

BURMA'S RELATIONS WITH HER EASTERN
NEIGHBOURS IN THE KONBAUNG PERIOD,
1752 - 1819

by

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Abstract of Thesis being submitted for the PhD degree
of the University of London.

Title of Thesis. Burma's relations with her Eastern
Neighbours in the Konboun Period 1752-1819.
~~up to the end of Bodawpaya's reign~~

The thesis is an attempt to portray Burma's foreign relations through Burmese eyes. The Burmese of the period regarded the glory of Buddhism as the dominant motive in both public and private life. The king was regarded as essential to this aim, and as by virtue of the general acceptance of the idea of successive reincarnations, the king could be regarded the most worthy contemporary Buddhist he was thereby fully invested with autocratic powers.

A tradition of great empire, which, however mistaken, found great favour in the general Burmese mentality, made it necessary for the Konboun dynasty to embark on endless wars of aggrandisement, and this is mainly responsible for the nature of the relations Burma had with Siam and Laos in this period. It was partly because of the Burmese attempt at the imposition of control over the Northern Lao states that caused the Chinese invasion.

The Siamese at the opening of our period lacked effective leadership, and the cumbersome and unsatisfactory nature of her administration, prevented the quick concentration of her forces of resistance, and the Burmese were successful in the early stages.

China had old traditions of overlordship but the enforcement of recognition varied and was seldom as effective as in the far more accessible area of Tonquin. The Burmese were a proud race and their kings would always attempt to beat off Chinese pretensions. They had always tried to, but sometimes unsuccessfully.

The Chinese invasions diverted Burmese strength from Siam, and Siam under pressure of the threat of renewed aggression reorganised and revived, and from that time held its own with Burma. Soon the West came on the scene and relations between these countries became incidents in more significant pattern of European expansion in the Far East.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

J.B.R.S.	Journal of the Burma Research Society.
J.A.S.B.	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
M.M.O.S.	Myamma Min Ochok Pon Sadan.
KONBAUNGZET	The Konbaungzet Mahayazawin Dawgyi.
J.S.S.	Journal of the Siam Society.
G.U.B.	Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States.
SANGERMANO'S D.B.E.	Father Sangermano's Description of the Burmese Empire.

INTRODUCTION

The years 1752-1819 in the history of Burma cover the period from the emergence of a new and virile Burmese dynasty,¹ out of chaos, to the time when European expansion in the Far East really began to encroach on the traditional scene in Burma, Siam and China.

In the 1740s the Toungoo dynasty which had reached its zenith in the reign of the great emperor Bayinnaung (1551-81) was fast declining in power and prestige.

1. Konbaung Dynasty.

Alaungpaya 1752-62.

Naung Daw Gyi
1760-63.

Maung Maung
(7 days)

Hsinbyushin
1763-76.

Singu
1776-82.

Bodawpaya
1782-1819.

Bagyi Daw
1819-37

Tharrawaddy
1837-46.

Pagan
1846-53

Mindon
1853-75

Thibaw
1875-85

The Manipuris were carrying fire and sword right up to the Irrawaddy; there was a rebel camp a few miles away from the capital. The Mons of the delta had risen in a great rebellion and setting up their capital at Pegu had begun raiding right up to Ava, and in 1752 they had captured Ava and the Burmese king Maha Dhamma Yaza Dipati while all this was going on U Aung Zeya a scion of the local ruling family, a virile, fierce and a proper man, respected for his manly qualities by all the villages surrounding his ancestral village of Moksobo had proclaimed his faith in his destiny. Brushing aside ruthlessly all waverers and doubters he had first enrolled a small number of 68 picked men, then collecting more men, he had started to turn his village into a little fort - determined not to submit to the Mons. He massacred the first small detachment of Mons sent to administer the oath of allegiance, then ambushed the next, a larger force. Then they came back in their thousands, but they could not take his village, and one night he made a sortie, and sent them flying. The news of his stand and his courage spread, and men came pouring in. As his resistance went on from strength to strength, his followers snowballed and by the end of 1753 a Burmese king ruled once more over Ava. The king was Aungzeya, now Alaungpaya.

My decision to devote this thesis to the study of the foreign relations of the Konbaungzet Dynasty from 1752-1819, i.e. the period of its emergence, to the zenith of its power was taken largely because it is only in this period, owing to a variety of factors, that some materials which could stand up to the critical demands of an English University, and would serve as a reliable check on the Burmese chronicle which I have used extensively to convey the atmosphere of Burma's relations with her neighbours, were available in some satisfactory quantity; but this period also offers certain trends and themes in Burmese history which apply throughout its known length; the wars with Siam, the struggles of the Mons to throw off the Burmese yoke, the competition with Siam for dominance over the Laos and the Chinese invasions.

An earlier historian¹ has quoted a Burmese Minister's words to explain the intransigence and arrogance of the Burmese, by explaining that in Burma's previous relations with her eastern neighbours, she had never met her match, and that she felt she could adopt the same sort of relations with the western powers, i.e.

1. H. Gouger: Personal Narrative of Two Years Imprisonment in Burmah, p.104.

that she was totally ignorant of her relative power vis-a-vis Great Britain. This on examination must be modified; for instance, the Burmese Embassies to Peking left records of mileage, distance, military and economic strength, which judged by present day U.N.E.S.C.O. publication standards are of poor quality, but reading through them one can sense that for contemporary and especially Burmese palace purposes, they were adequate. There is also proof that the Burmese Court collected - and presumably studied, information about British relations with other nations; for example, the Treaty of Balta Liman (between the Ottoman Porte and Great Britain) was known to the Burmese.¹ I have devoted much space to an examination of the Burmese palace system of administration with its concentration of policy-making in a very few individuals, for though the effect of the system and how it worked has been dealt with by contemporary Europeans, the evidence of the traditional conception of administration has not been used to explain the system. When one recollects that the Burmese court was sending embassies to the last independent powers of India for alliance against the British, it stands to reason that they did appreciate to

1. J.B.R.S. Vol. XXX, p.345.

some extent the strength of the British, but were justifiably afraid of the future, and with a mixture of motives, well larded with optimism took steps to prevent the thing they feared, from coming to pass.

The period in question, on being examined for outstanding new characteristics offers very poor results; the vitality of the idea of kingship can be observed in previous Burmese history; the kingly types, the courtly types, the military types, and the schemers are all of an old tradition and mould, and the only definite idea that one can deduce from one's studies of these factors in this period, is that they stayed remarkably true to type. It tempts one to assume that the structure of society had become remarkably static; fresh ideas were not originating, and though in the last stages of the monarchy one new idea, that of constitutional monarchy came from the West, even that was early overthrown.

To begin with her relation with her immediate Eastern neighbours, the Shan states; in this period, the idea of any danger to Burma emanating from the fragmented Shans never existed. The Shan states came definitely under Burmese suzerainty, and almost to the end, the nominal tokens of vassalage were given and accepted as a matter of course. Then there was the ebb

and flow of Burma's hostile relations with Siam which illustrate the shortcomings of the Burmese administrative system but do not deeply affect either country. The most remarkable feature of these relations is that neither side made any major imprint on the life and history of the other. In Burma's relation with the Laos kingdom (what is now part of French Indo-China) the same impression is obtained. However, in the last stages, Burma's physical proximity to the Laos States was instrumental in bringing French and British colonial rivalries to a head.

It is in Burma's relations with China that one finds features of greater topical importance. One is that Burma always has need of strong leadership. A decade before my period, the Burmese were being driven like sheep by the Mons; then again and again amazing transformations came about under effective leaders. The institution of kingship offered advantages to Burma because it offered so many opportunities for effective leadership, but also because there were no checks over this power it was open to abuse. The second feature is the precise nature of Burma's political relation with the Chinese. The Burmese quite often have a sense of proportion, and in their chronicles and even in contemporary reference still talk of Tarokmaw, "the point

from which the Chinese looked",¹ and the Tarokpyemin, "the king who ran away from the Chinese",² but on the other hand they still remember in song and play, Anhwratha's entry into Nanchao, and also that of Bayinnaung. There is no tradition of vassalage to the Chinese. The Chinese base their claims to suzerainty on four major points; long historical tradition, records kept of tribute received, the military situation of the Burmese in Siam during their invasions under Chien Lung and the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1886. There is a record of Pyu musicians playing at the Emperor's court in the 9th century, but the historical claim dates really from the Tartar invasion of Kublai Khan. The Yuans were of course a Mongol dynasty, and were later expelled, but in any case there was never any effective occupation, or even nominal gesture of permanent vassalage made, the King of Pagan fleeing his capital and being poisoned by his son for being such a poltroon.

The second point, of records kept of tribute received for example the one in 1795, also gives Great Britain as one of the tribute bearers; it must therefore be kept in mind that Chinese views on the nature of the

-
1. A hill spur near Prome about 180 miles North of Rangoon on the Irrawaddy.
 2. The last king of the Pagan Dynasty 1044-1287 who fled on the advance of the Mongol troops on his capital Pagan.

political relations which the various nations had with her, were, to say the least, unorthodox and unacceptable at least to the Burmese. Thirdly, the military situation of the Burmese in Siam in the final stages of Chien Lung's invasions, when it is claimed that the Burmese position in Siam was so desperate that the Burmese King considered it wise to ask for terms. The situation was never sufficiently dangerous to Burma. Ayudhya had been taken and destroyed in 1767 and Phya Tak Sin had not yet rallied enough forces to threaten Burma itself, and indeed never did so. The idea that the Burmese could offer no effective defence, and that the Chinese withdrawals were only brought about by Supply difficulties,¹ is proved wrong by the map of the campaigns. The main Chinese supply bases, threats to which finally caused terms to be proposed were situated on the Shan Plateau proper, and on the banks of the Irrawaddy, and not behind the mountains of Yunnan. Burmese defence was effective enough, and thorough enough, to make it absurd that any people, especially a proud people like the Burmese, ruled by a swollen-headed conquering dynasty like the Konbaungzet, would have asked for terms of vassalage, after such a good military showing. Finally, the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1886 must be viewed in the light of the

1. G.E. Harvey: History of Burma - p.356.

summary way in which the agreement was dropped, a few years later and two Tai provinces handed to France.

The third feature that is of importance in Burma's relation with China, is that alone among the countries of the East, large Chinese communities have not remained distinct entities in Burma. One needs only to examine and compare the position of the Chinese communities in Malaya and Thailand, with that of the Chinese in Burma to realize this fact. Possibly it is due to the ease with which Burmese women of good class and families marry Chinese, and of course the ease with which they, and their offspring are accepted by Burmese society; Sino-Burmese in the third generation do not generally speak Chinese. There is no large scale sending of remittances home to Chinese as elsewhere in Asia. These factors have some significance in view of the Communist triumph in China today.

Finally, the thesis under my handling presents perhaps just a picture of traditional Burma. The French gunners of Alaungpaya and Hsinbyushin might have affected some details but the picture essentially is of traditional Burma. There is in the period ebb and flow but no true development. We have to look at Burma's relations with the West before we can find any.

CHAPTER I

The Position of the Burmese king in the period 1752 - 1819.

The foreign relations of any country are motivated and influenced by the political nature and conditions of the country concerned, plus the geographical and economic circumstances. Today the geographical factor in the foreign relations of a country has been considerably affected by the nature of modern communications. The relation of French Indo-China, for example, can be far more intimate with metropolitan France than with Siam or Malaya, while those of Indonesia are also more intimate with the Netherlands than with Indo-China or Siam. In the period with which we are concerned however, and especially in Burma, it was one of the major factors governing the nature of Burma's foreign relations. But since the Burmese were not a seafaring nation, after the cessation of Hindu colonisations about 800 years before our time, Burmese foreign relations were mostly confined to overland contacts. The difficulties of the overland routes over the mountain barriers restricted the scope in significant measure. It will be seen that political conditions of Burma were at any

one time, the most important factor governing relations. A modern analogy can be seen in the East European totalitarian states today. Yugoslavia, which before the war had its economic relations largely dominated by the close proximity of the East European and German markets, has been put under an economic boycott by these same countries, and it is obvious that in the foreign relations of Yugoslavia today, the governing factor is politics. Similarly, economic factors in Burmese history, were largely governed by the political condition of Burma and its neighbours.

The foreign relations of Burma with her Eastern neighbours i.e. the Chinese Empire under the Manchus, and the various states of North and South Siam which was under a single central authority only later in our period, and the Lao states which now form part of the French Union, show a curious survival of the sort of relations which existed between Cesare Borgia and the Italian Renaissance principalities. They have a sort of barren and stagnant quality, and it is curious how only the successive encroachments and domination of the Western European countries, especially Great Britain and France slowed them down to a standstill.

Like the Italian Renaissance principalities, the prince was the human main spring of these foreign relationships, and though the human and physical resources

and, also, limitations of the respective countries qualified the action of the prince, he was still the most important factor, and our first task must be to enquire into the position of the prince in Burma: how it arose, how far it was accepted in the minds of the people, and how this acceptance conditioned the administrative machinery.

Throughout history we have all the theories of the origin of kingship, from the patriarchal old man of the family, the elected military leader, the high priest and God, to the modern Scandinavian constitutional monarchy. The theory of Divine Right, to my mind never played a great part in the power of the Burmese kings, at least from Anawrahta onwards. The theory of Divine Right in its essence meant that some soul had God's exclusive blessing on the permanency of his tenure, but the Burmese idea springs from the Buddhism of the Indo Chinese variety and serves as a reinforcement of the theory of the fittest ruling by intrinsic merit. The Buddhist idea of reincarnation was elaborated further by the accepted belief that one's own deeds of goodwill and rightful thinking conditioned the pattern of one's next incarnation and so on successively. Thus to become a king proved ipso-facto that one must have had a very meritorious past and this contention was in the main accepted by the people. To carry this one stage further, if one were a great king, i.e. king over other

kings, the more the merrier, then ipso-facto., the more meritorious one became, and therefore, the nearer Godhead. It was a sort of mathematical calculation of claims, and called for the systematic elimination of possible rivals for god-head. To become a Buddha or attain Nirvana, one must first be a man animal, then a Buddhist, then, if in any given period, it could be proved by ostentatious merit manufacture, which only the prince could afford, or even by warfare that one was the sovereign of the largest number of Buddhists, it followed then that he was the most meritorious Buddhist of that period, and that he, most of all Buddhists, be the nearest to salvation. Thus kingship was something in the first place, to be won at all costs and risks, in the second to keep and to hold at all cost, and with un-Buddhistic severity, if called for, and thirdly to increase the glory of, even if it meant in the light of modern ideas, quite unnecessary wars of aggression.

It may be argued that the tradition of family and princely blood counted, as admittedly, the chronicles make an attempt, which must have been sanctioned by the Alaungpaya family, to trace the lineage back to Anawrathta of Pagan, and so to the first kings who walked on this earth. But this fits into the pattern too. It can be seen that to be born into a great household and family carries many advantages and opportunities which can be

grasped in man's ascent to the supreme earthly goal of kingship; therefore, to have been born with such manifold advantages over other Buddhists, argued that he or she must be of considerable merit in other worlds and so in this world too. A great many people in history, like to back winners, and potential band waggon climbers are always bound to be influenced by the comparative prospects of success; and an influential family was help indeed.¹

I have remarked before that kingship meant successfully gaining, and successfully holding, and this in turn meant violent attempts to maintain one's hold. This development explains the frequent rebellions of royal cousins, royal murder, and the severity of the kings whenever the security of the throne was threatened. It was not the arbitrary nature of power that was the bone of contention; it was the

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1. Alaungpaya's lineage is traced in the Konbaungzet. Thus from Nawrahta to his son Sawlu, his son Sawyun, his son Alaungsithu, his son Narathu, his son Nara Theinkha, his son Nanda Thuriya, his son Theidda, his son Mingyi Yadana, his son Minnge Yadana, his son the Lambu Myosa, his son the Lord of Pauk and Myaing Min Pale, his son Mye-Ne Mindiga, his son the half brother of the Lord of Ava Mohnyin Wapa Nawrahta, his son Myauk-Bet Nawrahta, his son Thinkaya, his son Minne Wun, his son Min Ye Htwe, his son Mingyi Shwe, his son Min Po Khin, his son Min Sit-Naing, his son Thiri-Maha-Dhamma Yaza, who was Alaungpaya's father. In view of the mathematical possibilities of the number of descendants in the princely families, with their plurality of wives, it is not such an unreasonable claim.

right of any individual against another, to wield that accepted power, which was the cause of the rebellion.

The position of the king in Burma can be estimated from the following passage:¹ "I suppose that there is not in the whole world a monarch so despotic as the Burman Emperor. He is considered, by himself and others, absolute Lord of the lives, properties, and personal services of his subjects; he exalts and depresses, confers and takes away, honour and rank; and, without any power of law, can put to death, not only criminals guilty of capital offences, but any individual who happens to incur his displeasure."

Then it continues?² "... despotism in its worst form constitutes, as it were, the very essence of the Burmese monarchy, so that to be called its king is equivalent to being called a tyrant."

Then another account says³: "The Government of Upper Burma under the native kings was purely despotic. The King's power was absolute: his only restraints were his voluntary respect for Buddhist rules and precepts, general for all believers or particular to the kingly

1. Father Sangermano's: Des. of B. Emp. p.60.

2. Ibid. p.61

3. G.U.B. Part I, Vol.II, p.469.

estate. Otherwise, he was the lord and master of the life and property of everyone of his subjects. No hereditary rank or title existed in the kingdom, except in the Royal Family. Outside of that the king was the source of all honour. Official position was the only sign of rank and all officials were appointed or dismissed at the King's will. Dismissal usually meant erstwhile ruin, a step from the court to the gaol. On the other hand, anyone, not a slave or an outcast, might aspire to the highest office in the state."

Then again from Sangermano,¹ we get:

"Every subject is the Emperor's born slave; and when he calls anyone his slave he thinks thereby to do him honour. To express their sense of this subjection, all who approach him are obliged to prostrate themselves before him; holding their hands joined above their heads. Hence also he considers himself entitled to employ his subjects in any work or service, without salary or pay, and if he makes them any recompense, it is done, not from a sense of justice, but as an act of bounty. Their goods likewise and even their persons are reputed his property...."

The power claimed by the Burmese kings was absolute, but the king believed that his exercise of power was sanctioned by two factors; one, his descent (by virtue of

1. S: D of B.E. p.60.

accumulated merit) from the Sekya clan of Gautama Buddha who was descended from the first king on earth, Maha Thamata. The other was, the Abhiseka or his coronation. There were many forms of the Coronation, but the most important, the Muda Bhiseka, or Muda Beitheit called for rigid acceptance of responsibility under some fearful oaths, and the king who had undergone Bhiseka had the right to expect complete loyalty and subordination from all his people. The justification provided by birth seems to be a contradiction of the non-hereditary principle stressed by Sangermano and the compilers of the Upper Burma Gazetteers, but there is, I think, a reasonable explanation of this. The security of the throne was the major aim of the Burmese king and it was natural that he should attempt to prevent any one claiming hereditary territorial rights which if admitted might mean rebellion sometime. Therefore, the higher posts which called for some delegation of power, for example, the Governorships and the Viceroyalties of major provinces had to be filled by people whom the king thought he could trust; this in turn meant changes, promotion, and degradation at the beginning of almost every new reign. Hereditary right was in fact clipped to augment the stability of the realm, but the principle was not denied outright. In fact under the Burmese kings there were two levels at which the hereditary

principle was applied. One, in the succession to village headship the hereditary principle was largely accepted; one of Alaungpaya's first jobs when he was coming down the Irrawaddy in pursuit of the Talaings was to order an examination of the hereditary claims of all the headmen on his line of march and to confirm all those who could authenticate their heredity.¹ Then later we have the Ameindaw (Royal Edicts) confirming headmen or headwomen of villages and village tracts, for example, giving the following Edict of Bodawpaya issued in the month of Tawthalin 1789² - "In the inheritance that comes to the sons and daughters from parents, there are inheritances which should be shared, and another inheritance, which should not be shared. Hereditary Yos, hereditary Sos, hereditary Kes and hereditary Hmus should be inherited only by the eldest son and is the kind of inheritance that should not be shared.

Hereditary office should however only be conferred on those who have the full ability to undertake responsibility.

Should the inheritor be not capable and transfer the responsibility to another, or share it with others of the family, there will be ceaseless strife and then will the people not escape misery. In each town and village, let

1. M.M.O.S. iii p.17.

2. do. ii p.183.

there be only one person to inherit office. Let no hereditary Kyi, hereditary So, hereditary Hmu and hereditary Ke be given to those who have no right to them. Let no two persons share hereditary office. If this is allowed, hereditary claims will multiply. If the holder must look for help, let him choose only the son to help him. Should the son be too young to help, and an outsider must be used, let that outsider relinquish responsibility as soon as the hereditary holder is capable of undertaking responsibility. Should the holder say unto the outsider: 'May your son and the son of your son possess this right', then even it shall not be so.'

A Sittan (or sworn statement) given in 1783 is even more revealing. "The year 1145 B.E. on the fourth waning of Pyatho, the village head Nga Ngwe of Sa Fon village in the Twin Thin circles, aged 49, on being examined stated "The village of Sa Fon was under Nga Phyo; when he was not, his son Nga Myat Kyaw succeeded; when he was not, my father Nga Sa Ya succeeded during the time of His Majesty's father - Alaung Mintayagyi; when he was not, I succeeded in the year 1117 B.E...."¹ There is even a record of officials of provincial rank claiming and being granted hereditary office. Then there is an Ameindaw²

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1. M.M.O.S. Vol.iii p.31. See Appendix for Burmese Era
 2. M.M.O.S. Vol ii p.194.

which records the grant of hereditary office to a provincial official at Mogaung. The Ameindaw runs as follows: - "Year 1214 B.E. 15th Waning of 'aboung read by the Nakhandaw Minhla Minkyaw - 'Order for the appointment of the Mogaung Amatship and the conferring of powers. The Mogaung Amat Nga Tho Lone Nawrahta, Ne Myo Kammang Yaza, Ne Myo Nga Tho Lone Yaza, have in unbroken hereditary succession, succeeded to the Mogaung Amatship, and accordingly, the royal uncle Bagyidaw, and the Royal elder brother have in succession granted office, and being a frontier district, like unto Pho Saw Lone Saung Maing Nawrahta and Nga Tho Lone Nawrahta who were granted the umbrella, the petition for the succession to this right by the Mogaung Amat Ne myo Nga Tho Lone Nawrahta, Nemyo Kammaing Yaza, Ne myo Saung Maing Yaza, Ne myo Aga Tho Lone Yaza is granted this right while in office'."

Women were also admitted to the right of hereditary succession and there are records of female heads of village tracts being confirmed in their office.

It is stated¹ that the hereditary right of succession was operative in the case of the Shan Sawbwa and Myosa (Shan Chiefs of two grades) also the Hengs and Htamons (also Shan Chiefs): in Burma proper, the Kes, the

1. M.M.O.S. Vol.iii p.172.

Htaung Ke (prison officer). Kato Ke (Ferry Licencees), the Hmus, like the Win Hmus (keepers of the different quarters of the Palace grounds), the Kyis, like the O Sa Kyis and Thewe Thawk Kyis, (Sergeants in the Army) and in the lesser grades of Min.

The other spheres in which the hereditary principle was upheld, were the groups who furnished the fighting boatmen - the cavalry, the Athis, the oil-well owners (Twin Sas Twin Yos). They were generally groups of families who had hereditary duties in the King's service and were given privileges, such as sundry tax exemptions and service lands as recompense. There is also the formation of Thwe Thauk Groups of Forty Fifty formed by the Burmese kings which are somewhat akin to the various orders of English chivalry like the Knights of the Garter, and the Bath, though also resembling the Phi Beta Kappa fraternity of academic America. For instance Hsinbyu Shin and Bodawpaya formed Thwe Thawk groups, with great care and at the most auspicious moments.

Hsinbyu Shin proclaimed¹ "From the time of my royal father, and my royal elder brother, till my reign, those who have served with their strong right arms and their brains, with valour and distinction - that they and their

1. Konbaungzet p. 360.

descendants, who will have been comrades-in-arms, with us, shall not fade into obscurity; let them be selected and formed into Forty-Fifty Groups according to the respective standards of merit and success." The first group was formed in the year 1126 B.E. on the Saturday the 6th waning of Tawthalin, at the passing of the Burmese time of 2 hours - 2 Part and 10 Bizana,¹ and consisted of:

1. Mingyi Thado Thettaw She.
2. The Governor of Prome Thado Yaza.
3. The Wungyi Maha Thihathu.
4. The Wungyi Maha Sithu.
5. The Wungyi Maha Zeya Ottama Thinkyan.
6. The Governor of Kyawkse Maha Thiri Zeyathu.
7. The Hmu (commander) of the Right Maha Nanda Thinkyan.
8. The Hmu (commander) of the Rear Maha Kya Swa.
9. The Governor of Rangoon Thiri Uzyana.
10. Maha Nanda Kyaw Htin.
11. Thiri Zeya Teittha.
12. The Governor of Sagaing - Maha Baya Kyaw Thu.
13. The Kyi (Minister of the Granaries) Maha Dhamma.
14. The Lord Treasurer - Maha Kyaw Htin.
15. The Commander of the Horse - Maha Nawrahta.
16. The Hmu (Commander) of the Front - Thiri Seya Thinkhaya.

It can be seen that this group consisted of the most important ministers, governors and commanders, and this

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1. The instant in which the middle finger withheld by the thumb darts from it to give a fillip is called a carasi - 10 carasi makes a part, and 6 part, a bizana - 60 bizanas make an hour - 60 hours a day (of 24 English hours).

principle of forming people of equal ranking was observed in the formation of the other progressively lesser groups. Bodawpaya also continued this practice.¹

The pride of race of the Konbaung dynasty was based on two far-fetched but firmly held beliefs. One was that they were the descendants of the first king in the world, Thamata, the story of whose accession is given in the Myamma Min Ochok Pon Sadan.² The Konbaung chronicle itself,³ traces descent in the following manner - "Our Lord the Enlightened one, who is the foremost among those who attain Nirvana, came into possession of the four truths under the Sacred Bo Tree, and after that entered the blessed state of Nirvana. In the year of the Faith 2295 and the year of our Era 1113, B.E. (1751 A.D.) on Wednesday the 8th day of the waxing moon of Tagu, the city of Jewels, Yadanapura, the City of Ava, fell into defeat and obscurity, and like unto Maha Thamata, who was revered as king by the people at the beginning of this world the Coming One, Alaungmintayagyi being likewise of the race of Addeissa Kula - Addeissa Wuntha, the race of the Sun and the Moon, came into his inheritance and commenced his rule over the country and the many umbrella bearing kings." This is of course a bare statement of the

1. Konbounzet p.570.

2. Chapter 171.

3. On page 9.

Konbaung claim; details are also given which lay down the traditional Burmese conception of how the Sakya race came over to Burma to found the kingdom of Tagaung and how the succession came to Anawrahta of Pagan who is the first king that modern historians generally accept as an authentic historical personage.

"In this Baddakat world, in the country of Jambudippa from the first of all kings with the right to the white umbrella, of the true race of the Sun Kings, of the first King Maha Thamata rightly called Manu, through his descendants, who were true Kshattriyas, there were 252,556 kings, the last of whom was Okka Mokka, and then the 82,013 Saki (Sakkvas) kings ruled in succession in Majjima Desa. Before the foremost amongst these 334,569, the Addeissa Bandu Sakka Thiha Gautama attained Buddha-hood, the king of the countries of Kossala and Pyinsalarit, desirous of perpetuating his noble race, asked for the hand of the daughter of the king of Kawliya, and was refused, and so was started a great war between the two kings. The Thaki Win (Sakya) king was defeated, and Abiyaza, the king left his country, and coming into Burma, founded the kingdom of Tagaung. When he died his elder son Kan Yaza Gyi founded the kingdom of Arakan, while the younger, Kan Yaza Nge stayed in Tagaung. Then from the first Burmese king of the Sun Race, Abiyaza, to his son Kan Yaza Nge, and to his

descendants, there reigned 33 kings at Tagaung. In the reign of the last of the 33, Beinnakka there was an invasion from Gandalarit (China) and the kingdom of Tagaung was destroyed. When King Beinnakka died, his people were divided into 3 groups. One group formed the 19 Shan provinces of the East; one group entered the country of Thonaparantan, of the Kanran Thet and Pyu; the other stayed behind in the refuge of Manhi. At this time our Lord Buddha was born. Then, finally Pyu Saw Hti came to the throne, and he founded Pagan and so down to Anawrahta; from him to the Lord of the Golden Palace of Ava, Mohyin Min, this king's younger brother Wapa Nawrahta, his son Min Ye Khin, his son Min Sit Naing, his son Thiri Maha Damma Yaza, and his son Alaungpaya. Alaungpaya's ancestor Wapa Nawrahta had been given command of the North Ko Thin Horse and the Town and district of Myedu as a fief. His son Myawkbet Nawrahta was given a daughter of Mahathihatura, Bodaw Shin Me, and given the title of Nawrahta, was allowed to succeed his father in north Myedu. It was from this fief that he got the name Myawkbet Nawrahta. His descendants settled as local lords in unbroken succession.

The other factor on which the Burmese king based his authority, the Abhisekka (coronation) was a very essential one. It was something more than the process of transforming a de-facto situation into a de-jure one. Joan of Arc when

she helped to crown the Dauphin really performed a task of great significance, for the act of coronation placed Charles above all rivals contending for the French crown, and considerably altered the situation in his favour. In the Burmese coronation, however, the importance of the ceremony did not spring from any mystical communion with the Divinity, but from giving of vows for humane rule according to the law, by the king, while his subjects in return vowed support and obedience. When the Burmese talk of the King being of the Sun race it is reasonable for the casual reader to connect this belief with the Japanese claim for the Emperor, or even with the sort of magnificence which led to Louis Quatorze being dubbed Roi Soleil, but the term is only a reminder of the king's descent from the first king Maha Thamata, who in his wisdom and justice shed light, like unto that of the sun on the dark night, i.e. the dark strife and quarrels and hatred into which the people of the world had sunk before they elected him to kingship.¹

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1. H.G. Quaritch Wales: in his book on Siamese Court Ceremonies says that the taboo which calls for the reverting of one's eyes from the monarch was common to Cambodia, Burma, and Ceylon. The underlying idea being that no mortal could endure the glory of divine majesty. He quotes the following passage from Manu "because a king has been formed of particles of those lands of the Gods, he therefore surpasses all created things in lustre, and like the sun, he burns eyes and hearts; nor can anybody on earth even gaze on him."

The story of Maha Thamata's election is given as follows: "It was through fear and untruth that the first king was raised to the throne. In the period before there was a king, people put forward conflicting claims to property, and would attempt to fence off lands, distinguish their possessions, hide their valuables, and mount ceaseless guard on them. Therefore evil persons went and stole the property of other persons; when these evil thieves were captured by the good people, they were sternly rebuked and freed on the first and second occasion but on the third occasion they were beaten and put to death, and therefore the taking of life was committed. Because the taking of life had been committed there arose the evil of lying and untruthfulness: it is thus laid down in the Sakka Wutti Thot. When there was all this untruth and lying, a group of wise people searched for a man of penetrating intelligence to distinguish carefully the truth from lies, and a worthy person named Manu was elected Maha Thamata. He was elected thus:- 'Be you our Lord and govern over us and do thou criticize and put to shame (those who so deserve) and do thou esteem and raise (those who so deserve) in a righteous manner according to the laws. For the responsibility of ruling this, out of the wealth that people create and fashion, one in 10 parts do thou accept from us. The person who was elected thus

to kingship and the people who elected him, plighted their troth each unto the other thus, and after troth was plighted, the king-elect underwent the three modes of Abiseka and was raised to the throne."¹

"The king was called Maha Thamata, also Khattiya, and also Yaza. Maha Thamata meant 'the elected king', Khattiya meant 'the king who ruled the fields' and Yaza meant 'the just and wise judge.'"

It is cited in support of the above that today, when the people of the Buddhist faith desire to consecrate an ordination hall, it is considered desirable to get the Government to relinquish all claims to the land, because even though the land is privately owned, if the land were to be cultivated 1/10 of the produce was rightfully the Government's."²

The Burmese listed 14 different types of Abhiseka. The Muda Bhiseka was the most important and the 13 are as follows:-

- | | | | |
|----|------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. | Khattiya Bhiseka | } | For crowning of a king. |
| 2. | Yaza Bhiseka | | |
| 3. | Thakala Bhiseka | - | For the tranquillity of the kingdom. |
| 4. | Wi Zaya Bhiseka | } | For success in War. |
| 5. | Zeya Bhiseka | | |

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1. M.M.O.S. Para. 171.
 2. Ibid. Paras.163-170.

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|---|--|
| 6. | Thiri Pewathana
Bhiseka | - | For the greater obliquity of
the king. |
| 7. | Maha Bhiseka | - | For the increase of wealth. |
| 8. | Mingala Bhiseka | - | For the taking over of ele-
phants (or jewels). |
| 9. | Viwaha Bhiseka | - | For the marriage ceremony. |
| 10. | Draya Bhiseka | - | For the taking over of the
kingdom. |
| 11. | Ahyudeya Bhiseka | - | For long life. |
| 12. | Upayaza Bhiseka | - | When acceptance of the
Crown-prince-ship. |
| 13. | Mahe Thi Bhiseka | - | When raising to queenship. |

The Myamma Min Ochokpon Sadan¹ gives an account of the important Muda Bhiseka.

"When everything was in readiness, the Lord King of the Country, attired in the robes like unto those of the Brahma Kings; the queens also attired in the robes like unto those of the queens of the Nat Kings, set out together on the great Yatana Palanquin. When the Mingala Mandat (Auspicious structure) is reached the Thathanabaing (Primate) and 12 Puroheit (Ponnas) bring forth the Pitaka Sacred Book of the Lord Buddha's sermons. After they are placed in the Siha Thana building, and 108 monks recite a service, the Lord King bathed in the Maura Thana building; then in the Gaza Thana building he washed his head. Then the king and queen sat in state, and 8 princesses attired

1. Vol.i, p.160.

in brilliant robes prostrate themselves before the king. Then a jewelled right-whorled conch, filled with water from the sacred Ganges, held with both hands was placed respectfully on the king's head. Then the princesses say 'O Lord King, may you be steadfast in the laws practised by the Maha Thamata, the first king in the world - O Lord King, may you never lose your temper with the lords of the kingdom; may you raise all the people; may you love and pity all the people as your own son; may you regard the lives of all the people as you would your own. O Lord King, may you shut yourself from greed and anger, may you banish the evil of Maw-ha. O Lord King, may you only utter words of peace, may you only perform deeds of grace, may you plan only plans of grace," and as they finish the beitheik water is poured over the king's head. Then 8 Ponnas¹ of the true race, fill the right-whorled conch again with Ganges Water, and holding the conch with both hands, place it on the king's head, saying unto the king: "O Lord King may you endeavour to augment your glory and the glory of the religion. O Lord King may you love all the people as you would your son; may you endeavour to increase the prosperity of the people as you would your

1. Ponna is the Burmese name for Brahmins - the derivation is obscure.

your own; may you guard the lives of the people as you would your own; may you not lose your temper with the lords of the country; may you be steadfast in the law; may you heed the words of wisdom; may you defend the race." After the 8 Ponnas have completed saying this they pour the Sacred water over the King's head.

Then 8 rich men, holding a conch filled with Ganges water in both hands on the head of the King say "O Lord King, may you guard all the people as you would guard your own Life: O Lord King, may you guard the property of all the people as you would guard your own; may you not lose your temper with the Lords of the country; may you, when you collect taxes, do so according to the law, and guard it according to the law; may you avoid people who know not the law; may you heed the words of the wise:" after this the rich men would say "O Lord King after you have received the libation we have offered, may you practise according to our stated word, and after you have received 1/10 of the people's produce as tax and after you have accepted the power and glory of kingship, may you preserve the people lawfully: O Lord King if you should practise according to our word, may you prosper in worldly and heavenly things, and like unto the rising sun and waxing moon, may your glory increase day by day, may the kingsd

many countries bow their heads before you, may there be no thieves and bandits, may the faith increase in glory, may the people daily call blessings on you, and may you live long to reign over us; and if you should be heedless of our word, may the Bhisekha vows which virtuous kings undertake be broken in you; and may the world be in turmoil, may great storms arise, and great earthquakes crack the earth, and the fires of hell rise on earth; may evil men abound, may birds of evil omen and witches, and souls in torment hover over the throne and create fear and confusion, and may the cobra and viper and tiger roam and devour." (This is chanted in Burmese - the Pali version translated means - "And it shall be well if you should rule according to our word, and if it be not so, may your Lordship's head be smote into 7 pieces"). After this the king taking a golden pitcher pours libation water, and while doing so, he says: "In that I have given all kinds of Dana (alms) I have attained this position of king, and if I should seek the prosperity and welfare of the people and holy monks, of the country; if I should ask only for 1/10 of the peoples' produce according to immemorial custom; if I should, apart from the evil-doers who are the enemies of the faith, regard the monks, novices and people of the country, as I would the sons and daughters born of me: then, may my body be free of the multitude of disease, may

live to be a great age, may I be victorious over all mine enemies, and may the white elephant treasure be given unto me." After vowing thus, the princes, princesses, those of the blood royal, the commanders and ministers, the vassal princes, and the people of the country make obeisance with gold and silver offering and call for the blessings of long life, great glory, the possession of many white elephants and the seven kinds of treasure, and for the enlargement of the kingdom, for the tranquility of the kingdom. The princesses then ask the Chief Queen the traditional questions, and the Chief Queen promises in turn to cherish with justice the people, as she would her own son.

After this, with the royal hand, sacrifice is offered to the 3 Jewels (Buddha, the law and the Sanghas), to the 9 Gyo, to Sakya, the Brahmas, the Bommaso and the Lokkaso Nat spirits, the guardian nat of the faith, and the Thamadi Nat. The king and queen seat themselves on the golden throne and with many singers and dancers and bands, high festival is held. Then badges and vestments of nobility, and titles are conferred on the princes and officials. Fiefs are granted and the artisans of the country are rewarded liberally. Then offerings and alms are sent to various pagodas, monasteries, and alms-giving continues throughout seven days."

The Myamma Min Ochokpon Sadan¹ gives the following account of the Coronation oath of Anawrahta of Pagan. The compiler states that the account was taken from the facsimile copies of the inscription in the possession of himself, the Librarian of the Bernard Free Library, the Kin Wun Mingyi and the Bon Kyaw Sayadaw. The translation is as follows. "The year 1044, on the 8th day of the waning Pyatho, the Lord Anurrudda took the following oath: 'now the most noble lord, my father is no more, I shall not find fault with, destory or oppress, those princes and princesses of the blood, those ministers and officials, who listened to his commands. I shall be as gentle as my father; if I should break this oath, may I fall into the 8 sins and 10 punishments, may I descend into the 4 hells.' The princes, princesses, and ministerial officials then made this oath: 'To the most noble Lord, and his the true Anurudda, we shall not plan death and destruction; to the people of the country or of another country, We shall not plan evil and offer hate; to the royal son and grandson and descendants of the royal blood we shall offer obeisance; but if we should break our oath, then may we fall into the 8 sins and 10 punishments; may

1. Vol. I p.271.

we not receive the merits of almsgiving; may we descend into the 4 hells!"

The idea of kingship, from what can be gathered from these accounts is a mixture of the Hindu conception of kingship, and the Buddhist desire to find a link with Gautama. The Hindu influence left its imprint on the Burmese Court ritual, in the form of the Brahmins (Ponnas) that were in constant attendance on the king at all state ceremonies, including the opening and closing of state audiences granted to the envoys of the East India Company. Another link with the Hindu conception is the retention of the promise to regard 1/10 of the produce as lawful tax. The tax was called "Thathamede"¹ and is still in use in a modified form today. The derivation of the word could possibly be from the Sanskrit: Dasa (for thatha) meaning ten, and medkha (Madhu) money.

Still another link has to be examined, because we are told in the Satapatta Brahmana² that the king Indra for a twofold reason, namely because he is a Kshatriya, and because he is a sacrificer, and there is a record of an Edict of Bodawpaya which seems to have a similar significance: "We the Lord King of Kings - of great

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1. In the reign of King Mindon 1853-78 this tax was taken in cash.
 2. S.B.E. Vol.XLI p.99.

glory, have taken the Muda Abisekha twice, while lesser kings have dared not attempt it even once; have observed the 10 kingly precepts, the 7 Appariyati precepts, the 3 Thingaha precepts and also have observed the 3 Saryiyati precepts enjoined in all Boddhisattvas, and by virtue of all these have become a Kshatriya." The whole Hindu conception of varna or caste is however based on the idea of birth into a particular caste, and in the following passage from Manu¹ we read "Even an infant king must not be despised (from an idea) that he is a mere mortal, for he is a great deity in human form." Thus the king is born a king (i.e. of the Kshatriya caste), but in the same Edict of Bodawpaya which has been quoted, the king goes on to raise certain followers of one of the princes to the Kshatriya status; the Edict lays down as follows:-

"That those who have served us, without faltering and without fear; and their descendants in unbroken succession may be prominent, we, like unto those masters of worldly philosophy who gave praise to the Peithano Nat Spirit, attaining success in all that we plan, command that. Nga Aung Min and 18 others of the village of Ne Yin in the territory of Kyaw Htin Yazathu, the teacher of the Pakhan Prince, be of the Kshatriya caste. We proclaim

1. Manu Chap.VII, in S.B.E. V.

1803
 it to be so; let the command be carried out immediately." Given in the year 1165 B.E. (1803 A.D.) on the 3rd waning of Nayon and read by the Nakhan Daw Sa Hmyoung Hmu.

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 are
 This Burmese attempt to link their kings with the Aryan kings of Vedic India has no known historical foundation and seems far fetched. The claim however is only for the kings and therefore, the fact that the Burmese are of Mongoloid or Malayan stock is to some extent irrelevant to the validity of the claim. The Burmese, in the light of the absence of all cultural traditions except that of India, were probably a migratory collection of tribes, without an advanced civilisation, and the emigration of the Hindus, and their princes, with a superior civilization, could have provided the Burmese with a ruler.

The Hindu princes were, without much doubt, of the Kshatiya caste, and after Buddhism had taken root in Burma, the fact that Gautama Buddha also came of the Kshatriya caste would indicate the two aspects of the Burmese explanation of their kingship. Under the gradually overwhelming influence of Hinayana Buddhism, the Brahmanic element tended to lose significance and the retention of the Brahmins at the court, was probably due only to the added colour and pomp desired in the kingly

estate, plus the fact that the Brahmins had a well preserved tradition of astrological learning which was useful.

This traditional explanation of the autocracy of the Burmese king was accepted by the people, and so the various factors which could qualify this autocracy must be examined. These factors were, the respect for the Buddhist religion: its precepts and the monks of the Buddhist Order; the common people's belief in and fear of spirits, the influence of ministers in the risings of rival claimants for the throne.

