above him. At the top of votive tablet, a reclining Buddha represents the Great Decease or Mahāparinibbāna. On the right side are the three scenes representing the Descent from Tāvātimsa, the First Sermon and the Nativity. On the left side, three scenes represent—the Subjugation of Nālāgiri, the Great Miracle and the Honey Rice. Below the Earth-touching Buddha there is a scene of three dancing girls representing the temptation by Māra's Daughters: Taṇhā, Aratī and Rāga (Greed, Hatred, and Passion). Two small figures on the right may be figures of seated Vasumdhārās, squeezing their hair but in this votive tablet, the two figures are illegible. (See figure. 43-44)

There is no inscriptions on both size of the votive tablets. The finds at three ancient sites, Thaton, Śrī Kṣetra and Bagan, show that the Eight-Scenes plaques were to early Buddhist artifacts of the Pyu, the Old Mon and Bagan. It was a popular not only among the early Mon but also survived to a later period. U Bo Ke, a famous archaeologist, gave his department an Eight-Scene tablet with an inscription on the Middle Mon—*wo' kyāṅ mahā [a]m[ā]t makindam*<sup>16</sup> — from Patheingyi. The Eight Scene of Myanmar certainly originated among the Mons who made pilgrimages to Central India, Holy Place of Buddhism.

### **Descent of the Buddha from Tāvātimsa<sup>17</sup> (Type 6)**

This scene is portrayed not only as one of the Eight-Scenes on the obverse of votive tablets but also singly on the votive tablets. They are only a few found at Catubhummika monastery, Thaton (see figure. 55-56). However, prior to the find at Catubhummika monastery, this type of votive tablet has never been found in Myanmar. Hence, the find is

<sup>216</sup> Translation into English: this Buddha image is dedicated by Mahāamat (a chief minister). (U Mya 1961: 57)

<sup>217</sup> Second of the six deva worlds built by Indra, the King of Devas at the top of Mt. Meru

significant seven, including four in fragment.

In this scene, the standing Buddha who has a halo, raises his right hand at his chest and his left hand (? *Varada mudrā*) is down near the head of the kneeling Sāriputtarā whose hands are in *añjali mudrā*. At his right side, (?)there is Brahmā (? three faces) in *añjali mudrā*. His face is indiscernible and is plainly flat. At his left, there is a standing Indra in royal insignia; he holds an umbrella over the Buddha. In this scene, there is a very small stupa above the Buddha: it may be Cūlāmaṇicetiya<sup>218</sup> in Tāvātimsa. The three figures are in a building, with a shikhara (a spire) at its top. There are no stairways.

In the Buddhist iconography of India, the earliest depiction of the descent of the Buddha from Tāvātimsa is in the second century B.C on a relief on the Ajātaśatru Pillar of the stupa, Bhārhut, Madhya Pradesh which is in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Similar scenes in stone and bronze of the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century are displayed at the Patna and Calcutta Museums in India. (See figure. 58). In Bagan the scene is on stone plaques in the Ananda temple, Bagan.(see figure. 57) and the scene, on a wall painting, in the Lokahteikpan, Bagan.<sup>219</sup>

### Buddhist Triad ( Type 7)

This type has the seated Buddha in the *dharmacakra mudrā* between the two seated Bodhisattva—Maitreya and (?) Avalokitesvāra –also in *dharmacakra mudrā*. All have halos and seated on double-lotus thrones. Under the triads there are three seated triad— one is seated in *vīrāsana* (one knee raised and the foot locked in the bend of the other), at the left side, another figure is crowned and in *rājālīlāsana* (royal

<sup>218</sup> It is enshrined the hair of the Bodhisattva, Prince Siddhattha, which the Prince himself cut off on the bank of the River Anomā

<sup>219</sup> Ba Shin, 1962, *Lokahtiekpan*, Yangon: Burma Historical Commission, p 13

ease with the right knee raised and left leg folded loosely) and a triad figure is standing one (?) with the details unclear. The crowned figure seated in *vīrāsana* may be either a king or a bodhisattva because the seated style usually portrays Sihassabāhu Bodhisattva and or a *sāvaka*—monk, Brahman or layman. 24 tablets of this Buddhist triads type have been collected at the Catubhummika monastery in Thaton. (See figure. 41-42)

A similar tablet one with Old Mon writing was found at Winka, south of Thaton. Votive tablets depicting the Buddhist triads which have been collected over 20. These votive tablets of the Buddhist triad are found Winka in Myanmar.

### **Standing Buddha and Mojaghāñjavaḷa Lokiteśvāra (Type 8)**

During the votive tablets found at the Catubhummika monastery in Thaton there is a type of the votive tablets (10×5.5×1cm. and 7.6×4.5cm.) which show with the standing Buddha in *abhaya mudrā*. The standing figure is crowned with the body in *samabhaṅga* position, the right hand in *abhaya mudrā* and left hand hanging down. Also, never is it found in votive tablets found in Myanmar. In this type, the crowned figure certainly represents the Bodhisattva of Mahāyāna Buddhism rather than Theravada. In Mahāyāna art, there are one hundred and eight forms of Avalokiteśvāra, and one of them, Mojaghāñjavaḷa Lokiteśvāra is depicted in the *Samabhaṅga* pose on a lotus with his right hand in *abhaya mudrā*.<sup>220</sup> Thus the crowned-standing figure on the votive tablet possibly represents Mojaghāñjavaḷa Lokiteśvāra (see fig. 46-47). Similar tablets which are made of metal are found at the

<sup>220</sup> Bhattacharyya, 1924, *the Indian Buddhist Iconography*, New Delhi: Cosmo Publication, 1985 Reprinted, p.177.

National Museum, the Patna Museum in India<sup>221</sup>(see figure.48), the National Museum in Yangon, the Kawgun cave and Bagan.<sup>222</sup>

For the orthodox Theravadin, figures of the crowned Buddha are strange of the concept of the Buddha almost a contradiction. Myanmar Buddhists know about the life story of the Buddha from texts written in Pāli and both Myanmar Buddhist monks and laymen accept the life story as written. According to Pali Buddhism, Prince Siddhattha, at the age of 29, made the Great Renunciation on the bank of the river Anomā. From that time, he gave up all his royal ornaments and regalia and received monastic robes and the Eight Requisites from Bhramā Ghaṭikāra.

Nonetheless, *Jambupati*, the Crowned Buddha, is now revered as an image of Buddha in Myanmar and other Buddhist countries in Southeast Asia. In fact, even in Indian art, Buddha and Bodhisattva are not sharply distinguished. The two images appear much the same. When Buddhism came to Southeast Asia, there was an iconographic syncretism. Accordingly, the crowned-standing image may represent either Buddha or a Bodhisattva in Mon, Rakhine, and Myanmar Buddhist art.

## Conclusion

The types of votive tablets uncovered at the Catubhumika monastery in Thaton recently are similar to there found earlier elsewhere in Lower and Upper Myanmar. But profusion of votive tablets now found in Thaton, strengthren its item as an old city, center of the Mons in the ancient period. The artifacts found at Thaton stretch over a century

<sup>221</sup> Pande, Anupa, 2005, "Pāla Buddhist Bronzes of Nalanda: Reflections on Style", *Nalanda: Interface of Buddhism and Environment*, ed. R. Panth and Phuntsho, Nalanda, Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, (69-81).

<sup>222</sup> Luce, 1969, *OBEP*, Vol. I, p. 185f.

and two decades with R. C. Temple recording that he found a large number of clay tablets impressed with bas-reliefs in Thaton. The present finds help to understand the history of the Mons in Myanmar as well as providing archaeological evidences.

The views presented by such scholars as Reginald Le May and Prince Damrong, who had ever been to Thaton, can be corrected. Le May in his *Culture of South-East Asia* mentions that neither Thaton nor Bago has been systematically excavated and Prince Damrong believes that the city conquered by Aniruddha in A.D. 1056 was not Thaton but P'rapatom in South-Central Thailand.<sup>223</sup> Nai Pan Hla mentions the Thaton period (1000-1100 A.D.) of the Mons; it can be corrected that the Thaton Period emerged during the 5th -10th century A.D.<sup>224</sup>

All these iconographic styles depicted on votive tablets belong to the early Christian eras from fourth to eighth centuries. Furthermore, the Pāli verse "ye dhammā", stamped in Deva Nāgarī on the front of votive tablet, below the Earth-touching Buddha provides the dates of pre-Pyu and Old Mon writings. It is firstly certain that there were cultural relations between Dvāravtī, the old Mon kingdom in Thailand and the old cities of Thaton and Śrīkṣetra in Lower Myanmar. Votive tablets found at the site provide historical evidences. Although a large number of votive tablet were found at Catubhumika monastery in Thaton, peculiar feature of the votive tablets is that there is neither Old Mon nor Pyu writing.

The view of scholars in the 1960s was that the iconography of votive tablets was influenced by Indian Buddhist culture of the Pāla dynasty. As Thaton is geographically located near a seaport, it may have been more significant on the trade route than Dvāravtī in its southeast

<sup>223</sup> Reginald Le May. 1954. *CSEA*, p.49.

<sup>224</sup> Nai Pan Hla. 1969. "Mon Language and Epigraphic Literature", *Anthology of Nai Pan Hla*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Ahmanthit Books, 2006 Reprinted, p.141.



and Śrīkṣetra in its northwest. With sea-voyages on the Indian Ocean between South India and Southeast Asia in the early Christian eras, Buddhism and Hinduism arrived in Southeast Asia and gave the peoples their cultural identity. Thaton and its proximity—Kawgun Cave, Kyaikkatha, Winka, Ayyethama and the Kyaik Htee Zaung pagoda in Bilin—can be as places of the ancient Mons. The finds of terracotta votive tablets found at Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery in Thaton provided evidence that Thaton developed with in about the same period as Śrīkṣetra, Dvāravtī, and Śrīvijaya.

In early Christian eras, the impact of sea voyage across the Indian Ocean created change in Southeast Asia. The Indian merchants sailed to the coasts of Rakhine, Martaban, Tanintharyi and Kra Islands. They brought with them Indian beliefs—Brahmanism, Mahāyāna and Theravāda Buddhism—to the region. Southeast Asian civilization came to be influenced by Buddhism, Hindu theology, art and architecture. The art of India is mainly divided into four characteristic periods—

Amarāvati (second and third centuries),

Gupta (fifth to seventh centuries),

Pallava (AD 530-750), and

Pāla (AD 750-900).

Of the schools of art which flourished in the periods, the influence of the, Pallava School of architecture and sculpture is traceable in Śrī Laṅkā, Myanmar, Lower Thailand, and Sumatra during the second to the fifth centuries A.D.; while the North Indian Gupta influences penetrated into Malaysia, Thailand, ancient Funan, Java, and Borneo in the later centuries. Votive tablets, found at Catubhummika monastery in Thaton, West Java, Thailand and Malaysia, show that Indianization—Buddhism and Buddhist art, Brahmanism and Brahmanic

practices—came and spread to Southeast Asia first to the seaports then via rivers, inland water routes, penetrated inland.

The art of the Pāla Empire, which was founded by Gopāla, son of Vapyata, had an influence in Malaysia and Java after the close of the eighth century, the Thai sculpture of Northern Thailand in the ninth century, sculpture and wall-paintings at Bagan in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In Myanmar, central Thailand, the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, there have Gupta, Pallava and Pāla influences on art and writing.<sup>225</sup>

Thaton is geographically located at the head of the Gulf of Martaban to which the Indian merchants came in ancient times.<sup>226</sup> Having landed at Martaban, where is about ten miles from Thaton they proceeded the south through the Three Pagoda Pass (15°18'N-98°23'E) into southern central Thailand. Later, during the Gupta period, when the capital was at Pātaliputra, the routes from the ports in Bengal, such as Tamraliptin became busier.<sup>227</sup>

The recent finds in Thaton are similar to previous ones found at Winka, an archaeological site at the foot of Kelatha Range in Bilin which are displayed at Cultural Museum in Mawlamyine. Furthermore, identical tablets are also found in Dvāravtī, Kawgun Cave, Śrīkṣetra and West Java, Śrīvijaya in Indonesia. I have discussed above the Buddhist artifacts show that Thaton accepted South Indian Pallava School of Mahāyāna Buddhist art and architecture in 530-750 AD.