The main tenets of Buddhism are of course universal love, and definite abstention from the taking of Life, plus respect for the Law, and therefore, for the monks who have taken the vows. Universal love was part of the formal responsibilities of the king, but in practice, ruthless persecution was handed out to anyone who imperilled the security of the throne, sometimes, to anyone who was considered to have hindered, in any way, the greater glory or pomp of the king. This could degenerate of course, into wanton cruelty, under the cloak of safeguarding the realm. Thus, the practice of Buddhism on the part of the kings was confined mostly to the accumulation of merit, by the building of pagodas, temples, monasteries, reservoirs, bridges and irrigation works.

There were individual examples of favour and leniency shown by the king, but the universal emotion generated by the king was fear, and not love. The continuous conscription under the first 6 kings of the Konbaung dynasty against Manipur and Siam, with their attendant misery for the common people is sufficient commentary and proof.

Greater respect was shown to the monks. The fact that the great respect shown by the people to the monks could be used to buttress the king's position, probably had much to do with it. Merit also could be gained by due respect to the monks and there were kings like Mindon who were probably genuine in this.¹ The main point was that since it was an axiom that no monk could lie, his word was universally respected and accepted. He had access to the kings and ministers, and there was a special system to facilitate and expedite clerical correspondence. Monks could intercede successfully for the lives of the condemned; they obtained remissions of taxes in times of hardship. All this influence was however, regulated and contracted by the king through a hierarchical system.

At the head was the Thathana baing - or Primate. He was appointed by the King, and was invested with

1. The part played by the monks in mitigating the severity of the government is admirably set out in Para. 1-6 of Part I Vol.II of the G of V.B. and the S.S.

supreme authority in all matters of dogma, as well as of ecclesiastical polity. He was assisted by a Council or Thudama of learned Sadaws or Senior abbots, varying in number from 8 to 12. The majority of the Sayadaws were appointed by the king, and those so appointed were called Ta Seik Ta Sayadaw (teacher who has the seal). A Maha Danwun or ecclesiastical censor was under the Primate and so was the Wut Mye Wun or keeper of the Pagoda Lands.

The whole country was divided into ecclesiastical jurisdictions, each under a Gaing Gyok, who had several Gaing Oks under him; each of these in turn had a Gaing Dauk. All ecclesiastical disputes in the diocese were settled by the Provincial bishops, and an appeal lay from their decisions to the Thudama at the capital.

The Burmese Government however, reserved to itself, the right of punishing any offence which affected its own stability or was contrary to the public good. Thus beyond the 4 cardinal sins of fornication, theft, murder and false arrogation of supernatural powers, which brought immediate expulsion, the following offences brought about the immediate intervention of the civil authorities.

- 1) Participation in a conspiracy of some prince or rebel.
- 2) Harboursing bad characters.
- 3) Admission to the monastery of a novice or monk or

or men who had evaded punishment, unless with the approval of the secular authorities.

- 4) The practice of alchemy, sorcery, astrology, tattooing and the distribution of love charms, and talismans against wounds of whatever kind.

The monks were kept in touch with all Government orders and Acts. The Mahadan Wun kept a detailed register of all monks. Movements were also checked, controlled and registered. Mr. Taw Sein Kho¹ has given the case of a monk called U Cho who in 1866 was suspected of being implicated in a plot to rebel. He disobeyed an order to remain within the palace stockade and was arrested and sent before the Thudama. The Thudama unfrocked him and the civil authority deported him to Mogaung.

The common people had a considerable fear of the nats or spirits, and the observations of Father Sangermano and Bishop Bigandet who in their missionary zeal set out to study the nature of the Burmese belief, lend some support to his view. Mr. H.L. Eales in his census Report of 1891² writes that the Bishop endorsed his view "that it is from fear of displeasing the nats that the Burmese ordinarily does one thing or refrains from doing another." Father Sangermano wrote, "there is not a nation in the world so

1. G.U.B. Part I, Vol.II, p.5.

2. Ibid. p.16.

given to superstition as the Burmese, not only do they practice judicial astrology and divination, and put faith in dreams, but they have besides, an infinity of foolish and superstitious customs." ¹ The existence of the nats was formally recognized by the Burmese Court and in the Lawka Byuha and the Shwe Pon Ni Dan the ritual to be observed is carefully set out. Sir Richard Temple has written about the 37 nats of the Burmese. In this belief in the spirits, there could have arisen a rival claimant to the loyalties of the people, but the king was regarded as far more powerful than the nats and spirits. The proof of that lies in the formal reading out of a Discharge Order at the graves of anyone in the king's service who had died; a custom which still exists in Burma today. Apart from the spirits of the dead, powerful guardian nats were also expected to obey the king. For example in the Siamese Campaign (1763 - 7) of Ne Myo Thipate the army was held up by the flooding of the river Menam after days of heavy rain, and so the General with his sword in hand, commanded, in the name of the king, the nat spirit of the waters to behave; and it is recorded that the rains ceased and the floods subsided.

The third factor, that of the potential influence of senior ministers, especially at the time of the

1. D. of the B.E. p.114

accession of new kings is of no great significance. Burmese historians quote three occasions when the chief ministers intervened with success in the accession. This was when Yazathinkyan of the Pagan Period, the Minister U Pu of the pre-Konbaung Ava dynasty, and the Kin Wun Mingyi were those involved. They brought all their influence to bear to secure the succession of their nominees and they succeeded; each thinking that in raising the person who had no great following he could be more influential. The first was exiled soon after, the second was executed, and the third, after falling out of favour saw the kingdom pass away.¹ Kingship proved too strong for them.

The threat of rebellion is often pointed out as one of the major influences that could be brought to bear to ameliorate the severity of rule in Burma, but an equally significant aspect of these constant rebellions was the sanction it gave to absolutism. Everyone could understand and accept, the need of any government or ruler to defend himself - in advance, if necessary, when his life might be in jeopardy. The general acceptance of 'the massacre of the kinsmen'² strongly supports this view.

1. M.M.O.S. Vol.II, pp.293-303.

2. G.E.Harvey: "History of Burma" p.316.

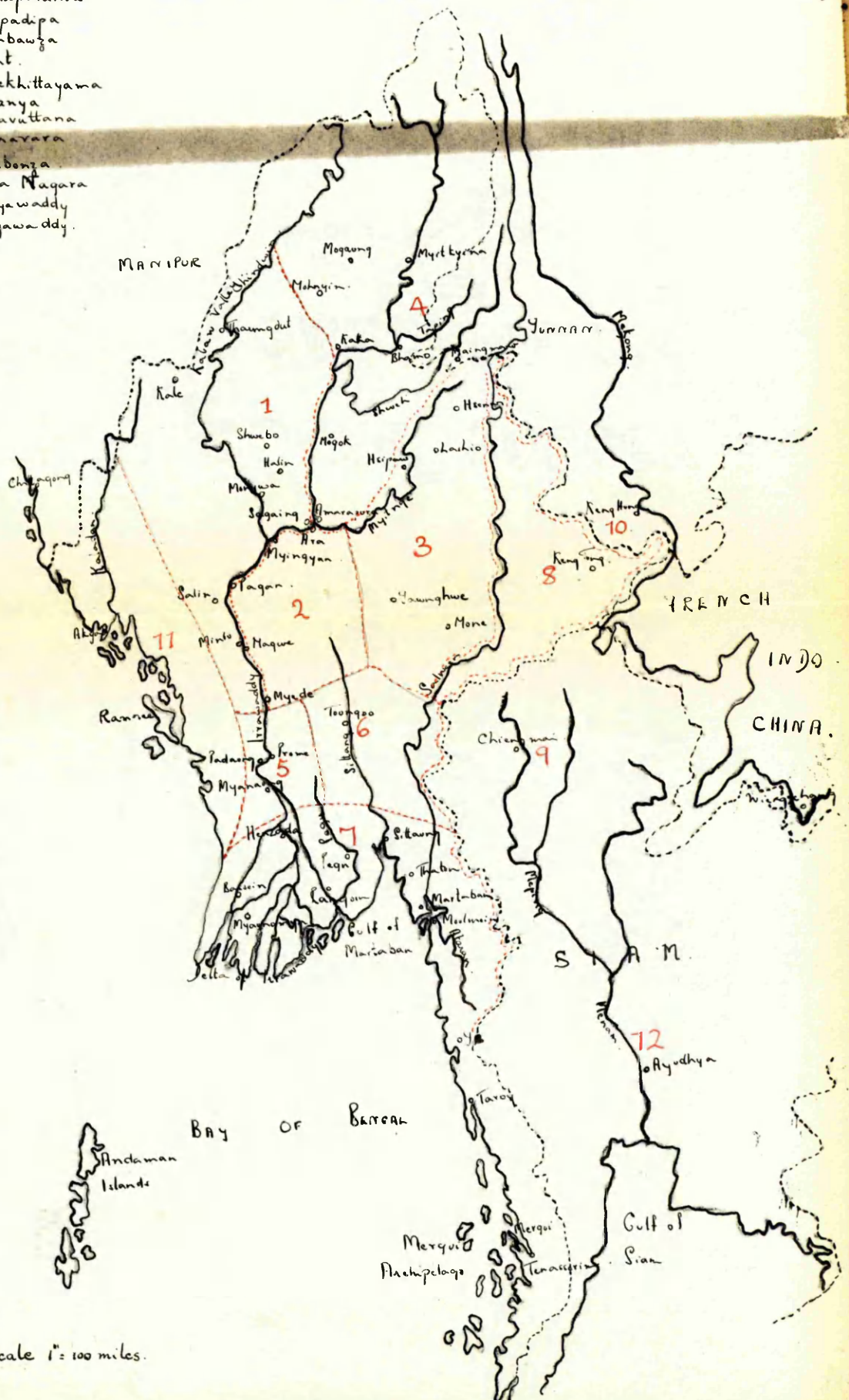
The administrative system of the country, also reinforced the king's authority, but that will be examined in a later chapter.

It will thus be seen that the autocratic position of the king was unassailed psychologically and constitutionally. It was confirmed and reinforced by the people's complete acceptance of the kingship as an institution essential to the well being of the faith. For example, Harvey in some unpublished research gives the account of a Gadaw (Lady Wife) of a provincial official at Pakkoku, who, in charge during her husband's absence, asked the conquering English "What are you English going to do? You ought at least to have a nominal king. Religion can't do without a king...."

Theoretically the king was accepted as supreme; in practice too no person, no institution, no belief in any significant measure reduced this supremacy. There never was any subject with the power of the Tokugawa Shoguns of Japan, and the Peshwas of the Mahrattas. The king decided all policy and his individual outlook and judgment decided the nature of all policy, home and foreign.

CLASSICAL PROVINCES OF BURMA (conjectural)

- 1. Thunparanta
- 2. Tampadipa
- 3. Kambauza
- 4. Seint
- 5. Therekhattayama
- 6. Yamanya
- 7. Zeyavattana
- 8. Khamarara
- 9. Hanbonza
- 10. Maha Nagara
- 11. Dinnyawaddy
- 12. Vayawaddy



Scale 1" = 100 miles.

CHAPTER II

The Territorial Boundaries of Burma- Traditional and Historical.

The Myamma Min Ochokpon Sadan¹ says that the kingdom of Burma was divided into various countries or provinces on the model of the classical divisions of Majjima Detha.

- 1) The regions to the North and West of the Irrawaddy was called the Thunaparanta Taing (taing = country or province).
- 2) The regions to the East and South of the Irrawaddy was called the Tampa Dipa Taing.
- 3) The region of There Khittaya or Old Prome was called the Thiri Khittayama Taing.
- 4) The region of Ketu Matti (old Toungoo) was called the Zeya Vuttana Taing.
- 5) Bassein (Pathein) - Otha - Pegu - Martaban was called Yamanya Taing.
- 6) The region where gold was found called Suvarnabhumi; the 57 cities of the Shans was called Suvarnabhumi Taing.

1. Vol. II, p.93.

7) Mone and Yawnghwe was called Kambawza Taing.

8) Momeit and Man Maw was called Seint Taing.

The divisions given above do not really cover or give details of the territorial limits set by the Burmese and since one of the causes of Burmese aggression was the claim to suzerainty over all the regions which their greatest kings had once raided, it might be relevant to examine the territorial claims of Anawratha of Pagan, Bayinaung of Hanthawaddy (Pegu), Hsinbyushin and Bodawpaya. The Myamma Min Ochokpon Sadan¹ gives a summary of what the Burmese chronicles regarded as the Burmese Empire from the time of Anawratha to Kyawswa i.e. the period of Pagan's greatness.

- 1) To the East - to the border of the Yun Gyi country i.e. to what is now Cambodia.
- 2) To the South East - to the border of the Gon country i.e. to what is now Siam.
- 3) To the South - to the border of the Nga Kwetkyi country i.e. to what is now Malaya.
- 4) To the South West - to the island of Nagamabein i.e. to the Andamans.
- 5) To the West - to the border of Patikhaya i.e. what is now Chittagong.

1. Vol.II, pp.115-120.

- 6) To the North-West - to the country of Kantu Nga Nar Gyi i.e. what is now the region of Homalin.
- 7) To the North - to the country of Seint (China) - the Sino-Burmese borders have never been clear; there is a considerable area where the Burmese and Chinese administrations has not been in existence for many centuries.
- 8) To the North West - the country of the Nga Thin Nga Yi birds; the meaning is so vague, the only reasonable conclusion must be that the territory in that direction had only the vaguest sort of connection with the Burmese Government, and the country to the N.W. of Pagan under the sway of the Burmese could only have extended to somewhere on the Shan Plateau.

Anawratha's empire was, in great measure, a question of prestige. The kernel of the Burmese dominion was probably just the Central Dry Zone and the Sittang Valley down to the Talaing Country of Hanthawaddy. He was, however, the first of the conquering Burmese monarchs, and the success of his arms, plus the great impetus he gave to the Hinayana form of Buddhism in this part of the world probably opened up relations with the outer regions of the claimed territory.

The next great conqueror in Burmese history, Bayinnaung, carried on a life-long series of campaigns and undoubtedly he had most of the Lao states, Siam, and the Shan Chinese States under his control for varying periods. His claims were:-

- 1) To the East - the Lu Country - the Gon Country, and the Yun country, and the district of Mainglon Khabin which was beyond the Yun Country on the borders of the Akyaw (Cambodia) Country. The tradition was that the king of Cambodia and the king of Burma had a say in the question of succession, but that tribute was paid only to Burma. It is supposed to be 12 days march from Chiengmai or 184 English miles. This would place the area round about Tonking. The Lu Country or the 12 Pannas of the Lu or the Sib-Song Panna, is the region of Keng Yung; the Gon Country is the state of Keng Tung; the Yun country is what is now the Siamese province of Chiengmai.
- 2) To the South East - the Linzin country. Lin Zin is Luang Prabang and Vientian; the claim is made on three invasions carried out by Bayinnaung who placed his nominee on the throne and took a princess into his harem.

- 3) To the South - the whole of Siam to the sea. Ayudhya itself was taken twice and the Burmese nominee was placed on the throne; the period of vassalage lasted about 20 years.
- 4) To the South West - to the island of Ceylon - there are Portuguese records of Burmese embassies to Ceylon; the claim is presumably based on the absence of any effective deterrent or barrier to the envoys' passage to Ceylon.
- 5) To the West - the border of the kingdom of Araken. There were amicable relations between the Arakanese and Bayinnaung; an Arakanese princess was given to him, and he in turn gave the right to the revenues of the three towns of Syriam, Mindon and Kama to an Arakenese Prince.
- 6) To the North West - the whole of Manipur - which acknowledged suzerainty till the time of Taininganwe. (1714-33).
- 7) To the North - all the 8 Shan States of Kaing Ma, Sanda, Mo Wun, Mo Na, Hotha, Latha, Maingmaw and Sikhwin, to the borders of China. The Burmese armies built pagodas in those regions, and later these were pointed out by the Konbaung as proof for Burmese claims. There was a yearly tribute of bees-wax and other articles of local produce.

8) To the East - all the country of the Shans to the China border; this is now the 9 Burmese Shan States of Mohnyin, Mogaung, Momeit, Mone, Hsenwi, Yawnghwe, Hsipaw and Mobyé, plus the region of Kaingma, Maing Ngalyi which is supposed to be North East of Hsenwi; Kaing Ma being 94 miles from Hsenwi, and Maing Nga Lyi being 90 miles from Kaing Ma.

Chieng Mai, L'owngoo, Prome, Ava and Martaban had Burmese Viceroy's. Luang Prabang, Vientian and Ayudhya were under vassal kings.

All this was of course the extreme limit of Burmese claims and their validity did not extend beyond the reign of his successor Nanda Bayin¹ but the claims to most of the areas were still kept up. The dedicating inscription in the Shwe Tha Lyaung pagoda set up by Min Ye Kyaw Swa, the Viceroy of Ava in the year 952 B.E. (1590 A.D.) lists the following provinces as part of the realm.

- 1) The country of Mahanagara.
- 2) The country of Khemavara.
- 3) The country of Zin Yone.

1. The constant conscriptions caused frequent rebellions in Burma which weakened the power of the Burmese kings, to impose their rule over the newly conquered states. See G.E. Harvey: "History of Burma" p.333.

- 4) The country of Tama Leittheit.
- 5) The country of Ayudhya.
- 6) The country of Thunaparanta.
- 7) The country of Tampadipa.
- 8) The country of Kambawza.
- 9) The country of Seint.

Then in the dedicating inscription in the Yaza Mani Sula pagoda set up in 1649 A.D. the following list of countries was given. Ayudhya had by now thrown off its allegiance and was not included.

- 1) The country of Thunaparanta where the great province of Sagu-Salin-Legaing-Hpaung Lin-Kale and Thoughtut are situated.
- 2) The country of Tampadipa, where the great provinces of Pagan, Ava, Pinya and Myinsaing are situated.
- 3) The country of Kambawza, where the great provinces of Hsipaw-Yawngwe and Mone and others are situated.
- 4) The country of Seint, where the great provinces of Man Maw, Khwe Lon and others are situated.
- 5) The country of Therekhittayama where the great provinces of Therekhittaya Udde Tarit, Padaung and others are situated.
- 6) The country of Yamanya, where the great province of Hanthawaddy, Digomba (Dagon, now Rangoon),

Dalla, Kuthein (Bassein), Yaung Mya (Myaung Mya), Martaban and others are situated.

- 7) The country of Khema Vara, where the great provinces of Kengtung and others are situated.
- 8) The country of Haribonza where the great provinces of Chiengmai and others are situated.
- 9) The great country of Maha Nagara, where the great provinces of Keng Yung, Maing Si and others are situated.

It will be noticed in the Royal letter sent out to the East India Company's representative that they invariably referred to the two countries of Thuna Paranta and Tampadipa, by name and the others generally. They were probably so mentioned because these two were, in effect, the metropolitan districts. The capitals of the Burmese kings were generally situated somewhere in this area,¹ and the great majority of the Burmese, as distinct from the other indigenous races of British Burma, lived in this area.

The Konbaung kings of course started from scratch, for the preceding Burmese dynasty had collapsed in the face of a great Mon revolt. The very nature of their insignificant beginning compelled them, when they had

1. J.B.R.S. 1915 Enriquez "Capitals of the Alaungpaya Dynasty."

seized power, to recover control over the traditional boundaries of their greatest predecessor's kingdoms, and Burmese foreign relations in our period probably owe a great deal to this factor.

Taking a broad view, the British Province of Burma corresponded more or less with what could be considered as the area of more or less permanent Burmese hegemony. The balance sheet could be adjusted on the one hand by the imposition of British control over Tenasserim and the Myitkyina area, and on the other by the loss of the Sib Song Panna and Chiengmai. Tenasserim was listed in the dedicating inscription of the Bon San Tu Lut Monastery set up by Hsinbyushin in 1765 as part of the Siamese kingdom, and Mergui in the preceding century, had relations with the East India Company as part of the Siamese domain. The Myitkyina area never enjoyed or suffered Burmese control.

The Sib Song Pannas on the other hand were not directly under Thibaw, but there had been a tradition of dual vassalage, to China and Burma, and the map submitted by the Hluttaw to the British at the time of the annexation included this area. Chieng Mai had been for most of 200 years, under Burmese influence and had been independent of Siam before that. It had however definitely been incorporated into the Siamese polity before the first

Anglo-Burmese War, and the British had no valid claim to Chiengmai.

The traditional boundaries of Burma must on any examination of the claims, be regarded with extreme caution. The tradition of calling the various provinces by names like Tampa Dipa and Thunaparanta indicates a desire to associate Burma with the classical countries of Buddhist India, and though the original idea could have come from the custom of the Indian colonists who chose to name their colonies after the mother province or country like Tamralipti from Tamruk on the mouth of the Ganges or Taruma in Java after Taruma in Cape Cormorin or Ussa for Pegu from Orissa¹ there is no direct evidence of Hindu colonization in all the provinces with classical names. The general vagueness must finally force one to assume that the traditional boundaries were really wishful thinking and had all the characteristic vagueness of such thinking, and that the real heart of Burma proper or even most of Burma proper was the Central Dry Zone, while Burma as an effective single unit of common allegiance was just British Burma, but slightly less than the present day area of 237,000 square miles with an extreme length of 1,200 miles and an extreme breadth of 500. The

1. Coedes--Les Etats des Hindouises(pp.57-58).

Burmese could never really claim the Chin and Kachin Hills, but there was no other organised administration to do so, and the fact that they could send columns up the valleys sometimes as Alaungpaya and Bodawpaya did, could have provided a basis for claim to suzerainty over the hill tops to where the hill tribes invariably retired when they were threatened, even in British times.

CHAPTER III

The Administration of Burma under the Burmese Kings.

The Myamma Min Ochokpon Sadan¹ says that the administration of the country was on the lines laid down by King Tha Lun who reigned in 1629-48. It quotes the following Ameindaw (Edict):²

"To the Sawbwas, Myosas, Ministers of the first and second grade, great clerks, Generals and Colonels, Adjutants, and Censors, titled Thwe Thauk Gyis (term for heads of fraternities), the provincial Governors, township officers and headmen of the various countries of the Shans, Yuns (Loos) and Myanma (Burmese), the great King of righteousness, the Lord of Life, Thiri Thudama Yaza Mahadipati, who reigns from the golden city of Yadanapura and before whom kings of many countries bow, proclaims "Let the Golden Hluttaw sound out in unison the Edicts and rulings that have been proclaimed since the beginning of the reign, with

1. Vol.III, p.13.

2. Ameindaw - (Amein = Order, Daw = Royal) therefore a Royal Order. Appointments - judicial decisions and rulings were all Ameindaws if they originated in the king.

regard to all Royal and state matters. Let the Ministers of the Interior (Atwin-Wun) decide on all cases affecting the Royal servants of the Interior (Palace employees). If it should be a military matter, or a State case affecting us, let the Hlut decide. Let the Atwin-Wun decide all cases of dispute arising in the Interior within the Palace. The Governors of the City, (meaning capital), the Town Clerks, the Superintendent of the Jail and the jailors, when there are cases of theft, arson and other crimes in the city area, surrounding the palace and without the walls, let the Myowun decide. Let the Win Hmus and Win Sachis (commanders of the 4 quarters of the Palace Grounds) decide only on the cases arising in the precincts of the 4 quarters of the Palace Grounds. If it should be a military matter or a State case affecting us, let the Hlut decide. Let the Commandants of the North Horse and the Southern Horse, the Great Clerk of the Cavalry Commandant, the Great Clerk of the Shan Horse, the great Clerk of the Burmese Horse, let the Myin Sis (local cavalry commanders) decide on those cases, including land and water tax, arising in their villages and districts, if they should concern cavalry men. Let cases of dues, taxes, fees and legal perquisites arising in the lands assigned to the elephantry and cavalry be decided only by the Myin Wun (Commander of the Cavalry) and Sin Wun (Commander of the elephants). Let

the Superintendent and clerks of the Service lands decide on all cases concerning the Athi people (hereditary groups of men set aside for general service) if they should arise in the towns and villages belonging to the Athi. If it should be a military matter or a state matter concerning us, let them take Sachun (orders in double pointed palm leaf) orders from the Golden Hluttaw. Let the chiefs of the war boat establishment decide together with all officials concerned in the case affecting the men of the war boat establishment. Let the Kyi Wun (keeper of the Granaries) decide on cases affecting the Kyi Wun, and the Anauk Wun (Superintendent of the Palace Rear) decide on cases affecting the Anauk Wun. In the matters concerning the men of the Lamaing lands (Royal lands) let the Lamaing Wun (Superintendent of the Royal lands) make full records and submit them to the appropriate department. In matters concerning the Wuttakan lands (Ecclesiastical lands) let the Mahadan Wun (Ecclesiastical Censor) submit to the appropriate authorities. In matters of taxes in gold or silver, let not the Kyi Wun have any say; let the tax in gold be sent to the Shwetaik Wun (Keeper of the Treasury) who shall take appropriate steps; let the tax in silver be put in the charge of the Ngwe Kun Wun (Superintendent of the Taxes in silver; silver was the medium of exchange: there was no coinage

till late in the Konbaungzet Period). Let the Se Wun (Superintendent of the Irrigation Works) have sole charge of this department. Let the rates of recompense paid to the servicemen be as in the time of our ancestors. Let the Myolat Wun have charge of the Myo Lats and Yun Lats (towns and villages which had not been attached to any department or person) and let them be under unified control, according to rulings laid down by the Ministers of the Golden Hluttaw. And according to the powers entrusted to them in the Royal domains, let the Thenapati (the commander-in-chief) Maha Nemyo Zeya, Maha Thihathura, Maha Thiri Zeya Kyaw Htin, comprehensively and strictly issue the Ameindaws (Royal Edicts) or Hma Sas (procedural rulings) and Sakhway (Orders)". In the year 999 B.E. (1637 A.D.) the 9th day of Nayon, by the Pyauk Kyi Hmu Zeya Taman.

The two points of significance that I can deduce from this Ameindaw are, one, that the Hluttaw obviously had overall control under the King, and that in the 240 years from Tha Lun to Thibaw, the administrative system had hardly changed, for the types of officials mentioned are still in existence in the time of the last Konbaung King and their appointment orders implicitly enjoin them to take cognisance of the traditional and customary pattern of official behaviour and conduct. The British envoys

to the Burmese Court used to be considerably annoyed with the Burmese for being such sticklers for custom and precedent. The shift in power that one sees in English history, the changing importance of the different administrative functions can be traced to a change in the social pattern - change in the quality and quantity of resources needed to run a centralized state, and generally the shift from a rural economy to a mercantile and urban industrial economy. There was no such shift in the social pattern in Burma and the economy of the country hardly changed in substance or form. It was only when the West assumed power in Burma that the country, from a self-sufficient economy, changed into a producer of agricultural commodities for the export market, while the superior technology of the West displaced its handicrafts and cottage industries. Without a substantial need for change it was natural that the Burmese not only failed to change their administrative system, but assigned to the same type of functionaries the same significance through the years. There are still in England today various state functionaries whose office originated centuries ago but whose significance has radically changed.

The King, or the unchallenged position of the King was the essential factor in the administration of the country. There were certain coronation vows and duties,

and the Buddhist religion and monks had a certain amount of influence in the exercise of power, but the idea being that only if the country was tranquil could the Faith prosper, and the prosperity of the Faith being the accepted basic life aim of the community (meaning the overwhelming Burmese Buddhist majority), the King was allowed to proceed, even to extreme limits to ensure this tranquility. This in effect meant a perpetual state of emergency; the King's Edicts¹ were always legal in the way arbitrariness is legal in time of martial law, and so the King's behaviour could almost always be explained and condoned and in any case no one dared to do otherwise.

The King's position being established, the chief instrument of his power, the Golden Hluttaw must be examined. The derivation of the word Hlut has two meanings in Burmese; one is delegate, to let off from one's authority (i.e. to pardon any offenders) to give, and the other, to offer or to sacrifice. The latter derivation could have come from the records in the Twin Thin Taik Wun's Mahayazawun² in which is stated that "When a marriage of the children of the officials, and rich men and ordinary people is to take place, then to the teachers

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1. Harvey p.329 says that 'the king never issued a command which jurists would recognize as law.'
 2. M.M.O.S. Vol.III, p.162.

must be offered as sacrifice, the first flower (virginity).¹

The former derivation is more likely in that there is an inscription dated 990 B.E.² in which is said "if I should give to the three Jewels, may I receive the boon of enlightenment which I seek, in that I (Hlut) give or offer, may I escape from the state of impermanency."

Then again, there is conveyed a sense of finality, from the manner in which the word Hlut is used in some dedicatory inscriptions dated 793 B.E. (1431 A.D.) (The Mohnyin Mintaya Badon Inscription). It is stated "In the good work of merit performed by Nga Hpaing, may he receive merit like unto me and pouring libation water with the Royal hand, the vessel was broken." The idea was, that like the finality of the act of breaking the vessel, so, was the giving of the article, a final relinquishment of ownership.

The second syllable of the word Hluttaw, i.e. Taw, is a word used as an indication of connection with royalty, e.g. Nan Taw - (Nan meaning palace - Taw meaning royal) - Uyin Taw (Uyin meaning garden - Taw meaning royal). The traditional version of the origin of the Hluttaw as an

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1. It refers to the claim of the Aris, a debased priesthood who held sway in Pagan before Hinayana Buddhism was introduced from the South.
 2. Given in the 1892 edition of the Inscription of Burma, published by the Government of Burma, p.165).

institution is admirably summed up by the Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States.¹ The extract is as follows: "The following story is told as to the origin of the terms Hlut and Yon, and the reason for the number of four Wungyi's presiding over the Supreme Court. Narapadi Sithu, the King of Pagan had five sons - Zayathu, Twetyontaw, Dingathu, Thethu and Zeyathanhka. He had once a very bad boil on one of his fingers, and suffered great agony from it. One of the minor Queens, the mother of Zeyatheuhka, took the finger in her mouth to alleviate the pain, and kept it there until the boil broke. The King was touched by her devotion and promised to grant any favour she might request. He assembled his five sons one day and made them sit in a circle and placed a white umbrella in the centre of them, and said that he towards whom the umbrella should incline was to be king. The umbrella leant over towards Zeyathenhka, the youngest of them all. The King remembered his promise to the lad's mother and accepted the omen and Zeyathenhka was named Heir-Apparent. The brothers remained on very good terms with one another, and it was arranged that they should meet together every day to discuss and administer

1. Part I, Vol.II, p.471.

the affairs of the country. The place of meeting was called Yon or Ron "The Assembly" and this name has been given to every Court or Council House ever since. After a time the four brothers said that affairs of State pressed hardly on the King and offered to relieve him of the burden entirely. He agreed to this, and henceforth the meeting place for the discussion of affairs of state was called the Hlut, the "freed" or "released", the Supreme Court. The four brothers then bore the whole burden of affairs (Wun = burdeh) and were called Wungyis, and this name and the number of four was ever afterwards maintained for the chief officers of the Court."¹

The story is substantiated by the existence of the Pyanchi Dhamathat, (or the Pyanchi Code) compiled by Pyanchi one of the four elder brothers who composed the first Hlut, out of case rulings made. The Burmese tradition,² states that the four elder brothers of the King Htilominlo, unhappy at the King being inconvenienced by his visits to each of them, asked for permission to erect a building in the palace grounds, and so was started the tradition of siting the Hlut in the position it always occupied in the layout of the palace buildings;³ "It is

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1. M.M.O.S. Vol.III, p.168.
 2. M.M.O.S. Vol.III, p.163.
 3. M.M.O.S. Vol.III, p.180.

to the right of the Tegani (Red Gate) in front of the Myenan (Audience Hall); there were two parts in the building, one called the Zetawun Saung and the other the She Saung." In the Zetawun Saung a throne made of Yamane wood with figures of lions at the base was kept for the King's use when he should attend. Then there were set places assigned to the princes, ministers and the assistants who attended.

The King attended at times, or the Heir-Apparent; if not, a Senior Prince or Princes normally attended. The form of address in the Hlut for all appeals varied in style to indicate the presence of the King, Heir Apparent, prince or princes. The Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States¹ gives a good account of the office routine of the Hlut, which, written on the authority of the Court Manuals and ex-Ministers, conforms to the historical Burmese account.

In the reigns of Mahadhamma Yaza Dipadi and Thibaw, i.e. on the two eves of ruin for the reigning dynasty there was an increase in the number of officials, but the following is the customary list of officers for the Hluttaw, which was generally adhered to by the other Kings of the Konbaung Dynasty.

1. Part I, Vol.II. p.47

- 4 Wungyis
- 1 Myin Sugyi Wun (Master of the Horse).
- 1 Athi Wun (Minister of the Corvee)
- 1 Myetaing Amut (Superintendent of Land Records, generally a Clerk of the Council on Saye Daw Gyi).
- 4 Wundauks (Assistant Ministers).
- 4 Nakhan Daws (King's messengers or heralds).
- 4 Saye Daw Gyis (Great Clerks of the Council).
- 2 Myin Saye Gyi (Clerks to the Master of the House).
- 4 Amein Daw Yes (King's clerks).
- 4 Ahma Daw Yes (Drafters and dispatch writers).
- 4 Athon Sayes (Superintendents of Government Works).
- 4 Awe Yauks (despatch writers for the Provinces).
- 4 Myanma Thankhan (officials connected with Burmese Envoys).
- 2 Shan Thankhan (officials connected with Shan Envoys).
- 2 Yun Thankhan (officials connected with Yun or Laos Envoys).
- 2 Cassay Sarpyan (writers of Manipuri despatches).
- 1 Tayok Sarpyan (writers of Chinese despatches).
- 4 Athi Sayes (Clerks of the Corvee departments).
- 4 Amein Daw Yas (Bench Clerks).
- 1 Thissa Daw Yes (Register of Oaths).
- 1 Neycha Thwe Thauk Gyi (Usher of the Council).

- 1 Hlut Saunt (Watchman of the Hlut).
- 1 Lethnet Taik Wun (Superintendent of the Arsenal).
- 1 Lethnet Taik Soe (Assistant to above).
- 1 Kathaung Myaung Taik Soe (Officer of the Hluttaw expense chest).
- 1 Ka Thaung Myaung Taik Saye (Clerk of the above).
- 1 Let Saung Yu Taik Soe (Officer in charge of gifts received).
- 1 Let Saung Yu Taik Saye (Clerk to above).

Among these officers, the Wungyi, the Myin Su Gyi Wun, the Athi Wun and the Wundauks were of the superior grade, and had letters patent with a preamble setting out their duties, granted to them.

The following is the preamble in the appointment order of a Wungyi:¹ "The office of Wungyi meaneth that, in the Yaza Htani (Royal Kingdom) and in the great Golden city (capital) possessed by us, the Noble Lord of Life, the Great Emperor, and in the numerous tributary countries far and near, all the multitudinous affairs of state should be administered, that the Faith should shine and prosper, and that the Royal service should prosper, and that till the time of my Royal descendants the royal kingdom should be prosperous and contented, all this should be kept ever in mind. And in that you are fully aware of

1. M.M.O.S. Vol.III.p.188.

the responsibilities toward the faith, the king, and the people, and bearing in mind the qualities of past Agga Maha Thenapati (Illustrious Commander in Chief), you are appointed to this office. Act in unity with the Wuns (the other holders of office."

The following account is given of the preamble to an appointment order to a Wundaukship.¹ "The office of Wundauk (Wun meaning minister, Dauk meaning prop or support or assistant) meaneth that, inasmuch as our Wuns having to keep in mind the present and the future, have to administer all affairs of state in their entirety, and therefore, their responsibilities being so comprehensive and wide, may sometimes be forgetful and heedless, therefore in all the matters which the Wuns are given to administer, if there should be any forgetfulness, if the case according to your resolution be thus and so, and the procedure or ruling be thus and so, or if in another case, it hath been submitted to us in thus and so a manner, and our orders have been so and so, then ye shall remind accordingly. The Hluttaw being the refuge of the Royal slaves, the poor people, when there are cases of persecution and various other cases and the appeals come in from all the various towns and villages of the

1. M.M.O.S. p.188, Vol.III.

country, then without confusion, examine thoroughly, and in matters to be sent up to the Wuns, or in matters for our golden ear, send them up together with full statements, and judgements. And in that the Royal servants who labour in our service day and night might not be noticed, let all these be brought to the notice of the Wuns, and in that ye are fully aware of the duties towards the Faith, the King and the people, ye shall serve with ceaseless vigilance."

The preamble in the appointment order of the Myin Su Gyi Wun (Master of the Horse)¹ "The office of Myin Su Gyi Wun meaneth in that our Thwe Thauk Su (fraternities or groups) and cavalry companies, given lands to live on, and serving without default; far and near, with and without horses, let them serve without dissension, let them lack not for horses, let them not wander from group (cavalry group) to group. If the number of troopers is a full hundred or more (in a district) let those who are qualified be commissioned and made to increase the number of horses. Let the troopers and sergeants work the lands allotted to them. Let not the men of the Thwe Thauk companies be confused with the others. When the office of hereditary cavalry company commanders should fall vacant, let the sons and brothers be examined and

1. M.M.O.S. Vol. IV. p.1.

appointed in place. Should there be no sons or brothers, let the most sensible senior man be appointed. Let Thwe Thauk Su men be assisted to render good service. When among the Thwe Thauk men there should be no quarrel, see that large words (causes of dispute) be made small, and small ones made to disappear. Let your discharge of duties be accordingly."

The Athi Wun had charge of all the Athi groups scattered throughout the country, and his appointment order was couched in the same style as the Myin Su Gyi Wun's, with the difference that instead of cavalry men, he had charge of the Athi (Corvee) groups.

There were originally only nine departments under the general heading of State and Religious affairs, but in the time of Bagyidaw 1819-1837, a tenth department, that of Foreign Affairs was started. (Bagyidaw was the Burmese King defeated in the first Anglo-Burmese War.)

The ten departments were:¹

1. Department of appointments - dismissals, creation of new posts, promotions, swearing in of new incumbents.
2. Department of Justice - rulings and commentaries and amendments.
3. Department of Education and Religious Affairs of

1. M.M.O.S. Vol, III, p.203, and G.U.B. Part I, Vol.II, pp. 472-5.

collection and preservation of inscriptions, old records, compilation of histories, of ecclesiastical lands, state examinations, charities etc.

4. War Department - of the land forces and navy, of garrisons, etc.
5. The Supreme Court - concerned with criminal and civil cases, examination of hereditary claims and disputes.
6. Department of Revenue - of all kinds of revenue except 7.
7. Department of Agricultural Revenue - of Land Tax, Water Tax, Garden Tax, etc.
8. Department of Works - of the construction and year round (Set Hnit Yär Thi) upkeep.
9. Department of Messengers or Postal Carriers - of the fast runners, fast boat and horse, etc.
10. Department of Foreign Affairs.

There was no separate department of Foreign Affairs till 1827 when one of the Wun Gyis took charge; previous to this all the four Wun Gyis acted in consultation.

Each Sayedawgyi was placed in charge of the routine work of two or three departments. He had under him one experienced general clerk, and then again two or three assistant clerks, with the additional help of four or five trainee clerks. He was expected to produce complete

statements on any file required, including a progress report.

In the Department of Appointments, the King personally directed the appointments of Viceroys, the three grades of princes, and the granting of fiefs. The Hlut, however, had a say in the choice of the Heir-Apparent and in view of the occasions when the Hlut at the sudden death of a King, was the highest authority, this was a real power and not a nominal one. In the appointment of officers of the armed services, from Thwe Thauk Gyi upwards¹ the application had to come from an individual who had been endorsed by the men who were to come under his immediate command, by the superiors of his area or district right up to the head of the department. The application was then forwarded after strict examination, and if the Hlut recommended appointment the King could not refuse (in custom)² unless he could point out grave defects in the chosen person. There was a similar procedure in the appointment of the civil officials from village headmen upwards. The appointment was sent out in copy to six departments for filing; copies were also sent out to the persons superior and subordinate to the appointee.

In the Department of Legislation³ the local officer

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1. M.M.O.S. Vol. IV. p.157.
 2. Ibid. Vol. III, p.199.
 3. Ibid. Vol.IV. p.196.

sent up reports; these were called Sa Ka Gyet (comment) and through the various levels finally reached the Hluttaw. The Hluttaw then gave various rulings (some of which were classified as temporary), which were called Hmat Tha Gyet; a digest of these reports and rulings was known as Hmat Sa (notes). These notes were concise, and generally did not exceed three pages of the Parabaik (notebook). The original report and rulings were however kept filed. The report, ruling and the decision together were called Upade (law), but this was not final or legal till it had been submitted to the King, who issued an Edict proclaiming such and such a ruling and decision as law. There are no records of the legislation of the earlier Konbaung Kings, but Mindon and Thibaw had a spate of legislation some of which were printed. They ranged¹ from Land Revenue, Monopolies, Custom and Excise, Currency to Arms Acts for Burma proper and the Shan States.

The Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs dealt with the supervision of the monks and monasteries, erection of religious buildings and schools, and the encouragement of various branches of learning, ranging from astrology and the medical ~~lore~~ of the Portuguese captured at Syrian

1. M.M.O.S. Vol.IV, pp.201-208.

in Anaukpetlun's reign¹ to wood and ivory carving, music,² and examinations.

The War Department: the work of the Hlut concerning military affairs was comprehensive, in view of the fact that the Wungyi was also dubbed Commander-in-Chief (Thenapati) when he took office. Thus all Wungyis were regarded as military officers, and in the more important campaigns, one or two Wungyis took the field³. Being a body comprising the highest military officers in the land, with control of promotion and dismissal, together with responsibility over the maintenance and upkeep of the servicemen, the Hluttaw was a General Head Quarters. The organisation of the army will be dealt with later.

The Judicial Department of the Hlut was in practice the final court of appeal, though in cases of importance, regarding hereditary, territorial and other claims, it was the practice to bring the parties before the King to have the case reheard. For this, however, express Royal permission was required, which, if granted, was given through the Hlut. In the Hluttaw, the Wungyis alone were competent to pronounce judgement in all cases, criminal as well as civil. If there was pressure of work,

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1. G.E.Harvey: "History of Burma" p.189., Hall, "Europe and Burma, pp26-27. and M.M.O.S. Vol.IV, p.214.
 2. M.M.O.S. Vol. IV. pp.213-231.
 3. Mahathihathura and Maha Sithu in the reign of Hsin Byu Shin and Bodawpayā; Maha Bandula in Bagyidaw's reign.

or in urgent cases, petitions were read before the Wundauks, who made their notes on the suit, marked points for enquiry, and passed the file to the Sayedawgyis. These officers passed them on to the Sayes, who wrote out the complaints and defence, and returned the papers, through the Sayedawgyis to the Wundauk. The whole proceedings were then submitted to the Wungyis who passed judgement.

The Revenue department: There were two officers, the Shwe Taik Wun and the Kyi Wun, who with assistants, for each district, and Senior officers at Toungoo, and Martaban were in direct charge of the receipt of revenue (in cash or kind). The Thathameda tax was introduced later in the Konbaung Period, in Mindon's reign, but before that there was a system of taxation which seemed to have taken more from the people, though less was sent to the Treasury.¹ The revenues were under the following general headings.

1. Kin Khun (tolls).
2. Thittaw Khun (Forest dues).
3. Twin Htwet Khun (Revenue from mines, i.e. Twin Htwet meaning from pits).
4. Ze Khun (Revenue from bazaars).
5. Ku To Khun (Ferry tolls).
6. Htwet Kon Knun (Export dues).

1. G.U.B. Part I, Vol.II, p.413.

7. Win Kon Khun (Import dues).

The Kin Khun was collected at stations sited on the boundaries of provinces. The stations were under the charge of the Kin Wun (Minister of Toll Stations) and each station had an officer called the Yazamattike in charge; they were generally men who had once been Buddhist monks. The traditional number of toll stations was 30 in Burma proper and 17 in the Shan States. The due ranged from Rs.1-as.3 to Rs.3-as.1½ as for 10 yoke of oxen. One anna was charged for one manload. In the toll stations on the river, e.g. at Sampenago, Kyauk Talone, Mingun, Mu Totthalot, the due was Rs.1-4as. on each boat going upstream and downstream. The sum of annas four was collected on each passenger.

The Forest dues covered timber, bamboo, roofing material, ivory, beeswax and other forest products. Rs. 12-as.8% was collected in the forests of the metropolitan areas. In the other parts of the country Rs.15% was collected. The Provincial Wun or District officer was also the Forest Officer. In view of the scanty population, the large areas of virgin forest, and the lack of foreign demand, the degree of exploitation of the forest probably did not call for systematic conservation, which became necessary in British times. The forest duties realized in Thibaw's time amounted to

Rs.6.2 lakhs.¹

The revenue from the mines was essentially based on the reckoning that all mines belonged to the king. There were variations in the tenancy and leasehold rights in the different varieties of mines. For example, the oil wells of the Yenangyaung area, where the traditional lessees were a group of families who kept hereditary rights.²

Then there were the jade mines, ruby mines, silver, gold, amber, lead, copper and sulphur mines. The king generally took the best stones, and apart from a flat licensing fee took percentage royalties.³

The revenue from Bazaars, was divided into two kinds. The first dealt with the farmers of bazaar revenues of the Metropolitan bazaars, and the second with the provincial bazaars which were given to the Eaters (or fief-holders) of the towns and villages, who sold them out to tax farmers. In Thibaw's time, the bazaar taxes coming into the King amounted to about Rs.1½ lakhs.⁴ The bigger provincial districts like Martaban and Bassein

1. G.U.B. Part I, Vol.II, p.424.

2. Captain Hiram Cox in Asiatic Researches Vol.VI, 1799. G.U.B. and S.S. Part I, Vol.V, p.258.

3. G.U.B. Part I, Vol.II, p.221.

4. Ibid. Part I, Vol.II. p.425.

in the time of Bayinnaung were stated to be worth about 100 ticals of silver (14,000 rupees) and subtracting the other heads of revenue from this sum, the bazaars should be worth about 10% of Rs. 1400.¹

In the actual collection, 2 annas a stall was taken from sellers of silk, and 1 anna per yoke load for those who sold grain or other produce. Food stalls and sellers of ngapi (fish paste) paid ½ anna.

The revenue from ferries was likewise placed under two heads: one the metropolitan ferries and two, the provincial ferries. The King farmed out the metropolitan ferries, while the provincial officers farmed out theirs. In Thibaw's time the ferries brought in about Rs.8000.²

The revenue from exports was nominally 5% but there being considerable restriction on the export of rice, cattle, horses, elephants, timber (plank timber) gold and silver, the amount exported was inconsiderable and restricted to such articles as lac, ivory and wax.³ In fact the foreign merchants generally spent the proceeds from their goods on ship-building. It was worthwhile to

1. M.M.O.S. Vol.IV, p.307.

2. G.U.B. & S.S. Part I, Vol.II, p.425.

3. M.M.O.S. Vol. V., p.8.

build ships in Burma where first class teak wood was available, it cost £12 a ton for a ship, coppered and equipped ready for sea in the European style, while in Calcutta it cost £17 and at Bombay £20.¹

The department of revenue from imports was divided into two; Inland and Maritime customs. The main articles of Inland import were from China and were silks, copper articles, brass articles, slate pencils, carpets, furs, satin piece goods, fluids, wax, hats, combs and paper. Edibles were also brought in and included dried pork, ducks' eggs, walnuts and apples. They were taxed at the Made De Wun (from the Pali devana= customs).

The Maritime Customs house was at Syriam (later at Rangoon) Akyab, Martaban and Bassein.² The maritime customs authorities kept 24 hour patrol, stopping boats at a distance from the harbours.³ After the port authorities had been satisfied with the bona fides of the ship, it was piloted into the harbour, and all the guns and the rudder were taken out and stored.⁴ The

1. Hall. Europe & Burma, p.77.

2. M.M.O.S. Vol.V, p.5.

3. Ibid. Vol.V, p.8.

4. Ibid. Vol.V. p.8. Sangermano - D.B.E. pp.176-177.
Hall, Europe and Burma, pp.78-79.

chief Customs Officer at the ports in this period was always a European,¹ probably because the Burmese were not a sea-faring race and found it more convenient to transact affairs at seaports, through a foreigner.

There was a separate department that received tribute and presents.² There were the gifts offered at the Coronation, the New Years gifts, and the tribute received yearly, biennially and triennially from the Sawbwas of the Tributary Shan states, and the provincial officials. The intervals between the presentation of presents depended on the distance of the capital of the province concerned; the three occasions for the reception of tribute were, the New Year, the beginning and the end of the Buddhist Lent.

There are no records of separate tax returns but an abstract of the tax returns of 1883³ is as follows:-

Gross receipts	Rs. 3,800,594.
Expenses of officials	Rs. 201,948.
Expenses of King.	Rs. 325,000.
Net Receipts.	Rs. 3,273,646.

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1. Hall, *op.cit.* p.78.
 2. M.M.O.S. p.9. Vol. 5.
 3. Ibid. Vol.5, p.12.

The Departments of Agriculture and Land Revenue:
 In theory, the state was the owner of all land, but in practice land was either Ayadaw or Ledaw (Royal), Boba-Baing (private property), or Myelat or Taw (waste). Wasteland was open to anyone who desired to settle upon it.¹

Royal land became so

- 1) by Ameindaw, or order declaring any waste land to be reserved for the king;
- 2) by forfeiture of private lands for offences against the law;
- 3) by simple confiscation or seizure at the King's will of private lands;
- 4) by the King inheriting all lands left ownerless by failure of heirs or ultimate heirs, called Zonpyet, Amwe-Pyet.

Wuttakan land may be considered a special class of state land. It was land assigned to a pagoda or monastery by gift, whether of the king, or of a private individual. Wuttakan lands were not gifts in perpetuity but seldom were they withdrawn, except in the case of a gift to a particular monk. A list of all the Wuttakan lands in the country was inscribed on marble slabs in the close of

1. This is another indication of the underpopulation of the Burmese Empire. This would imply the absence of rack renting and thereby greater freedom and perhaps happiness for the mass of the Burmese, most of whom (1891 Census 64% of both sexes of the agricultural class) were directly dependent on the land for a living.

the Mahamuni Arakan Pagoda in Mandalay.¹

Private land was acquired:

- 1) by cleaning waste land - Dhamma - Ugya.² Such land includes both land on which the ancestors of the present owner settled in times too remote for record, as opposed to land acquired more recently, by sale or mortgage, and also recently cleared land which is essentially state land and was given by the village headman to the applicant. Custom varied as to the length of tenure which gave complete rights. Broadly speaking cultivation by a man and his descendants for 3 or 4 generations secured rights of transfer and inheritance. The land then became Bobabaing.³
- 2) by inheritance.
- 3) by gift of royal land from the king.
- 4) by transfer of any kind

The privileges of the owner of private land were first that he could alienate his land by sale or mortgage;

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1. The Mahamuni Arakan Pagoda housed the great image of Buddha taken after the capture of Arakan by the Crown Prince in Bodawpaya's time 1784 A.D.
 2. The probable derivation is from Dhamma - chopper - Ugya - first falls i.e. land on which (someone's) chopper first falls.
 3. A modified form of squatter rights was sanctioned in British times when the Irrawaddy delta was being cleared, there was a period of tax-exemption for squatters who cleared land for cultivation.

secondly, on his death, the land passed to his heirs, and thirdly, he was not liable to eviction.

Dhamma-Ugya or Bobabaing land which had been acquired by mortgage or purchase was called Danekitta.

The Ahmudan or the soldiery held lands on a service tenure. Amudan-sa for infantry, Si-Sa for cavalry, according to the terms set forth in patents or Sittans. Alienation of such land was forbidden, but no attention was paid to this, for at the time of the annexation very little service land was in the possession of its original holders.

There was no land tax, only rent, on royal land. The rate was usually $\frac{1}{4}$ of the out-turn, sometimes $\frac{1}{3}$ and in some places $\frac{1}{5}$ and even $\frac{2}{11}$ was taken. Farmers of the revenue tried to make as much more as they could from the cultivators. Hereditary tenant rights of royal land were recognized.

The revenue from royal lands was collected by the Ledaw Ok, appointed by the Hluttaw. The Kayaing Wun and Myowuns were his seniors and from whom he took orders. The title was changed to that of Le Saye when the King demanded irrigation tax. The Le Saye or Le-ok, the Thugyi and the Ywalugyis made assessment rolls, showing the lands cultivated, how much proved profitable, and what the probable amount of out-turn would be, and these

statements were checked by the Wun; the statement was then forwarded by the Ka-Yaing-Wun to the Le-Yon at the capital, and this department conveyed the orders of the King as to the disposal of the revenue. Sometimes it was sent up in silver, sometimes in kind; occasionally orders were received to give rice to the monks.

The revenue returns¹ for an unspecified year in Thibaw's reign, excluding the suburbs of the capital, the Shan States Myelat and the houses of the poverty stricken, disabled, scholars and privileged amounting to 68,305 houses was:-

405,925 houses, on agreed assessment rate gave	-	Thatthameda of Rs.4,059,250
from which was subtracted 10% for various expenses of collection	-	405,925
then again remissions for religious purposes of	-	<u>29,764</u>
		435,689
Revenue submitted through the Hlut	-	3,623,561
Revenue from various other taxes under 76 heads		4,679,802
Revenue from royal lands -value on 831,319 baskets of paddy	-	<u>665,015</u>
		8,968,378
Expenses Military and Civil	-	<u>5,108,168</u>
		<u>3,860,210</u>

1. Konbaungzet p.1641.

These figures make interesting comparison with the British Government returns for the year 1890-91.¹

Total demanded	8,826,802
Total Remissions	<u>79,782</u>
Net demanded	<u>8,147,020</u>

The cash basis of Thibaw's period probably gives greater precision to the figures but it is reasonable to assume that on a basis of the two sets of figures one can arrive at a very rough idea of what the revenues of the Burmese Government were worth in the time of the earlier Konbaung Kings. The expense account of Thibaw's specify that it did not include his personal gifts, and was composed of various salary lists; the pre-Mindon Konbaung Kings on the other hand did not give salaries, but settled the revenues from various villages and towns, on officials and favourites. Sangermano accuses the Burmese King of having allocated most of the villages to the members and hangers-on of the Royal family, but since there were 8,000 villages and towns from which Bodawpaya once assembled 8,000 men at arms (one from each),² it was probably not so.

1. Gazetteer of Upper Burma & S.S. Part I, Vol.II,p.449.

2. Sangermano, D.of B.E. p.73.

However the payment of salaries made under Thibaw would probably cover this seeming waste of the king's revenue. In fact it might have been more than covered, if the presents which were expected to be brought was taken into account, and, the sort of extortion practised by Hyder Ali, in India, who allowed his officials to fatten, and then at periodic intervals, made them disgorge under torture, though in a milder form, must have contributed to the King's coffers.

The other Konbaung Kings of our period, however, ruled over a greater territory than Thibaw, and taking the constant drain on man power as a factor for the effective stabilisation of the population, one could take the figure of 771,686 for the districts of Rangoon, Bassein, Prome, Henzada, Toungoo and Tharawaddy, and 362,797 for the Arakan division and 50,000 for Tenasserim as a general indication of the population of the remaining territory, this would give about 1.1 million extra, 15% as in Thibaw's time might be regarded as tax free leaving about 950,000. On the same scale as Thibaw and taking revenue in relation to taxes, we could get about 190,000 houses, probably a net for the King of roughly 17,000,000 (17 lakhs) for all heads as income. The total would then give about Rs.35 lakhs.

The Shan States sent tribute of gold and silver flowers and on the basis of the estimated value of the Bunga Mas¹ each was worth about Rs. 15000. This in total could scarcely cover the value of the return presents given. The indirect income from Burmese officials stationed in the Shan States is the only source of net income that can be taken into account. It seems reasonable to assume that the holding of the Shan States gave only a trumpery kind of prestige and nothing very tangible.

The Department of Works:² all public works in the land were under the control of the department, and were executed through it. It was divided into three main heads.

- 1) Set Hnit Yarthi Alope (12 seasons) or year round responsibilities.
- 2) Asauk Alope - construction works.
- 3) Set Alope - manufactures.

The first main head was divided again into four types of work:

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1. Mills - "British Malaya" 1826-1864. p.34.
 2. M.M.O.S. Vol.V. p.36.

- a) Ne Sin Aloke - construction of temporary buildings.
- b) La Sin Aloke - works connected with sacrifice and charities.
- c) Ta Hnit Ta Khar Aloke - works connected with the great annual occasions - like Lent, New Year, etc. where the buildings were slightly sturdier in construction.
- d) Ahtoo Aloke - special work.

The second main heading was divided into two types:

- a) Yazaharni Aloke - concerned with the great buildings of the metropolitan area e.g. monasteries, palaces, bridges.
- b) Awe Aloke - concerned with the construction of the defence of provincial towns, such as walls, moats, and forts - irrigation canals and ponds, court houses, jails and service quarters.

The third main heading was divided into three types:

- a) Arsenals and Ordinance work.
- b) Ship engineering department (this only came in Mindon and Thibaw's reigns).
- c) Textile manufacturing (ditto).

Another department in the Hluttaw administrative system was the department of Posts (in Burmese Sa Pe Sa Yu i.e. sending and bringing letters). There was a post by fast messenger called Chay Lyin Daw, i.e. Royal Fleet of Foot - which called for a relay system of fast runners, but both in the capital and in the provinces it was only used when urgency called for it. Normally, the Hlut sent out the bearers in the establishment, and the provincial authorities sent on messages to the surrounding towns or villages for handing on. Then there was the post by horses or elephants. The post was organised only for official use and there was a very elaborate system of grading in the formal terms of address of the letters and summons.¹

The Hluttaw seen in the background of its comprehensive duties could have been an organ of such importance in the government of the country that it could have acted as a balance or check on the power of the king. However, there were various features in Burmese life under the kings which completely negated this possibility. In the Burma of those days, life moved at an even pace, and a leisurely one at that; there were no dangers from abroad, and diplomatic, political and

1. M.M.O.S. Vol.V, pp.78-85.

economic pressure from the outside world, which would have called for the extensive delegation of real authority in policy making and execution, like in Great Britain since the Tudors, simply did not exist in significant measure. The essential small-time nature of Governmental business, with the only emphasis in affairs concentrated on the accumulation of merit, and the glory of the king, did not call for an organic shift of power, and the position of the king in relation to the Hlut remains unchanged throughout our period. Another factor which has to be considered in assessing the Hluttaw strength is that the Hlut could not expect the support of the people. They were the nominees of the monarch, and had risen to high office by virtue of successful association with the king. The welfare of the people was only incidental in their duties, as being the welfare of the king's subjects. The third factor was that the king could always bring about a Hlut member's instantaneous disgrace or death, and the long apprenticeship in avoiding the king's anger¹ before they became Hlut Wungyis would make them particularly subservient to the wishes, desires and whims of any king on the throne. The fostering

1. G.U.B. Part I, Vol.II pp.502-503.

of favourable relations with the king was a factor of significance in the administration, and opportunity for intimacy with the king was of great importance to the Atwin Wuns of the Bye Taik - which we must now examine. The word Atwin Wun (Atwin = Interior; - Wun = Minister) means Interior Minister, and they were technically in direct charge of the affairs of the palace, but especially to take any business from the Hlut to the king.¹

Preamble to the appointment of Atwin Wun.²

"The office of Atwin Wun meaneth that, together with the superintendence of our internal (palace) affairs, all the affairs of the state should be fully and comprehensively submitted to us. In that you are fully cognisant of the threefold duties to the Faith, King and country, let ye serve in accordance with the customary duties of an Atwin Wun of the Golden Palace."

There were four Atwin Wuns in the administrative body, and under them were four Akunwuns (Revenue Officers in charge of the four Cardinal exteriors). Then four Akhun Saye (Revenue Clerks). Then four Thandawsins who were second in rank to the Atwin Wuns. They were always in attendance at audiences to take down

1. Sangermano D. of B.E. p.66.

2. M.M.O.S. Vol.IV, p.19. pp.171-173.

the king's orders, and to transmit them to the Hlut. They also read petitions aloud to the king at private audiences.

There were also eight Bye Taik Thansins who were clerks of the Atwin Wuns.

The Atwin Wuns had the right of holding up cases from the Hlut, if they considered further investigation necessary. Another duty of greater significance was their responsibility of adding to or deleting from the subject matter of a case, before submission, and this must have been a great weapon.

The word Bye is a Mon word, meaning bachelor and the building itself - Bye Taik was built next to the king's apartments. The closer relations with the king is reflected in the fact that the Atwin Wuns were in general control of the finances and the army.¹ They slept in turns two at a time in the palace. They went to the Bye Taik at seven in the morning and every second day, they were relieved at three in the afternoon. At nine in the morning the Ministers came in from the Hlut, and discussed whatever business there might be with the Atwin Wun, and then went in with them to the king's morning Levee (Nyi-La Khan, i.e. submission or

1. M.M.O.S. Vol. V. p.12. G.U.B. Part I.Vol.II.p.474.

presentation in unison). In the afternoon there was another informal audience called Bo-Shu-Hkan, because military officers were then admitted with the Atwin Wun to see the King. In the evening about eight, the evening reception was held, and at this time, also, the members of the Hlut were present. Business of a special character was usually settled in the day.

The Taya Yon was the Civil Court - largely of appeal.¹ It was situated outside the inner palace enclosure near the East Gate. It had a two tiered roof and was slightly smaller than the She Yon (dealt with later). The Court had two to four judges, two to four Nakhans, four Tayasayes (clerks) and four to eight Ameindawyas (officially recognised pleader of the High Court). All cases of value over Rs.500 would come right up through various other courts from the village headman's courts. Any case of value over Rs.5000 went up to the Hluttaw and even to the King. The Taya Yon Judges were enjoined first to advise the parties at law to observe fair play in their dealings with each other; then if the law was cited in complaint and defence, he was to give decisions on the Manu Dhammathat. If that did not cover the case to use the Manaw Thera Code; and if that still did not cover the case, to use the commentary of

1. Gazetteer of U.B.& S.S. p.477.M.M.O.S. Vol.II.p.97.

1.
Kaingsa Manu.

2.
Another court at the capital was the Criminal Court, the She Yon which dealt with cases of theft, arson, prostitution, grave diggers (the supervision of), weights and measures, offences against the law on alcohol, slaughter of animals, rape, dacoity, robbery, sedition, etc. It also supervised the policing of the capital, the stocks and pillories. The She Yon Court was presided over by the:-

2 Myo Wuns (Governors of the Royal City)

4 Taunghmus - assistants.

4 Myosayes - bailiffs.

1 Shwepyiso - alderman.

4 Htaungsachis - gaolers.

A third court at the capital was the Anouk Yon, or the Women's Court, which supervised the affairs of the women of the palace, and the wives of officials.

3.
It has been said that the Burmese recognised six classes of judges. First the parties themselves who may compromise, second, the parties may accept the decision of a private arbitrator, third, the parties may accept the decision of an official arbitration, fourth,

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1. M.M.O.S. Vol. IV p.56. Forchammer "An Essay on the sources and dev. of Burmese Law." p.77.
 2. M.M.O.S. Vol. IV pp.27-39. G.U.B. p.477.
 3. Quotation from a Mr. Pilcher's pages by the G.U.B. & S.S. Part I, Vol. IV. p.403.

the parties may accept the decision of the District Officer or Myowun, fifth, the parties may accept the decision of the Chief Court at the Capital and sixth, the Hluttaw and the King; the last being final.

The procedure is begun by the presentation of a written plaint. Then a Nakhan (assistant) is ordered to examine and report.. On the basis of his report a hearing is fixed, advocates are chosen, and the case is heard. After hearings, the issues are fixed by the judge, the onus of proof is put on one or other of the parties. If the parties agree to the decision both the parties ate pickled tea (letpet) and the decision be-^{1.} comes final. There are four forms of ordeal.

1. The oath ordeal (the Burmese had a terror of oaths).
2. Candle burning ordeal - the party whose candle stayed alight longest is judged to be right.
3. Ordeal of chewing rice - the party who finishes first is judged in the right.
4. Khetauk - or molten lead ordeal.

The Kin Wun Mingyi gives the following description^{2.} of the Burmese Judicial system.

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1. Sangermano: Description of the Burmese Empire p.72.
 2. G.U.B. Part 1, Vol.II p485.

- 1) If both the parties to a Civil suit were residents of the same place, the jurisdiction lay first of all with the local Thugyi (headman)- whose decision was final if both parties ate Letpet..
- 2) If the parties were not residents of the same place or if one of the parties was dissatisfied and wished to appeal, the case was taken to the court of the District Myowun, whose decision was final if both parties agreed and ate Letpet.
- 3) If the parties were dissatisfied with the Myowun's decision they could appeal to the courts at the capital called Saing Ya, Wun Ein Pyin Ein Sushin and Ngan-Shin,¹ and the decision of the court was final if both parties ate Letpet.
- 4) If the parties were dissatisfied, they could appeal to the Chief Civil Court (Taya Yon) whose decision was final if both parties agreed and ate Let pet.
- 5) If the parties were dissatisfied with the decision of the judges of the Civil Court, they could appeal to the Hluttaw. The decision of

1. These five courts dealt with appeals from the specific groups or classes of people.

the Mingyis was final. In very important cases however, the king might order a private or public retrial or re-examination, and confirm or reject the Hlut's decision. This, of course, was final.

Against all this background of an elaborate appeal system, it must be kept in mind that the district officers right down to the Thugyis, had charge of both executive and judicial functions. Then local prestige and influence, plus the expense and worry of carrying appeals up to the capital probably confined appeals to a minimum, and thereby enhanced the position of the rural authorities. Another feature is the judicial custom of sentence always waiting on confession or admission. But the use of torture in many frightful forms¹ is a most unfavourable commentary on this custom. On the whole, justice was probably extremely arbitrary and in view of the pernicious system of payment of officials, high and low, a good deal of corruption and even extortion was accepted as part of the evil consequences of having failed to avoid any dealings with the Burmese officials.

The last major department was that of the Taik ayarshi, literally officers of the buildings of stone,

1. Sangermano: Description of the Burmese Empire, p.69
M.M.O.S. on Administration of Justice. Vol.IV.

but really meaning the various officers in charge of housing and guarding various valuables.¹ The chief among which was the Shwe Taik (the Gold storage of the Treasury).

The cadre was:

1. Shwe Taik Wun (Chief Treasurer).
4. Shwe Taik Su (Treasurers).
4. Shwe Taik Sayes (Clerks of the Treasury).
1. Thaw-Kaing (Keeper of the Keys).

The Shwe Taik was not only the treasury, but also the depositary of the archives of state. Here were kept records of all land, genealogies of hereditary officials, revenue returns, and many other documents.²

Provincial Administration:³ The Burmese had a system of Viceroys and Governors, Township Officers, and Village Headmen. The Konbaung Dynasty however modified this substantially by restricting the number of princes with provincial charges. The post of Viceroy was left more or less suspended after Alaungpaya's brother the Viceroy of Toungoo rebelled in his nephew Naungdawgyis'

1. G. of U.B. & S.S. Part I, Vol.II, p.492. M.M.O.S. Vol.IV. pp.88-91.
2. The Shwe Taik was burnt at the annexation of U.B. in 1885.
3. Sangermano: D. of B.E.pp. 66-77. Taw Sein Kho- Selections from the Records of the Hluttaw. Snodgrass: Narrative of the Burmese War pp.199-201. B.B.Gazetteer Vol.I.pp.446-447.M.M.O.S.On the village chapter pp.243-249,254-258,509,514,246.

time. The princes were normally kept at the capital, similarly the Governors of the greater provinces. They might visit their charges once or twice a year, but generally the provinces were left in the charge of deputies. These deputies, in the name of their absent chiefs, had nominal charge over the district or province, but there were villages, towns and various enclaves in his province over which he had no jurisdiction, for they were the appanages of the various members of the royal family, Ministers and Military Officers at the capital; or of servicemen of all kinds who were controlled by their local area or group commanders who came under the appropriate head of department at the capital. The position of the district officials was complicated further by the presence of the Nakhan, who was really the King's spy, and by the fact that the post which he held had been wrested from someone else, who would report any misdemeanour or even invent one. This would involve the bribing of the queen or concubine, Wungyi or Atwin Wun, through intermediaries, and combined with the absence of a regular salary, and the presence of the set sum he had to send either to the Master of the district or the court did not make for flawless civil and judicial administration.

Nevertheless, he was the man-in-power on the spot,

and great deference was shown to him. Mr. G.E. Harvey tells me that U Tin, the compiler of the M.M.O.S. was a Myook (Township Clerk) at Pagan early in the 20th century under the British, and once he witnessed the hush that fell on the chattering throngs in the streets as U Tin approached - 'there was a dead silence' he said. The awe inspired by a Township Officer under the British cannot be explained by the power he possessed; he was a very minor official indeed but the old traditions, in which the custom of torture during examination of suspects was so dreaded that dacoits on being captured invariably knelt and mouthed rapidly a stream of confession, after which he was immediately despatched, were still very much in mind.

The last unit of provincial administration was the village, with the village headman, and his equivalent, the Myingaung and Thwe Thaukyi. This was a fairly compact and well-defined unit, with a practically self-sufficient economy. Everyone in the unit knew the antecedents of everyone else, and indeed it was their duty to do so. The headman or Thwe Thaukyi was a hereditary official, with generations of authority behind him. He knew the needs and moods of the village and being a local man could be far more efficient than a strange nominee of the central authority. He was

classified as a Min (Lord) in the official social hierarchy, and his Gadaw (lady wife) had the right of presentation at Court; he also possessed various minor insignias of rank.

Finally to summarize, the Burmese system of Administration, it would be relevant to state that the Burmese had an old saying. "The three great calamities - fire, floods and government". It might be an exaggeration but taking a broad view, the people of the country seemed to have achieved happiness and comparative content, in spite of, rather than because of their Government. They were quite happy in the idea of kingship but the manner in which the king's authority reached the life of the common people, could not in the nature of the system, be considered satisfactory or happy. The higher provincial authorities whether Eaters or personnel specifically assigned to a locality were equally the worst type of authority, i.e. absentee authorities who left subordinates as deputies. The deputies were on the whole parasitic and real administration comes only at the level of the village and circle headmen, and their equals in rank, the Myin Gaungs (Cavalry serjeants) and Thwe Thaukgyis and Penins (War Boat Commanders) of the various service areas for the administration of which they were responsible.

The general pattern of community life in Burma based

on the self sufficient economy and life in the village, unless there were major wars or civil war raging, was probably quite tranquil and happy. There was no pressure on the land, the need for shelter and clothing in the equable climate was at a minimum, and the fertile soil and favourable climate also reduced the hardships of food seeking. The essential gloom of the national religion was modified, as the Burmese saying has it "Paya le phoo yin. Leik-u le tu yin," ("and as we go to pray at the shrines let's also dig for turtles' eggs"); they contrived to get a lot of fun out of their religion, and still do.

The key features of the administration must be, arbitrariness leading to waywardness at the top, and abuse at the lower levels; clumsiness and inefficiency in exploiting the full material and man power resources of the country, and finally the acceptance by the people of kingship as the natural and essential basis of Government. There were never any attempts to change the nature of the system.

The administrative system was geared for internal purposes, and no provision was made for the maximum benefit that could be derived from foreign relations. There had been an ancient tradition of princes setting out to foreign lands to acquire learning, but it was

part of the religious tradition, and by our time had been whittled down to pilgrimages to holy places. The overland routes to the Eastern neighbours passed through thinly populated and difficult country and the insignificant amount of trade rendered any special instructions to the frontier officials unnecessary. Another factor is that all the frontier regions to the North East and East were under the charge of vassal chiefs rather than Burmese officials, and Burmese foreign contacts were restricted normally to the continuance of vassalage of these border states. Foreign relations thereby tended to have violence as a characteristic, when they do appear. Either these regions shrunk when the Burmese grew weak and failed militarily, or the Burmese made violent attempts to enlarge them.

The self-sufficiency of the economy, plus the difficulties of communication, combined with the nature of the border administration made any organic growth of foreign relations in our period negligible. Foreign relations were therefore based almost entirely on a hostile attitude, and viewed only in the way it affected the prestige of the Burmese king. The actual procedure in the conduct of foreign relations was for the frontier chief to send in reports of embassies or of invasions or raids to the Hluttaw¹. The Hluttaw might recommend I. Konbaungzet P.458 and 415 when the Bhamo and Kentung Sawbwas reported the Chinese invasions, and Konbaungzet p.572 when the arrival of a Chinese Embassy was reported.

as it saw fit, the course of action to be taken but naturally in the nature of the system, what the king willed, took place. The administration had no great say in the decision, and only existed to execute the king's commands.

CHAPTER IV

The Population of Burma in the time of the Konbaung Dynasty.

The Burmese like the totalitarian governments of the 20th century, had need of the most complete type of information about the nature of its resources, both human and material, and like them used an extensive system of espionage to keep close check. The various subjects, knowledge of which was considered essential, have changed from time to time, and the Burmese administrative machines, might not have been adequate for most purposes, but the population figures were essential. They were essential for taxation purposes and for the fixing of district quotas for levies in time of need. The first recorded census taken in our period was in 1783 under the order of Bodawpaya, the one previously recorded was in the reign of Thalun in 1638. It would seem that the long time interval between these two censuses would imply a large measure of ignorance on the part of the Burmese government, at the opening of our period; but this could not really have been so. The village unit of administration was quite effective and each new headman,

male or female, submitted reports on the exact boundaries of his village tract, and the amount of tax he was expected to send in. The palace system of granting fiefs (to eat, as the Burmese say) also implied some knowledge of the relative worth, and thereby resources of each fief, for they were granted to a strictly graded class of people. The queens and princes would, for instance, receive the larger fiefs of approximately the same value, then the ministers and generals, and concubines and other favourites as authors and composers, and poets would receive what the Burmese court called "appropriate" (Htaik-tan-lyaw-Swa) towns and villages to eat. The fact that the type of dresses worn, houses built, material used and names given were so jealously graded¹ that one is reminded of the account of the training of a third generation American millionaire who was taught to shake hands cordially, normally, tepidly and very languidly; then to offer 3 fingers, 2 fingers and finally one: then to nod, nod coldly, then to ignore. The various unfortunates ranged from

1. There was the white umbrella, the white umbrella with gold fringe; the gold umbrella with gold tassels and without; the red umbrella with gold fringes and without; the black umbrellas for various grades. Then the types of jewellery on ceremonial clothing - some with precious stones, some with fewer rows, some without, some with gold embroidery all over, some at the hems only, some without. Then the houses with gilt roofs; some with
(continued next page)

other third generation millionaires of impeccable antecedents, those with a parvenu grandfather, those with a grandfather not American born, those with a mother who had been divorced, and so on down to the lowest inferiors to ignore whom could not possibly cause any danger and for whom there was no potential use.

The implication of this story of course, is that there was detailed knowledge of everyone concerned. Colonel Burney, however, in his article for the Journal of the Royal Statistical Society (January 1842) said: "I am inclined to place much reliance in the census of Burmah taken in the year 1783, for I learnt at Ava¹, that the old King, Mindaragye had used the most severe and extraordinary measures to obtain correct returns and that he was employed nearly two years on the work. He displaced many, and even put to death some of the provincial officers for bringing him incorrect or false returns, and he had recourse to spies and secret agents, whom he sent to various districts to make enquiries, to ascertain the real number of houses, and bring him the lists."²

(continued from previous page)

7 tiers, others with 5 and 2, and just 1. Some with windows, some without, some with carved gate posts, some without.

1. Col. Burney was the British Resident at the Court of Ava after the 1st. Anglo-Burmese War.
2. J. B.R.S. Vol. 31, pp. 19-33.

This would imply that the knowledge possessed by the Burmese Government was out of date and secondly that the Government authorities did not care to transmit correct returns. Burney however, estimates the deficiency in the returns at 10% and I propose to regard that as quite adequate; anything more than 10% would have been quite difficult to hide. The 1783 census records of course no longer exist and the Konbaungzet only mentions the ordering of one, so I shall rely on what Burney has to say about the census, after due allowance has been made for a reasonable rate of increase.

Census of 1783.

	No. of District Towns in each Division	No. of Villages in each Division	No. of Houses liable to Assessment	No. of Houses liable to Assessment.	Total No. of Houses in each Division	Total no. of Population in each Division, allowing Seven Persons to each House.
City of Amarapura	1	27	4,248	9,596	13,844	96,908
Villages subordinate to ditto	..	199	1,199	1,368	1,567	10,969
City of Isagain	1	..	833	3,179	4,012	28,084
Villages subordinate to ditto	..	41	439	1,960	2,399	16,793
City of Ava (deserted in 1783)	1	..	25	48	73	511
Districts lying between the Capital and the North-west Frontier	41	921	38,905	31,146	70,051	490,357
Ditto between the Capital and the Western Frontier	15	505	14,690	5,149	19,839	138,873
Ditto on the banks of the Erawadi, to the North of the Capital	19	220	2,646	1,519	4,165	29,155
Ditto South of the Capital	41	2,119	52,518	14,113	66,631	466,417
Ditto between the Capital and the South-east Frontier, to the East of the Erawadi	35	1,065	30,247	15,705	46,042	322,294
Tait, or Demesnes of the Crown	12	523	18,431	25,077	43,508	304,556
Myen, or Cavalry Jaghires	2	205	4,223	3,672	7,895	55,265
Kywan-zu, Kywan wun-zu, and other Districts superintended by the Royal Treasurer and other Officers of the Court.	6	50	..	14,508	14,508	101,556
Miscellaneous or not included under any of the above Divisions	14	59	47	1,476	1,523	10,660
Total according to the Returns in 1783	188	5,735	167,451	128,606	296,057	2,072,399
Add ten per cent for omissions in the Returns	..	..	16,745	12,860	29,605	207,239
Total estimated population of Burmah Proper and Pegu in the year 1783	188	5,735	184,196	141,466	325,662	2,279,638
Add population of Ye, Tavoy and Mergui, ceded to the British Government in 1826	..	150	..	..	4,286	30,002
Amount of the various wild tribes subject to Ava, estimated by Mr. Crawford at	..	..	..	..	..	830,000
Probable amount of the population of the Shan States and Districts subject to Ava	..	..	76,400	76,400	152,800	1,069,600
Total estimated population of the Burmese Empire in the year 1783	188	5,885	260,596	217,866	482,748	4,209,240

Census of 1826 No. of Villages. Total No. of Houses. Total No. of Population, allowing Seven Persons to each house.

City of Ava, reckoning each subdivision of the town as a village.....	59	7,610	53,270
Villages subordinate to Ava.....	142	8,360	58,520
City of Amarapura.....	97	11,494	80,458
Villages subordinate to ditto.....	27	1,567	10,969
City of Isagain.....	90	4,012	28,084
Villages subordinate to ditto.....	117	7,885	55,195

Total according to the Returns delivered 532 40,928 286,496
 Add ten per cent. for omissions in ditto ... 4,092 28,644

Total population of the three cities and villages subordinate, in 1826..... 45,020 315,140
 Ditto of the remaining Districts in Burmah Proper and Pegu, according to the Returns..... 261,795 1,832,565
 Add ten per cent. for omissions in ditto..... 26,179 183,253

Total estimated population of Burmah Proper and Pegu in the year 1826..... 332,994 2,530,958
 Add as before, for the wild tribes..... .. 830,000
 Add population of the Shen States and Districts subject to Ava..... .. 1,069,600

Total estimated population of the Burmese Empire in the year 1826..... .. 4,230,558

Number of Houses liable for Public Service in the different Shan States and Districts subject to Ava, as taken by the Kyi-wungyee's Father, the Myen-wungee, about the Year 1800.

States and Districts	No. of Houses.	States and Districts.	No. of Houses.
		Brought forward	53,800
Kyaintoun.....	5,000	Legya	5,000
Kyain Khyaing.....	1,000	Main Kain.....	2,000
Main Youn.....	5,000	Youkzouk.....	4,500
Thainni.....	30,000	Thigit.....	200
		Isaga.....	500
	41,000	Thibo.....	3,000
Mouch.....	3,000	Main Toun.....	3,000
Maintaait.....	3,000	Main Loun.....	300
Mainpun.....	500	Thounzay.....	100
Heloun.....	100	Naung-mwon.....	50
Kyaintoung.....	2,000	Main Pyin.....	50
Kyain Khan.....	200	Tabet.....	900
Nyaung Yowe.....	4,000	Toungbain.....	3,000
Carried forward	53,800	Total	76,400

It would be interesting in relying to a large extent on Burney's account of the Census of 1783 and the Census of 1826 to glance at some of the other estimates made by various Europeans who visited Burma in our period.

Major Symes¹ was told by someone whose authority he had reason to trust that the towns and villages of the Burmese dominion amounted to 8,000. Symes however went on to assume that each town and village contained on an average 300 houses, and fixing 6 persons to a household gave a total population of about 14,400,000. His calculation of 6 persons to a house is on any estimate a reasonable one, but from the census returns given above, we get only an average of 50 houses to a town or village, and on this figure, Symes would have reached a reasonably accurate estimate.

Captain Hiram Cox² wrote a letter to Sir John Shore, Governor-General dated 27th November 1797 in which he states that he understood the population of Burma proper to be about 4,000,000. He went on to calculate that since there were about 8,000 towns and villages in the Burmese Empire and allowing each town and village to contain on an average 200 houses, then on the basis of 7 persons to a house there would be 11,200,000 persons

1. Symes: Embassy to Ava. pp. 314-315.
 2. J.B.R.S. Vol. 31, pp. 28-29.

in the Empire. In a subsequent letter, however, addressed to Lord Mornington, Governor-General dated 15th September 1798¹ he calculated that the Burmese Empire contained about 194,000 square miles with a population of about 8,000,000. Here again Cox seems to have erred only in the over-liberal estimates of the average number of houses a town or village contained.

Crawford² made two estimates of the population from an ingenious calculation based on the petroleum consumed in Burma. Considering that the slightest margin of error would be glaringly reflected in his final estimates, this method was remarkably accurate. His two estimates based on petroleum gave 2,147,200 and 3,300,000. A third estimate made by Crawford was based on the density per square mile of the province of Bassein, which had been occupied in the Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-26; and which gave 24 to the square mile. He applied it to the estimated area of Burma and obtained the figure of 4,416,000. Crawford made another estimate based on the house tax levied about 1794 on the Burmese and Palaings of the Empire. He calculated a gross receipt of 4,400,000 ticals (a tical was equivalent to about

1. J.B.R.S. Vol.31, pp.29.

2. Embassy to Ava p.55 and pp.467-468.

½ ounce of silver). Allowing for the Burmese habit of combining 2 or 3 families into one house, he calculated the total population to be 1584,000. Adding to this figure the number of Karen, Chinese and other wild tribes based on the application to the whole Empire of the proportion of wild tribes to the major races in Bassein, he obtained the total of 2,414,000, exclusive of tributaries.

The Reverend Malcolm¹ states that he was informed by the Chief Wungyi at Ava that the last census gave a total of 300,000 houses. This would give a total population of about 2,100,000 and Father Sangermano² gives 2,000,000 and presumably 2,000,000 was the official Burmese estimate of the population.

Regarding the population of Burma in the time of Alaungpaya (1752-1759) it would be reasonable to assume that in view of the constant fighting taking place throughout this period, and indeed up to the period just preceding the 1783 census, there was no significant increase in the population by 1783 and that it was approximately the same as that of the 1783 census. Apart from the casualties in the wars, and the absence

1. Malcolm's Travels in South Eastern Asia. Vol.I.p.208

2. Sangermano: D. of B.E. p.7

of the men from their homes, there was a large scale emigration by the Talaings of the lower provinces. For example in 1770, 3,000 Talaing troops rebelled and rescuing their families, fled with those Talaings who would follow, into Siam.¹ On this occasion alone something like 30,000 Talaings must have fled from Burma.

1. Konbaungzet p.504.

CHAPTER V

The Armed Forces of the Earlier Konbaung Kings.

On the basis of the accepted theory that the Burmese king had a right to the service of all his subjects, it is theoretically true that all the males of the country could be drafted into the armed forces, and that the Burmese could be regarded as a nation of soldiers.¹ In practice, however, the Burmese organised their military personnel in the following way. In times of peace or when there was no state of emergency, there was a standing army, half of which was stationed on duty at the capital or palace grounds, and in the surrounding suburbs.² These troops were raised from various provinces and towns, and the towns and villages from which they were drawn were generally exempted from taxation.³ There was a system of allocating lands

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1. Symes, Embassy to Ava, p.317. Sangermano: D.of B.E. p.79.
 2. Yule, Mission to Ava p.253. Symes, op.cit. p.317. Havelock: Memoirs of the Three Campaigns in Ava, p.353. G.U.B. Part I, Vol.II. p.500.
 3. Yule. op.cit. p.253.

for housing (Ne Mye) and cultivation (Lok Mye) and these lands were normally out of the jurisdiction of the provincial authorities, and came directly under the appropriate minister or general.¹

There have been various estimates of the number of regular troops, and it is interesting to compare the estimate of the regular troops in service in 1879² with that given by the Burmese as the regular establishment.³ The 1879 account makes the cavalry 2,500 strong, and the total of the Inner, Outer and Miscellaneous regiments at 13,250. The Burmese account gives the foot regiments at 13,388 and the cavalry at 5,292. It might be argued that in 1879, the army was that of a truncated Burma, which had lost two wars against the British, and had been comparatively neglected during the twenty-five years' reign of a pacific monarch. The two kings Mindon and Thibaw however, in whose time these estimates seem to have been made, were fully intent on maintaining their outward state to gloss over the mortification of the annexations, and, in view of the administrative

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1. Appointment order of the Myin Sugyi Wun and Atwin Wun - M.M.O.S.
 2. G. of U.B. Part I, Vol.II, pp.498-99.
 3. M.M.O.S. Vol.II, pp.241-271.

personnel being kept at the old levels, and even being increased (Thibaw had eight Hluttaw Wungyis instead of the usual four) the regular military establishment must have been approximately of the same strength as in the days of the earlier Konbaung kings.