It was probably at Thaton that the way from South India bifurcated to Dvāravtī in Thailand and Śrīkṣetra on the head of Aye-yarwady delta. The evidence would be the type of votive tablets of

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<sup>225</sup> Mukerjee: *CA/1959*: 217f.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>227</sup> D.P. Singhal, 1972, *India and World Civilization*, Vol. II, London, Rupa & Co. p.113.

the seventh century common to the trace. G. H. Luce also mentions that the oldest statue found at Thaton is Buddhist—a standing bronze Dīpaṅkara, late Gupta in style.<sup>228</sup> On the basis of my study, I am of the view that Thaton was an important area at the head of Martaban Gulf and had widespread cultural relations with Dvāravtī, South-Central Thailand in its southeast, West Java (Śrīvijaya) of Indonesia in its southernmost and Śrī Kṣetra in its northwest. Support for the view is provided by George Coedès, who in his *Making of Southeast Asia* also mentions as follows:

...North-east Indian influence, which predominated in the Indianization of the western part of the Irrawady [ now Ayeyarwady], is also found in the delta among the Mons of Ramannadesa who were centered on the city of Suhammavati ( Thaton). The ancient monuments of the Mon country have unfortunately either disappeared or been rebuilt or enlarged during the course of the centuries.<sup>229</sup>

The finds uncovered by Bhaddanta Tikkañāṇa in Thaton have waked up scholars and made them pay attention to remains of Thaton. Thaton is an old city rich in archaeological remains, much of which is underground. Hence, the staff of Archaeological Department, Historical Research Department under Ministry of Culture and History and Archaeology Departments of Universities under Ministry of Education as well as the natives have a responsibility in preserving and studying the old city.

Another point of importance I would stress is that there are some iconographic differences between the votive tablets found at Catub-

<sup>228</sup> *Journal of Burma Research Society*, XXXVI,(I),p.4.

<sup>229</sup> G. Coedès, 1962, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, trans into English by H. M. Wright in 1966, London: University of California Press Ltd., p. 111

hummmika monastery in Thaton and those at other contemporary sites, i.e. Śrīkṣetra, Śrīvijaya, and Dvāravtī. In my comparative study of the images of the Buddha of the votive tablets found at Catubhummmika monastery in Thaton and Śrīkṣetra found some prominent differences. The best example is the differences in the navel of the Buddha image. The Buddha from Catubhummmika have no depiction of the navel while those from Śrīkṣetra are depicted with a deep navel. Dr. Than Tun also points out the iconographic differences.<sup>230</sup> Moreover, both hands of the seated Buddha in the Preaching of the First Sermon from Śrīkṣetra are portrayed above the navel while those from the Catubhummmika monastery in Thaton are near the chest. Another physiognomic features of the Buddha in Mon art is the joined eyebrows. It is a distinctive feature throughout the Mon periods. Significantly, the votive tablet of the Buddhist Triad found at Catubhummmika monastery in Thaton is finer and more perfect than the artifacts found at Śrīkṣetra, Śrīvijaya, and Dvāravtī. Furthermore, there is an obvious difference in the shape between Catubhummmika monastery in Thaton and prominent sites in Upper Myanmar, i.e. Śrīkṣetra, Bagan and Tagaung. Also, the votive tablets from Catubhummmika are oval but those from Upper Myanmar is flat. Dr. Toe Hla looking at the votive tablets from Catubhummmika said that they were very different with the ones found in Upper Myanmar. The artifacts recently found in Thaton can make historians and archaeologists specializing in Myanmar and Southeast Asia as well as pan-Mons in Myanmar walk on air because the votive tablets of Catubhummmika monastery provides former evidence for the old Mon Period I and Thaton place in history.

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<sup>230</sup> Dr. Than Tun, 1972-73, *Myanmar Pottery History*, (in Myanmar), Yangon: Seit Kuu Cho Cho Books, 2013, Reprinted, p.55.

## Terracotta Votive Tablets excavated at Winka (Suvannabhūmi) Archaeological Site in 2012<sup>231</sup>

### Introduction

In 2012 archaeological excavations were carried out at Winka (Lat.17°13' N–Long. 97°4' E). In order to provide the public with a knowledge of the artifacts excavated from Winka site, the Culture Museum staged an exhibition in Mawlamyine. At this exhibition, terracotta votive tablets, fragments of pottery, a lion statue, a limestone image of the seated Buddha statue with head and both of hands missing but perhaps *dharmacakra mudrā* gesture were put on display as well as a silver coin and a photograph record of the excavation— were also viewed. Most of artifacts display were of Buddhist art. (See figure. 60,61)

Among the artifacts, was a well-preserved terracotta votive tablet (14×23×4 cm.) which the rest of votive tablets were iconographically are similar to it. The terracotta votive tablet shows a seated Buddha in high relief with hands in *dhyāna mudrā* and around the head is a halo with dots along the rim of halo. The seated Buddha is in *dhyānāsana* posture, with legs closely locked and the soles of both feet visible. Above and on both sides of the seated Buddha were ten images of the seated Buddha smaller than in size. At the top, there were three seated Buddha in the pose of the meditation. Seven seated Buddhas are sheltered under the hood of polycephalous serpent.

The serpent Mucalinda Nāga is in Pāli Buddhism. The word Mucalinda is the name of the tree, *Barringtonia acutangula*, that

<sup>231</sup> Read at Mon Studies Seminar, with Dr. Aung Myat Kyaw Sein, Pro-Rector, Mawlamyine University, Nai Maung Toe and U San Win in the chair, held at Rāmañña Hotel, Mawlamyine on 10 May 2015

grows north of a great lake.<sup>232</sup> At its roots, there is a hole where Mucalinda, a form of demigod, dwelt. When an unseasonable storm and cold wind blew, he sheltered the Buddha, who was meditating on the Abhidhammā, illumination of the Enlightenment, with his body coiled as a seat and the expanse of his hood as an umbrella over the Buddha's head during the seven days. After the seven days, Mucalinda unloosed his coil, transformed himself into a gentle youth and paid the Buddha homage.

In Buddhism, the Mucalinda Buddha represents the symbolisms: his Laws or Dhamma, Enlightenment (*sabbaññutañāṇa*), triumph over impurity (*kilesā*), supreme peace (*vimuttirasa*), the dying out of the three fundamental blemishes of lust (*rāga*), anger (*dosa*), and ignorance (*moha*), and immortal soul or complete annihilation (*nibbāna*).

The Buddha are all in *dhyānamudrā* hand gesture and *dhyānāsana* feet posture. On either side of the throne, the Buddha has two standing attendants: they are bodhisattva (a heavenly being who position his Bodhisattva) wear *jaṭamakuta* crown on their heads, hold a lotus in the left hand while the right hand is in charity or gift bestowing hand gesture (*varadamudrā*). The figure of the two Bodhisattva are in the graceful bent pose (*tribaṅga*). Provisionally, the two figures may be identified as the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvāra and Maitreya.

The most significant iconographic feature is the depiction of the Buddha under the hood of the Mucalinda serpent. The scene is an episode in life story of Buddha. It belongs to Mucaillinda Sattaha in the Seven Sattahaṭhāna of the Buddha, his meditation on the Abhidham-

<sup>232</sup> Divids: PED: 535

mā<sup>233</sup> in the sixth of the seven weeks that he spent in the vicinity of the Bodhi Tree after his Enlightenment.

In this regard, Dr. Heinrich Zimmer in his *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* mentions as follows:

...some of these Muchalinda-Buddha of the Mon Khmer (Siam-Cambodia, ninth to the thirteenth centuries A.D), rank among the very finest masterworks of Buddhist art. <sup>234</sup>

The votive tablet found at Winka which is under discussion is associated with the Old Mon-Khmer culture of Cambodia and Thailand. Moreover, there is a Mon Inscription of 1479 erected by King Rāmādhpati in Bago; the text mentions a Mucalinda Buddha dedicated by the king so that the Mucalinda Buddha was also popular in the reign of Rāmādhpati.<sup>235</sup> As no Mucalinda Buddha image has been found in Śrīkṣetra, Bagan or other places in Upper Myanmar, it is clear that Mucalinda-Buddha does not originate in Śrīkṣetra and Bagan. The Mucalinda-Buddha on the votive tablet found at Winka correlates with those on votive tablets found in Thailand. This also shows a cultural relation with the Old Mon kingdoms in Thailand.

Although the Mucalinda Buddha type continued into the Ayutthaya period (late 17<sup>th</sup> century) in Thailand, I do not think that the

<sup>233</sup> Abhidhamma is the third group of Buddhist Scriptures. Theravada Buddhism names *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. It means "Special Dhamma" and consists of seven books namely (i) *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, (ii) *Vibhaṅga* (iii) *Kathāvatthu*, (iv) *Puggalapaññati*, (v) *Dhātukathā*, (vi) *Yamaka*, (vii) *Paṭṭhāna*. It is the doctrine of the Buddha preached to his mother in Tāvātimsa Devine. Later, he taught his apostle Sāriputtra on the banks of Anotatta Lake. It was the first formulated by the Buddha during seven sattaṭhāna.

<sup>234</sup> Zimmer: 1946: 66ff.

<sup>235</sup> Chit Thein: 1965: 74.

(b) *ASB* (1938-39), 1940, p. 22ff.

See also C.O. Blagden, 1934, *Epigraphia Birmanica being Lithic and other Inscriptions of Burma*, edited by U Mya, Yangon: Govt. Printing.



Mucalinda Buddha type of votive tablet found at Winka is to be identified with the art of Khmer and Ayudaya Periods from Thailand. The strong possibility is that it probably belongs to the 5th-10th century A.D. because there are close similarities with Mucailinda-Buddha of the Dvāravatī Period in Thailand. They are as follows:

- a. the hood of the Nāga appears from the shoulders of the Buddha,
- b. the Nāga has seven heads,
- c. no depiction of the coiled body of the Nāga as the throne of the Buddha,
- d. the proportion of the torso,
- e. the Buddha's hand and feet in positions of meditation,
- f. the half-robe of the Buddha and
- g. the rim of the Buddha's robe crossing the torso from right shoulder to above the left waist.

However, there are some weak points in the depiction of the Mucalinda-Buddha on the votive tablet found at Winka.

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**Personal Interviews**

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- 2 Baddhanta Indaka, Abbot of Maggin Tawya monastery, Hpa-an, Kayin State on 15 June 2015
- 3 Professor Tun Aung Chain, Retired Head of History Department, Yangon University on 19 March 2016
- 4 Professor Dr. Kyaw Win, Secretary of Myanmar Historical Commission, Ministry of Culture, on 30 December 2015
- 5 Professor Dr. Toe Hla, Head of History Department, Mandalay University and member of Myanmar Historical Commission, Ministry of Culture, on 30 December 2015
- 6 U San Win, Retired Deputy Director, Historical Research Department, Ministry of Culture on 19 December 2015
- 7 Professor Dr. Tha Tun Maung, Pro-Rector, East Yangon University, Thanlyin, Yangon on 2nd October 2015
- 8 Professor Khin Ma Ma Mu, Retired Head of Archaeology Department on 9th January 2016
- 9 Professor Dr. Yin Yin Aye, Head of Geology Department, Mawlamyine University on 29 December 2015
- 10 Professor Aye Chan, Southeast Asia History Department, Kanda University of International Studies on 31 May 2016



INDEX

A

- Abhaya mudra, 62, 64, 78, 82
- Abeyadana, 36
- Abhidhamma, 89, 90
- Abhiraja, 14 (see Sakya)
- Afghanistan, 19
- Africa, 22
- Aggasavaka, 66, 69
- Ajanta Cave, 2
- Aksobhya Buddha, 74
- Akyab, 4
- Alavi, 18
- Alexandrine, 4,5
- Alopyi, 36
- Amarapura, 58
- Amaravati, 18, 21, 36, 85
- Amazon, 6
- Amitabha, 51
- Andaman Sea, 1
- Andhra king, 3, 8, 20
- Aniruddha, 21, 61, 84
- Angkar, 51
- Anjali mudra, 68, 81
- Ananda Temple, 81
- Annam, 22, 56
- Anuradhapura, 7
- Aparanta, 18
- Arab, 21
- Arati, 80
- Argyre, 4
- Aryan, 2, 14
- Asitanjana, 18
- Asoka, King, 15
- Assaji, 53
- Assam, 9, 10, 13, 14, 21, 23
- Asana, 63
- Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita, 75
- Attabass, 4 (see Dawei)
- Aung Kyaing, U, 57
- Aung Thaw, 47
- Aung-Thwin, A. Michael, 44, 46
- Austroloids, 22
- Austroasiatic, 22
- Austronesians, 22
- Avalokitesvara, 65, 69, 75-77, 81, 82, 90
- Avanti, 19
- Ayatthema, 30, 31, 44, 49, 85
- Ayeyarwady, 11, 14, 18, 25, 44, 86, 87
- Ayuthaya, 91, 92

B

- Badalaung, 67
- Bagan, 5, 13, 30, 31, 37, 42, 52, 53, 60, 70, 75-77, 80, 81, 83, 91
- Bago, 3,4, 8, 31, 52, 56, 84