Another factor that would make it so, was that the regular troops were raised, by the Konbaungzet dynasty, from special districts which were hereditary recruiting grounds. They were Shwebo, Madaya, Alon-Tabayin and Kanni.¹ The Konbaung dynasty had risen to power with the help of their kinsmen and friends from these very Burmese, Upper Burma districts. The generals, ministers, and officials of Alaungpaya were his comrades-in-arms from these villages and the victorious campaigns of the early Konbaung kings must have created a strong tradition of regular service in the armed forces. These districts were in the heart of the truncated Burma of Mindon and Thibaw and in the circumstances, the regular cadres, based on a hereditary tenure of land, were probably the same as in the time of Alaungpaya, Hsinbyushin and Bodawpaya. This theory is supported by the fact that in the 1783 Census taken by Bodawpaya² the Myin or Cavalry

1. G. of U.B. and S.S. Part I, Vol.II, p.500.

2. J.B.R.S. Vol.31, p.22

Jaghires were returned at 7,895 houses, which at the standard rate of 7 persons to a house gives a population of 55,265. Taking the males at approximately half, i.e. 27,500, it could then be calculated that there would be from 5,000 to 6,000 troopers in the regular cavalry regiments. The names of these regiments were:¹

- 1) Kathe (Manipur)²
- 2) Akkapat.
- 3) Ye Bet.
- 4) Shwe Pyi Yan Aung.
- 5) Myin So Oyi Myamma Myin.
- 6) " " " Shan "
- 7) " " " Zimme Pa.
- 8) Nauk Taw Pa.
- 9) Lamaing.
- 10) Nan u Mingala.
- 11) Mingala Ye Nyun.
- 12) Si Taw.

Another feature of the Burmese regular establishment was the organisation of the war boat personnel. They were

1. M.M.O.S. Vol.II, p.268.

2. The Manipuris were called Kathe and the Burmese regarding their horsemanship of a very high order, soon came to recruit their best cavalry from the Manipuris whom they periodically captured in their raids.

stationed in the river, towns and villages with the same system of tax-free state land for their subsistence and imbursement. They formed territorial enclaves in the provinces and were directly under their own officers local and central. There were about 500 boats in operational order, at any time, and this at the rate of 50-60 men for each boat, would give a minimum of 25-30,000 strong hardy men.¹ There was an artillery force too in the establishment and it was mainly composed of the descendants of the Portuguese captured at Syriam.

The procedure when there was need for larger forces was for the king, to issue through the Hluttaw, orders to the Governors of the Provinces to provide their contingents. The levy was proportioned to the population of the province or district, estimated according to the number of registered houses it contained. The Awewuns (Provincial Governors) then sent out orders to the local officers.² The mode of raising the levies differed in detail in almost every district, but a common method

1. Symes: Embassy to Ava, p.320. G.U.B. Part I, Vol.II, p.502.

2. There was in Thalun's time a List of 112 towns and villages which were called Thin Letnet Kaing (places of groups of men-at-arms) towns and villages, and they were graded into Htaung (1,000) Yars (1,000's) and Kyeits (tens). The towns of Taungdwingyi and Toungoo for example were expected to provide 1,000 men each - Pachangy, (now Pakokku) was fixed at 400 while Moksobo (now Shwebo) was fixed at 200.

was to group families together to form what was called one house¹ to furnish 2 soldiers and sometimes more. The selection of the conscript rested with the village Thugyis, though the conscripts were at liberty to provide a substitute, either by paying a sum of money, or cancelling a debt.²

A feature of this mobilization seems to have been the practice of calling for a greater quota than was required.³ The idea was either that the expenses of the conscripts could be covered by the men who bought themselves off, or that the recruiting officers lined their pockets. An alternative idea could be that, as in the case of the Germans who allowed for 10% casualties when they were massing invasion barges on the French channel

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1. Symes: Embassy to Ava, p.317, says 2-4 are required to furnish 1 soldier. Yule: Mission to Ava and G. of U.B. and S.S., Part I, Vol.II, p.499 says 16 families were required to furnish 2 soldiers. On the basis of 7 persons to a family, this would mean 28-50 people for 1 soldier. The M.M.O.S. p.266 lists 10 persons as the Home or Rear Supporter of 1 soldier - I have therefore taken 14 as the probable number of persons required to support one soldier.
 2. Sangermano: D. of B.E. p.79., G.U.B., Part I, Vol.II p.499. Symes: Embassy to Ava, p.317.
 3. Sangermano: op.cit. p.79. Yule - Mission to Ava, p.252. Snodgrass: Narrative of the Burmese Wars, pp.199-200.

ports, allowances had to be made for possible casualties and failure to fulfil the quota, so that the required number of men would in any case be forthcoming.

As regards the total number of fighting men that could be raised estimates vary. One states that the greatest force in their history amounted to 70,000 troops, of whom 66,000 were a mass levy.¹ Another estimate (made by the same writer) contends that even under the Alaungpaya dynasty the country could not put more than 60,000 in the field.²

The Burmese Chronicles in the account of the Siamese campaign of Alaungpaya and Hsinbyushin, and the Chinese and Manipur campaigns of the latter king gives a somewhat similar figure. Alaungpaya in his Siamese expedition started off from the capital with a force of 44,000, but sent back 4,000, and reached the walls of Ayudhya with just 40,000.³ Hsinbyushin in 1125 B.E. (1763 A.D.)⁴ sent off 3,000 horse and 20,000 men to Chiengmai, under

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1. Cambridge History of India, Vol.V, p.559.
 2. G.E.Harvey: History of Burma, pp.272-273, 333-335.
 3. Konbaungzet p.306.
 4. Ibid. p.356.

Nemyo Thihāpate, then in 1126 B.E.¹ he sent another 3,000 horses, and 20,000 men to attack Siam via the peninsula under Maha Nawrahta. Then in the next month he led an army of 25,000 into Manipur. So that the total force he could put in the field at this period was 6,000 horse and 65,000 men. Then again in the year 1128 B.E. (1766 A.D.) he sent 200 elephants, 2,000 horses and 20,000 men to Chiengmai which had rebelled,² and then subsequently the Chinese invaded from the North; this necessitated the sending of 200 elephants, 200 horses, and 20,000 men by land and 15,000 up the river. The total in this critical period was 400 elephants, 4,000 horses, and 55,000 men. In the next wave of invasions³ he could muster just about the same number of men. In the third invasion⁴ the total forces sent to meet the Chinese was still 62,000. In the next active military period however, in Bodawpaya's reign, when he decided on an invasion of Siam,⁵ the Chronicles set out a list of the

1. Ibid, p.373.

2. Ibid, p.430.

3. Ibid, p.441.

4. Ibid, p.441.

5. Ibid, p.595.

regiments, and the total came up to 13,400 horses and 134,000 men.

The difference in the numerical strength of the 3 Konbaung kings is probably due to the fact that Alaungpaya only reigned 7 years, and that when he began his reign, he started with just the volunteers from his home districts. Hsinbyushin on the other hand was an experienced warrior prince ruling over a unified Burma, and probably his 60,000 men, in a period of great strain and danger, represented the true strength of the Burmese Army. Bodawpaya had had no practical experience within the time of his father or brothers, being frequently left behind to escort the royal ladies back to the capital or to help guard it, while his father and elder brothers campaigned. He had come into the full inheritance of the Konbaungzet success and possibly his army was swelled enormously by camp followers.

The Burmese formally classified military personnel into 6 categories:¹

- 1) Body guards and hereditary household troops, called Mawla.

1. M.M.O.S. Vol.IV, pp.250-251.

- 2) The hereditary servicemen from the service jaghires (fiefs), called Bu Ta.
- 3) The troops from the villages and towns listed as troop-raising areas, called The Ni.
- 4) The troops of allies and vassals, called Thaka.
- 5) The troops raised from prisoner-of-war colonies - for instance the Manipuris and Chiengmai prisoners of war captured by Tha Lun raised troops on occasion. These troops were called Ri Pu.
- 6) The road-makers or prisoners, were called the Ala Wika.

This sounds too formal like most other Burmese classifications, but is probably correct as far as it goes. The internal organisation of the Burmese army can be ascertained to some extent from the following mobilization order of Maha Bandoola, at the beginning of the 1st Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-26.¹

"To the Bo's Sitkes, Nakhans, and Tat Hmu Officers, the Lord Commander-in-Chief - Maha Bandula commands - in the troops that are to be raised let no man who is, poor of sight, affected with cataract, heavy-eyed or has

1. Ref: M.M.O.S. Vol.IV, p.258 - Letwethondara's (he was the great poet of Alaungpaya's time, who served in the army) Theininga Byuha Sit Thamaing or the Art of War pp.127-130.

asthma, or Dula (a vague Burmese term for any disease from rheumatism to incipient syphilis), or walks in his sleep, or has malformed limbs, or is under 20 or over 50 years of age, or is muddle-headed - be recruited; let all so afflicted be left out. Let anyone who is fit to join the ranks be equipped with 2 Pyis (about 20 lbs) of rice in a shoulder sling bag, one pair of leather sandals, one large needle for extracting thorns. Let the summons go out to all the towns and villages with military quotas. When the men-at-arms arrive beneath the Golden Feet (i.e. at the capital) and are taken into the troop formations, let every 5 men be formed into a Taosa (literally eating from one pot). Let each Taosa have 1 Moka, 4 Mena, 1 copper pot, 1 chopper, 1 axe, 1 pick, 1 spade, 1 curved chisel, 1 flat chisel, 1 awl, 1 mallet. To each gun, there should be a rope of 14 feet length, 10 ticals in weight of fuse, 1 viss of powder, 100 balls, 50 cartridges, 5 flints, and 1 steel striker. For every 20 SAs let there be 1 Akyat (Corporal). For every group of 10, there should be 7 musketeers, 2 Carriers. Let the Akyat be equipped with a Maung Aung spear. Over every group of 5 Akyats let 1 Thwethauk be placed in command. Over every 2 Thwe Thauk let 1 Tat Hmu be placed in command. Over every 5 Tat Hmus let 1 Bo be placed in

command. On the march, let the men be grouped into 5 groups, and let 3 of the 5 march in front of the group officer, and 2 behind. Let the Akyat march in the midst of 10; the Thwe Thauk Bo in the midst of 50; the Tat Hmu in the midst of 100, and the Bo in the midst of 500. Let there be no confusion on the march; let not the Van, Main body, and Rear become mixed. Let them keep a distance of one march (6 miles) in between them. When on the march let 2 men of intelligent perceptions be appointed Tat Hmu, each to command a troop of 20 horse, half to carry guns and half to carry spears. Let one Tat Hmu be stationed 2 miles in front of the Nga Ya Bo (commander of 500) and the other be stationed 2 miles in front of the main centre force of the Bo Gyoke (General). Let them be in touch with each other.

The front Tat Hmu should ascertain whether the camping site (selected) is suitable or not, whether there is fodder for elephant and horse, whether the main body should halt or rest, and together with intelligence of the enemy should, without stop, daily, send in reports on fast horse to the 500 Bo. The 500 Bo shall then transmit reports through the second Tat Hmu to the responsible authority, the Bogyoke.

When the camping site is reached, before the elephants and horses are unsaddled, let pickets be placed on guard duty in all 8 directions (Nth-N.E. - East - South East, South etc.) up to a distance of 2 miles from the main force, let the elephants and horses be unloaded only when this has been properly done, and after this let the men prepare their food and eat.

When night arrives, let 1 Kyat (10 men) have one fire, and 1 man be on guard duty (in turn) to watch the fire and see that the elephants' and horses' tethers are secure. Let each man's weapon be kept near, let everyone be wakeful. Let the main body, and the van and the rear order their Tat Sau (heralds) to strike the gongs, and shout 3 times in the night. When the army is encamp'd at any camp, let the officers of the 500 Bo Command report to the Bo and then with swords in hand reprepare to the Bogoke before retiring for the night, to discuss the situation, tactics and strategy. Let this order be sent out to the officers of the army."

Maha Bandula's Order gives the formal organisation of the army up to battalion strength, and leaves out the higher echelons. The ranking after the 500 Bo was extremely loose. Normally, above the 500 Bo there would be a Tat Paung Bo (officer commanding many Tats or battalions. He would be in charge of 3, or 5 or 10 (as

seen in the Chinese invasions) and his responsibilities seem to have been for limited periods and specific purposes, after the accomplishment of which, the Bo Gyoke or General would be free to change or modify his command.

The Bogyoke¹ was the officer in command over more than one Tat Paung Bo. There was another rank higher than Bogyoke, the Bo Hmu; he was in command over more than one Bogyoke and was also termed Sit Bayin, i.e. Lord of War. It is usually reserved for use during campaigns when the king or a senior prince was in charge of the whole army. The fact that it would only be used in this manner, when the incumbent had a far greater title, of prince or king, makes the occasions very few. In the Chinese and Siamese campaigns of our period, the great leaders Nemyo Thihapate, Maha Nawrahta, Maha Sithu, Mahathihathura were referred to throughout as Bogyokes. Maha Nawrahta and Mahathihathura made the ultimate decisions in their respective campaigns, but their seniority seems to have arisen more from their ranking at court than as field officers. Mahathihathura was both a Wungyi, and a brother-in-law of the king. There is

1. The modern Burmese equivalent i.e. Lt. General Ne Win, who in Burmese is called 'Bogyoke Ne Win - but the Military attache at the Burmese Embassy in London, Major General Tun Hla Oung was also entitled to be called Bogyoke.

however a specific occasion when a Bo Hmu was officially appointed - King Bagyidaw in 1186 B.E. (1829 A.D.) appointed the Wungyi Thado Mingyi Maha Min Khaung to be Bo Hmu.¹

Another feature of the organisation was that whenever someone was appointed to the command of an army as Bogyoke there were also appointed 2 Sitke's to assist him. They were normally the two senior regimental officers in command. Then 2 other officers, a Nakhan and a Tat Ye were appointed. The Nakhan was the chief Military Police Officer and reported to the Bogyoke on the morale of the men; the Tat Ye kept accounts and was in charge of the clerical work.

The higher ranks, when the composition of the armies of our period is examined, were composed almost wholly of all ranks and kinds of ministers and officials at the capital, together with the provincial governors and eaters of towns and villages.

The equipment for the Burmese army was very primitive. For each company comprising 100 privates and 13 officers, there had to be 113 pairs of leather shoes (or sandals) 113 calabash gourds (for water

1. M.M.O.S. Vol. IV, p.262. Letwethondara's The Nin Ga Byuha Sit Thamaing, p.131.

bottles) 20 copper pots for cooking curry, 20 copper pots for cooking rice, 20 Ya Ba (Yaba was a large lacquer tray out of which 5 men could eat) 20 Mo Ka (waterproof covering, like a tarpaulin or oil cloth), 160 large nails, 20 axes, 20 hammers, 20 Dama (chopping swords) 20 saws, 111 swords, 10 small gongs (used rather as the trumpet was) for the Akyats, 1 medium sized gong for the use of the Thwethaukgyi, 1 gong painted 3 parts red, 1 part gold for the use of the Tat Hmu, 1 red umbrella for the use of the Thwethaukgyi, one horse for ditto, 1 red umbrella with gilt fringe for the use of the Tat Hmu, one horse for ditto, one silver-handled sword for the use of the Thwethaukgyi, and then 10 spears and 40 guns.

Alaungpaya when he started his resistance against the Talaing conquerors of Ava in 1752 A.D. could not even provide a musket apiece for his small group of followers and since the country could not produce muskets they were decrepit, out-of-date specimens which had been brought into the country over a period of time. They were either of French manufacture or condemned muskets from the English arsenals in India.¹ It was estimated that in 1795 A.D.² the Burmese had about 20,000 muskets

1. Symes: Embassy to Ava, p.319. J.G.Scott: Burma p.195

2. Symes: op.cit. p.319.

in the Royal arsenals, and since Burma had suffered no major defeat since 1752 A.D. it is hardly likely that Alaungpaya had ever collected more than this figure.

Their artillery, as mentioned before, was manned by a corps of Christian gunners, but though there were some people who could cast guns and try to model them on the European pattern¹ the artillery probably never amounted to much, and at the height of the Konbaungzet power, Bodawpaya, in his march into Siam in 1786 A.D. started out with a train of 20 guns² but even these were only old ship's guns mounted on low carriages. The Burmese however, did have a lot of very small calibre guns of one to three inch bore, and these jingals were used constantly and with good effect.³

The Burmese, like the armies of Chiangmai and Ayudhya who relied on fighting elephants used to keep hundreds of trained elephants for fighting from ancient times⁴, Originally the elephants carried towers from which spearmen and archers fought, but in the Konbaung period, jingles of one to three inch calibre were mounted on them. Seven musketeers were stationed round each elephant in the fighting for mutual support, and the

1. Yule: Mission to Ava, p.113.

2. Symes: op.cit. p.113.

3. The Cambridge History of India, Vol.V, p.560. G.U.B. Part I, Vol.II. p.501.

4. Yule: The Book of Ser. Marco Polo. Vol.II. p.99.

proportion of elephants, horses and foot were normally in the ratio 1:10:100.

The commissariat department was just as casual. The soldiers in any case did not want much, and they could eat almost anything, including leaves and insects. The procedure, as seen in the Siamese campaign was for advance parties to collect food from the nearby towns and villages which was then dumped at intervals along the line of march. When there was a long siége ahead as in Ayudhya in 1767, the soldiers were set to cultivating the paddy fields.¹

The regulars had some sort of uniform.² But most of the conscripts do not seem to have had any issued to them; they probably had, however, something to distinguish them, such as a piece of red cloth tied round their heads.³

The discipline of the army did not extend to an understanding and adoption of Western parade ground formations and precision. Bandula's orders implied that the companies ambled along in more or less a state of confusion. The army's loyalty and obedience to orders was

1. Sangermano: D of B.E. p.80.

2. Havelock: Memoirs of the 3 Campaigns in Ava, p.353.
Couger: Personal Narrative of 2 Years Imprisonment in Burma p.106.

3. Sangermano: op.cit. p.79.

however, strictly enforced and based on a frightful though effective system. The recruits were normally required to leave their families behind as hostages in the hands of the provincial authorities,¹ while the officers' families were taken care of at the capital. It was customary to execute the family of even the most high ranking officer² in front of the whole army, or in public, if he should be convicted of any major fault.

In the army itself, every single officer was directly accountable for any misdemeanour on the part of anyone in his command, but he also had the power of life and death over his charges.³

The recognized tactics used by the army were not generally regarded as such, and often the accusation was made that they were destitute of any.⁴ This

1. Konbaungzet, p.504.
2. Ibid. p.531.
3. M.M.O.S. Vol.IV.p.264, in which an account is given of muskets being stolen from Saw Taing Khan's company; of Binnya Set's regiment, and part of the Viceroy of Prome's division. The company and regimental commander fled, and the executioner had already laid hands on the Viceroy of Prome for execution when the 2 officers were brought in. The 2 officers who could not produce the Thwethaukgyi and Akyat who were in charge of the muskets, were executed.
4. Sangermano: D. of B.E. p.80.

misconception seems to have arisen from the fact that a lot of time was spent either in the Burmese stockades being attacked by Siamese, Chinese, or British, or the Siamese, Chinese, and British defensive positions being attacked by the Burmese. Stockading must however be admitted as one of the favourite tactics of the Burmese. A Chinese account says that cavalry were placed on either flank of the main body to close in upon the enemy. If victory appeared doubtful, the army rapidly entrenched itself under cover of heavy fire from artillery and small arms. When the smoke cleared away, the stockade was complete and the men inside were ready to defend it.¹ In 1794, a British Officer reported to the supreme Government at Calcutta: "It is their custom to fortify every time they move, as the ancient Romans did."² The Burmese seemed to have displayed skill and judgement in the formation and defence of stockades.³

A description given is as follows: "The unvarying element was a continuous wall, sometimes as high as twenty feet of solid timber, the stem of bamboos or trunks of saplings from the neighbouring forests. At

1. Harvey: History of Burma, p.255.

2. Political Consultations April 7th 1794, No.37.

3. Snodgrass: Narrative of the Burmese War, p.21.

the top run horizontal beams which held all firmly together. At intervals were loop-holes for musketry fire. Within the enclosure, which was square or oblong, were raised platforms of earth or wood from which small guns could discharge over the paling. Inside, and outside the stockade were trenches, and on the external face were often Abattis formed of trunks and trees.¹

Letwethondara the great Burmese poet who served in the armies of the last pre-Konbaung King of Ava, and under Alaungpaya, Naungdawgyi, Hsinbyushin, and Singu wrote a treatise on the art of war called the "Theninga Byuha Sit Thamaing and some of the more interesting features of the book are given below:--

The formations used in an army's march.

- 1) "Like the Sha Hlinkan (like a rug or carpet) the van, main body and rear being of equal strength.
- 2) "Like the Pyathat (like the many tiered roof of a Burmese Palace) rather like a triangle -- a small van gradually spreading out into a strong rear.

1. Ritchie and Evans: "Lord Amherst" p.93.

- 3) "Like the Pan Pone Tawng"(Like a basket) - rather like a wide-mouthed narrow-based basket - the rear being smaller than the van.
- 4) "Like the Ma Yo Si", (like a Ma Yo drum), in which the van and rear were approximately the same size and smaller than the centre.

The 2 formations used in approaching the enemy:-

- 1) "Like the moon" - in which the king or general stayed in the centre and in concentric circles the regiments were station round him.
- 2) "Like the sun, - in which the king or general placed himself at the head of the army and the army ranging itself behind him, followed him wherever he led.

The 6 formations used in attack:

- 1) "Like the wing of a Galon"(a mythical bird) in which the general commanded the centre, while the 2 wings spread themselves out on his left and right.
- 2) "Like the waves"- in which the attack was delivered in successive waves.
- 3) "Like the chief bull in a cattle herd" - in which the attack was delivered in a concentrated rush at the point of initial contact.

- 4) "Like the bow" - in which the centre was slightly behind the wings, which were spread out.
- 5) "Like the Ma Kan"- (Makan - Great Fish) in which there was a van, centre and rear, and 2 flanks of equal strength.
- 6) "Like the snake" - in which the offensive was made as supple as a snake; giving way here, advancing to the enemy rear, somewhere else.

The 6 defensive formations:

- 1) "Like the bridge across the river" - i.e. the whole army in close-packed order, shoulder to shoulder in a horizontal mass.
- 2) "Like the claws of a scorpion" - in which the 2 wings were extended like the scorpion's claws from the main body.
- 3) "Like the front of a cart" - in which the levies were placed in the centre, and the best troops or regulars were ranged round them.
- 4) "Like the bee-hive" - in which the main body stayed in the middle, and the rest of the army packed itself round it.
- 5) "Like the crow's feet" - in which three separate columns radiated from and in front

of the main body, while another column is ranged behind it.

- 6) "Like the tripod" - in which the army would divide into 3 equal parts which would be placed at the points of an equilateral triangle.

The treatise lays down that against the defensive formation "like the front of a cart" the "like the wings of a Galon" attack was to be used. Then against the "like the tripod" defence, the "head of a cattle herd" attack should be used. Against the "like a bridge and scorpion claws defence formations the "like the waves" attack should be employed. Against the "like the crow's feet" defence the Makan (Great Fish) attack was to be used.

And finally against the "like the beehive" defence, the snake attack would be employed.

This treatise was not just an anachronistic formality; we will find accounts of the use of these tactics in the Siamese wars.

It has been said that "The great conquest of the Burmese under the Emperors Alompra and Zempiuscien must not therefore be attributed to a native courage which they are far from possessing, but to the vigorous discipline which kept them in awe,"¹ and the British found that

1. Sangermano: D of B.E. p.80.

during the 2nd and 3rd Anglo-Burmese wars of 1852, and 1885, the Burmese soldiers were reluctant to face British bayonets and guns and generally retreated at most encounters.

However, it must be remembered that in Oriental warfare, the fall of a leader, or his personal example is usually of the greatest significance in the conduct of his troops. The leaders in the days of the early Konbaung kings of our period were great officers and ministers who had risen to power from very obscure beginnings largely because of their courage.

They were the 68 chosen commanders of U Aung Zeya, the Lord of Moksobo, who with this 68 set out to defy the Mon conquerors of Ava in 1752. The odds against them would have daunted anyone not possessed of great courage or faith in high destiny. A decade later, these same people were leading the common people of Burma against the might of the great power of China at its zenith, conquerors of Turkestan and Central Asia, and destined after its failure in Burma to subdue the Gurkhas, and no one doubts the courage of the Gurkhas today.

For the first Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-1826 before the Burmese had ever tasted great defeat, the accounts given by eye witnesses and observers paint a

clear picture of something to be proud of. A Colonel Bowen reported 'they fought with a ferocity; an obstinacy I never witnessed in any other troops; they fought desperately, reserving their fire to the last moment and seldom missing their object.¹ Another account says "They blindly charged with their spears on our bayonets; they neither gave nor expected quarter, but continued fighting long after all hope of success or escape had gone."²

Summing up the worth of the Burmese army, it should be reasonable to say that though the Burmese broke before the British as the French in 1940 did before the far better equipped and better led Germans, they were a proud, energetic army, believing in its high destiny. Its morale was never broken by heavy defeat, and was kept high by the loot and slaves obtained from successive campaigns: in effect a dangerous weapon in the hands of the Burmese kings of our period and in the limited sphere in which it was engaged, of first class importance.

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1. G.E.Harvey: History of Burma, pp.237-238.
 2. Ibid. p.238.

CHAPTER VI

The Eastern Neighbours of Burma at the opening of the period 1752-1819.

The greatest neighbour Burma had towards the East was of course the Chinese Empire, and it is necessary to examine the nature, the strength and the attitude of this Empire.

The Chinese Empire of our period was that of the conquering Manchu in their most energetic and successful phase. The Manchus had extended their hold to China proper in 1644 with the help of Wu San Kuei, Chinese General in charge of the Shan Hai Kuan Gate¹; and with him had pressed on to the control of all China. Wu San Kuei having thrown in his lot with the Manchus, had determined to finish off the Mings and in 1662 marched into Burma with 100,000 men² and had successfully secured the surrender of the last fugitive Ming Emperor by the Burmese. Wu San Kuei in turn had been

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1. Li Ung Bin: Outline of Chinese History, p.317.
 2. Li Ung Bin: Ibid. p.329.

liquidated as a dangerous and over-mighty subject by Kang H'si, the grandfather of Chien Lung, The Manchu grip on the boundaries of the old Ming Empire was tightened and made official and the boundaries of the Empire were slowly extended until they more or less coincided with those of China under the great Wu Ti who reigned from B.C.140-87 B.C.

In 1735 the Emperor Yung Sheng died and Chien Lung came to the throne. He was the fourth of the Manchu Emperors, and was described as one of the shrewdest and strongest rulers in the history of the world, and taken all round, was the most capable monarch that ever occupied the Chinese throne.¹ No monarch ever gave himself more freely to the task of administration. Few kings, even on the Burmese frontier, could escape that vigilant eye. Couriers covering 200 or 300 miles a day kept him in daily touch with the farthest corners of the Empire. In ten days, messages from Burma reached Peking.²

It will then be seen that at the opening of our period, China was a great and vigorous Empire, many times the size of Burma, ruled over by a vigorous and

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1. E.H. Parker: Burma with special reference to her relations with China, p.80.
 2. Luce - J.B.R.S. C.I.'s of Burma in the 18th century. Vol.15 Part II. p.119.

ambitious man. The theoretical basis of his power however had some resemblance to the situation in Burma. The difference lay in the Chinese belief that the Emperor was chosen by heaven as being the worthiest, while in the Burmese conception the king while ruling because he was the worthiest, owed no gratitude to anyone but himself.

The Chinese Emperor stood at the head of the state, and was regarded as the father of his people.¹ But it was in view of his mandate from heaven that he compelled the loyalty of his subjects and, especially, his ministers. In fact even his highest ministers were mere clerks, whose sole duty was to transcribe faithfully the Imperial Commands.² He in turn, was believed to be able to retain his mandate only through his virtue.³ If he persistently proved himself unworthy, heaven might transfer its decrees to someone else. Thus, a successful rebel might also claim to have received the divine commission.⁴

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1. Latourette. The Chinese - their History & Culture. Vol.II, p.26. Li Ung Bin - Outline of Chinese History - p.347.
 2. Li Ung Bin p.455, who quotes the Emperor Chien Lung's words.
 3. Latourette. op.cit. Vol.II, p.27.
 4. An interesting point that the Chinese and Burmese had in common was the taboo on the king's real name.
(continued next page).

All official authority as in Burma was derived from the king. He was the supreme source of legislation and of justice. In practice however, most of the Emperor's power had to be delegated. China was a world power, and the Viceroy system theoretically called for a greater degree of decentralization, while the Konbaungzet ruled over a much smaller territory and hardly dared to delegate any power to the provincial authorities; but there is some resemblance in the factors that forced some decentralization and qualified the absolutism of the king or Emperor. These factors, may be described as precedent, public opinion, custom, official inertia, together with the great distances involved in the supervision and checking of provincial officials,¹ the legal codes of the past and the elaborate formalities and ceremonial of the court.²

(continued from previous page).

The Chinese affected to insist upon the Burmese Kings' always naming themselves in his letters, and in speaking of them Chinese use what they suppose to be the family and personal names, thus Meng Yun (Maung Waing) and Meng Keng (Maung Khin) for Hsin Byshin and Tharawadday. Ref. E.H.Parker: p.80. Latourette China - Her Culture and History, Vol.II. p.28.

1. The Burmese Empire was dominated by the great highway of the Irrawaddy, and by relays of fast war boats a Governor could be created or executed quite speedily - the time distance between Ava and Rangoon was about 5 days.
2. In China as in Burma, there was a vast horde of palace functionaries, the chief of whom received high ranks.

The Central machinery of Government like the Burmese, was meant to assist in imposing the king's laws, edicts and desires on the country.¹ Below the Emperor in the capital and acting for him were numerous bodies which supervised national government. The highest body theoretically was the Nei Ko donominated in English as the Grand Secretariat. This body originated under the Mings. Admissions to it were regarded as the highest honour for a Chinese official. Its functions however were nominal since the members had duties which kept them away. In practice the highest was the Chun Chi Ch'u, which translated very freely was the "Grand Council or Council of State".²

There were then three other major bodies.

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1. Latourette. op.cit. pp.29-31. Li Ung Bin op.cit.p.349
 2. Li Ung Bin in his "Outline of Chinese History", p.411 informs us that the name meant Council of Strategy and took the dominant position among the organs of state in the time of Yung Cheng during the bitter fighting against the Dzungars. In 1730 its authority began to take on permanency and its authority extended to other than military matters. Under the older system everything passed through the hands of the Grand Secretariat and state secrets often leaked out. The members of the Chun Chi Ch'u usually had other substantive appointments. They were recruited in most cases from the ranks of the General Secretaries, presidents and vice-presidents of the Metropolitan boards.

- 1) Censorate (established in 1638) - a most intriguing body for which no other Eastern system of Government is seen to have any parallel. Its duty was to watch and check officials, check Imperial State documents, and through the mediums of Memorials, to the throne, take exception to some of the Emperor's acts of which they disapproved. The last power was a very genuine one, and evidently taken seriously by most people for in the long years of Manchu rule there were only fifty cases of Censorate officials being punished by the Emperor.
- 2) The Office of Transmission, whose duty was to open, record and transmit memorials to the throne on routine business.
- 3) Court of Revision, which exercised general supervision on the administration of criminal law - together with the Board of Punishment and Censorate, it formed what was known as the "Three Supreme Tribunals" which acted as the Court of Appeal.

After these three bodies, there were various other bureaux and boards, the six chief being

Li Pu - Board of Civil Office (Appointments, etc.)

Hu Pu - Board of Revenue.

Li Pu - Board of Ceremonies.

Hsing Pu - Board of Law.

Kung Pu - Board of Works.

Ping Pu - Board of War.

It will have been noticed that there were many points of similarity in the central machinery of the Chinese and Burmese Governments. The Chinese system, however, seems to have divided the administrative functions in a more efficient manner, and to have avoided the Burmese concentration of all government under the king in the hands of one body - the Hluttaw. However there is the same lack of facilities for a voice in the Government by elected representation, and the same absence of provision for the effective conduct of relations with foreign powers of equal standing.

The provincial administration of the Manchus was theoretically based on a greater degree of decentralization than was the Burmese provincial administration of the Konbaung dynasty, but there were great similarities in the use of espionage on the higher provincial officers, in the system of appointments and postings direct from the capital, and in the swift and complete disgracing of any official who was held responsible for anything that

the king or emperor disliked.

The first step in the provincial administration of the Manchu empire was the division of China proper into eighteen provinces - Sheng.

Then these eighteen were divided into Fu or prefectures.

T'ing or sub-prefectures independent of a Fu.

Chou another unit independent of a Fu.

Chou subject of a Fu.

Then a Hsien (district) subject to a Fu or independent Chou.

The chief provincial officers were

Tsung Tu)	Viceroy or Governor General
or)	
Chin T'ai)	
then the Hsun Fu)	Governors
Fu Yuan)	
Fu T'ai)	

The viceroy of course was the head of the province. He was usually placed over two provinces except in Chih Li and Szechuan. Under him in each province was a governor. The viceroy's power was supposed to be that of a monarch, subject of course to the Emperor. Theoretically the governor also had the same position in

relation to the viceroy, but in practice the two officials were often in conflict and acted as a check on each other.

Unlike the Burmese provincial authority, the Chinese received a small salary, which was inadequate for the upkeep of the far greater state kept by the Chinese officials, and therefore, the same defect - of financial corruption was present. As in the case of the Burmese officials bribes were necessary to secure appointment, and to receive re-appointment after the expiry of the usual 3 year term of office.

The Viceroys and Governors were expected to trouble Peking as little as possible, but on the other hand, they were responsible for anything that went wrong.

The Chinese Empire derived its revenue mainly from under the four heads; of land tax (which under the later Manchus was a combination of poll tax and substitute for forced service or labour) tribute, customs and the salt monopoly. The land tax was supposedly on the assessment of 1713, but in practice 10 to 50% additional tax was collected. Tribute was collected in produce; silk, copper and grain being the chief articles collected.

In addition there were miscellaneous sources of income, such as the octroi (as in Burma) and fish and tree taxes.

The potential man power of China does not seem to have been effectively exploited under the Manchus, but it would be relevant to have some idea of the population of China in our period. The population of China under the Manchus¹ especially in the 18th and early 19th centuries seemed to have increased rapidly. Many estimates have been made,² partly based on census returns and at the time of the emergence of the Konbaung dynasty in Burma (1752) it would be reasonable to assume that China had a population of approximately 190 - to 200 million, which would make China in man power resources

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1. Latourette: The Chinese - their Culture and History. Vol.II, pp.8-9.
 2. "What appears to be a fairly conservative set of figures arising out of a careful examination of the studies made by Western scholars gives the following totals."

1650 - 70 million.

1710 - 140 million.

1790 - 342 million.

Another set of figures gives

1741 - 147,410,539

1771 - 214,600,350

1793 - 313,281,295.

about 100 times stronger than the Burmese.

The Chinese military establishment, after the great rebellion of Wu San Kuei in 1665, and before the large scale European entry into the China scene about 1850, was based primarily on the need to hold down China as a conquered country.

The relation between the sovereign and his people was that of a master and his slaves. Excepting the sovereign everyone was a Nuts'ai (slave) both in theory and in practice. After the Manchus came into power all Chinese military officers were required to refer themselves as Nut'sai in all communications addressed to the throne.

The descendants of the original conquerors of China were grouped under banners of varying colours. The original eight became twenty four but they were often referred to as the 'eight banners'. These twenty four were divided into three groups; Manchu, Chinese, and Mongol. At the time of the conquest of China, the Banner men totalled 200,000. This number was later raised to 250,000 and eventually, since membership was inherited, reached 300,000. Half of the total was stationed in Chih Li, to provide for the defence of the capital. The contingents were stationed in Manchuria,

Sinkiang, Kansu Shensi and Shansi, with garrisons in other strategic centres.

The heads of the major divisions of the banners were 'Tartar Generals' who outranked the Viceroy, and nominally served as a check on them.

In addition to the Banner Army, another force composed of Chinese existed. They were called the 'Green Camps' and were organised by provinces. In 1856 they totalled 600,000 but were really far fewer, since the officials padded pay rolls. Each province had a commander of the Green Standard, but in practice the Viceroy had contingents directly under their command.

The Chinese took their soldiering more seriously than the Burmese did, for their officers had to take the district or Hsien service examination, then a provincial examination as well as a final degree which involved a journey to Peking. The impression one obtains from this examination of Chinese administration is that although from their more polished and maturer civilization, which, excluding the over-weening conceit that imagined China to be the whole civilised world, the Chinese gained an objective approach towards affairs which 20th century minds would approve of, it was open to the same kind of abuses as the Burmese administration. The two most significant points that one notices is that the character

and ability of the Emperor were the major factors in the efficiency and strength of the country and the direction of policy. The second point is that since the empire was large and the Viceroyalties correspondingly so, the effect of delegating so much authority to the Viceroys, while hanging the threat of disgrace and death over them, for any harm that might befall the Emperor's prestige, tended to prohibit the Viceroys from applying to the centre for assistance; and if in the course of local vainglory Chinese affairs suffered, then wholesale deception would be in order. This second point plays a great part in our period in the relations between China and Burma. It will be shown later how the Viceroy of Yunnan misjudged his own strength, blundered and tried to cover up his mistakes. An additional feature of the Chinese and Burmese administrations was that there was no tradition of regular diplomatic relations. The Chinese frontier Viceroys like the Burmese, reported on the affairs of the territory bordering their respective provinces,¹ and on the arrival of foreign embassies, first reported their arrival to the court before letting them proceed.

Proceeding from the acceptance of the policy of the

1. Konbaunzet p.614. E.H.Parker, Burma- Relations with China. pp.82 and 93.

Emperor and his particular ideas denoting the nature of foreign relations with the non-Chinese world, it would be relevant to state that Chien Lung the ruling Chinese Emperor at the opening of our period had inherited from his father a policy of imposing Chinese administration over the non-Chinese peoples round China proper. Tibet, for example, had to accept in 1751, two Ambans (Representatives of Peking) to supervise its political affairs and to influence the succession.¹

The nature and attitude of the ruling Chinese Emperor had the utmost significance for Burma, for given an aggressive administration in China, conflict with Burma was almost inevitable, since the boundary between the two states was somewhat indeterminate, and the regulation of the rude tribesmen on the frontier who were guilty of depredations on travellers and on their more civilized neighbours on both sides of the border, might at any time become a source of friction.

The Chinese historians have recorded the nature of relations with Burma and from the chapter on "Southern Barbarians" in the T'ang dynasty² it is learnt that "the Viceroy of Si Chwan (Szechwan) Wei Ko begged permission

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1. Latroutette: The Chinese - their History and Culture, Vol. I, p.342.
 2. Parker: Burma Relations with China. pp.14-15.

to offer some barbarian songs and moreover told the Piao¹ (Pyu has been accepted as one of the ancestral races of the modern Burmese race - see the Myazedi Inscription) state to "send up some musicians." The implication was that Nanchao (the present state of Yunnan) having exercised suzerainty over the Pyu, and having now become part of China, the Pyu were a vassal race of a lower order.

The Chinese next claim that two Burmese states sent tribute between the years 1127 and 1163² but since it was also recorded that in the middle of the 10th century the first Emperor of the Sung dynasty "drew a line" beyond which he was determined to have no political concern, and the Nanchao state was not under Chinese control³ up to the time of the Mongol invasion of Kublai Khan it is difficult to believe this. Disbelief grows when we consider the fact that Anawrahta, the Burmese emperor at Pagan had invaded what was thought to be the Thai half of the Nanchao empire⁴, and that the period 1127-1163 was the heyday of the Pagan dynasty.

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1. G.E.Harvey: History of Burma, pp.43-44.
 2. Parker: op.cit. p.20. G.E.Harvey: op.cit. p.48
 3. Parker: op.cit. p.22.
 4. Parker: op.cit. p.23. G.E.Harvey: op.cit. p.30

In A.D.1254¹Kublai Khan himself captured Yunnan (Nanchao or Tali) and in 1271 the Svan-wen-sz or Mongol Comforter-in-Chief of the Shan provinces demanded tribute from Burma. The Burmese king Narathihapate did not submit but sent them back with a Burmese official who carried polite messages. ²

In 1273 an Imperial Ambassador was sent by China, but after some difficulties over court etiquette, the Chinese were executed by the Burmese king. The Burmese went on to provoke the Mongols and in 1277 attacked the Chinese protected state of Kahnge (70 miles above Bhamo). One account says that a Mongol force of 700 men³ completely routed the 50,000 Burmese at the battle of Ngasaungyan), but another says that the Mongols had 12,000 horsemen.⁴ However, the Burmese were routed, the Mongol archers creating havoc amongst the Burmese elephantry. The Burmese king however was still defiant

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1. Parker: Burma Relations with China p.27.
 2. Parker op cit. p.29.. Harvey: History of Burma p.64.
 3. Parker op cit. p.31
 4. Yule: The Book of Ser Marco Polo p.99.

and continued to send his troops to raid Yunnan, and the Mongols were once again compelled to act. Nasr-uddin, the Mongol Commander with some Mongol troops and 10,000 Szechuan troops marched down and at Kaungsin smashed a Burmese army¹. The Burmese king was thrown into a panic and since the Chinese troops did not retire at once, for they were establishing garrisons in the area, he thought they would be coming down to Pagan and abandoning the frenzied plans he had made for defence, fled down the Irrawaddy to Bassein, where he stayed with the governor, his loyal son Uzana.

The Mongols however, did not come down, and in 1285 Narathihapate sent a monk to crave pardon². The king was completely discredited by now, and when he went upstream after receiving a favourable reply from the Mongols, he was stopped at Prome by Thihathur, another of his sons, and there forced to take poison.

The death of the king was the final touch needed to let loose the forces of disintegration already strong after 4 years absence of central authority, and the Prince of Yunnan, Ye-su Timor seized the opportunity to

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1. Parker: Burma, Relations with China, p.31.
G.E.Harvey: History of Burma, p.67. Hall: Burma p.26.
 2. Parker: op.cit. p.32. G.E.Harvey: op.cit. p.68.
Hmannan Part I, p.360.

destroy the Pagan Empire. He fought his way down with a loss of 7,000 men, and occupied Pagan¹. He sent out detachments to enforce submission and Burmese tradition has it that some of them even reached Tarokmaw (the point from which the Chinese looked) below Prome.

Burma, after Pagan had fallen, was divided for centuries into a number of warring petty states and the Chinese Annals state that during this period (approximately from 1287 to the rise of the 'Loungoo dynasty in 1531) there were 8 Suan-wei-shi or Comforters holding Chinese seals and warrants and they were the Comforters of

Meintien or Burma

Ch'eli or Kiang-Hung (Sib Song Panna)

Muh-Pang or North Theinni

Lao Chwasor Luang Prabang

Pa-peh Ta-Tien or Kiang-sen

Great K'ulah or probably Korat

Luh-ch'wan or Pong (possibly Maing Maw).

P'ing-Mien Ma-Sa (doubtful)

This claim was substantially true, for Chinese recognition was of some value to the warring princes, and through

1. Parker: Burma, Relations with China p.33.
Hall: Burma p.27. G.E.Harvey: History of
Burma, p.69.

this period there were frequent applications for recognition.¹

This was the traditional Chinese policy of fragmentation adopted for states beyond its effective control and given the conditions that were in force in Burma during this period, it was successful in preventing the rise of any strong unified state.² The Chinese endeavoured to keep order in the ring and were always ready to listen to the complaint of any small state if another attempted to interfere by force: for example Thohanbwa the Shan chief of Maing Maw (Luh-chwan) attacked Kange. Hsenwi and Lu Kiang and the Chinese deprived him of his title. He apologized in 1442, but the Chinese sent down a column in 1446 to demand him from the Prince of Ava who had captured him, and obtained his surrender.³

After this the Chinese seem to have lost touch with the Burmese and by the time of Tabinshweti the Chinese annalists have been judged to go largely by hearsay.⁴ This in effect would imply that even the shadowy claims

1. Parker: op.cit. pp.40-43, 49-51.

2. Coedes: Les Etat Hindouises D'Indochine et D'Indonesie p.392.

3. Parker: Burma, Relations with China, p.43. Hmannan Vol. II, p.97.

4. Parker: op.cit. p.71.

of suzerainty made by the Chinese had lapsed, and that they had no effective contact with the Toungoo dynasty for a century. The Emperor Chien Lung admitted that the Burmese had not sent tribute after 1586.¹ The strongest Burmese monarch of that dynasty had in fact raided the Chinese protected Shan states up the Taping and Shweli rivers into Yunnan in 1562² and the Burmese Shan States seem to have remained in Burmese hands from that time.³

The Toungoo dynasty, which in 1635 had moved its capital to Ava, next comes into contact with Chinese affairs when in 1658 Yung Li the last Ming Emperor asked the Bhamo Sawbwa to intercede for him at Ava for refuge. His present of 100 viss of gold⁴ perhaps influenced matters and he was permitted to enter Burma.

The Chinese administration had slackened with the downfall of the Mings, and because of the time interval before the Manchus were in a position to impose control,

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1. Parker: Burma, Relations with China, p.74.
 2. Harvey: History of Burma, p.165.
 3. Parker: op.cit. p.68.
 4. Harvey: op.cit. p.196.

Chinese freebooter armies raided deep into Burma and the Shan States.¹ Then in 1662 Wu San Kuei came down into Burma, and forced the surrender of Yung Li. From that date till 1750² the Manchus were busy consolidating their position in China and seem to have left Burma to herself. The Burmese did the same for their dynasty was in decay and sinking into oblivion.

The Manipuris on their ponies had started riding into Burma from 1724 for loot and slaves, and the Burmese king's levies were so weak, and ill-armed that the Manipuris thought they did not possess fire-arms, though the Burmese had started using them two centuries ago.³ They came again in 1735-1737, 1738, and 1740 and raided right up to the Irrawaddy and the Burmese king failed to cope with them. The weakness of the Burmese king encouraged the Burmese Governor of Pegu to rebel in 1740, and set himself up as king among the discontented Mons, who had almost recovered from the ravages of Bayinnaung's and Nanda Bayin's wars. The Mons, however,

1. Harvey: op.cit. p.198.

2. Parker: op.cit. p.75.

3. Pemberton: Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India, p.39. Hmannan III, p.377.

would have none of him and there was a general Mon rising in the South, and a Mon kingdom was re-established. From 1742 they started raiding right up to Ava and the hapless Burmese king was caught between the two scourges of the Manipuris and Mons. It was because of this situation that we get one last mention of Sino-Burmese relations before the rise of the Konbaung Dynasty.

In 1750 the Burmese King Maha Damma Yaza Dipati sent men to Yunnan for help¹, but received none; only an officer came down to report on the situation in Ava.

The whole history of Chinese relations with Burma reeks of Chinese pretensions. The Chinese conception of suzerainty as far as Burma was concerned, sprang more from a profound conviction of superiority rather than from any desire or ability to guide, control and exploit the Burmese. Kublai Khan, a non-Chinese and a Mongol conqueror was the first person to interfere so effectively that a dynasty was overthrown. Wu San Kuei's expedition found Burma at one of her weakest moments, but he did not stay long. The essential factor is that Burma was out of the range of effective control, and though it pleased the Chinese mind to think otherwise, the Chinese

1. G.E. Harvey: History of Burma, p.215.

knew really that Burma was not a dependent state. The Chinese attitude, however, was such that it would be possible that if ever the Chinese were to have a strong emperor again, they would arrange some kind of diplomatic mission, and then proclaim that the Burmese after these many years had seen the error of their ways, and had sent tribute again. It must, however, be kept in mind that the Chinese regarded their Emperor as the Universal sovereign till the second half of the 19th century, and refused to treat with even the powerful European powers who had repeatedly humbled her, as equals. For example when China was forced to give an Imperial Audience to the envoys of Japan, Russia, the United States, Great Britain, France and Holland in 1873, without ceremonies, inconsistent with their representative character, it was so arranged that the audience was held in the Tzu Kuang Kho, the hall reserved for the reception of envoys from tributary states.¹ In view of this pathological refusal to recognize the sovereignty of other states, it is not surprising that a small and genuinely weaker state like Burma, with a tradition of vassalage in her period of

1. Li Ung Bin op.cit. p.550.

fragmentation, the Chinese attitude was one of condescension and patronage.

It is against the background of this Chinese attitude that we come to the Konbaung Period.

Burma's other important neighbour on the East is Siam, but the Konbaung kings had never heard of the word Siam. It was Ayudhya to them and Ayudhya today is a vastly different conception from the one the Burmese had at the opening of our period. They had a classical name for Ayudhya¹ - Dvayawaddy which was the name of the old Mon Khmer empire preceding the Thai period,² but this name was not the one commonly used. The Burmese knew the kingdom as the Yodaya Kingdom, i.e. Kingdom of Ayudaya. The kingdom with which the Burmese were concerned was of course the Tai kingdom, and it will be necessary to examine briefly the origin of the kingdom.

The Shans, Laos and Siamese of today all came from the race which called itself Tai,³ and their earliest known home was somewhere South of the Yangtse Kiang. Early in the Christian era they came under Chinese suzerainty, but in the middle of the 7th

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1. Ayudhya itself is a classical name - it came from an Indian city.
 2. G. Coedes: Les Etats Hindouises D'Indochine et D'Indonesie p.110.
 3. Hall: Burma p.28.

century managed to shake this off to found the kingdom of Nanchao. The Chinese pressure was however, still exerted, and this combined with the lust for wandering led the Tai to emigrate, as far West as Annam, South to Raheng, and East to South-East China. The territory of what is now Siam, was then part of the Mon Khmer Cambodian empire and the early Tai emigrants must have acknowledged Cambodian sovereignty in this period. In 1253 Kublai Khan conquered Nanchao and there was a great wave of immigration to reinforce the Tais in the Cambodian Empire. This wave of immigration made the Tai strong enough to defy the Cambodians and in 1238 Bang Klang Tao, the chief of Bang Yang and Pha Muong the chief of Mong Kat - two Tai princes, combined to capture the North Cambodian capital of Sukhotai. Bang Klang Tao was installed as king with the title of Sri Intaratiya.¹ About 1275 Ramk'angkeng, the third son of Bang Klang Tao came to the throne², and in his reign the power of the Tai increased rapidly. He claimed the cities of Phre, Suwan p'umi, Ratburi, Petchaburi,

1. G. Coedes: Les Etats Hindouisee D'Indochine et D'Indonesie p.327. Wood: History of Siam p.51.

2. G. Coedes: op.cit. p.328. Wood: op.cit. p.53.

Nakon Sritammarat, Raheng, Mesot, Tenasserim, Tavoy, Martaban, and Pegu owed allegiance to him.¹ The truth of all his claims of course is impossible to establish, but there is some foundation for his claim to Hanthawaddy. A highly intelligent Tai called Mogadu (Wareru) entered the service of Ramk'ahheng and after a swift rise eloped with his daughter to Martaban, where he murdered and took the place of the Governor Aleimma (the clever). The period saw the decline of the Pagan Empire, and the Mons of Pegu under the Mon Governor Tarabya joined with Wareru in a great revolt, occupying the country up to Toungoo. The 2 fell out and Wareru became the sole ruler of Lower Burma. He demanded and obtained recognition from his old master Ramk'ankeng.²

In 1350 the Prince of Ut'ong (or Suvanpuri-Suvannabhumi - the land of gold) founded a new city at Ayudhya after having hacked out a kingdom from another chunk of the Cambodian Empire. He called himself king, with the title of Rama Tibodi I and so founded the present kingdom of Siam. The older kingdom of Sukhotai became a vassal kingdom in 1378, and its rulers in time

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1. G. Coedes: op.cit. p.342. Wood: op.cit. p.53.
 2. G. Coedes: op.cit. p.344. Wood: op.cit. p.54.
 3. Harvey: History of Burma, p.110.

became hereditary governors.¹ It formed, however, an almost distinct territorial unit and in later times the heir-apparent was usually appointed Governor of Pitsanulok.

By this period, there were three major Tai States in the area - Ayudhya, Chiengmai, and Luang Prabang. Luang Prabang does not seem to have been involved seriously in the new phase that now opens - the struggle for mastery among the Tai states, after the Cambodian yoke had been thrown off.

The main struggle was between Chiengmai, the Northern State which had dynastic relations with, and suzerainty over the North Tai states, and Ayudhya which had inherited the territory and power of Sukhotai.² The Ayudhyans started the struggle by an invasion in 1387,³ and this led to an unending series of invasions and counter-invasions right up to the time of the Burmese conquest of Chiengmai, and the first Burmese invasion of Ayudhya. It is probable that the long drawn-out struggle so weakened the northern kingdom

1. Coedes: op.cit. p.369. Wood: op.cit. p.59.

2. Wood: op.cit. p.63. Tavoy and Tenasserim which had been lost by Sukhotai in 1318 had been recovered in 1325.

3. Wood: op.cit. p.73.

that Burmese conquest became possible, while the elimination of Chiengmai as a possible ally correspondingly weakened the position of Ayudhya. The inhibitions that worked against the consolidation of Ayudhyan power were augmented by the fact that though the Tai's had succeeded in throwing off the Cambodian yoke from their colonies on the Menam area, the Cambodian empire was by no means a spent force in this period, and a lot of energy was wasted by Ayudhya in trying to reduce Cambodia to vassalage. The Cambodians, however, never lost one opportunity to harass Ayudhya and in like manner Ayudhya was always having to retaliate. The Cambodians were not strong enough to break Ayudhya but made large scale raids and carried off thousands of slaves. They chose naturally, the best moments for such invasions, for instance they chose 1570¹ the year after Ayudhya had been captured and made seemingly defenceless by the Burmese king Bayinnaung. Beyond the relatively larger issues, there was also the need for slaves and both kingdoms suffered much from mutual slave-raiding on a colossal scale.

The picture of the Siamese scene had hardly changed in essentials when the Burmese made their first invasion

1. Wood. op.cit. p.127.

under king Tabinshwehti (1531-50) in 1548. The Burmese after the fall of Pagan in 1287 had been harried out of their home land of Upper Burma by the Shans under their various chiefs and, losing at the same time their grip on Lower Burma had been gathering strength at Toungoo for over 200 years. By Tabinshwehti's time they had regained their strength and in a series of campaigns from 1535 to 1539, had reconquered Lower Burma and established their capital at Pegu, after subduing the Mons. The Shans of Upper Burma were thrown back North of Pagan by 1546 but they were not yet completely crushed, and it is possible that the invasion of Ayudhya was motivated by the need to demonstrate the ascendancy of the Burmese over the strongest of the Shan or Tai principalities. The immediate reason, however was Ayudhya's raids on Tavoy,¹ while Tabinshwehti was raiding Arakan. Tabinshwehti demanded the surrender of Ayudhya's white elephants, the acceptance of this demand meaning the acknowledgement of Burmese suzerainty. Ayudhya refused and the Burmese who had already made preparations started the invasion. This however, did not succeed. But his successor Bayinnaung in 1556-59

1. Harvey: History of Burma, p.158. Wood. History of Siam, p.112.

reduced in the course of three campaigns, the Shan States of Mohnyin, Mogaung, Momeik, Mong Pai, Saga, Lauksauk, Yawnghwe, Hipaw, Bhamo, Kale, Manipur. With the levies raised from these Shan States, he took Chiengmai and Viengchang in 1556.¹ With control over the Northern Tai states Bayinnaung was now more favourably placed than Tabinshwehti for the conquest of Ayudhya and in 1563² he asked for some white elephants which the Ayudhya king possessed. This was refused and the Burmese armies marched again on Ayudhya. In 1564 the King of Ayudhya surrendered and after surrendering the elephants, and accepting many other terms, including his own captivity, his son was left behind as a vassal king.³

In 1568 after a rebellion, Ayudhya had once more to be attacked and through treachery was taken again by the Burmese.⁴

During the next eleven years Siam was little more than a province of Burma. Burmese officials resided at Ayudhya and at other important centres, and many

1. Wood: op.cit. p.177.

2. Wood: Ibid. p.118. Harvey: op.cit. p.167.

3. Wood. op.cit. p.119 says that Prince Damrong, the Siamese historian of the twentieth century cited very strong reasons for believing that it was not the king who was taken but the son.

4. Harvey: op.cit. p.169. Wood: op.cit. p.124.

Burmese laws and institutions were forced upon the country. The Burmese era was introduced into Siam at this time, and so was the Manudhammathat (the Burmese Code of Law).

In 1584, Naresuen, the famous Siamese prince threw off his Burmese allegiance and raised the standard of rebellion and by 1587 had beaten off Burmese attacks and had re-established the independence of Ayudhya. Further Burmese invasions followed in 1590, and 1592 but both were also beaten off. In 1594 the Cambodian king was defeated and a Siamese Military Governor was put in charge. Siam, by now, was a completely revitalized kingdom, and began raiding into Burma.

It was Ayudhya that ruined the Burmese dynasty of Toungoo. The Burmese never had enough men to hold down Bayinnaung's empire and the attempt to do so, in the face of a resurgent and defiant Ayudhya under an inspiring leader like Naresuen was doomed to fail. It was a vicious circle in which the Burmese king Nandabayin found himself. He needed men in large numbers to carry on his wars against Ayudhya. The continuous exactions of men, labour, food and money had provoked desperate rebellion and savage reprisals even in the reign of the great Bayinnaung and they grew more numerous and more serious as the failures against Ayudhya piled up.

Rebellion weakened the Burmese forces against Ayudhya; the weakness caused failures, and failure caused further exactions, and still more rebellion; it was a dreary round, and completely exhausted the strength of central authority in Burma. In 1593 the last Burmese invasion had failed, and after that, it was Ayudhya which began raiding Burma. By 1599, when Pegu was sacked by Arakan and Toungoo, all the country South of Martaban was tributary to Ayudhya. The Burmese once they had given up their Siamese expeditions, recovered. One of Bayinnaung's sons, Nyaungyan Mintaya who held Ava concentrated his attention on the reimposition of central authority from Ava, and achieved a measure of success. His son Anaukpetlun who succeeded him in 1605, carried on the good work, and by 1610 had retaken Prome and Toungoo. In 1613 he took Syriam from the Portuguese, Felipe De Brito and had by then practically re-established Burmese hegemony over Burma proper. Then, he almost repeated the folly of his ancestors. He interfered in the control of Tenasserim, failed, and confined himself sensibly to the retention of Tavoy. His new strength further enabled him to re-assert Burmese sovereignty in 1615 over Chiengmai, which though under a Burmese prince had had, in 1595, to acknowledge the suzerainty of Ayudhya, in the lowest

state of Burmese strength.

Ayudhya was not molested by the Burmese after this, till our period; Ayudhya also, after the death of Naresuen gradually curtailed its raids into Burma.

In the South, Siamese influence, in our time, seems to have extended in effective measure, as far South as Kedah and Patani. There were historical Siamese traditions, however, that laid claim to suzerainty over the whole Malay Peninsular. In Ramk'ahheng's time in 1295, the Mongol court of Peking had recommended to the Tai that they should abide by their promise and do no evil to the Malays.¹ This would signify that the Mongols regarded both as her vassals and desired to keep the peace; but it also implies that Tai power was effective, right down the Malay peninsular.

In the middle of the 14th century a Chinese author Wang Ta-yuan wrote that in the last few years the Siamese had taken to piracy, and had raided Tan-man-si (present site of Singapore) with over 70 war junks.²

Yet again when the Portuguese captured Malacca in 1509, Albuguerque, the Portuguese viceroy sent an

1. G. Coedes: Les Etats Hindouisee D'Indochine Et D'Indonesie P.382.

2. Ibid. p.383.

Embassy to Ayudhya to explain matters, because they had learnt that Ayudhya had claims on Malaccar.¹

In the North and West it will thus be seen, that Siam was at the opening of our period, divided into a number of provinces or states which were more or less unsettled in their allegiance either to Burma or Siam, (i.e. Ayudhya). The Siamese raided through the Western provinces, whenever they felt strong enough, into Burma, and the Burmese did the same. In the North, the imposition of Burmese control or suzerainty was more or less continuous, but in any case the idea emerges that Siam up to this period was never in a position to count seriously on these areas. To the East, Cambodia was a thorn, but Cambodia seems to have been unable to harass Siam in a serious manner; on the other hand though Siam intervened successfully² in Cambodian affairs, it seems fairly clear that Siam was unable to rely on Cambodian help against Burma, and that her position on her eastern frontier vis-a-vis relations with Burma was thereby weakened rather than strengthened.

To the South Nakonsritammarat, Patani and Singora would really be the extreme limit of the area from which

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1. Wood: History of Siam p.98
 2. Wood: ibid. p.155. When the Siamese king was supposed to have intervened successfully in the succession of the Cambodian throne.

the Siamese could hope for added strength.¹

It will thus be seen that Siam at the opening of our period was not really a cohesive kingdom, and the system of having princes and semi-independent officials in charge of the provinces tended to make it easier for the Burmese invaders to split up the Siamese defences.

Government in Siam, however, was essentially based on the same idea as in Burma, of the king being the best Buddhist, and therefore entitled to absolutism.²

The ceremonies and ritual are very similar to those of Burma and was probably derived, as the Burmese was, from adaptation of Hindu ceremonial and custom.³ For example, there was a separate court language.⁴ Then there was the retention of the Court Brahmins for the same purposes as in Burma.⁵ Beneath the king there were two divisions in the central administration⁶. There were five ministers in the 1st division.

1. Wood: History of Siam p.119. 'when the Rajah of Patani came up with a force to Ayudhya to help repel the Burmese in 1564. Ibid p.201 - Potts one of the E.I.Company factors is reported to have assisted Singora, but it fell in 1689.

2. Q.Wales: Siamese State Ceremonies, p.29.

3. Ibid. p.32.

4. Ibid. p.39. G. of U.B. Part I, Vol.II, p.105.

5. Q.Wales, op.cit. p.54. M.M.O.S. Vol.IV. p.47.

6. Wood: History of Siam, p.84.

- 1) The Ministry of the Interior - which seems to have been the most important in this division.
- 2) The Ministry of Local Government - which was in charge of the affairs of the province of Ayudhya.
- 3) The Ministry of Finance.
- 4) Ministry of Agriculture - including land tenure.
- 5) Ministry of the Royal Household, which was also responsible for the administration of justice.

The other division was the military administration. A separate Prime Minister Kalahom, was set up with several officials under him ranking as Ministers, and in charge of various military departments. It is thus seen that there was an attempt at the differentiation of functions.

The provinces were placed under the control of various Governors, some of whom were princes. They received no pay up till the time of King Chulalongkorn, A.D. 1868, but there was greater precision theoretically in the amount of land from which they were expected to collect enough for their living. This was the institution of Sakdina.¹ Every prince, official and

1. Wood. Ibid., p.85.

private had a certain amount of land, allotted to him. The highest ranks held from 1000-4000 acres; the subordinate officials, like the Kuns and Luangs, held from 160 acres upwards; the common people had 10 acres.

The Judicial system seems to have been based on lines similar to the Dhammathat and Yazathat operating in Burma.¹ It was based on the Dhammathat which was brought into Siam by the Burmese conqueror Bayinnaung in his period of domination, and on the various edicts, case rulings, and procedural rulings produced by the various Siamese kings. The common feature of the two systems was the acceptance of trial by ordeal and, in the candle and water ordeals, we have identical types.

The Revenue was derived from cash payments in lieu of tribute or obligatory services, and from tolls, bazaar dues and customs. An interesting feature is that the Siamese kings like the Burmese kings used their power to become the principal import and export merchant of the country.² Foreign trade was placed under the control of the Praklang or Minister of the Treasury and Finance, who with his subordinates acted on behalf of the King. The enormous revenue from this particular source made the Siamese king a very wealthy one³ and he

1. Wood: Ibid. pp.127, 185, 215.

2. Wood: Ibid, p.163.

3. Harvey: History of Burma, p.253.

might perhaps have lightened the direct burden on his subjects.

The population of Siam in our period must be guessed rather than calculated. Some authorities think that Siam has hardly yet regained the population which she possessed before her conflicts with Burma began in the 16th century.¹ However, the census of 1929 gives 11,506,207 while that of 1947 gives 17,105,060 which makes Siam's modern population and the rate of growth almost the same as that of modern Burma. Considering that Siam has about the same area, climate, diet and living habits, as Burma, it would not be probable that her population in the 16th century could be three times as large as Burma's. The most reasonable thing, would be to assume that in our period, the two countries had approximately the same population.

The number of armed men that Siam could raise must therefore, in view of the man power resources and the administrative system, be about the same as in Burma; for example, the Siamese king Naresuen invaded Cambodia in 1593 with 100,000 men² but the Cambodian annals give the number as 50,000. Burmese estimates

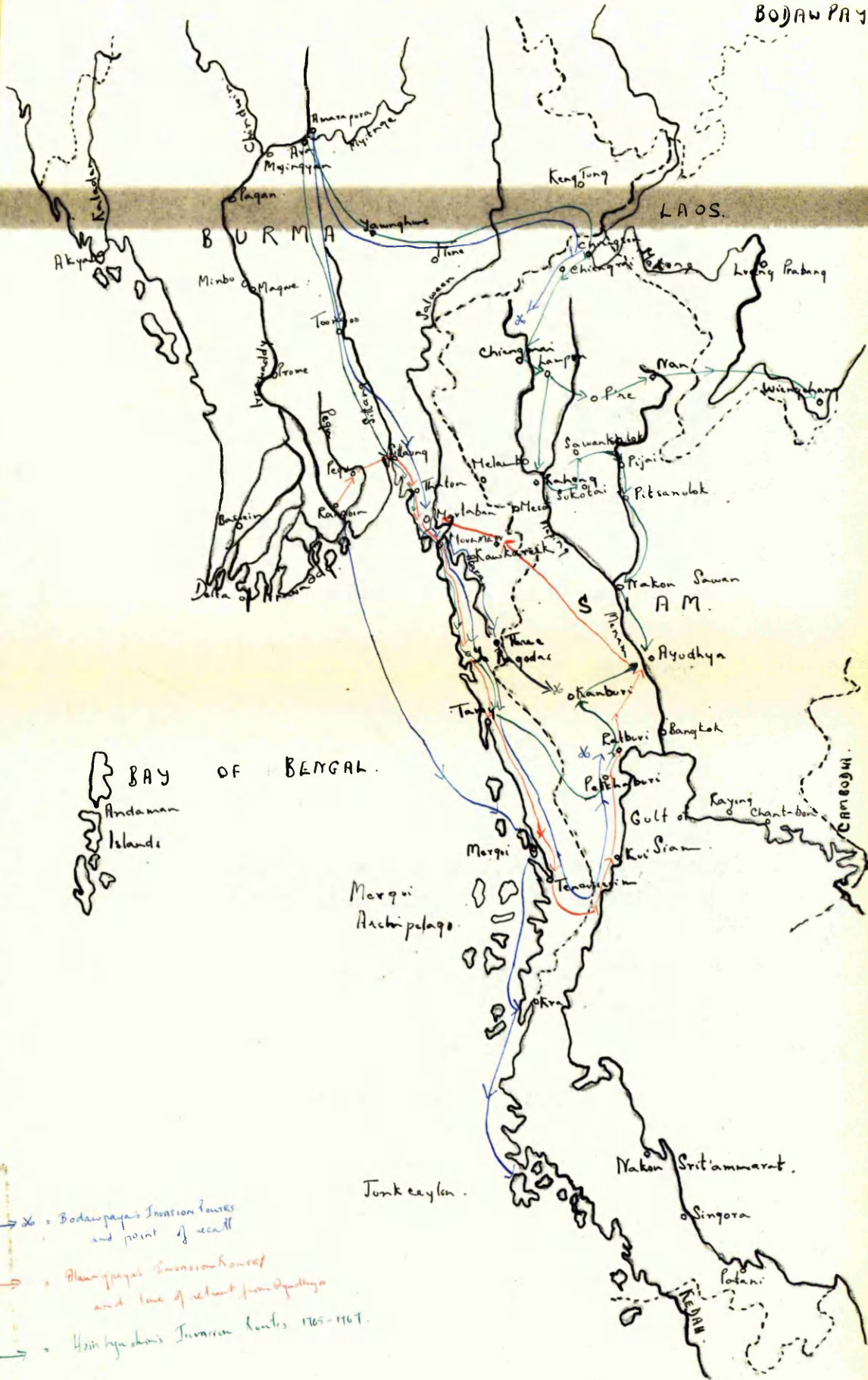
1. Wood: History of Siam, p.146.

2. Wood: Ibid. p.146.

of the numbers of the Siamese Army were much higher - about 10 times in excess, but so was the Siamese estimate of the Burmese forces. The impression is that the balance of forces was fairly equal and this was the opinion of Lord Amherst in 1824, when he wrote to Sir Thomas Munroe on the various aspects of bringing in the Siamese into the first Anglo-Burmese War.¹

1. Gleig's Life of Munroe. Vol.II, pp.110-111.

INVASION ROUTES OF ALAUNG PAYA, HSINBYUSHIN AND BODAWPAYA.



- x = Bodawpaya's Invasion routes and point of recall
- = Alaungpaya's Invasion routes and line of retreat from Ayodhya
- = Hsinbyushin's Invasion routes 1765-1767.

Scale 1" = 100 miles.

CHAPTER VII

The Initial Phase of Burma's Eastern Relations covering the period of the first two Konbaung kings.

Alaungpaya, 1752-60, was born in 1714 at the village of Moksobo which contained 300 houses.¹ He belonged to the ruling class and for generations his ancestors had been local lords.² He claimed descent from Myaukkbet Nawrahta, Myin Wun or Commandant of the Northern Cavalry Area, and brother to the Ava chief Mohnyin Thado 1427-40. Non-Burmese writers, such as the Siamese annalists and Sangermano have regarded this as an untrue claim, but to most Burmese, even today, the claim seems reasonable. Rural society in Upper Burma has always been stable, and families who are descended from great men seldom forget the fact, and that holds good for modern Europeans too.

The reign of Alaungpaya is important in that, led by a virile king, the Burmese reasserted their control

1. Dalrymple, Vol.I. p.163.

2. Harvey, History of Burma, p.219.

over Burma proper in a series of campaigns against the Mons of the Lower provinces. As far as relations with China are concerned, there seems to have been no direct official contact, but Alaungpaya's assertion of Burmese sovereignty over the Shan States on the Chinese border led to unrest in that region. Combined with the reluctance of the Shan Sawbwas of the border, the bitter quarrels stirred up on the frontier by the Gwes led by Gunna Ein who had been defeated by Alaungpaya and had fled to Meng Lien,¹ increased the unrest, and probably led to Chinese intervention, and so to the invasions of 1767.

Siamese relations with Burma had reached a state of friendliness never achieved before in the period immediately preceding ours, in view of the almost automatic resumption of hostilities in our period, it is necessary to examine the cause of that friendliness.

It is probable that control over the lower provinces of Burma was a necessary preliminary for an attack on Siam for strategic as well as man-power reasons. The Burmese kings after the havoc created by Bayinnaung and Nandabayin had since the time of Anaukpetlun and Thalun, given up plans for invasion, and had tacitly

1. Parker: Burma Relations with China. p.82.

proclaimed this by removing the seat of government from Pegu in Lower Burma to Ava in the North. The Siamese when they saw the gradual rejuvenation of the Mons of Lower Burma, must have calculated¹ that any renewed threat from Burma would be more likely to come from the Mons than from the Burmese. It was probably in the background of this thinking that they decided policy when the Burmese governors of Martaban and Tavoy were cut off from Ava by the Mon rebellion of 1740, and fled for safety into Siamese territory². The Siamese court treated them most kindly and offered them hospitality. The king of Burma was touched, and sent in 1744, envoys to Ayudhya to thank the Siamese king. The Siamese king in turn sent back a stately embassy which arrived at Ava in 1746³.

The new Burmese dynasty was however ambitious; the friendliness disappeared and hostilities were resumed. In a sense, the re-imposition of Burmese control over Lower Burma led to the strained relations, for the Mons fled in their thousands into Siam, and the Siamese

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1. Wood: History of Siam, p.234.
 2. G.E.Harvey: op.cit. p.214.
 3. Hmannan Vol.III, p.389.

king offered them generous hospitality. Siam thus became a base from which they could encourage and stir up their compatriots left behind in Burma to rebel, and Alaungpaya probably felt that the crushing of Siam would remove this nuisance. After the fall of Pegu Chiengmai is reported to have sent an embassy to Alaungpaya, who had demanded complete submission, and that before long, after having taken a look at the blackened ruins of Pegu, it had begun sending in tribute.¹ The Konbaung chronicle however does not mention the submission of Chiengmai in this reign, and only records that Smim Htaw² sent a plaintive but polite mission. In any case, this report states that the embassy came after the sack of Pegu, but both Wood³ and the Konbaung Chronicle⁴ state that the embassy from Chiengmai arrived

1. Harvey: History of Burma, p.241.

2. Smim Htaw was reputed to have been the son of the Prince of Pagan who had rebelled in 1714 against the King of Ava, and had fled to the hills East of Pegu to live among the Gwes. He was raised to the throne of Pegu in 1742 by the Walaing rebels but had been ousted by Binnya Dala, one of his fathers-in-law in 1746, (see Wood: *ibid.* p.235. Konbaungzet, p.241) and after a period of wandering had settled in Chieng Mai with another father-in-law, the Prince of Chiengmai.

3. Wood: History of Siam. pp.235-236.

4. Konbaungzet: p.241.

in 1756. Wood, however, states that Smim Htaw himself came with several hundred followers. The Burmese chronicle records that only nine of Smim Htaw's officers came and that they were housed in a junior captain's camp. The Burmese chronicle seems to be more reliable in this case, for in the next reign, Naungdawgyi sent out an expedition to Chiengmai with orders to conquer, and in the conquest the 'Lord of Elephants and Tigers' Smim Htaw was taken prisoner.¹

Alaungpaya had raised the Upper Burma villages after the Mons had taken Ava in 1752² and by late 1753 the Mons had abandoned Ava and fled South, down the Irrawaddy. Alaungpaya now turned to securing the country at his back; the Northern Irrawaddy including the villages and towns, and the Shan chiefs to the North and North East. In the month of Tabotwe (February) he set out in force up the river from Ava. When he reached Katha, he sent out a strong force under the joint command of his brother-in-law, Min Ye Kyaw Swa and the Mokso Chone Bo-Minhla Minkhaung to impose control over

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1. Konbaungzet: p.455. He spent much time hunting for a white elephant but only caught plain elephants and tigers - Harvey: History of Burma, p.241.
 2. Harvey: Ibid, p.216.

the Shan States of Mohynin and Mogaung,¹ and, two stages further North, the Shan Chiefs of Momeit and Bhamo came out to present tribute.

There is no mention of any direct contact with China or even Yunnan. Harvey² however, states that Minhla Minkhaung Kyaw with an imposing escort was sent up into the Shan States, where he secured the homage of most of them, and also recognition from the Yunnan Viceroy. Harvey seems to have confused him with another Min Hla Min Khaung, for before he had been promoted to the title of Minhla Min Khaung Kyaw, he also had been Min Hla Min Khaung.³

The Chinese seem to have been aware of Alaungpaya's rise to the throne, for in 1752⁴ the Yunnan Viceroy reported the existence of civil war in Burma, and the usurpation of Alaungpaya of Moksobo. The origin of the Civil War was stated to be "the conduct of the Gwe

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1. Konbaungzet: p.80.
 2. Harvey: History of Burma, p.228.
 3. Konbaungzet: p.22.
 4. Parker: Burma Relations with China. p.82.

Shans¹, who, declining to recognize Alaungpaya, had taken refuge in the Chinese protected state of "Meng-Lien, and had begun a bloodthirsty quarrel with their hosts. The Sawbwa of Meng Ken or the "country of the Kon" (Kengtung) it was said, took part against China in the quarrel and made himself very disagreeable. On the other hand, the Sawbwa of "Muhpang (Hsenwi) arranged with China to murder the Burmese Sitke or resident, and to join the Chinese. The Sawbwa of Manmu (Bhamo) also offered to desert the Burmese in favour of China."

The account agrees substantially with that of the Burmese chronicle. The Gwe colony of Madaya Okpo had set up as an independent unit in the last years of the Toungoo dynasty and in 1752 they had sent twenty men² to Moksobo to administer the oath of allegiance. A Mon detachment was already in Moksobo waiting to do the same so Alaungpaya asked for time saying that in all humbleness he could not decide until these two great parties had fought it out. On its way back he massacred the Mon detachment, but his kinsman the Lord

1. Harvey: Ibid. p.354. Luce: J.B.R.S. Vol.15, p.117. Also see Appendix.

2. Konbaungzet: p.20.

Sittha being in the hands of the Gwe, he let them depart in peace. The Gwe had returned, after successfully routing a large Talaing detachment which they had decoyed with 300 men,¹ Alaungpaya felt surer this time, and massacred the lot, saying to the leader "thou treacherous dog, it is not fit that such evil as you should be allowed to stay alive." He then followed this up, and launched a large scale attack on the Gwes and after one desperate stand at Hsipaw² the Gwes had fled into the Northern Shan Hills.

In 1758-59³ the Gwes stirred up trouble in the North Shan States; a strong force of 100 horse, 500 musketeers and 5,000 spearmen was sent off by Alaungpaya along the Hsipaw route. Another force of 30 horse, 260 muskets, and 500 spearmen was sent up along the Momeit route. The two columns soon cleared the area, and the Gwe chief Gunna Ein (the Kung Li Yen of the Chinese) fled into the Shan Chinese State of Maing Lyi (Meng Lien).⁴

The Saw Bwa of Meng Lien abused his position and

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1. Konbaungzet: p.63.
 2. Konbaungzet: p.73.
 3. Harvey: History of Burma, p.238. Konbaungzet:p.273.
 4. Konbaungzet: p.275.

during a temporary absence of Gunna Ein took Gunna Ein's daughter into his harem. This led to the Saw Bwa's murder, and the flight of Gunna Ein and his Gwes. He was captured and sent before the Maing Si Zaung Tu (the Viceroy of Yunnan) who executed him on the orders of Chien Lung himself.¹ It is also recorded² that the Hsenwi Saw Bwa and 100 followers, the Bhamo Saw Bwa and 15 followers, and a prince of Momeit with 20 families took refuge in Yunnan, and were given protection by the Chinese authorities.

This seems to have been the full extent of Alaungpaya's interest in China. A mission from a King Mahatsu arrived in China in 1753 with various presents³ but it was not till 1754⁴ that Upper Burma was clear of the Mons, and it is of greater probability that it was the Mons who sent this mission rather than Alaungpaya.

Alaungpaya took Ava in 1754 January; in the following March the Mons came up with their whole army.

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1. Luce, J.B.R.S. Vol.15, p.118.
 2. Konbaungzet: p.276.
 3. Parker: Burma - Relations with China, p.83.
 4. Harvey: op. cit. p.222.

They drove his sons out of Talokmyo in Myingyan district, and the younger son (later King Hsinbyushin) was so overcome with shame that he washed his head in purification. The Mons besieged Ava; their assaults failed but they carried fire and sword through the villages up to Kyaukmyaung on the Irrawaddy in Shwebo district. Finally, Alaungpaya marched down from Shwebo, his younger son made a sortie from Ava, and the Mons, finding the rains near, and their losses heavy, beat a general retreat in such haste that at Hsinbyugyun in Minbu district, they left behind the Golden Hti (umbrella-like spire) they had brought to place on the Shwezigun pagoda at Pagan.¹

In 1754, the Lord of Sale (in Myingyan district) and the Myothugyi of Pakhange in Magwe district led a rising in Prome,² and stood out against the attacks of the retreating Mon army. Alaungpaya decided that the Burmese of the South could not be left unassisted³ and came in force down the river, raised the siege at Prome, and in May 1755 took Dagon from the Talaings and renamed

1. Harvey: History of Burma. pp.222-223. Konbaungzet: p.84-116.

2. Harvey: Ibid. p.229. Konbaungzet: p.111.

3. Konbaungzet: p.113.

it Yan Kon "End of Strife" (anglicised to Rangoon).

The Mons had two great strongholds in the South, Syriam, and Pegu, their capital. In 1755 Alaungpaya commenced the siege of Syriam which lasted over a year because he had no cannon of calibre heavy enough to smash the walls of the town, and also because there were Frenchmen inside Syriam with two ships moored outside on the river which smashed Alaungpaya's flotilla of war boats to pieces.¹ This siege of Syriam marks one more stage in the re-imposition of Burmese hegemony over Burma, but the French in Syriam are of some importance, because their defeat, and the capture of their arms were of some significance in the wars with Siam and China that followed. In July 1756² the town fell, and among the spoils listed by the Burmese³ were 1500 muskets, and 50 cannon; 10,000 brass shot, 1000 iron shot and 5000 lead shot, together with 10,000 viss of ships anchors and chains (the reference to weight probably meant that they would be melted down for shot).

Bruno, the French chief in Syriam, had written to

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1. Harvey: History of Burma. p.299
 2. Harvey: Ibid. p.230 Konbaungzet: p.185.
 3. Konbaungzet: p.186.

Pondicherry for help and three French ships, the Diligent, the Fleury and the Galathee, had been sent with cannon and munitions.¹ The Diligent had met with bad weather, and did not enter Syriam, but the other two were decoyed up to Syriam and stranded on the bar. The captured loot included 35 ships' guns (24 pounders), 5 field guns, 1300 muskets, and a large store of ammunition.² The 12 officers were executed but the 200 who formed the crew were taken into Alaungpaya's service as an elite corps of gunners. They were decently treated, and given wives and land, as indeed were most prisoners of war who survived the initial phase of capture. Some of them became Captains in the Guards, and served in the various campaigns against the Manipuris, Chinese and Siamese.³

It seems, however, that only a few of the French stayed long in the Burmese service, for a French agent Lefevre, journeyed from Pondicherry to Ava in 1766, and is said to have obtained the release of the survivors of the Frenchmen enslaved by Alaungpaya at the time of

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1. Harvey: History of Burma, p.231. Konbaungzet:p.187
 2. Harvey: Ibid. p.231.Konbaungzet: p.187.
 3. Harvey: op.cit. p.231 from Sonnerat's Voyage aux Indes Orientales et a la Chine - Paris.1782. Vol.II. p.40. Hall: Europe and Burma. p.67. Symes: Embassy to Ava, pp.31-32. Sangermano: D. of B.E. in the notes by John Jardine. p.231. J.B.R.S.Tombstone of the Chevalier Milard.Vol.15.p.75.

the capture of Syriam.¹ After the fall of Syriam, Alaungpaya in the open season of 1756-57² advanced on Pegu by land and water; while another army moved down from M'oungoo. There is a good English translation of the story of the fall of Pegu³ written by a Mon monk Athwa. The monks were accused of helping in the defence, and "he threw 3,000 monks to the elephants, the elephants trampled on them, the elephants killed them....." The monks who survived fled East of the Sittang river to the towns of Sittaung, Pa-an, Shwegyin, Martaban, Lobun, Chiengmai, Ayudhya and other Shan towns. The Burmese soldiers seized all the people of the Mon country, men, and women, and sold them "some for a hundred pieces, some for 50, some for 25, some for 20, some for 15 pieces. We were sold in the market, we were sold like cattle in the market, and the Burmese soldiers made merry with the price. Sons could not find their mothers, nor mothers their sons, and there was weeping throughout the land." After the sack of Pegu, the treatment of the Mons was not more oppressive than that meted out to the ordinary

1. Hall: Europe and Burma. p.72.

2. Harvey: History of Burma. p.232. Konbaungzet. p.193

3. Harvey: op.cit. p.235.

Burmese, for in 1760 when he marched through Martaban on his way to Ayudhya Alaungpaya appointed a Mon officer Daw Talut as Governor of Martaban.¹ However, in the initial phase of total defeat, many Mons must have fled East with the monks.

Alaungpaya next turned his attention to Siam. It has been said that there was no immediate reason why he should have attacked Siam, and that the real reason was his ambition and the need to work off his energy.² The Konbaung Chronicle³ states that during his state visit to Rangoon when he had regilded the Shwe Dagon Pagoda from top to bottom, Alaungpaya had received news, of Siamese raids on Tavoy, of the detention of three Burmese ships by the Siamese, and of the capture of a junk sent down by him to Tavoy. He had then decided to invade Siam. Another reason for invasion was possibly the rebellion of the Governor of Tavoy, who had been encouraged by the many Mon refugees from Hanthawaddy and perhaps secretly instigated by the Siamese.⁴

1. Konbaungzet: p.310.

2. Harvey: History of Burma. p.241. Wood: History of Siam, p.240.

3. Konbaungzet, p.309.

4. Wood: op.cit. p.240. Symes: Embassy to Ava. p.49.

It is probable that it was Alaungpaya's ambition and his desire for loot and slaves that started him off on this expedition, and that the immediate causes were only opportune excuses.

The Konbaung Chronicle¹ states that when he set out from Kyaukmyaung on the Irrawaddy, he sent 13 regiments, under the command of 13 Shans Sawbwas of Htilin, Yaw, Tein Nyin, Thaunghtut, Kale, Mohnyin, Mogaung, Bhamo, Momeik, Hsipaw, Yawngghwe, Mone, Moby, and composed of 3,000 horse and 25,000 men, by the over-land route through Toungoo. He himself with 24 regiments composed of 24,000 men under the command of Min Khaung Nawrahta had embarked in 600 war boats and travelled down to Rangoon. It is possible that at the outset he only wished to make the most ostentatious display while performing his work of merit, but the marshalling of all the Shan levies he could raise, and their being brought down by a separate route, instead of accompanying him to augment the brilliance of his progress downstream, suggests that he had the invasion of Siam in his mind before the excuses presented themselves.

Siam at that time happened to be in a particularly

1. Konbaungzet. pp. 306-307.

weak state, with no effective leadership to marshal her comparatively weak resources. The Siamese had had no taste of large scale warfare since 1717¹ and there happened to be two brothers alternating on the throne. One Ut'unpon not daring to rule and fearful for his life, and the other, Ekat'at desirous, but not capable of ruling.²

Ut'unpon had succeeded to the throne of his father, the peaceful and prosperous Boromokot in 1758. He had an inclination for religious life, possibly because he was nervous, for immediately after he came to the throne he executed three brothers whom he suspected of conspiring to rebel.