Barail, 10  
 Barnett, Dr., 18  
 Basham, A.L., 3,5  
 Ba Shin, Bohmu, 30,43, 46, 52, 79  
 Balu Kyun, 25, 26  
 Bamar province, 18, 27  
 Batujaya, 67  
 Baunglin, 18  
 Baw Baw Gyi, pagoda, 54  
 Bayint Nyi Cave, 60  
 Benares, 2, 10, 18, 74  
 Beithano myo, (see Vishnu)  
 Bengal, 1, 4, 6, 8, 23, 52, 70, 79, 86  
 Bengali, 52  
 Besynga, 4 (see Pathein)  
 Bhaddhasima, 28  
 Bhamo, 11, 19  
 Bharukacchana, 10  
 Bhagalapur, 19  
 Bharhut, 81  
 Bhikkhu Vinaya Pali, 9  
 Bhumipasra, 62, 73, 74, 75, 79  
 Bhurkuti, 65  
 Bihar, 52, 70, 79  
 Bilin, 32, 66, 85  
 Bimbisara, King, 20  
 Bladen, C.O., 28, 33, 48, 49  
 Brahmadesa, 14  
 Bode, H. Mabel, 48  
 Bodawpaya, king, 58  
 Bodhi (Bo) tree, 73, 75, 91

Bodhisattva, 5, 6, 51, 63-66, 70, 75, 76,  
 81- 83, 90  
 Boneo, 6  
 Borobudur, 2,3  
 Botahtaung pagoda, 31, 52  
 Brahmavastu, 14  
 Brahmi script, 17  
 Black Mountain, 13  
 Brah Bimb, 51  
 Brahmi script, 50  
 Brahmans, 15, 53  
 Brahmaputra River, 11  
 Brahmanism, 15  
 Brown, L. Robert, 50  
 Budh-Gaya, 55, 75, 76, 78  
 Buddhagupta, 13  
 Buddha, Gautama, 53, 51, 62, 65, 70,  
 74, 83, 92  
 Buddha, Three White, 70  
 Buddhism, 15, 83, 85  
 Burgess, Jass, 75

## C

Calcutta, 6, 75, 81  
 Cambodia, 4, 6, 21, 30, 91  
 Camadevi, 24  
 Campanago, 19  
 Catubhummika (monastery), 58-60, 66,  
 68, 74, 75, 77, 80, 82, 85, 88  
 Caucasians, 22  
 Celebes, 52

Ceylon, (see Sri Lanka)

Chaiya, 31

Chit Thein, U, 75

Chola, 3, 52

Cinapatta, 9

Ciun, (also Chinese), 28

Chan Kien, ambassador, 11

Charney, W. Michael, 50

Chatravali, 74, 76

Chhibber, R, Prof., 47

China, 1, 5, 8, 9, 13, 22, 50, 65

Chiangmai, 35

Chindwin River, 11, 28

Chin Hill, 10, 11, 13, 26, 28

Chin-Lin (see Suvannakudya)

Chirapravati, P. M, 38, 60

Coedes, George, 15-17, 32, 38,

43, 53-66, 77, 87

Culamani Cetiya, 81

Culavamsa, 7

## D

Dala, 20

Damrong, Prince, 84

Dawei, 8, 53

Devanagari, 17, 61

Dhannyawati, 19

Dhammaceti, (also Ramadhipati), 7, 44, 45,

47

Dhammacakkapavattanasutta, 55

Dharmacakkra mudra, 30, 63, 69, 76, 89

Dharmasastras, 17

Dhyana Mudra, 89, 90

Dhyanasana, 63, 89, 90

Dhyani-Buddha, 64, 74

Dikshit, K.R, 14

Dikshit, Jutta K, 14

Dipankara Buddha, 69, 70, 74, 87

Dohan, 11,

Dong Sak, 77

Dvaravati (Dvaraka ), 19, 24, 29, 51, 60,

69, 75, 78, 84-88, 92

Duroisele, C, 32

Du'wop, 29

## E

Egypt, 50

El Dorado, 6

Ellora Cave, 68, 76, 77

## F

Fa Hsia Cave, 65

Fan-Cho, 27

Fashade, 68

Forchhammer, Emil, 49

Frasch, Tilman, 50

Fu-Kan-Tu-Lu (see Lbir-cin)

## G

Gandalarij, (also Gandhara), 19, 20

Ganges, 2, 6, 10, 14, 17, 19, 23

Gauhati city, 13

Geographia, 4  
Geiger, Wihelm, 6  
Gerini, 6  
Getty, Alice, 65  
Ghata Jataka, 19  
Godakumbura, C.E., 7  
Golamattida, 7  
Gopala, son of Vapyata, 86  
Graham, W.A, 38  
Greece, 50  
Greek, 4  
Grunwedel, Albert, 75  
Gujarat, 19  
Gupta, 17, 18,21, 37, 79, 85-87  
Guswaygatuim, (also Thaton), 26

H

Hall, D.G.E, Prof., 16  
Halliday, Robert, 32  
Hamsavati, (also Bago/ Halingyi), 19, 36  
Han dynasty, 8, 50  
Hanlin, 54  
Hiranujayavaha, 6  
Himalayas, 14  
Hindu, 16, 85  
Hiuen-tsang, 6  
Hlaing Shey, 36  
Hngak Twin (sect), 58, 59  
Homo sapiens, 22  
Hteelo Minlo, king, 70  
Hukaung Valley route, 10

I

Iddhipathriya abhiññan, 72  
India, 9, 10, 13, 16, 20, 51, 56, 83  
Indian Ocean, 1,5, 6, 8, 85  
Indo-Myanmar orographic chain, 14  
Indonesia, 6, 68, 86, 87  
Indus Valley Culture, 51  
Insein, 26  
Islam, 21

J

Jakata, 67  
Jataka stories, 2, 5, 54  
Jatamakuta, 90  
Jainism, 15  
Jabhupati, king, 83  
Jaiya, 66, 77  
Java, 2,6, 30, 67, 68, 85-87  
Javanese, 30  
Jeyavakkhana, (also Taunggu), 19

K

Kachin, 26  
Kabaw, 10  
Kacchapa River, 19  
Kadamba, 17, 73  
Kadu, 28  
Kai Tan, 11  
Kalay Plain, 10, 11  
Kalinga, 4, 15, 20  
Ka-lo-na-su-fa-la-na, 6

- Kala(also Indian), 28  
 Kalyani inscription, 34, 44,45  
 Kalok dak( water demon), 26  
 Kamapura, 13 (also Assam)  
 Kamasuvana, 6  
 Kamboja, (also Shan State), 19  
 Kanchapuram, 8  
 Kanburi river, 9  
 Kanheri, 68  
 Kapilavastu, 14, 72, 78  
 Karawang, 67  
 Karle, 68, 77  
 Kathar, 53  
 Kawgun Cave, 18, 29, 33, 34, 57, 67, 72, 78, 83, 85, 86  
 Kawkariak, 36  
 Kawkathaun Cave, 77  
 Kayah,(also Gandararij), 19  
 Kayan, 26  
 Kayin, 26,27, 28  
 Kedaram, King, 3  
 Kelasapabbata, Mt., 44, 66, 86  
 Khantee, 10, 18, 74  
 Kharsi, 23  
 Khathar, 52  
 Khin Ma Ma Mu, Daw, 38  
 Khmar, (also Krwam), 5, 22, 28, 30  
 Khao Ok Thlu, 51, 66  
 Khryse, 4  
 Khrysoana (see Ayeyarwady), 4  
 Klaudios Ptolemy, 4, 25  
 Kosseya, 9  
 Kra, Isthmus, 6  
 Krikumbha (also Yangon), 26  
 Kshatriyas, 14  
 Kublai Khan, 8  
 Kumagupta I, king, 75  
 Kurukulla, 65  
 Kushan, 15  
 Kusima, (also Pathein), 19  
 Kusimapura, 19  
 Kusinagara, 55, 78  
 Kyatpyin, 20  
 Kyansittha, king, 26, 30, 34, 36, 47  
 Kyaik De-ap, (see Botahtaung)  
 Kyaik Htee Zaung, 85  
 Kyaikkathar old town, 29, 31, 78, 85  
 Kyaiktalan pagoda, 47  
 Kyaikte pagoda, 30  
 Kyaikto, 48  
 Kyaikmaraw, 31  
 Kyaukse, 27, 28, 31  
 Kyazin, 36  
 Kyi Kyi Kaing, Nan, 42  
 Kyun Pyaw, 26  
 Kyun Sein, 8  
 Kyuntu, 31, 56
- L
- Labir-cin,(Sea elephant), 8  
 Lagum, (also Yangon), 25  
 Lalitasana, 63, 69, 71

Lampun, (also Haripunjaya), 24, 31, 34, 36, 49

Laos, 6

Lau-man (see Zokthok)

Lawa, (also Laos), 23, 30

Legaing, 18

Leiberman, Victor, 50

Leider, P. Jacques, 50

Le May, Reginald, 36, 37, 42, 73, 84

Lo (a town of Nan-Cho), 13

Lopburi, (also Lavapura), 24, 31, 33

Lokananda, 56

Lokahteikpan temple, 5, 72, 81

Luce, G. H, 24, 26, 30, 32, 33, 38, 43, 46, 53, 70, 74, 79, 87

Lu Pe Win, U, 32, 49, 71

## M

Madagascar, 5

Madamalingam, 3 (also Mottama)

Magadha, (also Upper Chindwin), 20

Mahabarata, 16, 20

Mahabhodi temple, 75, 76

Mahagaruna, 62

Mahajanaka, 5

Mahanandi river, 4, 25

Mahasatipathan monastery, 41, 50

Mahavamsa, 3, 6

Mahayana, 51, 65, 68, 69, 72, 74, 75, 77, 78, 82, 85, 86

Mahimsaka, (also Moegoke) 20

Mahite, 7

Maitreya, 65, 66, 70, 75, 81, 90

Majamdar, R.C., 16

Malaya, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 17, 23, 48, 52, 67, 78, 85, 86

Malcolm, Howard, 57

Manchee, 11

Mandalay, 52

Manipur Plateau, 1, 10, 11, 21, 23

Manjusri, 69

Man Lu Lan (also Saw Lu), 52, 71

Manshu, 27

Manu, 17

Mara, (Satan ), 62, 80

Marco Polo, 8

Martaban, (also Mottama), 18, 37, 47, 48, 67, 85-87

Mauryan kings, 2, 3

Mawlamyine, 7, 8, 9, 31, 36, 66, 67, 86, 89

May Oung, U, 32

Mediterranean merchants, 5

Meithila, 20

Menam, 9, 24

Millindapanna, 5

Mi-cho (see Rakhine)

Middle Mon, 34, 36, 45 Migaravana, 55

Min Nwe Soe, Dr., 42

Mirma (also Myanmar), 28

Mishmi route, 11

Mesopotamia, 50

Modern Mon, 37

Mohenjo-Daro, 51  
 Mojaghanjavala Lokitesvara, 82  
 Motlamlem (also Mawlamyine), 26  
 Mo-Ti-Po (see Mottama)  
 Moemei, 13, 31  
 Moe-sit, 18  
 Moe-the, 18  
 Mokti, 31  
 Mon, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 31, 32, 38, 49,  
 57, 73, 78, 83, 84, 87, 88  
 Mon Daih, 25  
 Mon Duin, 25  
 Mon-yul district, 23  
 Mon Country, 7, 8, 21, 72  
 Moggalana, 64-66, 69, 78  
 Mongolians, 22, 28  
 Mon-Khmer, 23, 91  
 Mon Nya, 25  
 Mottama, 3, 4, 8, 26, 36  
 Mozaffarpur, 20  
 Mucalinda, 89-92  
 Munda, 23  
 Mya, U, 32, 38, 46, 49, 52, 56, 61, 64,  
 67, 70, 71, 79  
 Myakan stone library, 36  
 Myathabeik pagoda, 30  
 Myatheindan pagoda, 30  
 Myeik, 31, 55  
 Myinkaba Gupyaug, 36, 77  
 Myint Aung, U, 37, 44  
 Myitnge, 27

Myitthar River, 10, 11, 31

Mudra, 62, 89

## N

Naga, 92

Naga Hill, 10, 23

Nagajunakonda, 18

Nagari script, 51, 52, 74, 84

Nagayon, 36

Nai Pan Hla, Dr., 24, 29, 32, 84

Nakhon Si Thammarat, 31

Nakhon Pathom, 33

Nalanda University, 21, 52, 75

Nalagiri, 62, 80

Namaskara mudra, 62, 64, 69, 72

Negroes, (also Negritos), 22, 25

Neolithic period, 23

Nepal, 14, 52, 69

Nicobar Island, 3, 23

*North-East India Land, People and Economy,*

14

## O

Old Mon, 25-34, 36, 45-47, 52, 56, 57, 60,

72, 74, 79, 80, 82, 84, 88

Orissa, 4, 8, 20, 79

Orinoco, 6

## P

Pacific Ocean, 8

Padamasana, 75

Pahtothamya, 36

Pai-ku (see Bago)  
Pala, 21, 51, 52, 55, 65, 79, 84, 86  
Palaung, (also Ta'ang), 22  
Pal lava, 3, 8, 17, 21, 85, 86  
Pal lava script, 17, 18  
Pandit Inscription, 34, 45,46  
Panjab, (also Sriksetra), 20  
Pantavamahathe, 58, 59  
Pa-O, 26, 27  
Parileyyaka, 79  
Parinibbana, 74, 78-80  
Patkoi Pass, 11  
Pataliputa, (also Patna), 20, 86  
Pathein, 32  
Pahtothamyar, 71, 72  
Paung, 47  
Paung-Tuk, 9, 24, 32, 36, 77  
Pe Maung Tin, U, 32  
Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, 4  
Persia, 8, 21  
Phattalung, 51  
Phetleik, West/East, 56  
Pitaka, 5, 17  
Pitaka Taik, 36  
Phungan Pass, 11  
Pokkhara, 20  
Polynesia, 50  
Pralambanasana, 63, 64, 76, 78  
Poppalam, 3  
Prapathom, 9, 24, 32  
Pugama Dvara, 8, 14