Ekat'at his elder brother however, succeeded in gathering a strong following and Ut'unpon not daring to execute him, abdicated and retired to a monastery. Ekat'at in a book written only 22 years after his death³ is described as 'void of intelligence, unsettled in spirit, fearful of sin, negligent in his kingly duties, hesitating alike to do good or evil'. Perhaps the fall of Ayudhya had to be explained by the production of a scapegoat, but then again it might have been a proper description.

1. Wood: History of Siam.p.241.

2. Wood: Ibid. pp.238-240.

3. Wood: Ibid. p.239.

Early in 1760¹ Alungpaya completed his preparations and set out on his invasion of Ayudhya. The first thing he did was to send out his Kala Panthes (Christian Gunners) in five little ships to Tavoy by the sea route. He himself with 40 regiments proceeded by boat to Hanthawaddy; at Hanthawaddy the boats were abandoned, and his whole army took the land route through Sittaung, and Zingyaik to reach Martaban in nine stages from Rangoon. The army was then ferried over to Moulmein where a fleet of junks was collected by his orders. After they had been requisitioned, part of the army was sent off in the fleet to Tavoy, Alaungpaya himself followed with the rest of the army, and advanced down the coastal plain through Ye, and reached Tavoy in thirteen stages from Martaban. He rested a day at Tavoy, while waiting for the seaborne detachments to arrive and then Min Khaung Nawrahta with 300 horse and 3,000 musketeers was given command of the van and sent ahead. Immediately after him followed Minhla Nawrahta with a force of the same strength. Next came the Myedu Prince (his second son, later Hsinbyushin) with 500 horse and 5,000 musketeers; the main body then followed

1. Harvey: History of Burma. p.241. Konbaungzet. p.309.

him. Mergui was reached in nine stages and taken without any resistance being offered. He then advanced on Tenasserim, the main Siamese port on the Bay of Bengal, and took it just as easily.¹

It was at this stage that Alaungpaya seems to have achieved the tactical advantage of surprise over the Siamese. He went East over the hills to the Gulf of Siam and then marched North up the narrow coastal strip. Nobody in Siam seems to have realized that a serious invasion was possible from the South, for it involved marching up a narrow plain with the sea to the right and a high range of mountains to the left, and the Siamese, expecting the main enemy attack to be made by one of the usual routes, had sent three armies to guard the vulnerable points on the Western frontier. (The three routes were via Keng Tung, via the Three Pagodas Pass, and via Raheng'. The Siamese, however, sent an army of 20,000 men, under P'ya Yomarat down the peninsula. The Burmese Chronicle says that it was the Chao P'ya Yazawun Thanta with 100 elephants and 1,000 horse, and 20,000 men. There does not seem to be any great discrepancy between the Burmese and the Siamese accounts

1. Konbaungzet. p.311. Wood: History of Siam. p.240. Harvey: History of Burma. p.241. Symes: Embassy to Ava. p.150.

and possibly the Siamese knew the particular name of their commander better than the Burmese did.

The Burmese met the Siamese force near Kuiburi.¹ The initial attack was delivered by the two forces under Min Gaung Nawrahta and Min Hla Nawrahta and the Burmese attack was held. When the Myedu Prince came up with his force and under his impetuous leadership the combined Burmese force broke the Siamese.² 1,000 muskets, over 100 guns, and 2,000 men were taken. After this battle, the towns of Petcha Buri and Ratburi fell and the Burmese van encamped within 40 miles of the capital. Then, the main Siamese force of 30,000 men under the Mahalom (the Siamese Minister of War) came out to meet the Burmese and stationed itself opposite the Burmese camp with the Talaw stream in between. The three Burmese army groups, under Min Khaung Nawrahta, Min Hla Nawrahta and the Myedu Prince, hesitated momentarily because the Burmese commanders realised they were facing a numerically superior force probably comprising the best troops of the Siamese king, and they wondered whether it would not be better to wait till the main body under Alaungpaya had advanced

1. Wood: History of Siam. p.241. Konbaungzet. p.312.

2. Wood: Ibid. p.241. Konbaungzet: p.312.

to a position from which it could give effective support. At this moment Alaungpaya came up with a small bodyguard and personally ordered the battle formation. Minhla Nawrahta was to command the right wing, Min Khaung Nawrahta the left wing, and Min Hla Thiri, the centre. The whole force was placed under the overall charge of the Myedu Prince and the whole body was ordered to cross the stream and advance simultaneously.

The Siamese met the attack with concentrated fire from their jingals and there were heavy casualties among the Burmese. Then, while the attack was faltering the main body of the Burmese army came up and joined battle. After a while the Siamese armies broke and five Siamese divisional commanders were taken. The Kalahom escaped and fled into the capital with the survivors of his force. On the 11th morning of Tagu (April) 1760, the Burmese forces came in sight of Ayudhya.¹ It had been thirty six stages from Tavoy, and from the capital, eighty stages. Alaungpaya camped North of the city, and within effective reach of each other, he ringed the city with his armed camps. Then the commanders sent word through some prominent Siamese

1. Wood: History of Siam, p.241. Konbaungzet: p.315.

prisoners, to the Siamese, "Our Lord, the King Alaungpaya, having heard that the (Buddhist) faith doth not flourish in Siam, and desiring that it should so flourish, like the coming Buddhas, (Boddhisattva) has come here. Why has the Siamese king not met him or sent elephants and horses and sons and daughters in tribute, or even come out to attack him. Our Lord, the King Alaungpaya in accordance with his desire of obtaining Buddhahood has set free the ministers captured in battle."

The Siamese ministers on hearing these words replied: "In this world of ours, only five Buddhas will appear. Kakkuthan, Gaw Na Gone, Kassappa and Gautama have entered Nirvana. Only the Lord Buddha Arimettaya remains. The coming Arimettaya is in the Tussita abode of the Nats, who be your coming Boddhisattva? In each world there be a maximum of only five Buddhas; there is no precedent for a sixth."

The Siamese King called a council of his courtiers and military chiefs and saying that the Burmese King had advanced and was now surrounding the capital asked "how can we make him retreat?"¹

1. From this stage onwards, this account is from a purely Burmese point of view and is given here to illustrate the type of reasoning which the Burmese chroniclers used to explain in a plausible manner, their version of the development of events, for it will be obvious that they could not have had access to the many sources of the information which they recorded.

The General Abya Yaza counselled thus:

"The Burmese have arrived before the city, in the month of Tagu, and before long heavy rains will fall, which will make it impossible for the Burmese troops even to cook, let alone manoeuvre with horse and elephants. The Burmese King will then have to raise the siege and retreat. Then we can follow up and attack or stay in our city. We should not tire our armies with attacks; we should stay firmly in our capital, and let our tributary towns stay likewise. Let the Burmese go quietly." The whole council concurred, the Siamese King approved, mounted additional men and guns on the ramparts and on the warboats, and strengthened the feudatory cities surrounding. To Alaungpaya too, he sent presents of elephants and horses, and expressing a hope that his comfort might not be disturbed he sent the three ministers, Bya Theidi, Bya Thupawati, Bya Thurakama. They were taken by the Burmese pickets to mingkh-aung Nawrahta, who led them to the Myedu Prince. They told him that the Lord of the Rising Sun, (Alaungpaya) had been sent these animals, fit for a king, so that the King of Dvayawaddy, taking refuge in Alaungpaya's glory, might contrive to reign in peace. The prince took this message to the king who proclaimed: "I have not come to destroy the peace of the King of Dvayawaddy.

In the country of Ayudhya, though a centre of the faith, the faith doth not flourish. I have come to encourage the growth of the faith. Let the three Yodayas (Siamese) return." At which the Commander in Chief obediently escorted them back.

Ten days after the return of the Siamese, the King feeling unwell, sent for his son, and the other commanders and proclaimed: "The Siamese king has not come out to attack, nor has he settled anything by agreement. The rains are coming, let us think of a plan of campaign." Then the Myedu Prince declared that the Siamese offer of submission looked treacherous for it had not been followed up and the Siamese king stayed in the city. In view of the fact that the city had many points of egress to the sea, which it was impossible to seal off, provisions and arms still poured in; therefore he would withdraw and return after the rains, and then would the Siamese escape from the Burmese clutch?

Alaungpaya agreed and appointed Min Khaung Nawrahta to command the rear guard. The rear guard was the pick of the army, 500 Manipur horse, and 6,000 musketeers. Min Khaung Nawrahta spread them out, and it was two precious days before the Siamese realised that the main body had left. Then, the Siamese King sent out his forces in overwhelming strength with orders to take all

of them. Min Khaung Nawrahta's commanders watched the Siamese closing round saying "We are in the heart of the enemy's land, and in numbers we are like the two horns of the cow, while the Yodayas are as numerous as the hairs of the cow." Then Min Khaung Nawrahta replied "Our Lord is not well, and has been gone just these two or three stages ahead of us; if we should retreat from here in haste, we should soon be in gun shot hearing of our Lord, and when he should hear the sound of battle, because of us, his progress might be retarded. Therefore, though the whole Yodaya kingdom should come out and surround us, we shall not know fear; verily let us now go out and attack them."

Alaungpaya went ahead by forced marches, while Min Khaung Nawrahta withdrew slowly, collecting Alaungpaya's stragglers on the way. Alaungpaya, however, was not destined to reach his capital, and at Kinywa in Bilin township Thaton district, he died. His death was kept secret and swift horsemen were sent to Shwebo, so that the Crown Prince might be the first to know, and secure the throne. The body bound in sheets was hidden in the curtained litter, and thus in death Alaungpaya still rode with his armies, and the daily orders issued in his name. The Siamese account¹ says that one of the

1. Wood: History of Siam, pp.241-242.

Burmese cannons had exploded while Alaungpaya was directing its loading, but if that had been true, it would have been difficult to keep the news of his death from his men, as was done. However the suddenness of the retreat, without any major assaults made, makes it possible that the very determined king had been wounded.

Looking back at Alaungpaya's reign, we see that the strong hand of a virile, new Burmese dynasty had reached out to the borderlands near China at the moment when an aggressive and energetic Chinese Emperor was stretching out his hands to do the same. The stage had been set and the play that was to continue through the next four reigns of the Konbaungzet Dynasty, had begun.

In Siam, a new type of Burmese invasion marked by greater ruthlessness had appeared, for the new generals and leaders were fierce and energetic men, without inhibitions, and this was ultimately to sway the allegiance of the semi-independent states of Northern Siam towards Ayudhya and thus accelerate the process of so unifying and strengthening the kingdom of Siam, that it helped the Siamese to reach their greatest strength, at the time when it was most needed, i.e. the period of European Expansion in the Far East.

Alaungpaya was succeeded by his eldest son Naungdawgyi 1760-1763.¹ He ruled for only three years but his reign served to illustrate how stereotyped the rule of a Burmese king was, in the dangers confronted, the type of pious sentences uttered, and the immediate resumption of aggression as soon as the king was firm, or felt firm on the throne.

The danger confronted was as usual rebellion by a prince of the blood, his younger brother, the soldierly Myedu Prince. The plans of this prince went astray however, and he submitted in time for forgiveness.² The Myedu Prince had succeeded to the command of the main body of his father's army when Alaungpaya had died. The strong rearguard under Minkhaung Nawrahta had been left some distance behind. The Myedu Prince had seized his father's famous personal sword, Yein-nwe-pa (the swaying, the tender, the keen sword) and had forced the oath of allegiance on the officers under his command at the MyanThein Dan Pagoda at Martaban. He had also opened communications with the ladies of the

1. Naungdawgyi = Royal elder brother. This title is some indication of the comparative mildness of the king. The impression gathered from the report of Captain Alves, the East India Company envoy who met him in 1760 seems to support this view.

2. Konbaungzet p.325-26.

palace. He summoned Min Khaungnawrahta to hasten, but Min Khaungnawrahta would not obey his summons. Rumours of all this had by now reached Naungdawgyi and he sent down orders for the Myëdu Prince to leave the party escorting the body of Alaungpaya up the river, and to hasten home immediately by the land route.

The Myëdu Prince decided to place all blame on the general and reported that Minkhaungnawrahta had tarried suspiciously on the retreat collecting men, arms, and provisions and would not obey the summons to hasten back. The king was at first not quite convinced, but the Queen Mother interceded and this settled the issue as far as Minkhaungnawrahta was concerned. He heard he was suspected; already another officer Nemyo Shwe Taung had been executed on suspicion (Konbaungzet p.325) and saying "I have been accused so that another's crime should be unnoticed, and since they are brothers, and our Lord and benefactor the great Alaungpaya is no more, I shall act like a man; for only if a man fears not for his life can he best fulfil his destiny and in each existence he hath but this one opportunity.¹ He marched North collecting men and brushing aside the opposition of the Viceroy of

1. Konbaungzet p.330.

Toungoo, Alaungpaya's brother, he forced his way into Ava and shut himself in.

The king had no cannon large enough to force an entry¹ and ultimately, though the levies, with the king's sword hovering over their heads, suffered terrible casualties in attempting to storm the walls, it was starvation that did the work. Minkhaungnawrahta broke out, but was soon isolated and shot down.

In 1762 the Lord of Toungoo, Thado Thinkhathu, Alaungpaya's younger brother rebelled. He was the greatest provincial officer and had been allowed to reside at the capital of his viceroyal province by Alaungpaya, the last time any prince of the blood was to be so allowed in this dynasty. His officers included San Hla Gyi and Dammata, and Bala Mindin, the great heroes of the Chinese invasions² and his rebellion was a serious one. However, after some serious fighting, this rebellion was also subdued and the king, in a purple passage typical of the continued stress on the religious ambitions of the Burmese kings which plays so large a part in the formulation of foreign policy, proclaimed:

1.G.E.Harvey: History of Burma, p.246. Konbaungzet p.329.

2.Parker- Burma, Relations with China. p.92.

"When our royal father passed away, the Sa (Eater, Viceroy) of Toungoo should have devoted himself to his duty toward us, but he has dared to plan that which is not proper, and has therefore brought great misery and hardship to the people. He has now deserved great punishment but we aspire to attain Buddha-hood ..."
and so the Toungoo Yaza was spared, and so were his Lieutenants¹.

Thus the first two years of the reign had concentrated all attention on the internal affairs of the court, and foreign relations had been thrust aside. So far as Siam was concerned the danger from Burma must have been regarded as trivial, for the two Siamese kings again began to plot, and intrigue, and the promising King Ut'umpon who dared not rule, was forced once more into retirement, and the unsatisfactory one came again to the throne.² The Siamese, however, should have known better, for immediately the Toungoo rebellion was over, the king sent out the General Abaya Karmani, Minhla Thiri, Nemyo Letwe Kyaw Khaung, and Nemyo Let Ya Kyaw Din with 750 horse and 7,500 foot

1. Konbaungzet, p.349.

2. Wood: History of Siam p.242.

to take over the 57 districts of Chiengmai. The idea of subduing Ayudhya to vassalage must have been uppermost in the mind of the king, for he must have realized that previous Burmese successes over Ayudhya had always been preceded by the marshalling of all the Salween Shans, and by the occupation and exploitation of the Northern Lao States. In any case Chiengmai was regarded as just a rebel province which had to be subdued¹. The prince of Chiengmai appealed to Ayudhya for help, but none arrived in time, and in July 1763 the town was easily taken by the Burmese.²

One sees the traditional pattern taking shape once again when the Mon general Talaban raided Martaban from his base the Kawgun caves in Thaton district³ and the Mon refugees joined with the local inhabitants of Tavoy in a massacre of the Burmese there⁴ and encouraged the Governor of the town to change his allegiance to Ayudhya⁵. The

1. Wood: History of Siam, p.243.

2. Wood: Ibid. p.243.

3. Harvey: History of Burma, p.247. Konbaungzet, p.350.

4. Harvey: Ibid. p.250.

5. Wood: op.cit. p.243.

pattern becomes complete when it is noted that the Burmese grip was once more on the Trans Salween States like Keng Hung, for the states in that region were inextricably bound in a maze of relationships with China and Burma.

Keng Hung sent tribute once every 3 years to Burma consisting of a gold cup, gold and silver flowers, and a few other articles from each of the 12 sub-chiefs, while the Chief sent the same plus 2 horses¹. The right of investiture was claimed and exercised even in Thibaw's reign (1878-1885) by the Burmese². It was a Let Net Kaing Naingkan (i.e. it was expected to provide a fixed contingent in time of need) and the contingent for Burma was 5,000³. A Burmese Sitke (a sort of garrison commander in this case) was stationed in the State to look after Burmese interests. On the other hand the Chinese who called it Cheli, regarded it as an almost Chinese province, rather than a tributary, and stationed an establishment of officers and clerks to regulate and collect taxes.⁴ The passage of bodies of

1. Yule: Mission to Ava. p.308.

2. Taw Sein Kho's Selection from the Hluttaw Records. p.21.

3. Yule: op.cit. p.309.

4. T.E.Macleod J.A.S.B.1837 Vol.VI, Part II. pp.996-998.

Burmese troops through this region could be quite sufficient to disturb the extraordinary equilibrium, and the tightening of border administration by Chien Lung must have added to the risks of conflagration.

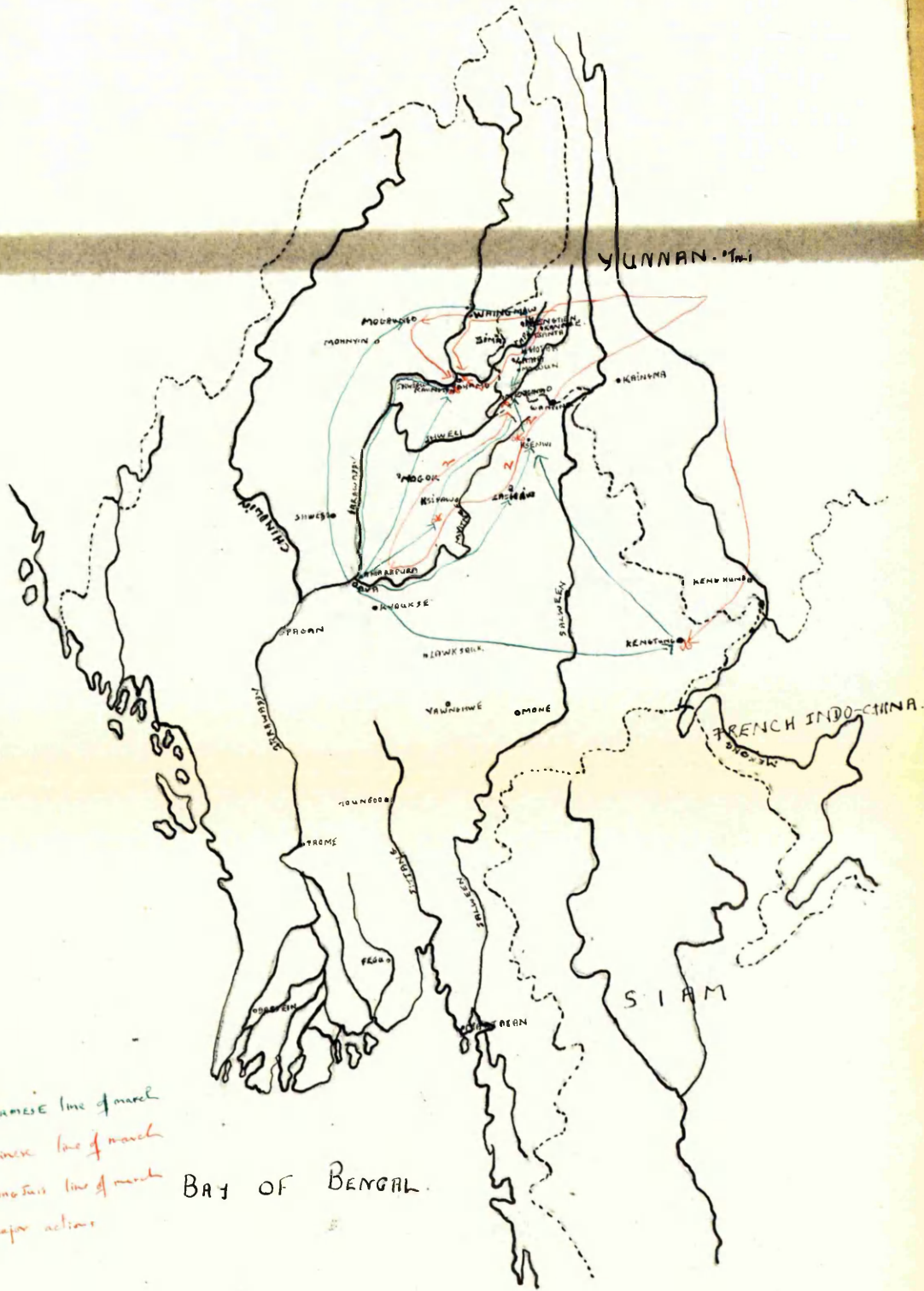
To the king however, all the possible repercussions of his aggression were as nothing. The impression one obtains from the chronicles is that the expedition to Chiengmai was in the nature of a British Ministry of Food mission sent to Denmark to arrange for the resumption of a curtailed supply of good Danish bacon and eggs, though in the Burmese case the lever was force and not the offer of a guaranteed bulk market, and the commodity required was prestige and not eggs. It is this matter of fact attitude to foreign aggressiveness which is so depressing a feature. Naungdawgyi on his record had exhibited the reactions of quite a mild prince to his full quota of trouble in his 3 years reign. He had forgiven a powerful and ambitious brother, and although it is impossible to say what he would have done to the great soldier Minkhaungnawrahta, he at least did regard his death as a loss. The Viceroy of 'Ioungoo had been forgiven too, perhaps because he was his great father's own brother, but the defiant Lieutenants like San Hla Gyi and Balamindin would never have been spared or retained in high office if he had not

been a mild man. Greatest proof seems to be in his generous behaviour towards Talaban, the defiant Mon General¹.

The king spent the short period left to him in taking his mother and queen round the countryside visiting the holy places and in 1763 he died quietly.

1. Konbaungzet p.25. Harvey: History of Burma p.247. has gilded the lily of this gesture by adding a colourful and chivalrous touch. His main authority for this incident does not support him, for after all there was no need for the king to be circumspect with the captured rebel.

CHINESE INVASIONS 1766 - 1769.



- Burmese line of march
- Chinese line of march
- Minoans line of march
- * major actions

BAY OF BENGAL.

Scale .1" = 100 miles.

CHAPTER VIII

Hsinbyushin 1763-1776 - the period of Burmese glory with intensive hostilities as the main theme of foreign relations.

Naungdawgyi's younger brother Hsinbyushin succeeded to the throne without any trouble or fuss for Naungdawgyi's eldest son Maung Maung was only a baby. His youthfulness and the shortness of Naungdawgyi's reign had prevented the growth of any opposition to the succession of Hsinbyushin and Hsinbyushin himself was an experienced soldier with a strong following and his accession was not contested.

Alaungpaya had set the stage, and giving the first cue had departed. Naungdawgyi had been occupied for the first two years with discordant moves in the orchestra, by rebellion, but immediately after this phase in the third and final year of his reign had started the first act by sending out troops to Chiengmai with orders to conquer.

Hsinbyushin's reign is the second act, packed full of action, the first major event of Hsinbyushin's reign was the arrival at the capital in the month of Tabotwe

(February) 1764 of the two generals Minhla Nawrahta and Abaya Karmani who had been sent to take over Chiengmai in Naungdawgyi's reign, Abaya Karmani was promoted and appointed Myo Wun (Governor) of Chiengmai¹. This would support the view that the Burmese still regarded Chiengmai as part of the Burmese Empire. Minhla Nawrahta was also promoted becoming Maha Nawrahta and appointed Myin Wun or Commander of the Horse.

The capture of Chiengmai is then dismissed in the chronicles with a list of the booty brought before the king; it included the daughters of the refugee prince of Shwedaung, a scion of the last dynasty, the controversial Smim Htaw and his attendants, and elephants, horses, and articles "fit for kings". The list mentions just these, for they were royal loot, but Chiengmai had been for centuries from Bayinnaung's time, a favourite hunting ground for slaves, and possibly slaves were taken in this campaign too.

Soon after the arrival of these generals however, news arrived from Min Ye Thiri that the Prince of Chiengmai had rebelled.² Hsinbyushin decided that he

1. Konbaungzet p.355.

2. Ibid p.355. Wood: History of Siam, p.244.

would send fresh troops and after effectively crushing the rebellion his orders were to raise fresh strength from the conquered province. This fresh strength was to be employed in the subjugation of Lin Zin (Wiengchang) and then after raising levies from LinZin the combined forces were to advance on Ayudhya.¹

If the Burmese regarded the taking of Chiengmai as a very normal business, the Siamese king also had no doubts of the Siamese rights to Tavoy, and quite blithely ignoring the fact that Alaungpaya had marched down the Tenasserim coastal strip with the greatest of ease, the Siamese king had formally taken from the rebel Governor of Tavoy the emblems of vassalage which implied the extension of Siamese protection to the province.

The column sent to retake Chiengmai was composed of 100 war elephants, 1,000 horse, and 20,000 foot. It was under the command of Nemyo Thihapate with Kyaw Htin Thiha Thu and Tuyin Yamakyaw as his Lieutenants. It was a formidable force, but the necessity to retake Tavoy and the need to augment even his large Northern invasion force with another from the South, to split up the Siamese defences, occurred to the king,² and so

1. Konbaungzet, p.356.

2. Ibid. p.472.

saying that "On no occasion has Ayudhya suffered so severely as to have it's king destroyed"¹ he ordered Maha Nawrahta to lead 30 regiments composed of 100 war elephants, 1,000 horse and 20,000 men, with Nemyo Gunnerat and Tuyin Yama Kyaw as his Lieutenants. He was instructed to augment his forces with levies from the provinces of Hanthawaddy, Martaban, Mergui and Tavoy.

Though the Burmese king had sent an additional column to invade Siam, the strength of the Burmese was by no means completely expended on the Siamese adventure. The country was sufficiently stable for the king to lead personally an expedition to Manipur with the levies of the Shan Chiefs on the west bank of the Irrawaddy plus 12,000 guards of the four palace groups, making a total force of 25,000. The official reason given was that the Raja of Manipur had dared to set himself up again as an independent chief after the Alaungpaya invasion and was reported to be doing quite well. The campaign was over quickly, and all the Manipur people - men, women and children - who could be rounded up from the jungles surrounding Imphal were herded back as slaves.

In the meanwhile, the Chiengmai column had

1. Konbaungzet p.473.

reached Mone, the Burmese control point in the Shan States and the chiefs of the Myelat (States west of the Salween River) had been commanded to raise 3,000 men. The 3,000 was then formed into seven companies under the command of the two Sawbwas of Mone and Yawngghwe and the five Myo Sa's (Shan Chiefs of the second grade) of Lauk Sauk, Mong Pawn, Legya, Maing Kaing and Mong Sit. They were then commanded to march in front.¹

When Nemyo Thihapate arrived at Kyaing Taung (Keng Tawng) on the West bank of the Salween, urgent appeals for reinforcement arrived from Min Ye Thiri who had been left in command of the Burmese garrison at Chiengmai. Nemyo Thihapate on receiving this intelligence, combined the West Salween Shan levies with three Burmese companies under the Burmese commanders Kyaw Khaung Kyaw Thu, Thiri Yaza Thin Kyan and the Sitke Gyi Tuyin Yama Kyaw. This force was then sent off by the Mong Pu (Burmese Maing Pu) Mong Hsat (Maing That) route, while he himself with the rest took the Mong Hsin route down to Chiengmai. The armies swept down the country, spreading out as they advanced while the rebels concentrated their

1. 1924-25
J.B.R.S. Luce: Chinese Invasions of the 18th century. p.123, in which he quotes a Chinese Military History stating the same custom.

forces up in the town of Lampun.¹ The approach of the Burmese army however, created a defeatist spirit and the Chiengmai rebels fled from the city, leaving the families of their chiefs behind, together with 200 elephants and a large stock of arms. From Lampun the Burmese marched to the town of Nan (Burmese Anan) and there halted for the rains, resting the men, and replenishing the strength of the army.

Nemyo Thihapate sent back a report to say that the cities and villages of the fifty-seven provinces of Chiengmai were as unruffled as a calm piece of water and in a complete state of obedience; soon orders came out to exploit the full resources of Chiengmai for an attack on Wiengchang and then with the added strength of Wiengchang to attack Ayudhya. In November 1764, Nemyo Thihapate set out from Nan to carry out his master's orders.

Nemyo Thihapate and his twenty-five battalions going by boat reached the Mekong in nineteen stages, while the ten battalions under Tuyin Yama Kyaw had marched overland in fifteen stages.

They found the forces of Wiengchang ready to meet them. The troops were massed on the East bank of the

1. Konbaungzet: p.380.

Mekong while the war boats were massed behind. Then the Burmese forces "without fear or hesitation, aimed their boats, elephants, and horses straight at wherever the enemy was thickest and charged straight into their elephant masses, their boat masses, and their cavalry masses; each man vying with the others to gather glory, they delivered a furious attack."¹

The Wiengchang forces withdrew into their city, and the Burmese camped near the Mekong. They hacked off the heads of all the enemy dead and piled them in a great pile so that the defenders of the city might see and be terrified. The city was situated between the two arms of the river, and the Burmese finding they could not bombard it crossed the river and erected high platforms of a height greater than the city walls and mounting their guns on these platforms, started an incessant bombardment.

After five days of this bombardment, Nemyo Thihapate decided that he could not waste much more time on the siege of Wiengchang for he still had the task of marching on Ayudhya ahead of him. He therefore declared that 'there should be an ogre at the head of his army' i.e. that desperate measures were in order,

1. Konbaungzet p.381.

and with all his subordinate commanders concurring he ordered an assault on the city.

They constructed moveable shelters and approached right up to the walls, and while some dug at the foot of the walls, others erected ladders and pressed on to come to grips with the defenders on the walls. The walls were captured after desperate fighting, but the inhabitants inside still held out, so more guns were mounted on the walls and a ceaseless bombardment was started. Then the peoples of Wiengchang "in such a state of terror, their very flesh crawled" sent their General, the Amat Daro Boya (possibly Chao Phya) with eight monks and sent in their submission.

The King of Wiengchang and all the chiefs of the vassal cities swore allegiance, and three daughters of the king, with 1,000 attendants were sent back to be presented to the Burmese King. 500 viss of silver, 50 viss of gold, 500 guns, 1,000 muskets, 100 war elephants, 500 spears, 500 swords and other booty were sent back with Let Ya Udien Kyaw to the Golden Feet.

Nemyo Thihapate having completed the first stage of his task left Wiengchang early in April and in May arrived at Lagun (now Nakawn Lampang) to spend the rains under shelter.

The account up to this stage has been fairly straightforward in the Burmese Chronicle, and is not contradicted by the Siamese chronicles, but now comes the touch which is so expressive of the mentality behind the adventures. The rains came while the Burmese army was sheltering in Lagun and the river started to flood. Soon the flood was serious and the horses and elephants began to be flooded out of their shelters, then with drawn sword Nemyo Thihapate invoked the Spirit of the River and commanded it in the King's name to desist, 'and then,' says the chronicle,¹ 'the floods subsided'.

Mahanawrahta in the meanwhile had reached Tavoy, where he spent the rains of 1765 collecting men, horses, and elephants, from the provinces of Hanthawaddy, Martaban, Tavoy, Mergui and Tenasserim. 3,000 men in 6 battalions under the Sitke Binda Yaza arrived from Hanthawaddy. Then 3,000 men mostly Mons from Martaban under Binnya Sein, and from Mergui and Tenasserim, 2,000 men arrived who were placed under the command of the Lord of Martaban. In November the combined force of 200 elephants, 2,000 horses and 30,000 men began its

1. Konbaungzet p.382.

advance on Ayudhya.

The fact that the levies from Mergui and Tenasserim reported at Tavoy makes it unlikely that this column took the same route as Alaungpaya's invasion of 1760. On the other hand, the Burmese chronicles¹ state that Petchaburi (Pyatbi to the Burmese) was taken before Ratburi (Ratbi) and there is no mention of Kui as there was in the account of Alaungpaya's campaign. Therefore Mahanawrahta's columns must have crossed the hills by taking the Myitta route, as the Japanese did in the reverse direction in 1941, and then going down the Tenasserim River valley, passed down the Pram river valley to reach the Siamese coastal strip somewhere near Pram Kao.

The Burmese struck rapidly and ruthlessly in their advance up the coast. The towns and villages which submitted at once were required to take the oath of allegiance and also to raise troops to fight on the Burmese side. The towns and villages which resisted on the other hand, were stormed and after a sack, the survivors were given to the individual soldiers who were the actual captors, as slaves. Gold and silver and other booty was reckoned the property of the captor, but arms

1. Konbaungzet p.383

and equipment had to be sent to the general's camp.

With official sanction given to pillage, the treatment meted out to the Siamese must have been terrifying. Later the Burmese generals had to issue special orders to remind their soldiers that towns and villages which had submitted were not to be molested which rather implies that they were being so molested. Even the sacked towns did not escape from the obligation to raise contingents for the invaders, though of course their value must have been doubtful.

The first city encountered by Maha Nawrahta in his march north was Petchaburi. Petchaburi was one of the towns which resisted, 'the Lord of Pyatbi (Petchaburi) not daring to face the weight of the Burmese elephants, horses and men (in the open) fell back into his city and shut himself up in defiance. Then the elephants, cavalry and foot, with swords, spades, pick axes and ladders approached the walls, and some set up ladders, and scaled the walls, and the royal troops showing no fear, and vying with each other to be the first, soon captured the city within an insignificant space of time; the lords and all the citizens were taken as prisoners of war. Women, men and treasure were retained by the actual captors, but arms were sent to the general's camp.

Then the chief men of the city were sworn into the royal service, with a terrifying oath, which they would not dare to break, and arranging for a garrison, the royal army proceeded on its way from Pyatbi."¹

It is stated that Phya Tak the Siamese general born of a Chinese father, had been responsible for the defence of Petchaburi, and that the Burmese armies from the South making their way to Ayudhya had been stopped at Petchaburi, and had had to retreat right back to Tenasserim.² The southern column however, had been ordered to proceed only in December 1764,³ and had spent the rains of 1765 in Tavoy. It had recommenced its advance on Ayudhya in November 1765, and so there does not seem to be any interval in which the column could have found time to advance right up to Petchaburi from Tenasserim or Tavoy, and after being stopped, retreat right back to Tenasserim. The statement possibly arises from the desire of the Siamese chronicles to place Phya Tak in as favourable a light as possible in the history of the campaigns.

1. Konbaungzet. p.383.

2. Wood: History of Siam, p.243-44.

3. Konbaungzet: p.373.

Ratburi (the Burmese Ratbi) was the next town on the line of march, and "the chief of Ratbi, having heard of the fate of the chief of Pyatbi, and all the inhabitants, dared not offer resistance, and with the chief men of the town, came into the camp to tender submission. The chief of Ratburi, and the chief men of the town were made to take the oath of allegiance and were taken into the royal service, after which the royal army proceeded on its way."¹

This was the standard procedure, and there was no serious resistance offered to the Burmese. From Ratburi, the main body swept up to Ban Pon which submitted at once and then to Kanburi. Resistance was offered but there was nothing to prevent its speedy capture, and the standard treatment for recalcitrants was dealt out. The Burmese chronicle does not mention the encounter with the English merchantmen near Nontaburi on the Menam,² but it is possible that the Burmese sent a column to cut off Ayudhya from the sea by erecting forts on the banks of the Menam. This would have prevented the arrival of sea-borne reinforcements from the tributary Malay states.

1. Konbaungzet, p.383.

2. Harvey: History of Burma. p.250. Wood: History of Siam, p.245.

From Kanburi the route lay through Sa Yah which submitted without resistance. From Sa Yah the Burmese marched on Sun Phyone (now San Phan) which after a short fight, was taken. After Sun Phyone the city of Sar Lin was taken without a fight. Nemyo Thihapate selected the best elephants and horses captured from the towns, and villages of Western Siam, and with them equipped seven battalions from the seven captured cities of Petchaburi, Ratburi, Ban Pon, Kanburi, Sayah, Sun Phyone, and Sarlin. The Siamese levies were placed under the command of the Lord Mingyi Karmani Sanda. The ability of the Burmese so to raise, and, what is more, make effective and valuable use of levies raised from freshly conquered enemy provinces is remarkable. It argues that the Siamese provinces had only the most tenuous link with the centre, or that the provinces had a tradition of rebellion, with no strong sense of national unity. The British with their use of Sikha and Gurkhas and Mahrattas, the Dutch with their soldiers from Amboyna, and the French with their Senegalese troops, have demonstrated in modern times that such troops can be very useful.

A point of major importance that strikes one is that notwithstanding the possibility of the Burmese acting in such a manner, the Siamese dissipated their

forces, possibly through lack of effective control. The procession of easily taken provincial cities must have provided the Burmese invaders with shelter, food and loot, and kept the morale of the Burmese troops high, while correspondingly lowering that of the Siamese defenders. It will be shown later that the Siamese levies fighting on the Burmese side, fought well, and though it may have been the continued effect of a watchful Burmese eye on them in the front line, with a strict guard on their families left behind, as hostages, there can be little doubt that with just the original Burmese forces, Ayudhya would never have been effectively cut off for nearly two years.

During all this time the Siamese King had collected a force of 500 war elephants, 500 guns on carriages, and 60,000 men for the interception of the South Burmese column and had placed them under the command of the Minister Phya Pala. The Burmese scouts soon came into contact with the Siamese and reported back to Mahanawrahta. The morale of the Burmese was high, the Siamese position was attacked at once, and taken. The Burmese then advanced on the village of Kanni, five marches west of Ayudhya and there dug themselves in to wait the arrival of the Northern column from Chiengmai.

The Chiengmai column on the confirmation of orders to advance from Ava, set out in the month of September 1765. Five battalions under the Sitke Gyi Tuyin Yamakyaw, five more under Sekta Theikdi Kyaw, five more under Tuyin Thaya Kyaw and five under Binnya Law making a total force of 10,000 which was sent in 300 war boats down the Mè Ping with the Sitke Gyi Tuyin Yama Kyaw as commander in chief. Nine battalions raised from the cities of Wiengchang and commanded by nine princes of Wiengchang were placed under the command of Thiri Yaza Thinkyan and with his own battalion making ten, this force of 100 elephants, 300 horses and 8,000 men were sent off as the vanguard.¹

Next, fourteen battalions raised from the cities of Chiengmai, and commanded by fourteen princes of Chiengmai² were placed under the command of Thado Mindin, and together with his own battalion this force consisting of 200 war elephants, 700 horses and 12,000 men was sent off immediately behind the Luang Prabang detachment. Then Nemyo Thihapate himself with thirteen battalions composed of 100 elephants, 200 horse

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1. The fact that the Wiengchang troops were placed ahead of the Chiengmai contingent implies that the Burmese had more trust in the Chiengmai troops.
 2. The cities of Mong Su, Mong Hsat which are now part of Mone and Kentung was also included in the list.

and 13,000 men set out as the vanguard.

The same procedure such as we saw used by the Southern column in its dealings with the cities and villages on the way was adopted. The first city in the line of advance Ban Tet, (now Bantak) shut its gates but it was easily stormed and taken. The next town Raheng made its submission well in advance. Kampheng Phet (the Kaman Paik of the Burmese) also tendered submission. From Kampheng Phet, the column made a short detour North East because Sawankalok had refused to submit, and encountered no difficulty in taking it. From Sawankalok the column turned South again and on its way received the submission of Sukotai without any delay. The ease with which the Burmese took Sukotai is significant comment on the way Burmese power overshadowed the weakened Ayudhyan Kingdom. It had taken generations of struggle before the Tais wrested Sukotai from the Cambodians, and it was one of the prizes that Ayudhya had coveted and struggled for throughout the years. From Sukotai the march was on Pitsanulok, Pitsanulok, the major Siamese town in the North, had lately been the scene of a civil war in which the Governor of the city had triumphed. He decided to defy the Burmese¹ and ignored their demands for submission.

1. Wood: History of Siam, p.245. Konbaungzet, p.389.

But they made short work of him, and took the town.

They spent ten days resting in the city, and then swept south, administering the oath of allegiance to all the people on the way. There was no large scale resistance after Pitsanulok; but two strong columns, each of ten battalions strength, were sent out under Thiri Nanda Thinkyan and Kyaw Gaung Kyaw Thu to sweep the countryside of the flanks of the line of march. The two commanders administered the oath of allegiance to all the provincial officials, and collecting their families as hostages took them back to the Burmese base at Pitsanulok.¹ These captured towns were required to provide thirteen battalions, and in view of the hostages taken, these were forthcoming. They were equipped by the Burmese with the elephants, horses, and weapons, captured from the Northern and Eastern cities of Siam.

In their victorious sweep the Burmese had captured such an ample amount of weapons that the Commander in Chief Nemyo Thihapaté found he could not carry all his booty with him, and so sent back under escort 150 cannons of various calibres, ranging from three pounders, to 45 pounders to Chiengmai. It is curious how the

1. Konbaungzet, p.389.

Burmese generals persisted in sending back booty to the king. The fact that cannon and daughters figured so frequently in the choice of loot sent back would imply that glorifying of the king was one of the main factors of the invasion. It could also mean that the cannon used by both sides was not of any great value to the combatants, or that there was insufficient ammunition.

The Siamese levies were now placed under the command of Uddein Nanda Kyaw Htin and in the traditional manner of using levies, ordered to march in front. The Siamese king in the meanwhile had managed to raise two forces, each of 30,000 men. One group under Phya Kuratit marched out along the bank of the Me Ping river to intercept the Burmese.

The second force was placed in 300 great war boats¹ and proceeded up the Me Ping. At a spot about 1½ miles N.E. of the village of Passan Pathok they waited for the Burmese to come up.

No sooner were they formed up than the Burmese attacked, and forced them to retreat. The Burmese followed up but the remnant of the Siamese withdrew into the capital and on the 5th February 1766 the Burmese

1. War boats were of varying sizes - some carried 20 men - the larger ones 40 to 50.

halted at the village of Passan Pathok about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile North East of Ayudhya itself.

Nemyo Thihapate then ordered the construction of 9 great stockades along both banks of the Me Ping, and sent back as proof of his victory the choicest loot to Ava.

When Mahanawrahta heard of the arrival of Nemyo Thihapate's column, he ordered his own column to advance and the Burmese Commanders joined forces almost beneath the walls of Ayudhya. Mahanawrahta stationed his column about a mile N.W. of Ayudhya just west of the pagoda built by Bayinnaung in the 16th century.