Purana, 16  
Puvastu, 14  
Pwo, (see Kayin)  
Pyay (see Sriksetra)  
Pyinbya, king, 70  
Pyu, 8, 13, 17, 23, 27, 28, 30, 33, 47, 49, 51, 53, 68, 72-74, 78

R

Raga, 80  
Raheng, 9, 36  
Rajagri, (also Kaletaung nyo), 20  
Rajaburi, 77  
Rajalilasana, 63  
Rakhine, 4, 8, 10, 19,21, 52, 56, 85  
Rakkhasi, 25  
Raman, 49  
Ramaññadesa, 3, 6, 7,21, 43, 44, 48, 87  
Ramayana, 16  
Rajalilasana, 81  
Rajendra Chola, King, 3,4, 52  
Ravi, 18  
Ray, Nihar Ranjan, 43, 66  
Red River, 22  
Rig Veda, 2  
Rome, 9

S

Sabara, 4  
Sadhammajotika monastery, 18  
Sadhanamala, 76



- Sakya clan, 14  
 Sghaw, (see Kayin)  
 Saku, 18  
 Sakyamuni, 69  
 Salin, 18  
 Salon, 25  
 Samabhanga, 82  
 Sambo, 5  
 Samgramari jotturigavarman, 3  
 Samabhanga, 82  
 Samon, 27  
 Samadi mudra, 62  
 Sanskrit, 16, 51, 53  
 San Win, U, 42, 49  
 Saptaratna, 64  
 Sariputtra, 53, 64-66, 69, 78, 81  
 Sarnarth, 79  
 Sasana, 56  
 Sattasattaha, 90  
 Savaka, 82  
 Shan State, 18, 22  
 She-Li (see Vesali)  
 Seinnyet Nyima, 36  
 Shin Sawbu, Queen, 78  
 Shorto, H.L, 32, 33  
 Shweli, 13  
 Shwedagon pagoda, 32  
 Shwemawdaw pagoda, 74  
 Shwesandaw pagoda, 30, 32  
 Shwesaryan pagoda, 29, 30, 33, 34, 41, 46, 47, 50, 56, 59-61  
 Shwe Zan Aung, U, 23, 32  
 Shwe Zigon Pagoda, 30, 57  
 Sihassabahu (also Bodhisattva), 82  
 Sikhara, 36, 69, 80  
 Silk cloth, 9  
 Silk Road, 10  
 Singapore, 6  
 Singhal, D.P., 20  
 Si T'ep, 24, 32  
 Sittaung river, 29, 48, 78  
 Sittwe, 4  
 Son river, 6  
 Song Period, 8  
 South Asia, 14  
 Southeast Asia, 1, 3, 5, 6, 14-17, 18, 51, 83, 85, 88  
 South Indians navigation, 3  
 Sriksetra, 13, 14, 18, 30, 38, 42, 52, 54, 60, 67, 69, 71-73, 75-77, 84-88, 91  
 Sri Lanka, 5, 7, 48, 65, 69, 85  
 Sripamesvara, 18, 29, 33  
 Srivijaya, 67, 68, 77, 85-88  
 Stadtnr, M. Donald, 28, 50  
 Sumatra, 6, 25, 52, 67, 85, 86  
 Suvana, 25  
 Suvannabhumi, 5, 6, 7, 8, 25, 44, 49, 54, 75, 89  
 Suvannakudya, 7  
 Sweli, 14  
 Syam, 30

|  |  |
|--|--|
| T  |  |
| Tagaung, 13, 42, 52, 53  | Thin Kyi, Dr. Prof., 48                          |
| Takau Pa, 7  | Three Pagoda Pass, 9, 86                         |
| Talaing, 27  | Tibet, 14, 23, 65, 69                            |
| Ta Li, 13  | Tibeto-Burman, 27, 73                            |
| Tamalinda, 6   | Tilangana (also Tiuk Luingana), 25               |
| Tamu-Moorey-Impha road, 10   | Tin Gyi, U, 43                                   |
| Tanhā, 80  | Tircul, (also Pyu )28                            |
| Tang dynasty, 7  | Tribhanga, 90                                    |
| Tanintharyi, 8, 85   | Tikkhanyana, Ashin, 41                           |
| Tantra,(Mahayana), 65  | Trap Inscription, 33,45, 72                      |
| Tapain, 14   | Trigumba, (also Yangon), 25                      |
| Tara, 51   | Toe Hla, Dr., 7, 44, 88                          |
| Taruk, (also Mongolia), 28   | Tonkin, 13, 24                                   |
| Taung Pauk Sayardaw, 6   | Tun Aung Chain, Prof., 45                        |
| Taung-gu, 19 (also Varanasi)   | Turkish, 21                                      |
| Tavatimsa, 62, 79, 81  | Tuzu Gap, 10                                     |
| Taw Sein Ko, 46, 52  | Twante, 32, 53, 77                               |
| Temple, R.C., 67, 84   | U  |
| Thailand, 6, 7, 24, 28, 56, 60, 65, 68, 84-87, 91, 92                            | Uddissana cetiya, 54                             |
| Tham Koa Khrom, 66   | Ujjeni (Ujin), 18                                |
| Tham Guha Svarga, 67   | Ukkala, 4, 20                                    |
| Than Lwin River, 13, 23, 57  | Upali sima, 79                                   |
| Than Tun, Dr., 32, 44, 52, 55, 56, 79, 88  | Upper Ayeyarwady, 14                             |
| Thantwe, 19, 20  | Upper Myanmar, 9, 11, 14, 42, 49, 60, 74, 88, 91 |
| Thaton, 18, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 43, 46-50, 52, 56, 59, 67, 68, 72, 77, 78, 80-88 | U Thong, 32, 36                                  |
| Thaung-thwut, 18   | V  |
| Thein, Sayar, Hmawbi, 32   | Vajrapani, 68                                    |
| Theravada, 24, 28, 66, 69, 70, 83, 85  | Varada mudra, 62                                 |

Varanasi, 19

**Z**

Vesali, 8, 17, 20, 54

Zabubadi, 64

Vasumdhara, 80

Zayar, (also Tanintharyi), 25

Vietnam, 22, 68

Zimmer, Heinrich, Dr., 91

Vinaya Sangaha Atthakatha, 9

Zin Gyaik, 47

Virasana, 63, 81

Zokthok, 8, 36

Vishnu city, (also Visnupura) 18, 19, 54

Vyakhana mudra, 63, 76

**W**

Wa, 24, 56

Wan Fa Hsia Cave,

Wann Twin, 32

Waw, 31

Winka, 32, 44, 49, 56, 66, 82, 85, 86, 91

**Y**

Yamakapratiharika, 64

Yangon, 18, 20, 83

Yajur-veda, 20

Yao, 28

Yazagyo, 20

Yin Yin Aye, Prof., 47

Young ch'ang, 13

Yu River, 10

Yue-Chi country, 13

Yunnan, 9, 13, 22

Ywazo, 54

## **MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS**



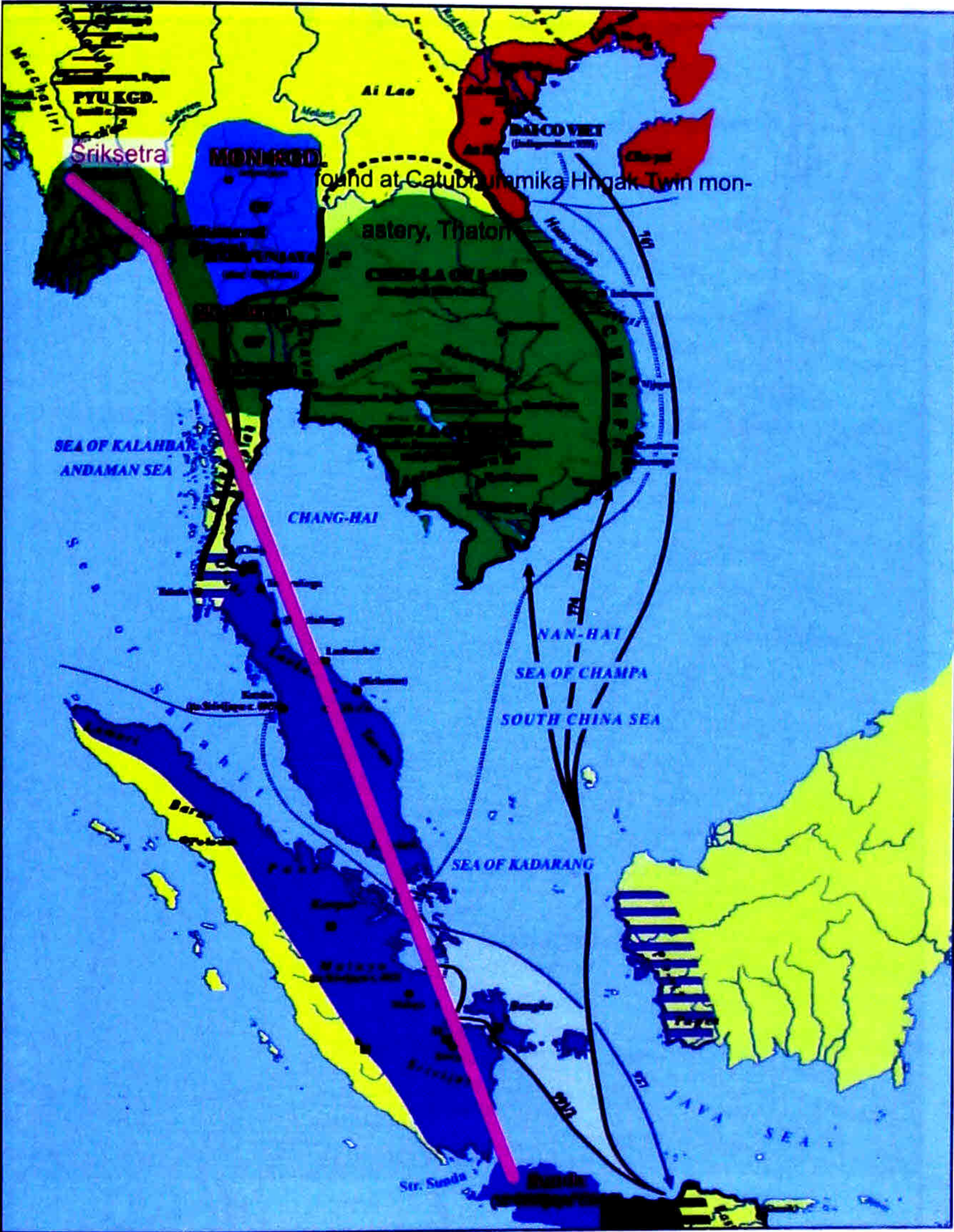


Figure 1. Thaton in relations to Śrī Kṣetra, Dvāravatī and Śrīvijaya

From Jan M.Pluvier, 1995, *Historical Atlas of South-East Asia*, New York: E.J. Brill, p.5