The Siamese had cleared the countryside immediately surrounding Ayudhya and had taken all the people and provisions into the city to stand a long siege. The walls and forts were repaired and manned, and all the other static defences of the city strengthened. The morale of the citizens, and even of the king, however, was not high, and the people followed the king's example of searching feverishly for all kinds of superstitious talismans and amulets for making themselves invisible and invulnerable.¹

It was decided not to give the Burmese time to

1. Wood: History of Siam, p.246.

consolidate their positions, and Phya Kuratit with 50,000 sallied out to attack the northern Burmese column. Nemyo Thihapate took no risks with his untrained local levies and sent out 10,000 Burmese under 5 of his most experienced officers - Kyaw Gaung Kyaw Thu, Sitke Gyi Tu Yin Yama Kyaw, Shwe Taung Si Thu, Thiri Yaza Thin Kyan, and Binnya Law. The Siamese attack was broken up, but 5 days later, 50,000 picked men again came out of the city under Phya Tak to attack the Southern Burmese column. The elephants were special ones this time, wearing armour and carrying jingals. Then another army of 50,000, under Phya Than was sent out to support the first group. This time the Burmese brought out 40,000 men, 200 elephants and 1,000 horses from their stockades. The Burmese divided themselves into 2 groups, and placing Bayinnaung's pagoda as their centre, spread themselves out to its left and right to meet the Siamese who had coalesced into a single group.

The Burmese right wing commanded by Mingyi Zeyathu first came under attack. The Siamese laid down a heavy barrage from their guns and before the smoke had cleared, charged with their elephants.

The Burmese lines at the point of contact was under the Lord of Ban Pon - a Siamese - and he had 70

elephants with 500 horse in support. The Siamese general Phya Than caught sight of Ban Pon and exclaiming "It is thou that I seek" charged on his elephant. Ban Pon stood his ground on his elephant, and the tusks of the elephants clashed as they strained to throw each other. But a Siamese musket shot hit Ban Pon and he fell, mortally wounded.

The Siamese then spread out their elephants and pressed home their attack on Ban Pon's squadron of 500 horse which broke under the strain. The whole weight of the Siamese forces was then thrown into this gap in the Burmese lines and soon the 20 battalions of Min Gyi Zeyathu were thrown into confusion and began to retreat.

As soon as the Burmese Commander-in-Chief Maha Nawra Hta saw what was happening he came hurrying up with 100 elephants and 3,000 musketeers to give support. The sight of the Bogyoke's action electrified the other wing of the Burmese line, and the 20 battalions under the Sitke Gyi Nemyo Gunnerat wheeled round the Bayinnaung pagoda, and hurled themselves on the Siamese rear. The Siamese assailed from the rear, checked in their stride, and gave Mingyi Zeyathu's troops time to re-form. The time had now arrived to catch the Siamese between two attacking Burmese forces, and Mingyi

Zeyathu ordered his column to attack. The Burmese guns were massed and created panic among the Siamese elephants who wheeled round and broke through the Siamese foot and cavalry which were following close behind. This threw the Siamese into confusion; they scattered "as a bundle of bamboo would, when the binding rope was loosened."

Immediately after the action, Maha Nawrahta called all his commanders before him, and proclaimed "The Lord of Ban Pon though a Yodaya (Siamese) has proved true to his allegiance to our Lord the King, even unto death; Mingyi Zeyathu, Nanda Baya Kyaw Din, Thuyein Tan Saung, Yan Ngu Thiri Kyaw Din and Thamar Kyaw Gaugn (the five senior commanders of the Burmese right wing) on the other hand have proved lacking in zeal and care; let them be executed at once."

The Sitke Gyi Tu Yin Yan Aung Kyaw, however, submitted that the 5 commanders had not fallen back because they dared not die, but because, in view of the superior numbers of the Siamese it was necessary to fall back a little to destroy them. The Sitke of the left wing Ne Myo Gunnerat supported this plea, saying that the right wing had had a small stream in front of them when the Siamese attacked, and by withdrawing had

drawn the whole Siamese force across the stream; then when the right had made its stand and the left wing had attacked the Siamese rear, the Siamese had not been able to retreat in a hurry because of the stream, and had thereby suffered bloody defeat.

Then Satu Karmani added his plea for leniency saying "the words of the two Lord commanders have been indeed most fitting; in the fortunes of war, it is as difficult to prophesy results, as it would be to tell of the chick in its egg; and beyond that, the royal commands had not yet been carried out; they were in the heart of the enemy's land, and it would be right to let the five commanders prove themselves in another battle.

Then spoke Mahanawrahta - "In war, lesser or greater numbers, smaller or greater faults, rarity or frequency, do not count: discipline must be maintained; but since the three Lord commanders desire it to be so, let the five commanders be given their lives this once."

The Burmese commanders then decided that the city must be completely sealed off, and Mahanawrahta's column took charge of the West and South of the city, while Nemyo Thinapate's column became responsible for the North and East. Thirteen stockades in all were erected right round the city, and each was manned by five to

seven battalions.

Ayudhya had a good natural defensive barrier in the network of rivers and streams that surrounded the city on all sides. The walls were all manned, and the Burmese could never, in that first year of siege, get near enough to the city walls. The junior commanders feared the approach of the rains, and wanted to withdraw during the rainy season, but Mahanawrahta would have none of it, saying that the Siamese would be like fish escaping out of a net, and that all the months of siege would be wasted if they should raise the siege even though for a short period.

He commanded a more vigorous collection of food and cattle from the surrounding countryside and ordered the cultivation of the paddy fields. He directed the removal of the elephants and horses to higher ground under escort. A series of stockades near enough to each other for mutual support, wherever there was ground high enough, were constructed, and he proclaimed that he would stay ten years round Ayudhya, if it were necessary.

These decisions were made just in time, for five days after the elephants and horses had left, the rains poured down, and "the whole countryside became as one with the great ocean." The Burmese forts were on

earthen platforms faced with bricks, and they stood out like islands in the watery waste. This would have isolated them from each other without boats, but the Burmese already had some, and from the conquered towns in the North fleets arrived and "those which should be gilt were gilt, and those painted crimson were so painted." The island forts and the fleets of war boats succeeded in isolating Ayudhya right through the rains.

The Siamese being on their home ground so to speak, decided that their boats should be made full use of in the circumstances, and came out again and again in force to single out and destroy individual Burmese forts. In September 1766 they made a final attempt.¹ One hundred and sixty great war boats each mounting three cannons, and manned by a force of 6,000 men came out of the city under the command of Phya Petchaburi and Phya Tak. The Burmese were ready for them and wasted no time in coming to grips with the Siamese. They bore down on the advancing Siamese boats, and using grappling irons and boat hooks boarded, for fierce hand to hand fighting. The Siamese made a courageous stand under inspiring

1. Wood: History of Siam, p.247.

leadership. Phya Petchaburi was in the thick of it when 20 Burmese boats hemmed his own in. His crew and gunners were shot down and when a Burmese officer came alongside to take him prisoner, he shouted "I have come to take thee and thy men; not to surrender" and jumped onto the Burmese boat. He was beaten down with a ramrod.¹ The fall of Phya Petchaburi broke the offensive and the Siamese turned round and fled.

After this the Burmese had everything under control and used to decoy desperate parties of Siamese into bloody ambushes, so that soon the Siamese ceased to make any more serious attempts to break up the siege.

The Siamese of the provinces of Sukhotai, Pitsanulok, and Savankalok, who had survived the initial Burmese advance by taking to the jungles, now collected a sizable force of 10,000 (the Burmese chronicles say 20,000, and under Prince Tep Pipit came down to try and raise the siege.² The Burmese detailed 3,000 men to meet them, and, probably because the Siamese were a badly demoralized rabble, while the Burmese troops were seasoned campaigners, this force was

1. Konbaungzet, p.399.

2. Wood: History of Siam p.247. Konbaungzet p.405.

sufficient to drive off the attackers. The Burmese chronicles state that the Burmese force was given the great advantage of surprise for the Siamese forces permitted them to approach without any preparations for defence thinking the Burmese were Siamese reinforcements from the other provinces. It is reasonable to deduce from this that the Siamese were completely disorganized, and had no comprehensive plan of campaign, that a part of the Siamese population had escaped the Burmese system of press ganging and hostages, and also that the Burmese soldiers could not have had any distinguishing uniform, though this last might have been due to deliberate policy for the occasion.

After the monsoon floods had subsided, the Burmese captured one after the other the Siamese forts serving as an outer defence line, and were then able to erect large earthen mounds overlooking the city walls, against which they directed a ceaseless bombardment. The walls, however, stood firm and the Siamese stubbornly refused to surrender. The Burmese commanders decided to scare the Siamese into surrender by a bluff. A vast number of huts was built round each stockade and in the night, large bodies of troops were secretly sent some miles behind. During the day they would come

marching up, flags flying, bands playing, and salvos being fired from the stockades to welcome them. At night men were detailed to keep lamps burning in the empty huts. This strategem did not bring about surrender, but seems to have successfully deceived the Siamese, and therefore lowered their fighting spirit.¹

Siamese morale was now very low; dissension was rampant, and some of the best commanders, like Phya Tak, deserted and fled from the capital. The Siamese king now decided to ask for terms, and sent four Siamese, garbed in penitential white with this message.² "The Righteous king, Lord of Dvayawaddy, and of the white,

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1. Wood: History of Siam P.248. Mr. Harvey has considerable contempt for Burmese ideas of strategy, but they seem to have been quite sound in the light of present day acceptances; for example Maha Bandula wrote incriminating letters to a Magh employed in the British service in the 1824 war, and arranged for them to fall into British hands. Some months ago a well known British correspondent wrote about the great comfort he had in incriminating by false friendliness a cafe proprietor in Vienna, presumably in Russian pay, who annoyed him by eavesdropping. Again General Wingate is recorded to have successfully bluffed the Italian Duke of Aosta as to the real strength of the British in Abyssinia. Surely a basic need is to mislead the enemy about one's military strength.
 2. Konbaungzet p.408.

red and spotted elephants, delegates his wise ministers - O great Lords of Ava, possessed of wisdom, energy and courage, who having placed on their heads, the commands of the great and righteous king of Ava, Lord of many umbrella bearing kings, of the sapphire, gold, silver, and amber mines, of the white, red and spotted elephants, have marched to this region: the great countries of Yodaya and Ava have from the time of our ancestors been at peace and as one, like unto a piece of gold. But this peace, with the forwarding of great elephants, horses, and other tribute with the regular passage of envoys has been broken by the rebellion of the Talaing (Mon) race, and therefore the tributary presents have not reached the Golden Feet. The customary presents shall be presented as of old."

The Burmese treated the offer with contempt, saying "in this war between the two countries, the Yodaya king and his ministers are as inconsequent and trivial as a Yiwe (Burmese weight = 1 gramme) is to a viss in a very true balance" and that they would in any case take the city. Five days after this Mahanawrahta died but orders arrived from Ava that Nemyo Thihapate should be in sole charge, and that the Yodaya affair must be finished off soon, for the king himself was going to

lead his armies into China. Nemyo Thihapate now decided to tunnel, and to hide the tunneling operations, constructed three forts near the city walls. Five tunnels were dug. Two, after getting beneath the wall, followed the line of the wall for a distance of 800 feet, timber supports of suitable girth being placed along the tunnel to support the walls. The other three proceeded past the earth embankment behind the walls, and then tilted upwards till a thickness of only 2 feet was left between the tunnel and the surface. On the 28th of March 1767 the wooden supports in the tunnels dug along the walls were fixed, and from the other three, the Burmese streamed into the city. Simultaneously a great assault was made from all sides under cover of a terrific barrage, and the Burmese fought their way into the city. The Burmese chronicle states "thus in the year 1125 (1763 A.D.) had marched from the Golden Feet at Ava, 28 battalions of 20,000 men under Nemyo Thihapate and 30 battalions of 20,000 men under Mahanawrahta by Zinne and by Tavoy, and because it could not withstand the glory of the king, in the year 1129 (1767 A.D.) at four in the afternoon of the 16th day of the Waxing Tagu fell Ayudhya with its king and people."

The chronicle¹ gives a list of the booty which, questions of chauvinism apart, indicates that the wealth of Ayudhya must have been one of the major reasons for the Burmese attack. The chronicle states "then were captured, the ex-king, the brothers, sisters, wives and concubines of the Siamese king, the ministers and officials, merchants and magistrates, learned men, musicians, dancers, wood carvers, carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, silversmiths, painters, tanners, stone polishers, bakers, magicians and herbalists, astrologers and soothsayers, vets, brocade weavers, spinners, dyers and all the books and manuals, lumps of gold and lumps of silver, precious stones, copper and brass, elephants, muskets, great and curious cannon, shot of Chinese manufacture, shot of Linzin and Zinme manufacture, and many other articles of great value."

Ayudhya was by the command of the king destroyed utterly. The buildings were burnt down, the walls razed to the ground, and the moat filled up. The destruction of Ayudhya might have been a gesture, but it could also be an indication of what the Burmese king conceived to be the best method of holding down a conquered region; the Konbaung kings had not progressed mentally from the Toungoo kings who had the same idea. But the Siamese chronicles say "the king of Hanthawaddy
 1. Konbaungzet p418.

(Bayinnaung) waged war like a monarch, and the king of Ava like a robber."

They did not realize that strong garrisons at strategic points were needed in the initial stages after conquest; and that with the certainty of swift action, a policy which was not more harsh and oppressive than that of its native rulers had to be combined, to lessen the strain on Burmese resources. In actual fact the Burmese conquest imposed a parasitic burden, which by doubling the exactions from the people would make the overthrow of Burmese rule increasingly desirable, and in any case, even had they realised the need for this policy Burma had not the resources for full time and effective garrisoning. Punitive expeditions sent out to avenge the massacre of inadequate garrisons would tend rather to inflame the conquered and unify them in resistance. The threat of certain and overwhelming forces which enabled lone British officials to rule did not exist, for the Burmese were about equally matched in strength with the Siamese. The Siamese knew this, and if anything, they could convince themselves that they were stronger.

The conditions for successful invasion called for determined and effective Burmese leadership set against a hesitant Siamese defence; the coercion and effective

utilization of Siamese tributary provinces set against the fragmentation of Siamese strength, and the ability to keep the field through the monsoon floods which last would call for tranquillity in the Burmese homeland. All these conditions were by great good fortune operative just long enough for the capture of Ayudhya.

Immediately after the fall of Ayudhya, the Shan, Chiengmai, Wiengchang, and Siamese levies were released from their duties and small Burmese detachments were left in charge of Siamese garrison troops, and with this optimistic gesture the Burmese armies hurried back to Burma.¹

The destruction of the Siamese ruling dynasty accentuated the fragmentation of the country, which broke up into various petty spheres of influence. Thus, only if sufficient Burmese strength were stationed in the country could a lengthy and durable overlordship have been maintained. But since Burmese strength was lacking, the destruction of the ruling dynasty and the fragmentation of the country provided men of ability and energy the opportunity to rise to leadership. A leader having risen to power, the debilitating influence of the Burmese invasion on the power of the semi-independent

1. Wood: History of Siam p.248. Konbaungzet p.422.

provinces would enable him eventually to unify and so strengthen the country. Burmese withdrawal, the essential preliminary to the revival of Siamese strength was however, brought about by an external factor - Chinese invasion - and before we deal with this Siamese revival we must turn to Burmese relations with China.

The Burmese chronicles first reference to the Chinese invasion is given casually, when Hsinbyushin appointing Nemyo Thihapate to the sole command of the Burmese armies in Siam urged speed for he himself was to lead his troops into China. This casual way of introducing the subject is in keeping with the tone of Burmese ideas as to how and why the invasions had started. The two reasons which they gave, the death of a Chinese in a brawl near Keng Tung and a minor trade dispute over the question of the bridging of the Taping River are not mentioned at all by the Chinese.¹ The Burmese chronicle however seems to have been vaguely aware of the true cause, for they add² that the disputes provided the Viceroy of Yunnan with an excuse to accept the bribes and blandishment of the three refugee sawbwas of Hsenwi, Bhamo and Keng Tung.

1. Luce: J.B.R.S. Vol. 15, Part II, p.116.

2. Konbaungzet pp 427-28.

for he could on the strength of these disputes urge on the Emperor to war against Burma. The Emperor of China it is stated, ordered the annexation of Keng 'lung.

Now, this reference by the Burmese to the three refugee sawbwas from three frontier states brings us onto solid ground; for it is known that all three were rebels and fugitives from Burmese authority. The Sawbwa of Hsenwi referred to without any explanatory note by the Konbaungzet chronicle was the full brother of Sao Meng Ti, the Hsenwi sawbwa who in 1758 had been driven out of Hsenwi by Alaungpaya's troops for assisting the Shwedaung Prince, a scion of the preceding Burmese dynasty.¹ The Burmese had appointed as Sawbwa a half brother of Sao Meng Ti, but the people of Hsenwi had murdered him, and set up, Sao Hkam Leng (the Nga Aung Tun of the Burmese). On Burmese troops being sent up to Hsenwi, Sao Hkam Leng had fled into China and thrown himself on Chinese protection.² Hsenwi, under the Chinese

1. The Hsenwi Chronicle (G.U.B. Part I, Vol.II. p249) says that during Sao Meng Ti's period, the Burmese had made many demands for money and men. The sawbwa had dreamt that if the Hti (spire) of a pagoda he had built inclined towards Burma, then Hsenwi would always remain under the Burmese; if it remained upright it would be independent, and if it leant towards China, then it would be a Chinese vassal. When he woke the next morning he found the Hti leant towards Burma, and thinking that he would soon be killed by the Burmese, he gathered his treasures and fled into China.

2. Konbaungzet, p.276.

Hti

term Muhpang had been for centuries regarded as a Suan-wei-ship (Comforter's province)¹, and now when the Chinese were once more powerful on the frontier they were glad to utilize this opportunity for fragmentation.

As regards Bhamo, the sawbwa had come in with his submission to Alaungpaya early in his reign² but at some time later, he had presumably rebelled for the Burmese recorded³ that he had fled into China. The Chinese also had a tradition of suzerainty over Bhamo, which to them was known as Man Moh, under a Suan fu-sz (a vassal ruler) and the same Manchu attitude as in Hsenwi seems to have been adopted.

The Keng Tung Sawbwa referred to was the rightful heir who had been ousted by the Burmese nominee and had fled into China.⁴ Keng Tung, the largest trans Salween Shan state owing allegiance to Burma was of course another border state, and though it had never had relations with China, as intimate as those of the other two, it was the immediate neighbour of Keng Hung

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1. See Chapter VI on the historical background of Sino-Burmese relations.
 2. Konbaungzet p.80.
 3. Ibid. p.276.
 4. Luce: J.B.R.S. Vol. 15. Part II, p.118.

an 'inner dependency' of China. The Chinese knew Keng Tung as Meng Ken (the Kon country) and the Yung-Chang annals¹ claimed that Keng Tung "came in in 1406, but joined Burma in 1522" and remained independent of China. "Its chief" the Chinese annalist continues, "is called P'a Chao (Sao Pha of the Shans today the Chao Fa of the Siamese) and lives in a many tiered building. He has several hundred wives, who in the late afternoon go out on elephant back to bathe in the river. When this is over, they form in a circle to do obeisance to the chief, who removes the gold bracelet from his arm, and the one who get it does night duty. There are many tigers in the country, and the husbandmen build straw huts on the trees to watch their crop. Their clothes are pulled over their heads and they make mattresses of goose feathers. Chao Hun, the Prefect of Yunnan, on one occasion went into this country on a barbarian-conciliatory errand, but the chief was so discourteous that no man has ever been since."

The real reason for the invasion can be traced to the Chinese policy of keeping the frontier region quiet, a policy which by Chien Lung's time they were strong enough

1. E.H. Parker's translated extracts in G.U.B. Part II, Vol.I. p.397.

to put into effect, and secondly to the need to heed the complaints of the Chinese protected border states about exactions by the officer of the expansionist Konbaung kings.

It will be remembered that in Alaungpaya's reign,¹ the Gwe chief Gunna Ein had been driven across the border into Meng-Lien and that after bitter quarrels Gunna Ein had been killed, and his wife taken into the harem of the Meng-Lien Sawbwa. The Chinese historians remark that Nang Chan the wife of Gunna Ein, loved neither the Chinese nor the Burmese, nor even her captor the Sawbwa of Meng Lien. They made an understatement, for she hated all three, and brooding on her wrongs, planned revenge.² In 1762, herself leading a band of avengers, she murdered Meng Lien and burnt his city to the ground. Then while on the run, she instigated the Sawbwa of Keng Tung, a Burmese nominee, (the rightful Sawbwa having fled into China) to make an attack on Keng Hung. The Keng Tung Sawbwa accepted the suggestion and attacked Keng Hung.

The Chinese border states in Southern Yunnan were

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1. See Chapter VII.
 2. Luce - J.B.R.S. Vol.15 Part II, p.116.

soon in an uproar, and the Chinese presumably ill-prepared for hostilities in this area after the long years during which the declining T'oungoo dynasty had had no say in frontier affairs, were at a disadvantage, and three Chinese generals were severally defeated.¹ Then while the Yunnan authorities were presumably re-organizing their forces for retaliatory measures, Teinkya Min Khaung was despatched in 1765 by Hsinbyushim² to demand tribute from the minor Sawbwas in the Salween area North of Keng Tung who were under Chinese protection.

The states in the border country had long paid tribute to both China and Burma³ but in the decline of Burmese influence in the last years of the T'oungoo dynasty, they must have escaped the payment of tribute to Burma, and when they were asked to resume payment they proved recalcitrant. Perhaps it was the arrogance of the officers of the new and fierce Burmese dynasty; perhaps they relied on effective Chinese protection; but they seem to have refused, for Keng Hung murdered the Burmese Residents, Let Ya Kyaw Gaung, and Letwe

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1. Luce: J.B.R.S. Vol.15, Part II, p.118.
 2. Konbaungzet, p.328.
 3. Macleod: J.A.S.B. 1837, Vol.VI, p.996.

Kyaw Gaung¹ and threw themselves on Chinese protection.

The Yunnan forces having by now re-organised, advanced on Keng Tung and it is at this point that the Chinese account of the invasion and that of the Burmese meet, though the Chinese hardly mention the siege of Keng Tung.² The Burmese chronicle continues, after giving its explanation of the invasions, to say that the viceroy of Yunnan posted a notice on the banks of the Talaw river saying "Deliver a man to us in the room of our man who was killed, or we will attack you."³ The Chinese were supposed to have advanced on Keng Tung with 50,000 foot and 10,000 horse under Yin Ta Lo Ye. The Keng Tung Sawbwa now deserted the Burmese, and went over to the Chinese, and the Burmese resident Sit-Ke Shwe Taung Tet was left to conduct the defence as best he could.

Word had, however reached Ava, and Hsinbyushin on the 28th December 1765 sent 20,000 foot, 2,000 horse and 200 elephants under the Let We Win Daw Hmu Nemyo Sithu (Let We Win Daw Hmu - meaning the officer in command of the left hand or Northern section of the palace city;

1. Konbaungzet p.428.

2. Luce: J.B.R.S. Vol.15, Part II, p.118.

3. Konbaungzet p.328.

in effect one of the principal military officers commanding the Guards).

Nemyo Si Thu arranged for a sortie to be made by the Keng Tung defense at the moment of his attack. The Chinese cavalry broke under the charge of the Burmese elephantry, and first the Chinese retired to the bank of the Talaw river, where they erected some mud works; then under continued Burmese pressure they retreated to the Mekhong where the Chinese general fell. The Burmese were back in Ava by April. It was at this time that the Viceroy of Yunnan is stated to have "lost his wits" and smarting under the Emperor's censure, committed suicide "out of sheer fright".¹

Up to this stage what seems to have happened, from the point of view of the Chinese was a large scale disturbance of the peace in the frontier areas caused largely by the invasion of Burmese-Shan hordes. The Chinese thought that the Burmese were at the bottom of all the disturbance, and such suspicions in the time of an energetic and strong emperor like Chien Lung could well be sufficient, at the very least, to provoke active retaliatory measures.

1. Luce: J.B.R.S. Vol.15, Part II, p.119. E.H.Parker: Burma, Relations with China. p. 84.

From the Burmese point of view, the whole business was pure Chinese aggression. The new Burmese dynasty was just getting into its stride but it already had fierce opinions of its own worth and any retaliatory measures would and did automatically bring violent Burmese reaction.

It is reasonable to conclude that the historical accident of the Gwes fleeing into Chinese protected territory, and after unfair treatment setting the whole border region on fire is an incidental, rather than a fundamental cause of the war. The Gwes of course acted as a historical catalyst, but the reaction from the meeting of two national ambitions in the explosive area of highly unorthodox frontier politics could not have been long delayed.

It was the reintroduction of Burmese power in those regions by the energetic and ambitious Konbaung dynasty that made possible the extent of the fire lighted by the Gwes. Without the prospect of Burmese intervention to back one of the disputing parties in the area the whole incident could have been limited to minor operations. For, whatever the real reasons that caused Keng Tung to attack Keng Hung, the fact remains that the Sawbwa of Keng Tung had now become a Burmese nominee.

In any Chinese attempt to impose law and order on the frontier, the Chinese were liable on every occasion to find that their policy was regarded as aggression by a rejuvenated Burma. The situation could not have developed otherwise. The traditional Burmese conception of successful kingship called for an expansionist policy. Whenever the Burmese had enough strength, as they did have in our period, they would at the very least attempt to enlarge their sphere of influence into a semblance of that under their greatest kings. This expansionist policy was invariably accompanied by avaricious extortions from the Sawbwas of the frontier region and naturally the incumbent Sawbwas of the border region turned to the Chinese whom they considered to be punctual and just in all their transactions, insisting on regular payment of their taxes, and writing long letters about a few pice, but never taking any sum however small which they were not entitled to.¹ Thus the Sawbwas not amenable to Burmese demands were generally chased out by the Burmese, and replaced by Burmese nominees. These local quarrels were aggravated, and the backing of the antagonists on the one side by Burma, and on the other

1. Macleod: J.A.S.B. 1837, p.998.

by China was bound to lead to friction.

The Burmese in their recital of the causes of the invasions assumed that the Emperor had been persuaded to sanction the invasion. In view of the lack of contacts between the Chinese and Burmese courts this was a natural and reasonable assumption. They were wrong in assigning the Emperor's decision to the period of the first disturbance at Keng Tung but they were right later, for a Viceroy of Yunnan did succeed in persuading the Emperor Chien Long to sanction the conquest of Burma. The Viceroy of Yunnan concerned in the decision was however, not the one who was in charge at the time of the Keng Tung fighting. That official, as stated before, had committed suicide, and the Emperor Chien Lung had sent another to take his place.¹ His name was Yang Ying Chu described as a man of "large ambitions and meagre abilities."² Yang Ying Chu was at first successful, but Chinese operations seem to have been limited to the restoration of order in the border region. He reported to Peking³ that he had taken Keng Hung and Keng Tung and this claim seems to have

1. E.H. Parker: Burma, Relations with China, p.84.

2. Luce: J.B.R.S. Vol. 15 Part II, p.119.

3. Luce: Ibid. p.119.

been a true one, for the Chinese are reported to have advanced from Keng Hung and taken Keng Tung after defeating the combined forces of the Keng Tung Sawbwa and the Burmese garrison troops.¹

The Viceroy's ambition seems to have been fired by these successes, and he now conceived the idea of conquering Burma. The Sheng wu chi, the Chinese Military Records² states that "his generals falling in with his humour, told him there were daily applications from states wishing to become tributary. Emissaries were despatched to Mongmit, Hsenwi, Mohnyim, old Bhamo, Zinme (Chiengmai) and other states to induce their chiefs to swear fealty or to invite their relations or sub-sawbwas to do this for them....

All this was reported to the Emperor without examination by the Viceroy, but in effect these states were still half inclined towards Burma, and were beyond the range of our effective control."

Chien Lung had of course to make the final decision, but he probably regarded the conquest as an easy matter, for although he told the Viceroy to be careful,³ he sanctioned the proposed operations, and in the notes which

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1. Translations from the Keng Tung State Annals. G.U.B. Part II, Vol. I. pp.406-407.
 2. Luce: J.B.R.S. Vol.15, Part II, p.119.
 3. Ibid. p.120.

Chiang Lung recorded on his file, it is seen that he intended to annex Burma, and set his nominee on the throne.¹

The Burmese king meanwhile had foreseen the probability of Chinese aggression and immediately after the return of the troops from Keng Tung had despatched Bala Mindin (the rebel lieutenant of the Toungoo Viceroy) with a strong force to garrison Kaungton,² South of Bhamo, a strategic spot on one of the two main routes from China to Burma.

The Burmese were however, still under the strain of the Siamese campaigns, and the bulk of the Burmese forces in Siam being still outside the walls of Ayudhya, the Northern Lao states had rebelled, and Hsinbyushin in October 1766 despatched 2,000 horse, and 20,000 foot under Tein Kya Min Gaung and MahaThihaThura to settle affairs in that region.³ The deduction is either that the Burmese had no fear of ultimate Chinese success or that knowing from painful historical experience that the Chinese were their strongest enemy, they still persisted in blindly pursuing their king's

1. G.E.Harvey: History of Burma, p.355.

2. A riverine town on the Irrawaddy 8 miles South of Bhamo. It is a Burmanised Shan name - derivation from Kwang Tung - "the Sambhuns field."

3. Konbaungzet p.430.

policy of senseless aggrandizement.

The strengthening of the Kaungton defences had not been made too soon, for the Chinese swooped on Bhamo and captured it in October 1766.¹ The Burmese were not in strength at Bhamo, a disaffected town, and their intelligence was faulty, for Hsinbyushin only knew of the Chinese invasion after the capture of the town, and in the circumstances, the strength of the original small force of Chinese that took the town, they placed at a ridiculously disproportionate figure.

The capture of Bhamo, where the Chinese had erected a fort near the river, now stirred the Burmese king from his concentration on his Siamese campaigns and he proclaimed that "this matter had arisen because in the time of our royal ancestors, they (the Chinese) had always had easy passage into the country whenever they invaded, but this time every Chinese that has come into my kingdom, shall everyone of them be killed."² In January 1767, the Wungyi Maha Sithu was sent off to march up the West bank of the Irrawaddy, and after collecting what levies he could from Mogaung and Mohnyin, to proceed by the Sanda route to attack the

1. Luce: J.B.R.S. Vol.15. Part II, p.120.

2. Konbaungzet p.431.

Chinese. Another force commanded by the Letwe Win Hmu (the Commander of the Guards of the left) NeMyoSithu and composed of 15,000 men was sent up the river in 300 boats carrying guns and jingals.

The Chinese capture of Bhamo gave them a good base right in comparatively open country and an easy route down to Ava. But there was the Burmese fort under Bala Min Din at Kaungton blocking the way, and it was the failure to take Kaungton more than anything else that decided the outcome of this first invasion.

The Burmese under Bala Min Din conducted a magnificent defence and well might the Chinese Emperor Chien Lung write that the Burmese "... know their strength in stockade fighting." ¹ "Inside and round the foot of the fort" says the Konbaungzet, ² "he threw up earth five cubits deep, seven cubits thick. On the top of the fort also he prepared shelters, warrior-runs and flares. At the bastions and angles he placed his cannon holding two viss or three, and drew up ready in array men to pick up and hold the fuses. Outside the fort also he planted elephant-snags, horse-snags, breast works, thorns, spikes, 'sharks', pits,

1. G.E.Harvey; History of Burma, p.356.

2. Konbaungzet P.432-433 - the translation is the excellent one by Luce in the J.B.R.S. Vol.15. Part II, pp.120-21.

trenches, cross-barred fences and deer horns. A log 25 to 30 cubits long and $4\frac{1}{2}$ or 5 fists thick, was fastened to two short posts by a catch; this long log was so placed that it could be pulled up by a rope-mechanism, and then sprung back by releasing a pin inside the fort. In the barbicans on top he stationed abundance of guns, cannon, braves and formidables. There, within the fort, he stood resolute, with molten lead and liquid resin ready ... The Chinamen left a force at Bhamo market-fort to guard it and came marching, densely surrounding Kaungton. They brought along with them town-scaling ladders, dahs, spades, axes, hooks and ropes, and drew near the fort. But they could not get right up to it; for what with the thickset 'sharks' snags, pits and trenches, and the royal troops in the barbicans discharging guns and cannon, the Chinese were wounded and slain and their generals and captains suffered severe punishment. Therefore without stop or pause, like running water, making breastworks of pile on pile of their dead corpses, they closed right in on the foot of the fort. Then the wheel-ropes of the mechanical catapults and levers were let fly time after time, each time killing a hundred or two. Yet the Chinamen closed in; those appointed to dig up the fort posts, dug; those to plant the ladders and climb

them, climbed; those to hook the fort-posts and pull them, pulled. The royal troops undaunted hurled down levered logs and molten lead and resin. From the barbicans above also, armed with dah, spear, gun, stick, faggot and bar, deftly and desperately they thrust, hewed, shot, slashed, beat and rammed. Therefore the Chinamen could not penetrate the fort, but perished pile on pile; and they said "This fort is held by gods and not by men."

Nemyosithu arrived on the scene and stopping just North of Shwegu he asked for volunteers to take supplies and the king's gracious presents to BalaMinDin and his men. The Chinese who show here a lamentable lack of vision in coming down to Bhamo from where the Irrawaddy offered an easy passage down to Ava, had only three sampans¹ and the volunteers brushing these aside, pushed their way into Kaungton. Here they found BalaMinDin in magnificent spirits; the first three Konbaung kings were skilful in their choice and handling of good men, and Naungdawgyi's leniency towards the rebel BalaMinDin, and Hsinbyushin's confidence in him was paying off magnificently. He spurned the offer of reinforcements and the officer sent by Nemyosithu witnessing just at

1. Konbaungzet p.434.

that moment the skilful way in which the defence repelled yet another Chinese night attack, agreed to recommend BalaMinDin's plan for the capture of Bhamo fort which was to be followed by an attack on the rear of the Chinese besiegers while he made a sortie. Nemyosithu hearing of Kaungton's strength decided on the strength of information about Bhamo fort, which was reported to be manned by sick Chinese and a rabble of Shans, to adopt BalaMinDin's plan.

Bhamo fort was stormed and the cavalry group which the Kaungton Besiegers sent to the rescue was intercepted by a large Burmese group which Nemyosithu had posted at the Lem-Ban-Gya stream in anticipation of such a move. After Bhamo had fallen, men were sent to fix a date for the double assault, and on the chosen date, the Chinese were attacked. The Chinese admit that they "fell into a complete trap and were most bloodily defeated."¹ The Chinese Officer-in-Charge, Chao Hung Pang set fire to his stores and retreated.

Mahasithu's army, reinforced by the Mogaung levies, turned on Eastwards, and then crossing the Irrawaddy near Waing Maw approached another Chinese group stationed

1. Luce, J.B.R.S. Vol.15, Part II, p.121.

in the Yawyin hills North of Sima. The Chinese left a part of their force in their camp and their main body advanced to meet the Burmese. The Burmese had however, sent off their two wings on a flanking movement to the rear, and the Chinese in the camp, secure in the knowledge of their main body being between them and the Burmese were caught by surprise and fled. Mahasithu's troops then made a frontal assault, while the two Burmese wings closed in on the Chinese rear.

The outmanoeuvred Chinese were defeated, and retreated with the Burmese following, right up to Sanda (Tsanta on modern maps) where they prepared to make a stand. Maha Si Thu was now permitted to return because of illness, and Nemyosithu was given the chief command. The Chinese at the other Chinese forts along the frontier were now outflanked by the advance of the Burmese beyond Sanda, which had fallen to Nemyosithu, "because", says the Chronicle, "the Shans of the area had refused to send in supplies to the Chinese declaring they were subjects of the King of Ava." This statement, as far as the attitude of the Shans is concerned, may not be true, but it is an indication of the Burmese pretensions and the complicated political atmosphere of the area.

In any case, the two Northern army groups of the

Burmese were now reinforced by the arrival on the scene of MahaThihaThura's army which had been diverted from its Siamese adventure, and had proceeded up the Salween, driving back the Chinese from that area of Hsenwi. The Chinese frontier forts were now taken from the retreating Chinese, and the eight Shan-Chinese states of Hotha, Latha, Mona, Sanda, Mengmao, Sikhwin, Kaingma, and Maungwan were occupied by the Burmese. The Burmese then proceeded to ravage the whole countryside, raiding right up to Yung-chang and Tengyueh. The Viceroy of Yunnan "fell ill through excitement". The Emperor despatched his Court Physician to see if he was shamming, and a confidential officer to report on the whole situation.¹

It is by now clear that the Chinese and Burmese systems of conducting foreign relations had fallen into all the pitfalls which their inadequacies could bring about. The Burmese system of conducting their foreign relations in the most remote manner, only by the imposition of control over border states without much attention to any possible repercussions is now proved to have been based on a hostile state of mind, and hostilities were a logical outcome.

The Chinese in the vastness of their empire, had delegated a large measure of responsibility to their

1. Luce, J.B.R.S. Vol.15 Part II, p.121.

frontier viceroys, and the only guide to policy, the necessity to maintain Chinese prestige at all costs. The question of prestige was always a onesided affair, as far as the Chinese were concerned. It was this question of prestige which brought about the Emperor's acceptance of the Yunnan Viceroy's ambitious reports on the situation. If there had been more official diplomatic relations, the Chinese invasions might never have begun. As it is the Viceroy got into deeper and deeper water in his need to cover up his failures and thereby aggravated the situation.

Yang Ying Chu now began sending in the most frightful lies; ten thousand Burmese, he claimed, had been killed at Meng Mao; Nemyosithu himself had visited the Chinese camp with apologies and offers of submission; the people of Bhamo had adopted the Manchu pigtail. At the same time he added, it would be better to come to terms with Burma, restore Bhamo, and offer trade facilities.¹

Chien Lung saw through this report at once. He knew the fighting could not be taking place on Chinese soil at Meng-mao and Sanda, when the Burmese were reported to be beaten everywhere. He summoned Yang Yin Chu to

1. Luce: J.B.R.S. Vol 15. Part II, p.122.

Pekin where he was "graciously permitted to commit suicide". Ming-Jui (the Burmese Myin Khun Ye) one of the finest Manchu generals - conqueror of Turkestan, bearing the title of "Purely rejoicing, recklessly gallant, First class Duke" was appointed viceroy and commander-in-chief.

Preparations were made for a big invasion of Burma in the open season of 1767; the land tax of the districts traversed by the armies was to be raised; 6,000 Manchus and 20,000 Chinese troops¹ were despatched; the ex-Sawbwa of Hsenwi, Nga Aung Tun came along presumably to raise the Shans of the area on the side of the Chinese.

Ming Jui decided to strike right at the heart of Burma - Ava the capital - and at the end of October 1767, the Chinese army started off from Yung Chang. One division under Ertenge was to march on Bhamo, take Kaungton and descend on Mong Mit, and then join Ming Jui at Ava, while Ming Jui himself was to take the Lashio route, down to Ava. In 36 days Ming Jui reached the frontier at Wanting, his advance base. Eight days later he reached Hsenwi. The Burmese Resident fled with what troops he could collect without a fight.²

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1. Luce: J.B.R.S. Vol.15, Part II, pl22 says there were only 3,000 Manchus in the total force; the Konbaungzet gives 700,000 foot and 10,000 horse.
 2. Konbaungzet p.440.

Nga Aung Tun was installed at Hsenwi, and the Chinese leaving a garrison of 5,000 under Ta Hsinga to guard the advanced base from which supplies were to be conveyed to the striking column of 12,000 led by Ming Jui.

The Burmese sent off 3,000 horse and 30,000 foot under Maha Si Thu to meet the Chinese advance; then 200 elephants, 2,000 horse and 20,000 men under MahaThihaThura were sent through Shwe Za Yan, up the Myitnge to intercept the Chinese communication with Hsenwi and after cutting off their supplies, to attack the Chinese from from the rear. A third Burmese force of 10,000 men under NemyoSiThu was sent off to intercept Ertenge's column.

MahaSiThu first came into contact with the Chinese East of Hsipaw at the village of Bangyi; but the seven Burmese battalions which took part in the fighting were driven off. Then at Gokteik (west of Hsipaw) the main battle was fought. The Burmese cavalry charged, but were surrounded, and three whole cavalry regiments were taken prisoner. The Burmese elephantry was next routed and the Burmese stockades erected to strengthen their barriers were taken. The Burmese were most bloodily defeated and the Konbaungzet admits¹ that "the whole army sank, the

1. Konbaungzet p.442.

troops fled topsy turvy, helter skelter". MahaSiThu collected the remnants of his troops, and sought the shelter of thick kaing grass and sent off messengers to report at Ava.

Hsinbyushin rose arrogantly and magnificently to the situation. Two of his predecessors Narathihapate of the Pagan dynasty and Pye of the Toungoo had failed to act the part demanded of them. Hsinbyushin's decision is in keeping with the martial tradition of his adventurous youth; the position of the king was so important that had he faltered at that moment, the Burmese army would have disintegrated, and Burma today might have been a Chinese province. But he stood firm, his armies rallied and the inherent difficulties that still faced Ming Jui, combined with the lack of co-operation from the other Chinese column saved the country. Kingship as practiced in Burma had its defects, but then, a resolute man on the throne, at a time of crisis meant all the difference between failure and success.

He ignored the arrival of the message sent by MahaThihaThura; the next day when he sat in court, and was advised to make drastic preparations for a siege, he refused with scorn saying that the Chinese had never really succeeded in their invasion in the time of his

ancestors. "All the Chinese who enter my kingdom are doomed. Let not a house or tank or monastery be touched. Let all the subjects in my kingdom work and eat as usual. When the Chinese come to Shwekyetyet (just outside Ava on the Irrawaddy) I shall cross the Myitnge with my four brothers, and like mine ancestors, Pyusawhti (the legendary founder of Pagan) myself shall smite them though they come thick as leaves or grass, and cast them all into the Irrawaddy. As the oracle saith "There shall be a dusty cart track from Shwekyetyet to Shwe-Taung-u, for I will cross treading on Chinese carcasses." Then his brothers answered: "Take thine ease, O king, in thy golden palace. We four will go and slay all the Chinese; not one shall escape," and the king said: "Though all my kingdom be women, there are we five brothers who are men and who in Jambudvipa can withstand us."¹

The Burmese plan of campaign was however beginning to pay dividends. MahaThihaThura with his deputy Teinkya Min Khaung now cut the Chinese line of communication and intercepted all the supply columns which Ming Jui as he advanced further and further from his base needed so urgently. The Burmese as usual employed

1. Konbaungzet p.445.

their stockading tactics and when the Chinese hurried up forces to push through supplies, they found the Burmese entrenched in hurriedly erected but strong stockades on the route. The Chinese wasted their strength against these stockades and then the Burmese attacked and scattered them. The Burmese followed up and drove the Chinese right back - beyond Hsipaw, beyond Lashio, right back to the Chinese forward base at Hsenwi.

It was at this moment that MahaThihaThura showed his mettle. The other Burmese commanders desired to turn back to help in the defence of Ava, but MahaThihaThura decided otherwise. He pointed out that their Lord Hsinbyushin was not the person to panic and fail, for "had he not been the leader in the defence of Ava in 1754 when at the age of 17, he had repelled the hordes of Talaings (Mons)." No - he had confidence in the strength of the capital under such a king, "besides it is one of the fundamentals of warfare that the supply base and the lines of communication are the root and heart of a campaign. Therefore if the supply base which is the root and heart is surrounded, dug up and destroyed, then the spearhead which is as the branches and sprigs, will, of its own accord wither, and shrivel and become fit for burning (i.e. destruction)."