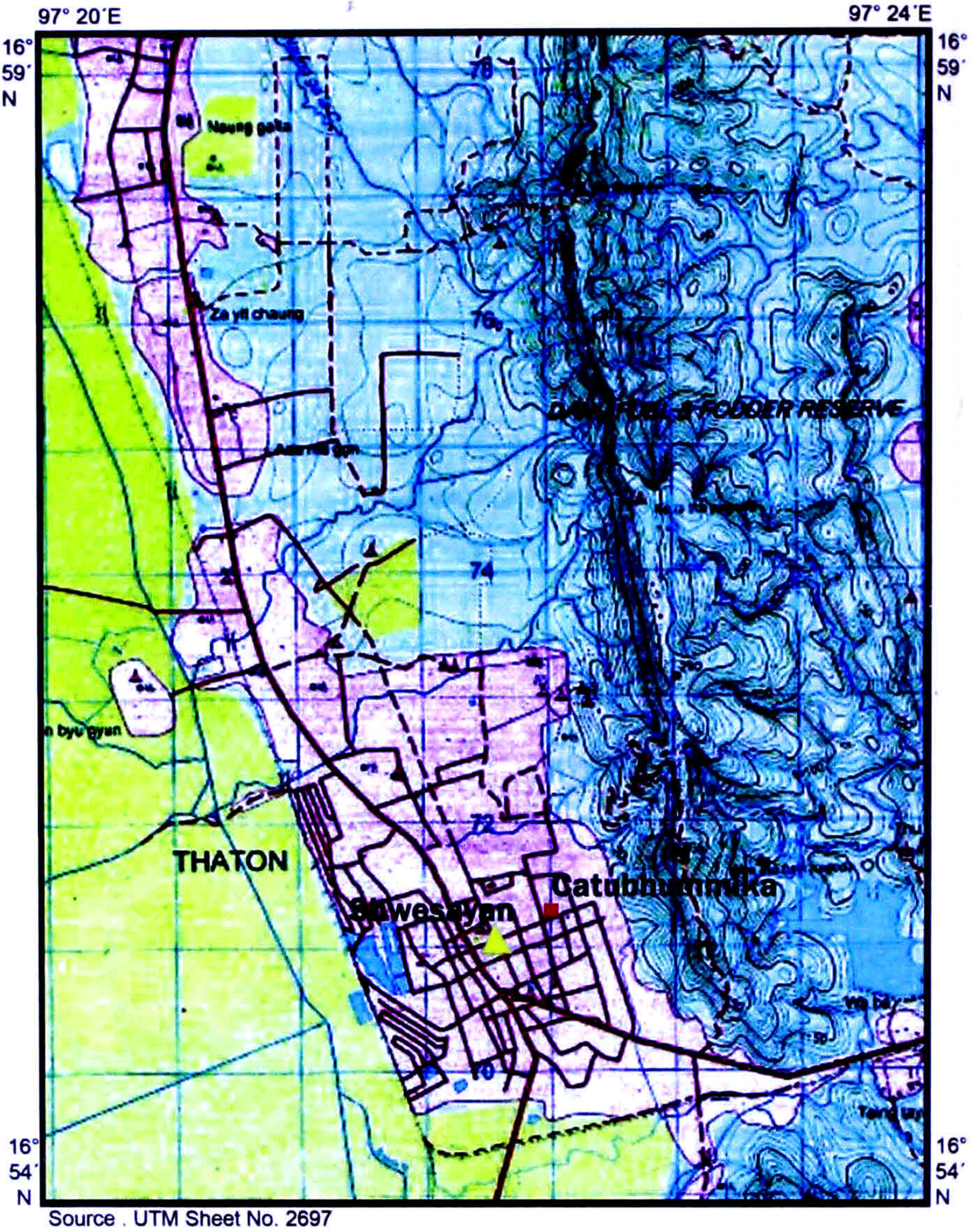


Figure 2. Location of Thaton





Figure.3 Place where votive tables were found, the Mounment of Funeral Urn of the Pantita at Catubhummika Monastery, Thaton.





Figure. 4 Dr. Min Nwe Soe, State Minister, Mon State Government observing the site where the votive tables here found, Catubhummika Monastery, Thaton.





Figure.5 Bhaddanta Indaka, Bhaddanta Tikkhañāṇa, Nan Hlaing and Khant Zaw Aung observing the votive tables found at Catubhummika Hngak Twin Monastery, Thaton.





Figure 6. The Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā* and *Pralambanāsana* flanked by two standing Bothisattva holding a lotus in his hand, found at Catubhummika Hngak Twin Monastery, Thaton.





Figure 7. The Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā* and *Pralambanāsana* flanked by two standing Bothisattva holding a lotus in his hand, found at Catubhumika Hngak Twin Monastery, Thaton.





Figure 8. The Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā* and *Pralambanāsana* flanked by two standing Bothisattva holding a lotus in his hand, found at Winka, Mon State, and displayed at Mawlamyine Museum.





Figure 9. The Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā* and *Pralambanāsana* flanked by two standing Bothisattva holding a lotus in his hand, 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, found in Batujaya, Kariwang, West Java province, in 2006, Clay (8×6×0)cm, Pusat Arkeologi Nasional, Indonesia.

From Gay, *Lost of Kingdom*



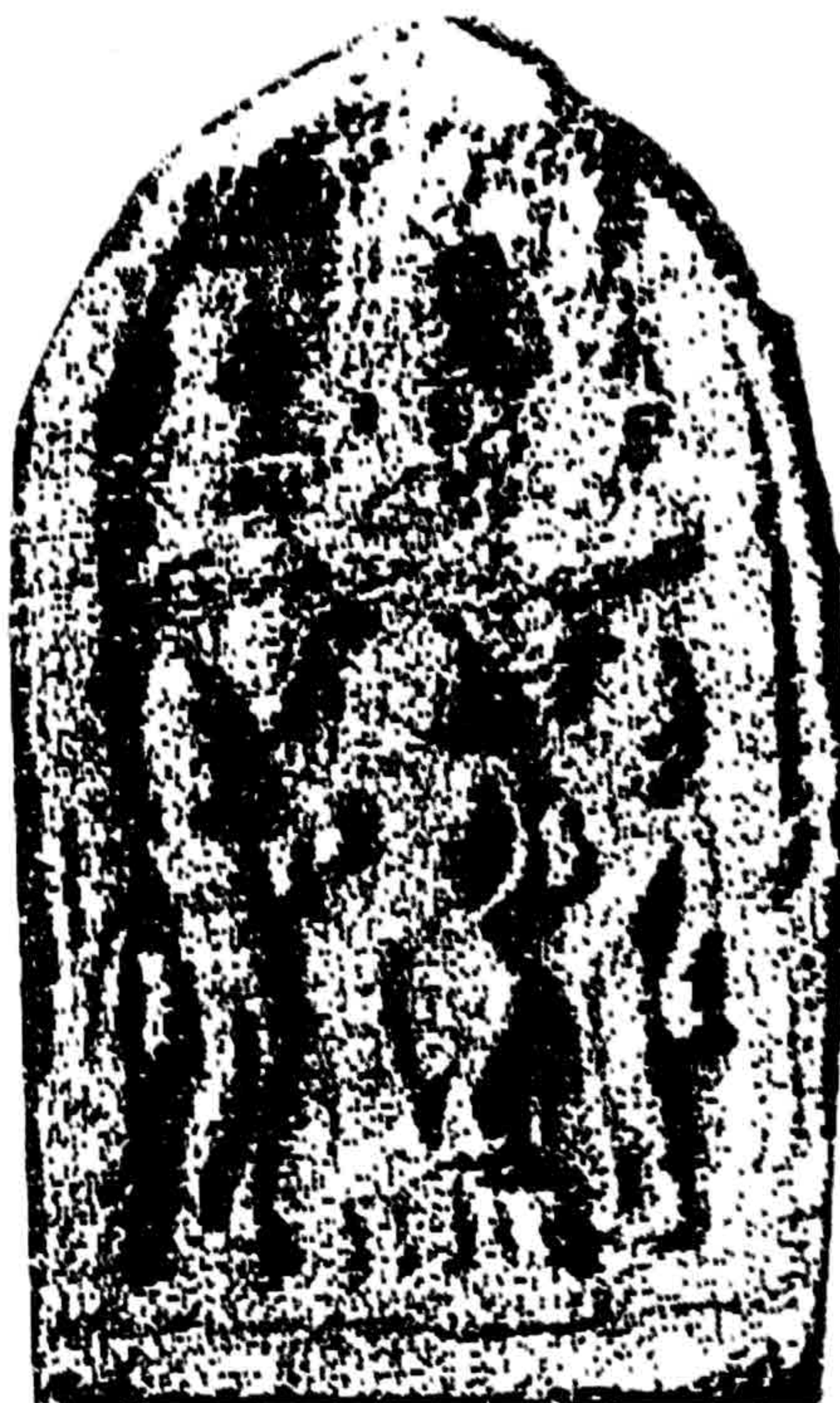


Figure 10. The Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā* and *Pralambanāsana* flanked by two standing Bothisattva holding a lotus in his hand, 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, found in Thailand.

From G.Coedes, Siamese Votive Tablet



Figure 11. The Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā* and *Pralambanāsana* flanked by two standing Bothisattva holding a lotus in his hand, 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, found in Kawgun Cave. (From R.C Temple, 1894, *Notes on Antiquities in Ramannadesa*.)





Figure 12. The Buddha in *Abhaya Mudrā* and *Pralambanāsana* flanked by two standing Bodhisattva holding a lotus in his hand, 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, found in Sri Ksetra (Hmawzar).  
From U Mya, *VTB*



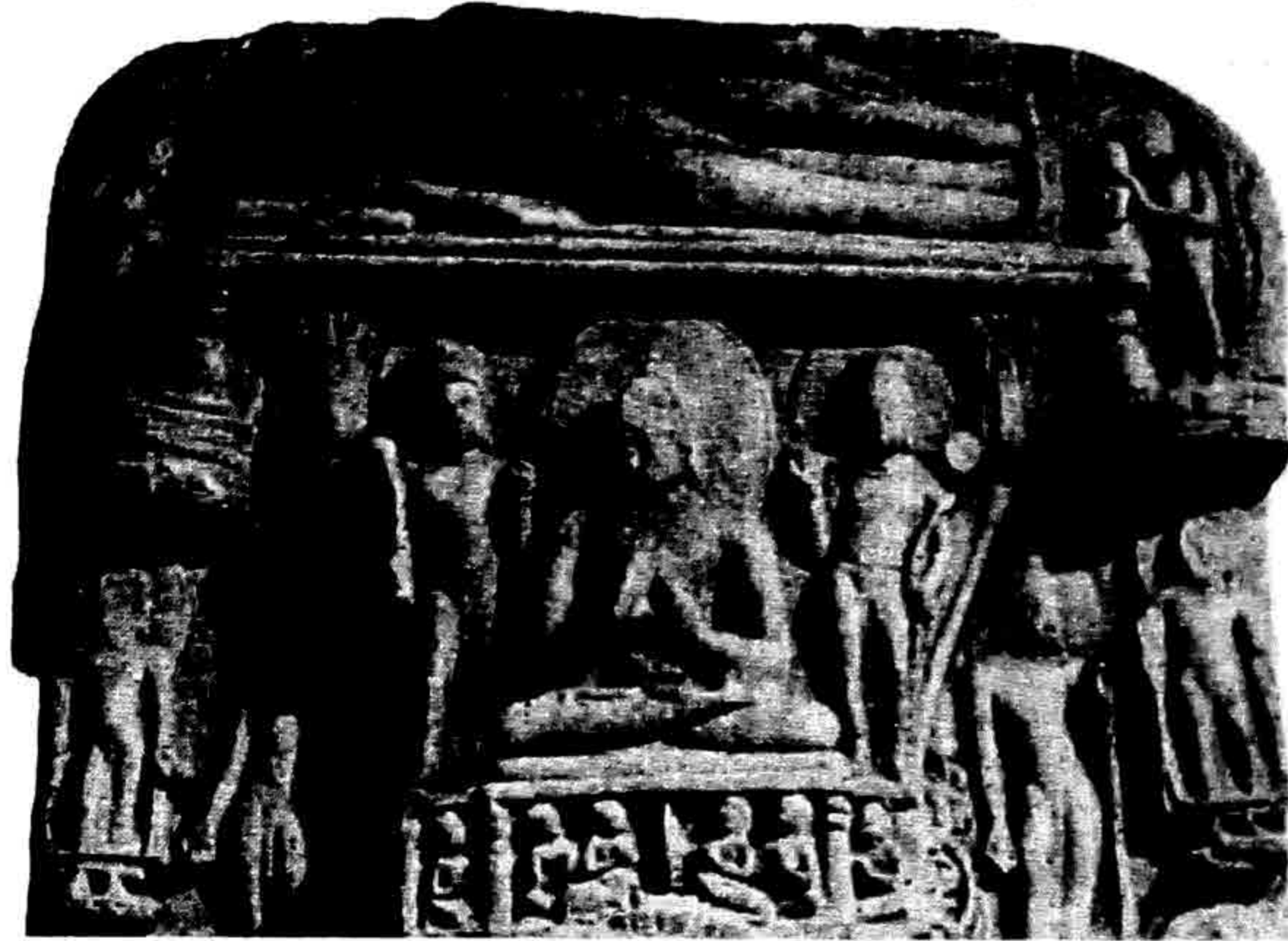


Figure 13. The Buddhist Triad, Fashe Karle Panel between entrance, c. 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century AD.



Figure 14. The Buddhist Triad, India, c. 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century AD.  
(from the *Way of Buddhism*)





Figure 15. A Seated Crowned Buddha in *dharmacakra mudra* flanked by bodhisattvas in *lālitāsana*, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton





Figure 16. A Seated Crowned Buddha in *dharmacakra mudra* flanked by bodhisattvas in lālītāsana, Catubhumika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton





Figure 17. A Seated Crowned Buddha in *dhammacakra mudrā* flanked by bodhisattvas in *lālītāsana*, Catubhumika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton



Figure 18. A Seated Crowned Buddha in *dharmacakra mudra* flanked by bodhisattvas in *lālītāsana*, Buddhist Museum, Shwesaryan Pagoda, Thaton





Figure 19. A Seated Crowned Buddha in *dharmacakra mudra* flanked by bodhisattvas in *lālītāsana*, relief, at the Trāp Old Mon Inscription, Shwe-saryan Pagoda, Thaton



Figure 20. A Seated Crowned Buddha in *dharmacakra mudrā* flanked by bodhisattvas in *lālītāsana*, sand stone, relief, at Kawgun Cave, near Hpa-an



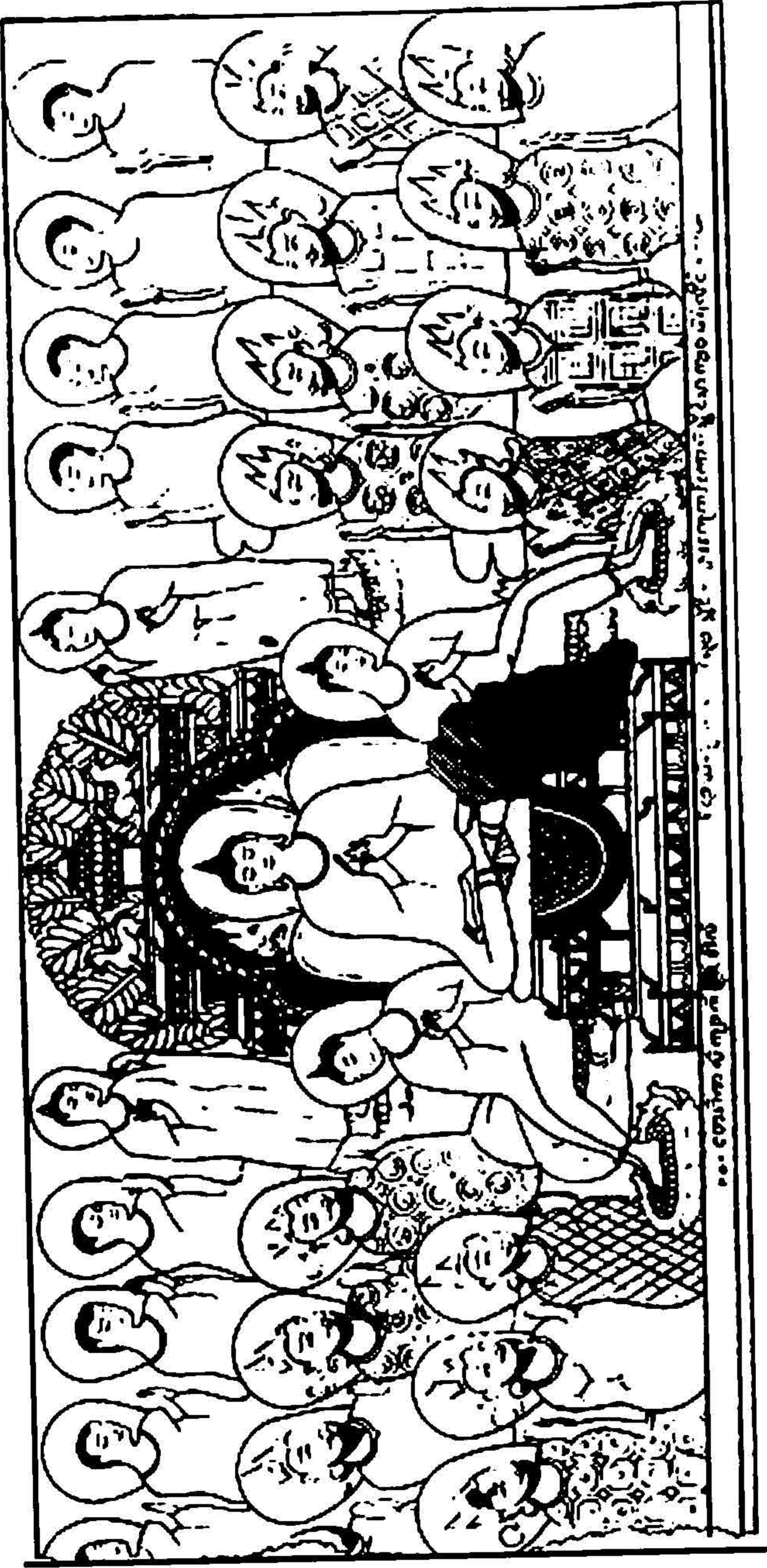


Figure 21. Wall-painting depicting the scene of the Great Miracle of Buddha, Old Mon glosses, Pahtotharmyo temple. Early Bagan





Figure 22. A Seated Crowned Buddha in *dharmacakra mudrā* flanked by bodhisattvas in *lālītāsana*, Terracotta Votive Table, Śrī Kṣetra.

From U Mya, *VTB*





Figure 23. Earth-touching Buddha flanked by small stupas, 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.



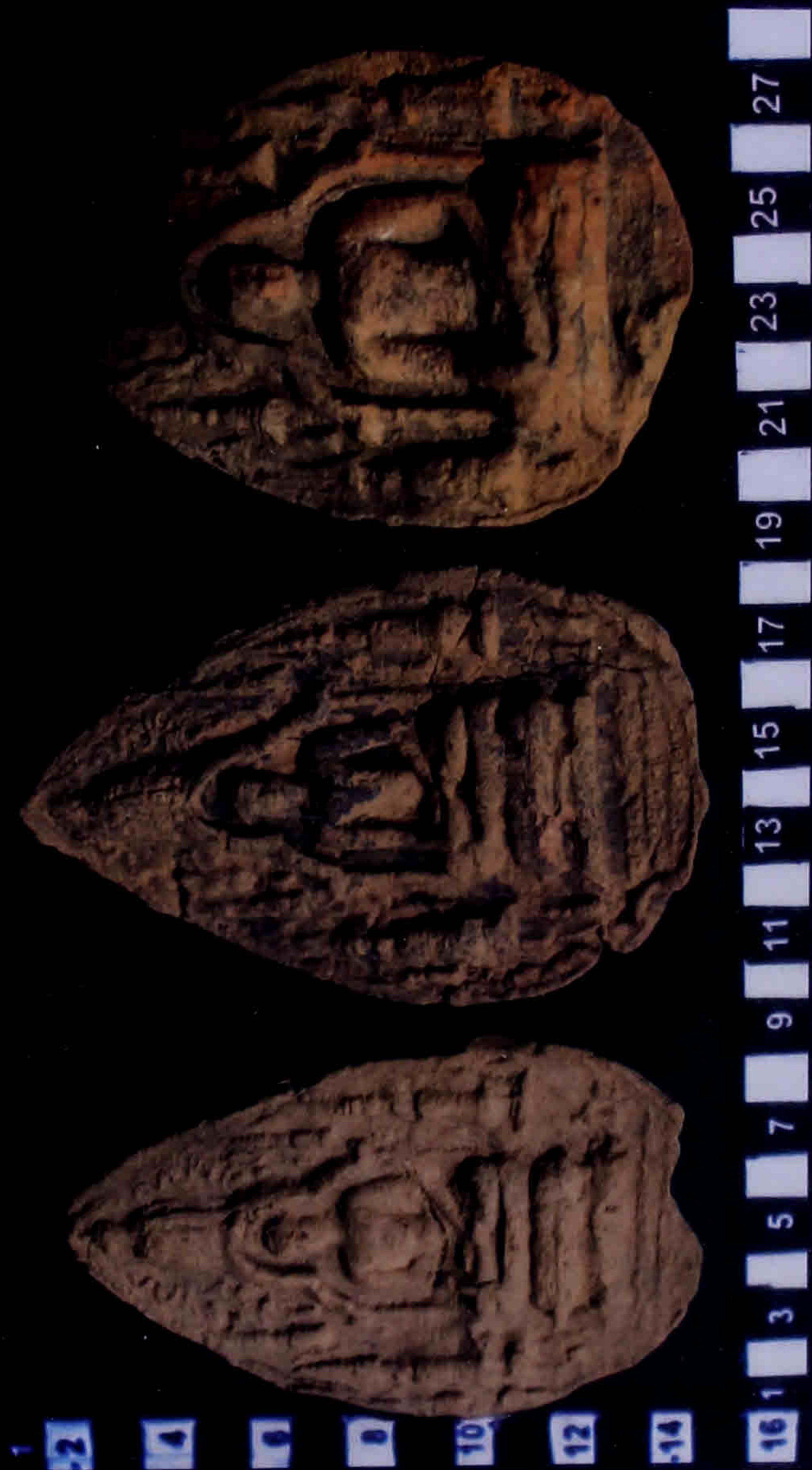


Figure 24. Earth-touching Buddha Flanked by small stupas, 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Catubhumika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.





Figure 25. Earth-touching Buddha flanked by small stupas. Budh-Gaya, displayed at Berlin Museum, Germany.

(Albert Grünwedel and Jas. Burgess, *Buddhist Art in India*)





Figure 26. Earth-touching Buddha flanked by small stupas, with inscription in Nāgarī script under the seated Buddha, Narlanda, India.



Figure 27. Earth-touching Buddha flanked by small stupas, Bago,  
From R.C Temple, 1894, *Notes on Antiquities in Ramannadesa*.





Figure 28. Earth-touching Buddha Flanked by small stupas, 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.





Figure 29. Earth-touching Buddha Flanked by small stupas, 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.





Figure 30. Earth-touching Buddha flanked by small stupas with inscription in Nāgarī script along the bottom edge. 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Catubhummika monastery, Thaton





Figure 31. Earth-touching Buddha under the Bodhi tree and umbrella, (14×7) cm, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.





Figure 32. Earth-touching Buddha under the Bodhi tree and umbrella, (14×7) cm, Catubhumika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.





Figure 33. Seated Buddha, from South India, Limestone, height 71'',  
9th century A.D., Boney Collection, Tokyo  
(from Zimmer, 1955, *The Art of Indian Asia*)





Figure 34. Inscription in Pallava script under the Earth-touching Buddha on the reverse of votive tablet, c. 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Catubummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton





Figure 35. Earth-touching Buddha seated under Śikara, Catubhum-mika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton





Figure 36. Earth-touching Buddha seated under Śikara, Catubhumika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton





Figure 37. Earth-touching Buddha seated under Śikara, flanked by Bodhisattva, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton





Figure 38. Earth-touching Buddha seated under Sikara, flanked by Bodhisattva, Catubhum-  
mika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton





Figure 39. Earth-touching Buddha seated under Śikara, flanked by Bodhisattva in *vyākhyāna mudrā* and *virāsana*, Catubhummika Hng-ak Twin monastery, Thaton



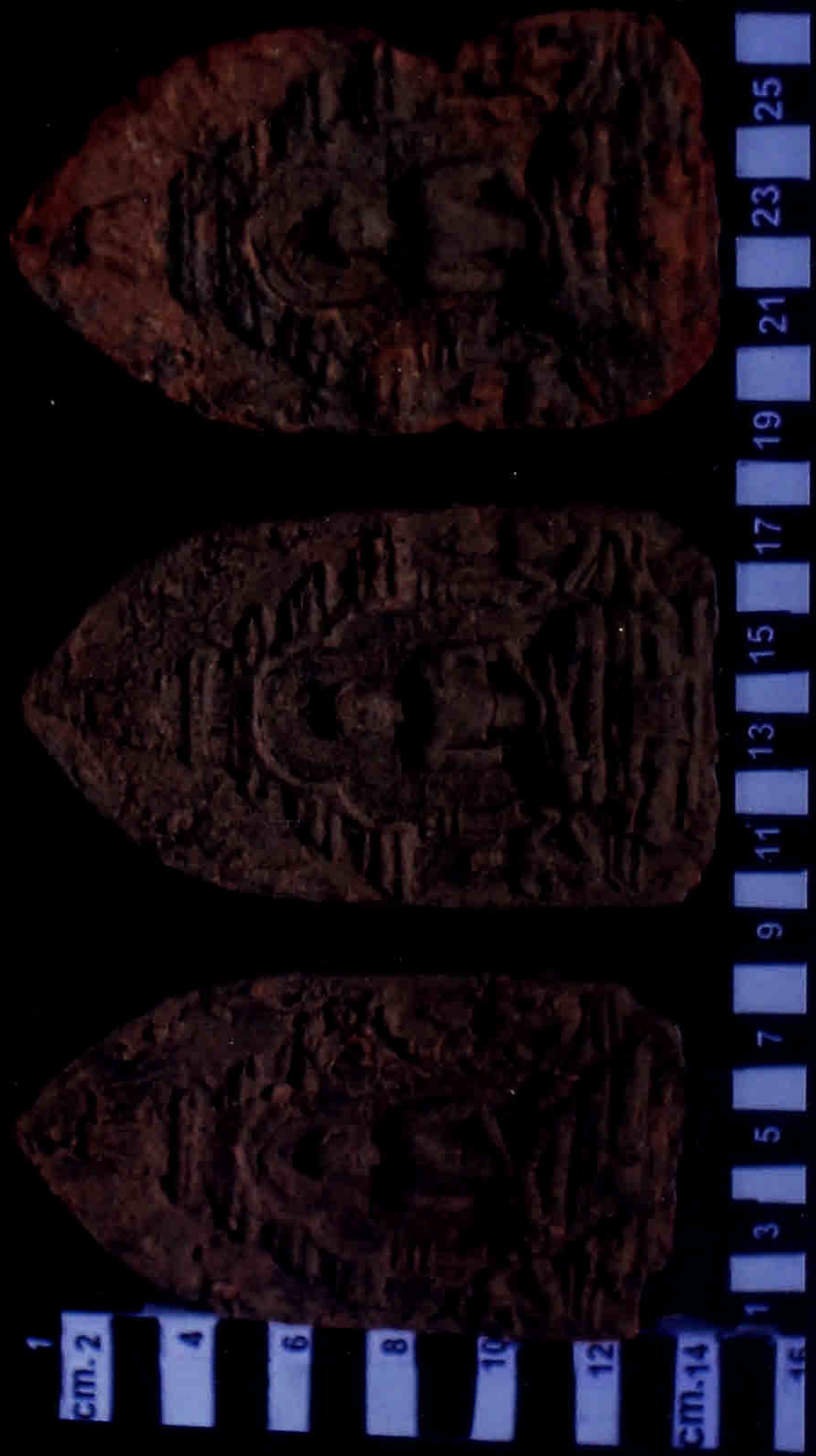


Figure 40. Earth-touching Buddha seated under Śikara, flanked by Bodhisattva in *vyākhyāna mudrā* and *virāsana*, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton





Figure 41. Seated Buddha in *dharmackra mudra*, flanked on either side of seated figure in *dharmacakra mudra*, seated three figures: the one on the left in *virasana*, the one in the middle in *lālītāsana* and the right one in undertermined position, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.





Figure 42. Seated Buddha in *dharmacakra mudra*, flanked on either side of seated figure in *dharmacakra mudra*, seated three figures: the one on the left in *virasana*, the one in the middle in *lālītāsana* and the right one in undertermined position, Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.





Figure 43. The Eight Scenes depicted on votive tablet, c. 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., at Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.





Figure 44. The Eight Scenes depicted on votive tablet, c. 5<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., at Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.





Figure 45. The Eight Scenes of the Buddha's Life, Sārnāth, India, 5th century A.D., Indian Museum, Calcutta (*The Way of Buddhism*)



Figure 46. Crowned-standing Buddha and *abhaya mudrā* with the body in *samabhaṅga* position, found at Catubhummika Hngak Twin monestary, Thaton.





Figure 47. Crowned-standing Buddha and *abhaya mudrā* with the body in *samabhaṅga* position, found at Catubhummika Hngak Twin monastery, Thaton.



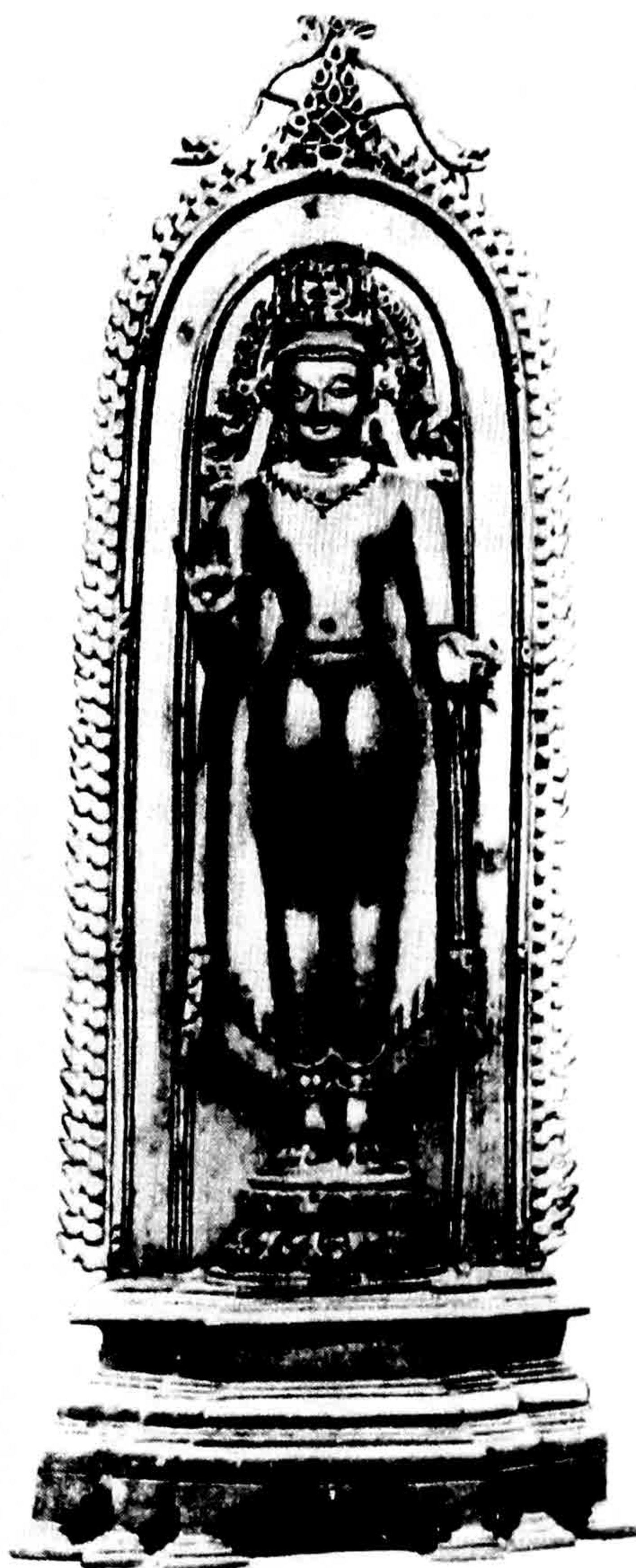


Figure 48. Crowned-standing Buddha and *abhaya mudrā* with the body in *samabhaṅga* position, Kurkihary Patna Museum, India



Figure 49. Enthroned Buddha Preaching the First Sermon flanked by small under śikhara, Catubhummika monastery, Thaton



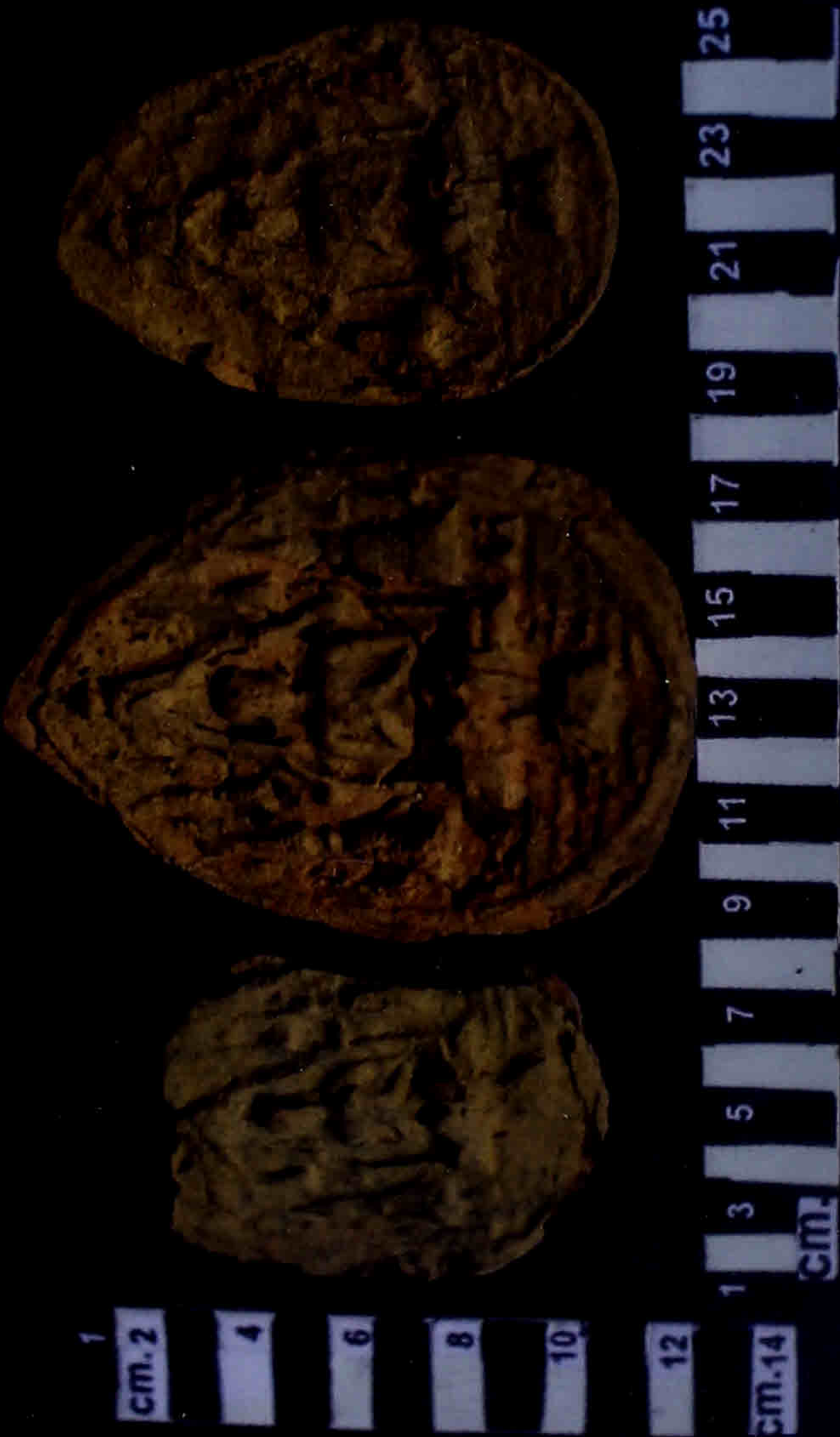


Figure 50. Enthroned Buddha Preaching the First Sermon flanked by small under śikhara, Catubhummika monastery, Thaton





Figure 51. Enthroned Buddha Preaching the First Sermon flanked by small under śikhara, Shwesaryan Pagoda Museum, Thaton





Figure 52. Enthroned Buddha Preaching the First Sermon flanked by small under śikhara, Kawkathaung Cave, east of Hpa-an





Figure 53. The Enthroned Buddha in Preaching the First Sermon flanked by small stupas under śikhara, the tower of Gaya, Thailand  
From G. Coedes, Siamese Votive Tablet



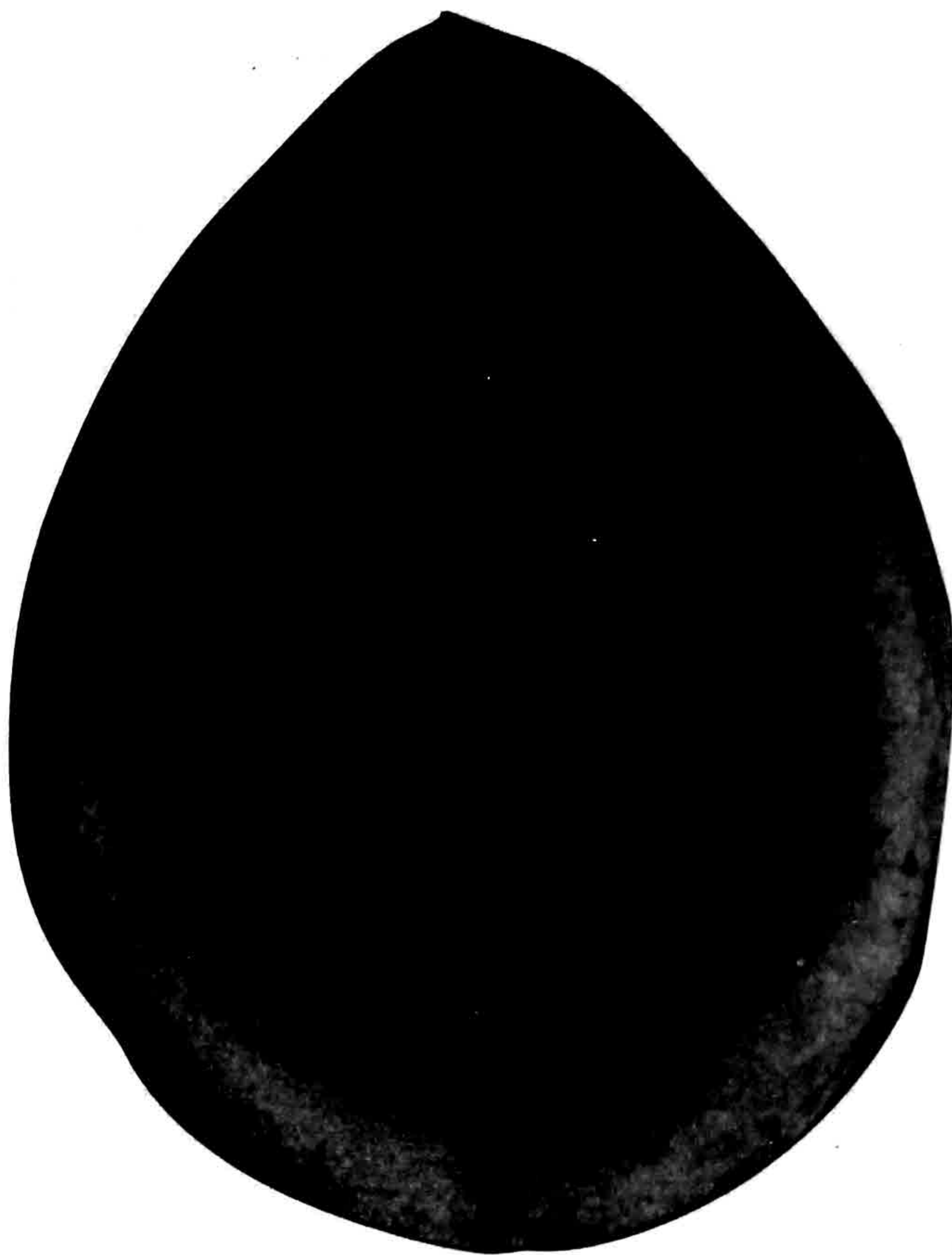


Figure 54. The Enthroned Buddha in Preaching the First Sermon flanked by small stupas under śikhara, Śrīkṣetra (from U Mya, *VTB*)



◦ Figure 55. Descent of the Buddha from Tāvātimsa, found at Catubhummika monastery, Thaton





Figure 56. Descent of the Buddha from Tāvātimsa, found at Catubhumika monastery, Thaton





Figure 57. Descent of the Buddha from Tāvātimsa sand stone, 11<sup>th</sup> Cent. A.D., Anadar Temple, Bagan



Figure 58. Descent of the Buddha from Tāvātimsa bronze, 9th-10th century A.D., Calcutta Museum, India

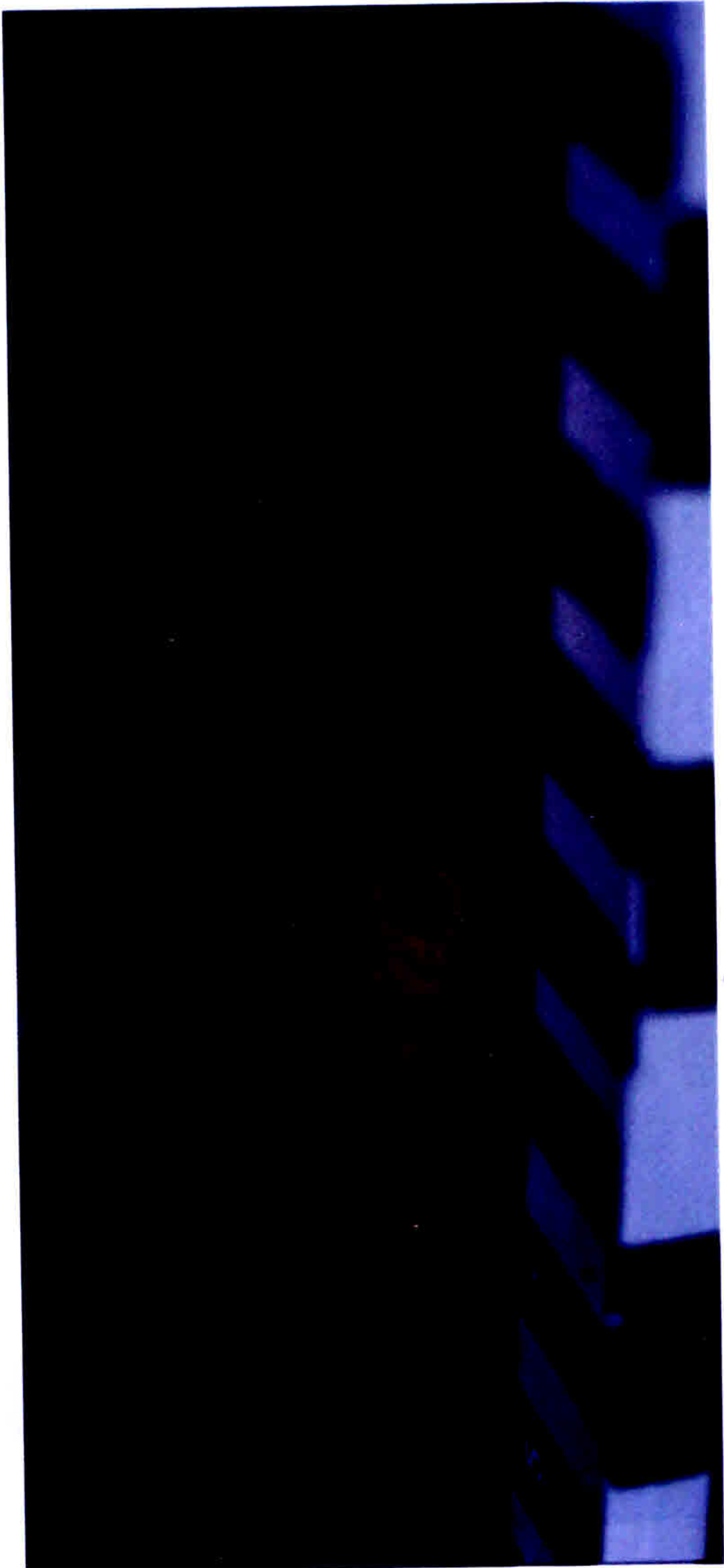


Figure 59. Reverse of votive tables, found at Catubhumika monastery, Thaton





Figure 60. A Terracotta Votive Tablet (8×4×1)in., depicted a seated Buddha in meditation posture flanked by Mucalinda Buddha found at WK 8 and 11, Winka Excavation sites, Bilin, Mon state





Figure 61. Fragments of votive tables found at WK-8 excavation site,  
Bilin, Mon State





Figure 62. Laterite Artifacts unearthed at Catubhumika Hngak Twin Monastery, Thaton



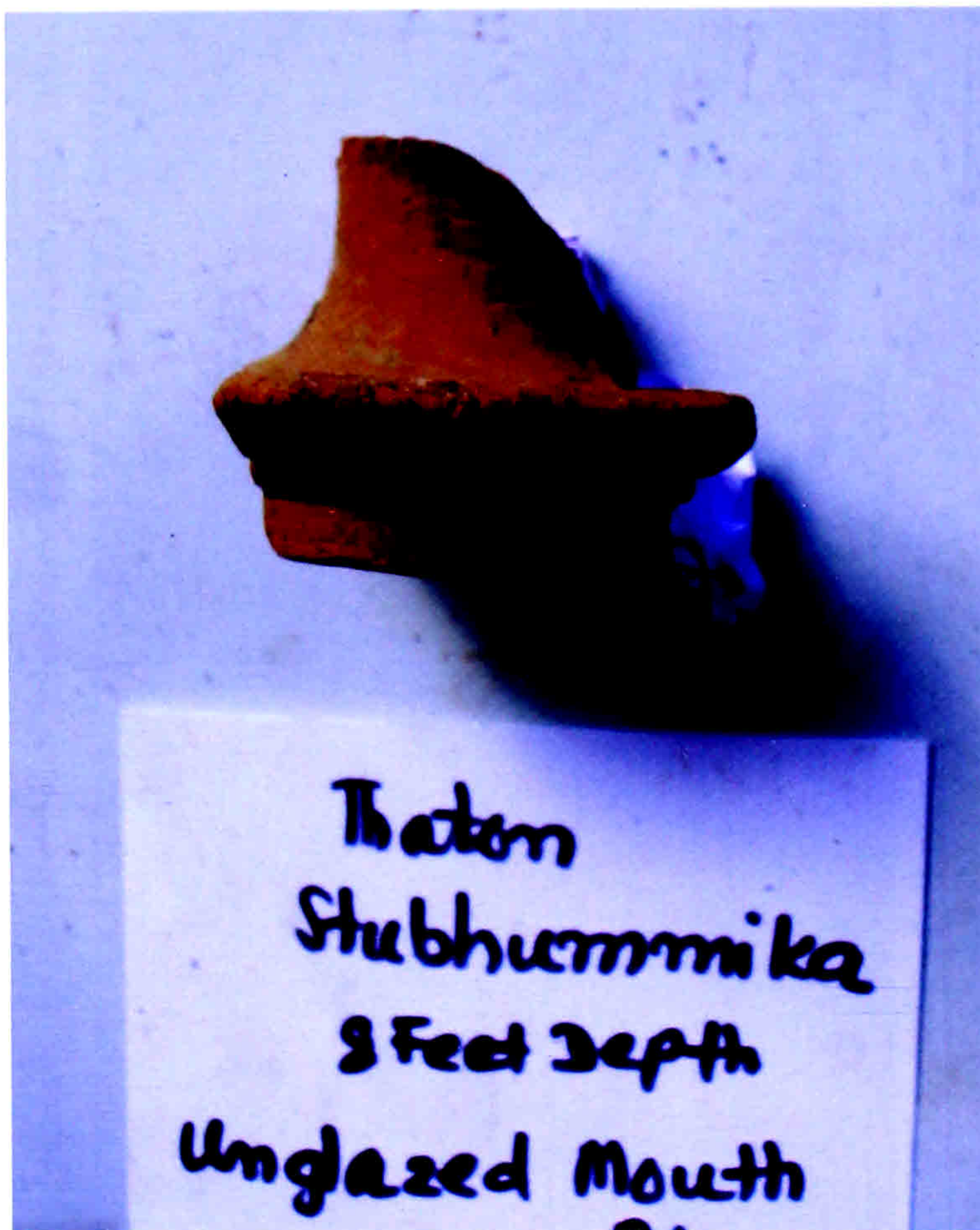


Figure 63. Mouth of Terracotta Pot, Catubhummika Hngak Twin Monastery, Thaton





Figure 64. Dr. Win Win Phyoe, Daw Khin Ma Ma Mu (Retired Professor) Prof. Dr. Toe Hla, U Hla Thauang, Bhaddanta Tikkhañāṇa, Prof. Dr. Kyaw Win, Nan Hlaing, Nan Kyi Kyi Khaing, U San Win, taking a group photograph at Catubhummika Monastery, Thaton on 31 December 2015 (from left to right)

## **ERRATA**

| <i>page</i>             |                              | <i>Page</i> |                                  |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|
| vii,viii, 168, 169, 170 | <i>For by small</i>          | 73 (I.8)    | <i>For were had cut off from</i> |
|                         | <i>Read by small stupa</i>   |             | <i>Read were not cut off</i>     |
| 176                     | <i>For Andar</i>             | 86 (I.21)   | <i>For abvoe</i>                 |
|                         | <i>Read Ananda</i>           |             | <i>Read above</i>                |
| 153 (I.1)               | <i>For Pallava sript</i>     |             |                                  |
|                         | <i>Read Pallava script</i>   |             |                                  |
| 19 (I.1)                | <i>For Bama</i>              |             |                                  |
|                         | <i>Read Bamar</i>            |             |                                  |
| 22 (I.5)                | <i>For Retrospective</i>     |             |                                  |
|                         | <i>Read Retrospective</i>    |             |                                  |
| 25 (I.4)                | <i>For familtes</i>          |             |                                  |
|                         | <i>Read families</i>         |             |                                  |
| 25 (I.5)                | <i>For Insland of Orgers</i> |             |                                  |
|                         | <i>Read Island of Ogres</i>  |             |                                  |
| 26 (II. 7,8)            | <i>For laterate soil</i>     |             |                                  |
|                         | <i>Read laterite soil</i>    |             |                                  |
| 32 (I.23)               | <i>For toponum</i>           |             |                                  |
|                         | <i>Read toponym</i>          |             |                                  |
| 52 (I.2)                | <i>For See fig. no 31</i>    |             |                                  |
|                         | <i>Read See fig. no 30</i>   |             |                                  |
| 52 (I.11)               | <i>For local scrips</i>      |             |                                  |
|                         | <i>Read local scripts</i>    |             |                                  |
| 67 (I.3)                | <i>For mantions</i>          |             |                                  |
|                         | <i>Read mentions</i>         |             |                                  |





The First Millennium Artifacts of Suvannabhūmi

TERRACOTTA  
VOTIVE TABLETS  
OF  
THATON

Nan Hlaing

ISBN 978-99971-0-239-3



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