In the circumstances MahaThihaThura was quite right.

The country through which Ming Jui was going, was desolate and lacked supplies (even today), and in any case the Burmese had desolated the countryside¹ as they did in the Irrawaddy delta when the British landed in 1824. To reinforce his decision at this juncture, NemyoSiThu who found that the North Chinese column was being well held by Bala Mindin at Kaungton came down from Mongmit (the Burmese Momeik, the ruby mine state) to join MahaThihaThura.

At Hsenwi, the Chinese as an indication of their bad military judgement had split up their strength. They had posted the bulk of their Shan auxiliaries and some Chinese troops in Hsenwi town itself, and at a distance which ultimately proved too far for co-operation, they erected a stockade in which the Chinese general Ta-Hsinga himself, and the bulk of the Chinese troops were placed. MahaThihaThura before any assault on the Chinese positions at Hsenwi sent off 5,000 musketeers to occupy the Chinese outpost at Kunlong (the main Salween ferry) and thereby to ensure that the Chinese at Hsenwi would be cut off from reinforcement and supplies. The town of Hsenwi being regarded as the weaker position was stormed first, and taken. Then the water supply of the Chinese fort was first cut off, and after allowing for a time interval in which the Chinese

1. Luce, J.B.R.S. Vol.15. Part II p.125.

cut off from food and water, might be weakened physically, an assault was made with all the strength the Burmese could muster. The fort was taken and Ta-Hsing-a in despair committed suicide by cutting his own throat. The Burmese column was now free to turn on Ming Jui's rear. MahaThihaThura, leaving a strong garrison at Hsenwi under the ex-Burmese resident gathered his troops.

Meanwhile Ming Jui, almost within sight of Ava, found himself cut off both from his Hsenwi base and from Ertenge's support. His men were now starving, and he decided to retreat. It is difficult to understand why Ming Jui did not advance right into the Burmese plain, where with the bulk of the Burmese forces absent, he might have taken the capital and obtained food for his troops. The taking of the capital might have demoralized the Burmese and prevented any further organised defence. The conclusion must be that Ming Jui's casualties were far heavier than was ever admitted by Chinese historians. The Chinese claimed that Ming Jui's column only lost from 10 to 20% of its effectives.¹ The bulk of the losses were suffered on the long retreat from Singaung (36 miles from Ava); when he made his decision, he must

1. Luce, J.B.R.S. Vol. 15 Part II, p.127.

on the Chinese figures of his original strength still have had at least 11,000 effectives. It is however possible that the Burmese concentration on his lines of communication was, in combination with his losses, the deciding factor.

It must be remembered that the Chinese had taken care in their preparations. There had been nothing to stop them from bringing in all the supplies they would need to their base at Hsenwi. Hsenwi was at the very least neutral, and not hostile, and they had the active support of the Sawbwa, and perhaps the bulk of the Shans, for Nga Aung Tun was not the Burmese nominee. Hsenwi, however, is in about the same geographical position on the East, to the Chinese, as Imphal in the West was to the 14th Army in 1944-45. In 1944-45 the 14th Army with a larger force in relation to the Japanese against the proportion of Chinese to Burmese in 1767, could not overcome the problem of keeping clear the lines of communication even with the help of Bailey bridges, caterpillar tractors, and mepacrine. The 14th Army ultimately had to rely on large scale air supply. It is obvious that so long as the Burmese leaders kept their heads, and their armies did not disintegrate, the Chinese could not succeed. The Chinese Empire at its peak under Chien Lung could not have provided the necessary strength to hold down Burma,

in face of the continued Burmese will to resistance, and that to my mind is the whole crux of the matter. The Chinese in the circumstances had bitten off more than they could chew.

Ming Jui withdrew fighting. The troops of MahaSiThu took the offensive once again at news of Hsinbyushin's anger at their failure. Ming Jui did not retrace his footsteps, knowing that there must be Burmese armies in his rear for his supplies had been effectively cut off. He struck North for MongLung, South of Mong Mit, perhaps in the hope of finding food, perhaps in the hope of linking up with Ertenge's column. From Mong Lung, Ming Jui turned North-West and marched North West to Meng Yu. MahaSiThu's troops in the meanwhile had taken a short cut through the hills and by-passed Ming Jui, and by the time Ming Jui reached Meng Yu he found that he was in a trap. MahaThihaThura had marched North via Lashio, and had reinforced MahaSiThu's column. The Burmese in great strength hemmed in the Chinese and cut it off completely from any succour. A Chinese scout sent from Yunnan found that he could not enter Ming Jui's camp, so tight was the Burmese ring round Ming Jui.¹

1. Luce: J.B.R.S. Vol.15. Part II, p.126.

The Chinese could not last much longer now, and before reinforcements could reach him from Yunnan, he decided that it was the end. The standard of Manchu duty was high, and an officer who could not preserve the Emperor's honour was expected to commit suicide.¹ Ming Jui did not know that Chien Lung had ordered his retreat² and he determined to make a last suicidal stand with a chosen band, while he ordered the rest of his troops to cut their way out one night as best they could. The Chinese made a desperate attempt, and most of them escaped to Wanting the Chinese base 70 miles away. Ming Jui with his Manchu lieutenants Chalafenga and Kwan Yin Pao died at their posts, Ming Jui committing suicide and sending his pigtail to the Emperor as a last token of affection.

The Burmese did not know of his death; they only knew that the Chinese had left Burmese soil. "The two Wungyis finding the Chinese had retired, and that the king's service was completed, retired with all their prisoners, arms etc. to Ava, where they arrived on the 17th March 1768."³ The reference to the 'king's service'

1. E.H.Parker: Burma, Relations with China, p.86.

2. Luce: op.cit. p.127.

3. Burney: J.A.S.B. 1837, p.138.

is significant, for it illustrates once more the Burmese attitude towards foreign affairs - it was the king's business.

The full fury of the Chinese Emperor now fell upon Ertenge, who after being relieved of his independent command, had once again become commander-in-chief at the death of Erkinge.¹ He was blamed for failing to support Ming Jui, but this was rather unfair, for with the inadequate numbers under him, he could not have taken Kaungton, and with Kaungton threatening him he could enjoy no freedom of manoeuvre. The defeat of Ming Jui brought about his withdrawal. He was sent in chains to Peking, where he and his family were given the most frightful punishment, the Emperor being "amazed at his own moderation."²

The Chinese had not however, given up the idea of conquest. They probably considered Ming Jui's failure an avoidable one, and preparations were once more made to renew the struggle.

Towards the end of 1769³ the Burmese learnt that once

1. Erkinge had been sent to take command at Kaungton because the Emperor disapproved of Ertenge being given independent command.
2. Luce: J.B.R.S. Vol.15, Part II, p.127.
3. E.H.Parker: op.cit. p.86.

more the Chinese had invaded Burma. The Chinese had assembled no less than 60,000 fresh troops on the border¹ and their best general Fu Heng, a Manchu Duke and the 'Chief reliance of the Government' was placed in command.²

The original Chinese plan of operations was for Fu Heng to cross the Irrawaddy at Waing Maw with a mixed force of Manchus and Chinese, and then to sweep through the region on the West of the Irrawaddy to take Shwebo and so down to Ava.³ Another force under General Htet'u was to advance down the East bank of the Irrawaddy to assist Fu Heng, and a third column was sent to march by Manwyne on Bhamo.

The Burmese despatched NemyoThihathu (the Amyauk Wun = commander of the artillery) with 12,000 men to Mogaung. MahaThihaThura himself with the main body of 52,000 men proceeded in a fleet of boats up the river to Bhamo, while the Mongmit Sawbwa and Kyaw Din Yaza with the

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1. Li Ung Bin: op.cit. p.450.
 2. The Burmese generally used the words Kun Ye as part of the names of the Chinese generals. Most of the senior Chinese commanders were Dukes which in Chinese was Kung-ye. The Manchus used the first syllable of their names as their family names and therefore the Burmese version of Ming Jui, Myin Kun Ye would be a perfectly correct version meaning Duke Myin or Ming. Fu Heng was known as the Tho-kunye.
 3. E.H.Parker: op.cit. p.88.

cavalry and elephants were sent up along the East bank.

The Chinese plan seems to have mis-carried at once. Fu Heng spent two futile months promenading in the Mogaung area, a malarious place, without getting anything effective done. By the time the Mogaung column of the Burmese arrived at Mogaung, the Chinese had turned East again towards the Irrawaddy. North of Shwegu, Fu Heng was joined by Ilet'u who had crossed the Irrawaddy. The Chinese on this occasion seem to have realized the value of boats for fighting on the Irrawaddy and had brought a large contingent of carpenters to construct a fleet of boats with the plentiful timber to be had from the area. With the arrival of the third Chinese column from Man Waing, a combined naval and military assault was made, and Bhamo was once again taken. But Bhamo on this occasion as on the first and second invasions was not the Burmese strong point. The Chinese after taking Bhamo, constructed a tremendous stockade 'as big as a city'¹ at Shwe nyaung bin (the place of the Golden Bo tree) 12 miles East of Kaungton. Then "the Chinese spent weeks dashing themselves against the obstinate stockade of Kaungton, though their artillery was fairly powerful."²

1. Konbaungzet p.461.

2. E.H.Parker, op.cit. p.87.

The Burmese generals as usual, first sent off strong columns to waylay the Chinese supply columns and then closed in on all sides. Kaungton was first relieved by the river force, the Chinese fleet of junks and sampans being scattered and then a violent assault was delivered on them at Shwenyaungbin. Shwenyaungbin was taken and the Chinese armies fled to join the besieging force on the landward side of Kaungton.

The Chinese were now in a desperate situation, hemmed in on all sides, starving, they were like 'fenced in cattle'.¹ It is at this point that the Chinese and Burmese accounts contradict each other. The Chinese account² states that shortly after the Emperor had ordered withdrawal, the Burmese king sent proposals for peace, saying that he would apologize for past offences, release all prisoners, restore all occupied territory, and send tribute. The Burmese account³ states that on the third December 1769, the Kwei Swe Bo (probably Akwei, the general who led the peace party in the Chinese camp)⁴

1. Konbaungzet P.468.

2. E.H.Parker: Burma, Relations with China, P.80.
Li Ung Bin: Outline of Chinese History, P.450.

3. Konbaungzet pp.464-476.

4. E.H.Parker: op.cit. P.88.

had advanced to the Burmese lines with a letter which stated that if the Burmese would send presents as was done in the 16th year of the Emperor's reign (1751 when Maha Damma Yaza Dipati asked for Chinese help), then presents would be returned. The war had arisen at the instigation of the Sawbwas of Bhamo, Hsenwi, Keng Tung and Mogaung; they would be handed over, if the Burmese promised to reinstate the four. Finally, if the Burmese would release all the Chinese prisoners, then they would submit to the Emperor that the two countries continue on the same terms as before.

Now it must be remembered that on the admission of their own military records that the Chinese were all gathered in a tight mass round Kaungton. The Burmese had cut them off completely from the landward side, and were closing in. They could not escape across the river, because Kaungton barred their way, and in any case they had lost control of the river. The next step that the Burmese would take, would be to launch a double assault that would have sandwiched the Chinese. The Emperor had already sent orders to withdraw and to inform the Burmese that "out of sheer compassion the Emperor had decided not to annihilate them as they deserved."¹ If

1. E.H.Parker: Burma, Relations with China, p.88.

the Chinese could get out of the mess they had got themselves into, there would be no rebuke from the Emperor, but it might be as well from the Chinese point of view if they could realize most of their war aims too.

The Burmese chronicle shows that the Burmese completely missed the point of the Chinese conception of traditional relations, even when references were made to the presents in 1751. To the Burmese it was inconceivable that the Chinese would regard the assumption of friendly relations as an acknowledgement of vassalage. They therefore fell into the diplomatic trap and agreed to parley. The Burmese were most punctilious in their negotiations about their position as a sovereign state, and resisted at first, that the negotiations be carried on in neutral country, i.e. on the border; but there were practical difficulties to this, and this was dropped.

MahaThihaThura now summoned his thirty senior officers to debate on the course of action to be taken. They all recommended that no terms be given. MahaThihaThura then pointed out that though they were right in thinking that the Chinese army now surrounded could be easily destroyed, that would not be the end, and would generate the most bitter feelings. He would recommend the granting of terms, and if the king disapproved, he would take the whole responsibility upon himself. MahaThihaThura's

decision must here be noted to prove that Burmese senior officers who had the actual experience with foreign powers did acquire reasonable ideas, but it will be seen that Hsinbyushin as a typical Burmese king, was ready to sacrifice reason, if it should affect his prestige or vanity.

The Chinese next sent a long letter addressed to the king of Burma proposing that the Burmese should withdraw first, before the Chinese retired, but the Burmese replied that they dared not submit such a letter. The Chinese then climbed down and said a mistake had been made, but it would be more suitable if the Chinese were to be allowed to negotiate from a more favourable position.

Finally, on the 13th December 1769, fourteen Burmese, headed by the Wundauk (Minister of the second grade) Nemyo Maha Thuya, Commander of the Ko Thin horse, and without the three senior Burmese commanders met thirteen Chinese headed by Akwei and Hakwohing ('the Kyimān Tituha' of the Burmese, from Chinese titu = general and Kin ming - by Imperial Command). The Burmese demanded that the rebel sawbwas be handed over immediately. The Chinese replied that they were not in the Chinese camp, but promised on oath to deliver them six months hence at Hsenwi. Then the following treaty¹ was written by the

1. Konbaungzet, p.480.

Chinese on white paper with ink, and a copy delivered by the Chinese to the Burmese.

"Wednesday, 13th December 1769, in the temporary building to the south-east of the town of Kaung-ton. His Excellency the general of the lord who rules over many umbrella-wearing chiefs in the great western kingdom, the sun-descended king of Ava, and lord of the golden palace, having appointed the Wundauk, Nemyo Maha Thuya, Commander of the Ko Thin Horse, the Yodaya Wun (Officer in charge of Siamese Affairs) Nemyo Thiri Zeya Thinkyan lord of Magwe, the Yun So Kaung Han Wun (officer in charge of the Lao colonies) Nemyo Nawrahta, the Nga So Wun (officer in charge of 5 Sosoor service groups) Nemyo Sithu Kyaw Htin, lord of Meiktila, the Tayok Wun (officer in charge of Chinese Affairs) Nemyo Sithu Thinkhaya, Shwe Taung Ye Gaung Nawrahta lord of Hlaing det, the Kathe Wun (officer in charge of Manipuri Affairs) Ne Myo Thiha Thu, the Myenan Thenat Wun (officer-in-charge of the Household musketeers) Kyaw Swa Shwe Taung Nawrahta lord of Myede, the Linzin Thenat Wun (officer in charge of the Linzin musketeers) Nawrahta Kyaw Din, Kyaw Thiri Nawrahta lord of the four Kothin towns, General Yangnu Thiri Nawrahta Lord of Salin, the Commander of the Pye Sin Horse Minye Thihathu, the Commander of the Kyauk Sauk Horse Minye Minhla Kyaw Htin. Pyanchi Thiri

Nawrahta, and the generals of the lord of the golden palace of China who rules over many umbrella wearing chiefs in the great Eastern Kingdom, having appointed Akwei, Kyi Min Ti Tu Ha, Sin Ta Ye, Myin Ta Ye Kyi, Hai Ta Ye, Ya Ta Ye, Myin Ta Ye Nge, Yi Ta Ye, Yo Ta Ye, Ya Ta Ye, Li Ta Ye, Kwei Ta Ye then assembled in the large building, erected in a proper manner with seven roofs, to the south-east of the town of Kaungton, on the 13th December 1769, to negotiate peace and friendship between the two great countries, and that the gold and silver road should be established agreeably to former custom. The troops of the sun-descended king and lord of the golden palace of Ava, and those of the lord of the golden palace of China, were drawn up in front of each other when this negotiation took place: and after its conclusion, each party made presents to the other, agreeably to former custom and retired. All men, the subjects of the sun-descended king and lord of the golden palace of Ava, who may be in any part of the dominions of the Lord of the golden palace of China, shall be treated according to former custom. Peace and friendship being established between the two great countries, they shall become one, like two pieces of gold united into one; and suitably to the establishment of the gold and silver road, as well as agreeably to former custom, the princes and officers

of each country shall move their respective sovereigns to transmit and exchange affectionate letters on gold, once every ten years."

During the negotiations Akwei seems to have really set himself out to please, presumably because he was getting away with an astonishing piece of chicanery, and asked to see the defenders of Kaungton, and the Burmese proudly pointed out Bala Min Din and San Hla Gyi pointing out that even they were only junior officers. Akwei next asked to see the officer who had intercepted the supply columns on the Meng Tien route, and here is a very convincing touch, for Min Ye ThihaThu, Commander of Pye Sin horse stepped forward, rolled up the sleeves of his jacket, and tucked the lower part of his garment up his crutch to show the admiring Chinese his strength. There was a famous precedent for this kind of exhibition, for in 1755 Alaungpaya himself had behaved in such a manner for the East India Company's envoy Captain Baker.¹

Presents were then exchanged between the officers and the Chinese sent some for Hsinbyushin and on the 15th December, the Chinese army withdrew followed at the distance of a jingal shot by a Burmese column under NemyoSiThu, and TeinKya Min Gaung.

1. Baker's Report. Dalrymple. p.149.

When Hsinbyushin heard of the Chinese withdrawal, he was furious. MahaThihThura and his commanders hearing of his anger dared not return, and as if to provide another illustration of the Burmese attitude towards foreign relations, they moved off in the direction of Manipur¹ to gather a fresh crop of slaves and loot to appease the king. The irresponsibility of foreign relations hinged on the king's mood, in the past, at that moment, and in the future.

Hsinbyushin unable to lay hands on his generals vented his fury on their wives. MahaThihaThura's wife was a sister of his chief queen, but even that was of no consequence; they were lined up at the palace gate with the Chinese presents on their heads, and kept there for three days. Even when MahaThihaThura returned, the king's anger had not abated, and he and the ministers who counselled forgiveness were exiled.

Several months passed and since no tribute came or prisoners returned as he had been led to expect, Chien Lung ordered the Yunnan Viceroy to remind Burma of her duty.² The Burmese were willing to send presents because they thought that there was to be an exchange of presents

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1. Pemberton; Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India, p.43.
 2. Konbaungzet p.495. E.H.Parker: Burma, Relations with China, p.89.

between two great nations, but they were not going to surrender their prisoners without first obtaining the fugitive sawbwas, and the Emperor instead of receiving tribute received a letter through the Yunnan Viceroy demanding the Sawbwas.

It is recorded that it was from this Burmese demand that the Emperor and the Viceroy first learnt of the surrender of Sawbwas¹ and from this clue we deduct that the Chinese generals, as Yang-Ying-Chu had done before, had been out to bamboozle the Emperor with tall stories of Burmese submission. The military situation from the Burmese point of view did not call for submission, the fierce pride of the Burmese king did not call for submission, and finally Hsinbyushin's subsequent behaviour after the Chinese withdrawal, and till his death, does not seem to be that of a submissive monarch. Hsinbyushin had disgraced and disowned the generals who had let the Chinese get away. He never surrendered a single Chinese prisoner, and continued to occupy Chinese territory, and proof of the last is in the official Momein (Yunnan) Annals which tell us with a sigh, that 'the Han Lung Kwan and the Tein Ma Kwan two of the frontier gates established in A.D.1594 (after Bayinnaung's

1. E.H.Parker: Burma, Relations with China, p.89

invasion) as a protection against the Burmese, fell into, and have since remained in, Burmese hands."¹

The Burmese were genuinely angry at the failure of the Chinese to deliver the Sawbwas, and the Emperor continued during Hsinbyushin's reign, and that of his son Singu to write in the Yunnan Viceroy's name arrogant and abusive fulminations demanding tribute, but the Burmese ignored the Chinese demands and held on tight to their prisoners and their frontier conquests.

Chien Lung was almost impotent but managed to retaliate by strictly forbidding all trading at Bhamo, or by the sea route. It is on this hostile note that relations were conducted up to Bodawpaya's time, and it would now be relevant to turn back to Siam to examine the effect of the Chinese invasions, on Burmese relations with that country.

The Burmese king after the fall of Ayudhya, had ordered back the bulk of his conquering armies and only small Burmese detachments were left round Ayudhya. It was an optimistic gesture and probably counted on the submissiveness of the Siamese after the reverses they

1. E.H.Parker, Burma, Relations with China. p.82.

had suffered. They failed to reckon that if they themselves could resist Chinese pretensions and aggression, so could the Siamese their own.

Thus the situation in Siam in the middle of 1767, had one dominating factor. The old central Siamese authority, which had been unable to exercise control for two years had now vanished and the bitterly resented new Burmese authority was not based on the firm foundation of a show of force, nor even by the threat of immediate reinvasion. The way was open for the provinces to split, but it was also open for the rise of new and virile power which by its virility might harness the forces of nationalism to unite the country in the process of throwing and keeping the Burmese out.

Actually both possibilities became fact. Phya Tak, the half Chinese governor of Sin who is known in history as Phya Tak Sin had escaped from Ayudhya before its fall, and had fled South-East into the district of Rayoung on the East coast of the Gulf of Siam. By the time Ayudhya fell, he was in full control of Rayoung and Chon Buri districts. In June 1767 he had collected enough strength to take over Chantabun (the Eastern-most Siamese province on the sea).¹ By October his forces had

1. Wood: History of Siam, p.252.

grown to 5,000, and he took first Tanaburi (western part of Bangkok) and then destroyed the main Burmese garrison near Ayudhya.¹ Phya Tak Sin now determined to become king and after a period of psychological preparation, he married some of the princesses of the old dynasty, and crowned himself king at Bangkok. At this stage Siam was divided into five spheres of influence.²

- 1) Central Siam, under king Tak Sin: area today occupied by the provinces of Bangkok, Ratburi, Nakon Jaisi, Prachin, Chantabun and part of Nakon Sawan.
- 2) The Peninsular provinces up to Jumporn: the Governor of Nakon Sritammarat had proclaimed his independence at the fall of Ayudhya under the title of king Musika.
- 3) The Eastern provinces including Korat: a prince of the old dynasty had set himself up as king at Pimai.
- 4) The province of Pitsanulok and part of Nakon Sawan under the governor who was known as King Ruang.

1. Konbaung zet p.498.

2. Wood: History of Siam p.254.

- 5) The extreme North of Pitsanulok where a priest had set himself up as the ruler.

Phya Tak Sin first turned to Korat and in the open season of 1768, he killed the king of Pimai and annexed that province. Then as his strength grew, he fell once more a victim of the futile conception of foreign relations of which Indo-Chinese history provides too many examples. Instead of consolidating the country, he used his strength to interfere in Cambodian affairs, but had only limited success there. Then he turned to Nakon Sritammarat; he defeated king Musika but judged him a useful man, and reappointed him as Governor of the province. Early in 1770, he defeated the priest ruler of the North and occupied Pitsanulok.

The three years of grace allowed by the Chinese invasions had been made use of. When the Burmese could spare a thought for Siam, it had been reunited under a strong audacious king. The Burmese had been driven out of the old kingdom of Ayudhya but they regarded it as a temporary setback which would be dealt with in time, for they still retained a garrison at Chiengmai, and the key to success in Ayudhya was the retention of bases in Chiangmai and the utilization of its power and resources. The retention of the Lao states however, was dependent on a certain measure of tolerance towards the native

rulers, and this was no longer available from the new type of Burmese Residents sent out.

In March 1773, Hsinbyushin received news that there was unrest in Maing Lon Kha Bin (Luang Prabang) and that Phya Tak's forces were raiding the frontier districts of Wiengchang. He therefore sent 500 horse and 7,000 foot under Nemyo Thihapate (the same general of the earlier Siamese campaigns) with orders to settle affairs there, and then, with the help of the local levies, to march on Phya Tak Sin at Bangkok.¹ At the same time the Governor of Pagan, Mingyi Karmani Sanda was sent as Governor of Martaban in place of Min Ye Min Hla Uzana who had died, with instructions to raise levies from the Mons of Martaban, Tavoy, and Mergui and to march in support of Nemyo Thihapate.

Nemyo Thihapate on arrival at Chiengmai found a bitter quarrel going on between the Burmese Governor Thado Min Din and the influential chiefs Phya Chaban (Phya Sapan of the Burmese) Kawila, lord of Lagun.² The account of the quarrel given in the Konbaungzet³ supports

1. Wood: History of Siam p.262. Konbaungzet p.498.
2. Dr. D.Richardson's translation of the Native history of Labong J.A.S.B. 1837 p.55.
3. Konbaungzet p.500

the account given in the history of Chiengmai¹ which states that "the Burmese rulers in every part of Lannata' (kingdom of Chiengmai) oppressed and illtreated the people in many ways and the people suffered very grievously. Some fled and dwelt in the forests and jungles, and some formed themselves into robber bands and fought together." A report on the state of affairs was sent back to Ava, and Hsinbyushin ordered that Thado Mindin confine himself to his duties and let the Chiengmai nobles rule in peace. The Burmese king evidently was content if Chiengmai continued as a vassal state, for that was the extent of Burmese ambitions, but the machinery broke down because the men employed to maintain this relationship were inept and oppressive, and there was no effective means to correct in time the results flowing from such inept handling.

Thado Min Din issued an arrogant order to the Chiengmai nobles to attend in person to hear Hsinbyushin's orders. The Chiengmai nobles refused to submit to this arrogance and cut up the armed men sent to bring them by force. Hiding their families in a place of refuge, they hurried into Nemyo Thihapate's camp for protection. Nemyo Thihapate in the meanwhile had settled affairs in

1. Wood: History of Siam p.260.

Wieng Chaung and had returned to Chiengmai to collect more troops for the projected march against Phya Tak Sin. He received the Chiengmai nobles, and gave them the command of the van. Thado Min Din at this point approached Nemyo Thihapate and pointing out that the Chiengmai nobles were disaffected persons not likely to be loyal asked that they should be given into his custody. Nemyo Thihapate refused saying that he found no fault with the Chiengmai nobles since it was only a personal quarrel.

Thado Min Din was not to be denied. He sent back an urgent message to Ava giving his interpretation of the affair and Hsinbyushin desiring to clear up the matter sent out orders for the Chiengmai nobles to come to court. Armed with this order Thado Min Din demanded the Chiengmai nobles from Nemyo Thihapate again, but deciding that the king probably only wanted to ensure the tranquillity in Chiengmai so that the invasion of Siam should not be affected, and in any case he had full powers as a field officer on active operations, Nemyo Thihapate refused to hand them over, for they were persons of great influence in Chiengmai, and their surrender might turn the people against the Burmese. Thado Min Din now sent armed men to intercept the Chiengmai nobles, but his men were cut up and had to retreat. Thado Min Din however was reckless by now; he rounded up the families

of the Chiengmai nobles, and sent them under escort to Ava. News of this development reached the Chiengmai nobles. They deserted their posts, hurried in pursuit, rescued their families, and fled into Phya Tak Sin's camp.

The disaffection of the leaders of the Chiengmai people was a godsend to Phya Tak Sin. He realized that this was the best opportunity to unite Chiengmai with his territories, and he hurried to make use of it with all his strength; by January 1775 the Burmese were driven out of Chiengmai, and had retreated to Chiang Sen (Bankasa).¹ Through their own fault, the Burmese had inextricably thrown away the bases essential to the success of any future aggression in Siam, while at the same time they had helped to increase its strength, by creating the conditions necessary for the effective fusion of Chiengmai and Bangkok.

In the South too, the avaricious folly of the Burmese officials was the main cause of failure. Mingyi Karmani Sanda, the newly appointed Governor of Martaban collected troops as ordered, and then ordered the Mon levies under Binnya Sein to lead the advance. Three marches away from Martaban the Mons received news that their families were being tortured by Mingyi Karmani

1. Konbaungzet p.503.

Sanda for money. Saying "we have marched in the van so that our families may live in peace, and now they are being tortured; our enemy is not before us, it is behind"¹, they hurried back travelling day and night, killed all the Burmese they caught, and drove the rest into Rangoon, which they besieged. The Myanaung Bo (Myan Aung, North of Henzada) raised the Burmese of the delta towns, and came to the rescue. The Mons taking their families with them, fled into Siam where the Siamese, regarding them as useful enemies of the Burmese, treated them well, even to the extent of stocking supplies on the escape routes.²

Hsinbyushin however, did not abandon his ideas of conquest, and persisted in once more sending a major expedition by the Southern route. MahaThihaThura who had been recalled from exile was placed in charge of 2,500 horse and 35,000 men and sent off once more via the three Pagodas route.

Hsinbyushin was now near the end of his life; the generals knew of his illness and in the intrigues that went on between the generals who were backing different nominees for the vacancy, the efficient conduct of

1. Konbaungzet p.504.

2. Halliday: Journal of the Siam Society Vol X, Part 3, pp.3-5. Konbaungzet p.505.

foreign relations, even as the Burmese conceived it to be, suffered.

MahaThihaThura was a brother-in-law of Hsinbyushin and was also father-in-law of Singu, Hsinbyushin's son (who was to succeed his father in disregard of Alaungpaya's desire that his sons should rule one after the other); Minye Zeya Kyaw, one of the senior commanders was the brother-in-law of the Amyin Prince (the fourth son of Alaungpaya). MahaThihaThura received intelligence that the Siamese were waiting in force in a narrow valley through which his route lay. It must be remembered that he was a soldier of considerable experience and proved judgement; the action he now took must therefore lead one to suspect strongly an ulterior motive. He commanded Minye Zeya Kyaw to lead 3,000 men to disperse the Siamese force that blocked the way.

Minye Zeya Kyaw protested saying that it was folly to invite inauspicious defeat at the very beginning of the campaign, by sending such an inadequate force. MahaThihaThura persisted and when Minye Zeya Kyaw still refused, he sent back a report to Ava on Minye Zeya Kyaw's insubordination. Minye Zeya Kyaw heard of this report, and knowing that his life was now in jeopardy, he determined to play for high stakes. He knew that Hsinbyushin was not well, and determined to throw the weight of his own

regiments on the side of his brother-in-law in the coming fight for the succession. He gathered his regiments and retired to Martaban.

MahaThihaThura now had to persist in his original orders, for he must never let it be suspected that there was anything deeper in the causes of Minye Zeya Kyaw's insubordination. He ordered the Sat Pya Gone Bo (the Colonel of the Soapy Hillock village) to advance with 3,000 men. The Sat Pya Gone Bo had no option but to advance as ordered. The Siamese surrounded his troops, and in April 1775, one thousand three hundred and twenty eight¹ starving men that were the survivors of the force surrendered. By this time, it was too late to achieve any worthwhile results before the rains, and the Burmese returned to Martaban.

Hsinbyushin, however, even in his illness had no thought of giving up his Siamese adventure. The orders for invasion were not withdrawn, and in October 1775 MahaThihaThura having abandoned the previous invasion route chose the far more suitable one via Kawkareik--Myawaddy and Melamao. The causes of the failure of his earlier campaign become even more obvious when the rapid progress he now made is seen. With the same number of

1. Wood: History of Siam, p.265.

of troops, he rapidly occupied Raheng, Sukotai and Pitsanulok. A Siamese army under Chao Phya Chakri (the founder of the present Siamese dynasty) was smashed at Pitsanulok, and Phya Tak Sin himself was defeated in his attempt to relieve Pitsanulok.¹

It is clear from these successes that Siamese strength had not reached the stage when they could prevent a determined and well lead Burmese army from creating havoc in Siam. The Chinese invasion must be regarded as an absolute god-sent gift, for if the Burmese had been able to muster the same strength as MahaThihathura's single army, at the beginning of his rise, Phya Tak Sin would never have had a chance.

The vagaries inherent in the direction of foreign policy, due to the absolute power of the Burmese kings, however, now came to the rescue of Siam. In June, just when MahaThihathura had deployed his army in three columns to swoop through the Siamese plain on Bangkok, Hsinbyushin died. His son Singu succeeded to the throne, and orders were at once sent out to recall the Burmese troops from Siam.

1. Wood: History of Siam, p.266. Konbaungzet p.524.

CHAPTER IX

Singu 1776-82. An Interim Period.

We now enter upon an Interim Period in which the scale of hostilities is reduced, and foreign relations are more or less suspended.

Singu, the eldest son of Hsinbyushin was born in 1754 and throughout his life there had been fighting on a large scale which must have made him sick of it all. Another reason for the recall of the troops in Siam could have been that, he succeeded to the throne largely because his father's reign had been long enough for him to build up a respectable following, though by the express wish of Alaungpaya another of Alaungpaya's sons was to have succeeded Hsinbyushin; therefore the presence of MahaThihaThura, his father-in-law, and the chief Burmese commander in Siam, who must have been one of his principal adherents, was necessary in the capital to buttress his position in the first months of his reign. Nemyo Thihapate, the Burmese commander, who was the other specialist on Siamese campaigns and at the time of Hsinbyushin's death was still at Chieng Sen, was

probably another supporter for he also was recalled with his troops, and made a Hluttaw Wungyi, with the title of Nemyo Thenapate.¹

Singu, whose tutor was the Poet Nga Pyaw, spent his time wandering round the countryside visiting various pagodas, repairing those of his predecessors and building new ones.² He possessed, however, in some measure, the same attitude as his immediate predecessor towards the traditional boundaries of Burma. Chiengmai to him was part of the Burmese kingdom, and as far as suzerainty over Chiengmai was concerned, the Burmese had a far better claim than Phya Tak Sin. In January 1777, he sent off 15,000 men under the Amyauk Wun (Commander of the artillery) Nemyo Thiha Thu, who succeeded in driving Phya Chaban (the Chiengmai noble of Nemyo Thihapate's time) out of Chiengmai.

Regarding relations with China, the Burmese still retained their Chinese prisoners, and the Burmese chronicles do not bother to mention any renewal of

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1. Konbaungzet p.525. Harvey in his History of Burma, p.262 implies that Mahathihathura was deprived of his office almost immediately after his recall from Siam. In the chronicles, the main source for this period MahaThihaThura was stripped of his dignities only in June 1777 (Konbaungzet p.526), one year after his return.
 2. Konbaungzet p.542.

activity, hostile or friendly. The Chinese accounts¹ state that letters drafted personally by Chien Lung were sent to Chwei-Koihya (Singu) but they never effected anything. The Burmese wars had cost Chien Lung on his own admission² 20,000 men, the flower of his generals, and the equivalent of several millions sterling, and the prospect of another invasion being therefore distasteful, the continued hostility of the Burmese monarch abolished all contacts during the period of Singu's reign.

Singu did not reign long. He took to drink³ and in his drunkenness, wantonly alienated the loyalties of an influential section of his ministers. He adopted the custom of wandering round the countryside and returning to the palace at odd hours of the night. A conspiracy was hatched. Maung Maung, the eldest son of Naungdawgyi tricked his way into the palace one night, and with the help of his village braves from Paungga, captured the palace city and proclaimed himself king. Singu planned large scale measures to retake his palace, but the ministers and officers deserted him in droves.

Maung Maung, an inexperienced youth, was at once found out to be a weakling and the excesses of his uncouth villagers soon alienated the court. Bodawpaya

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1. E.H.Parker: Burma, Relations with China, p.90.
 2. E.H.Parker: Ibid. p.82.
 3. Konbaungzet p.534.

Alaungpaya's fifth son, obtained the support of the ministers and generals, and on the seventh day of his reign, Maung Maung was seized and executed. Soon after, Singu who had been captured, was also executed, and in February 1782 Bodawpaya ascended the throne.

CHAPTER X

Bodawpaya 1782-1819. The last period in which Burma was to conduct her foreign relations, free from effective European pressure.

Bodawpaya, the fifth son of Alaungpaya was 38 years old when he came, at long last to the throne. He had grown up in an atmosphere of arrogance, heady success and power, and up to his brother Hsinbyushin's death had lived in all the trappings of influence and prosperity. Then, all his carefully bred arrogance, and the lust for power which he considered would rightfully be his one day had had to undergo the most painful humiliation. Throughout the reign of Singu he had been progressively stripped of almost everything he valued, and only the most circumspect behaviour had brought him safely through. If enforced humility increased his pent up ambition, his years of trial taught him to be careful with anything or anyone that could affect the retention of his power.

His pent up desire for glory sent him off on a conquest of Arakan and, much later, Assam and the resumption of the interminable campaigns in Siam, and

in him this desire for glory reached such a pitch of intensity, that he carried the traditional Burmese conception of the monarch as the best Buddhist, much further than any of the other Konbaung kings: he was to proceed to the ridiculous extent of proclaiming himself as Arimettaya the Buddha himself. The years of humiliation, however, showed their effect in the way he resumed friendly relations with China without much fuss, though only after he had been led to believe that it was the Chinese who had made the first overtures.¹

Bodawpaya had ascended the throne by forcible means, and his first task was to make himself secure during the inevitable period of rebellion that followed immediately after the accession of a new king. Three rebellions had to be dealt with in quick succession. His brother the Sitha Prince and MahaThihaThura, the great Burmese general, were the first to rebel² in March 1782. Then, Nga Myat Bon, one of Maung Maung's followers rebelled and nearly succeeded in killing Bodawpaya; but he too was disposed of. Finally, in February 1783, the Mons

1. Sangermano: D of B.E. p.58. Bodawpaya had however, after the conquest of Arakan in 1785 talked of annexing China and India but perhaps the failure in Siam made him change his mind.

2. Konbaungzet p.544.

of the Delta rebelled once again and took Rangoon, but they did not last long and that rebellion was crushed with great ferocity.

The rebellious phase now being passed, Bodaw in December 1783 set out to concentrate on the more efficient exploitation of his people, and carried out a census with great care.¹ He was now free as no other Burmese king had ever been to increase the happiness and prosperity of the people, and by conserving his strength, to keep the country's independence secure. The country had been united since Alaungpaya's time, and in the five years preceding Bodawpaya's period, there had been no great wars. The common people had achieved a large measure of prosperity, and when Father Sangermano first arrived in 1783, he found on the way up to Ava, a thriving and prosperous country. But now, an obscure local quarrel in Arakan diverted his attention from Bodawpaya's own country, and success once more inflamed the ever present ambition of the Konbaung dynasty.

In 1665, the Arakanese kingdom which had taken part in the sack of Pegu - 1599, suffered a mortal blow. Shayista Khan² the Moghul Viceroy of Bengal had forced

1. See Chapter on Population.

2. Jadunath Sarkar: The Conquest of Chatgaon. J.A.S.B. 1907.

the Portuguese allies of Arakan to desert, and in 1666 Chittagong was irretrievably lost to Arakan. The extension of Moghul power under Aurangzeb made it certain that the centuries old piratical instincts of the Arakanese would find no effective and profitable outlet. Soon there was widespread anarchy in the kingdom: by the time of Bodawpaya's accession Arakan was in complete confusion. A certain faction of the warring Arakanese nobles came to Amarapura (the new capital a few miles from Ava) for help, and in November 1784 the Burmese Crown Prince with 33,000 men started from the capital on the Arakanese adventure.¹ Arakan was taken with little trouble, some of the villages coming out with bands playing to welcome the Burmese.² Bodawpaya now felt that he was equal to the task of surpassing any achievement of his predecessors and almost automatically, lacking in imaginative understanding of the true interests of his country as against self glorification, his thoughts turned to Siam.

In 1785 he issued orders for a grand attack on Siam, saying that he himself, lord of many etcetras would lead his royal troops. Preparations took a considerable

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1. G.E. Harvey, History of Burma p.267. Konbaungzet p. 575
 2. Konbaungzet p.582.

time for an enormous army was ordered to be raised, but finally Mingyi Min Gaung Kyaw was sent off ahead in June 1785, to arrange for supplies at Martaban, which were to be stocked on the Ataran river route (the Burmese Htaryaik route), after which he was to lead a column of 10,000 men to Tavoy, from whence he was to start his activities. Then, the seven Salween Sawbwas with 30,000 men were placed under the command of the Wungyi Thado Maha Thiri Uzana and ordered to march via Chiengmai. Next the Bhamo, Hsipaw and Mogaung Sawbwas with 23,000 men under the command of two Burmese princes were sent ahead of the main body to Martaban. The main body some 50,000 strong accompanied the king down to Martaban. It set out in November 1785, and marching by way of Toungoo and Shwegyin reached Martaban in December. High festival was held at every stage in anticipation of victory.

At Martaban, it was found that the supplies collected by Mingyi Min Khaung Kyaw were insufficient, for there were hordes of camp followers brought by the king; so that unfortunate officer was brought back bound into the royal presence and executed at once. The other officers were now thrown into a panic, and when the king asked again about supplies they lied and told him they had enough. The king was thirsting for glory now, and

when the troops were slow in the crossing over to Moulmein, he uttered violent threats which caused such a confusion of haste that it seemed probable that a large amount of what supplies had already been collected must have been left behind.

A courageous junior officer, the Eater of Khaw Thanti now suggested that an intensive search for food should be made in the provinces of Martaban and Pegu by the main body, while strong columns would cache supplies along the route and guard the lines of communication. After all this had been done, the main body unencumbered by the transport of supplies could march twice as quickly. He calculated that the Siamese, hearing of the king's intention to march by the Htaryaik route, would be forced to keep their main strength on guard on this route. This would enable the other three columns which had been sent via Tavoy, Chiengmai, and Mergui, to advance without meeting any considerable resistance, and would thus serve his Majesty's ends very effectively. The king, however, refused to consider this suggestion, saying he would march on the morrow, and just to emphasize the point threw his spear at the crouching group of officers.

There was now no escape from the king's folly. The

army began its advance. It could not march in strength because there was not enough food on the way, and the consequent division of the main body into detachments led straight into defeat. The advance columns reached as far as Kanburi, were surrounded, overwhelmed and captured.¹ The king himself had advanced but three stages from Moulmein where he received news of this. Saying² "In war, even Sakya (the king of the nats) has on occasions to retreat; we shall let the Yodaya be this once, but can they ever escape again!" he fled back shamelessly.

The Salween levies had by now fought their way down to Pitsanulok, and the Tavoy column, after driving the Siamese forces out of Nakon Sritammarat, had reached Raheng, when orders came recalling them. These two columns had advanced rapidly because the main Siamese armies were waiting for Bodawpaya, but as the king's flight had now set these free, the Burmese had to retreat leaving many prisoners in Siamese hands.

The Mergui column had been sent off with the most sensible aim of the campaign, which was meant to reduce the strength of the Siamese by indirect means. Its orders were to capture Junkceylon (Ujong Selang). The

1. Konbaungzet p.605.

2. Ibid. p.607.

mountains on the East of the Siamese peninsular provinces effectively cut off the Siamese from direct access to the Bay of Bengal and it was only at Junkceylon island that there was a practicable outlet to the western seas. Junkceylon was conterminous with the territory of the Sultan of Kedah and commanded Siamese access to the West. Its occupation by the Burmese forces would affect considerably the flow of arms and ammunition from India, and also reduce Siamese trade with India. Thus while the Mergui column marched down the Tenasserim coast, a fleet of eleven ships set out from Rangoon¹ in support. Early in 1786, the Burmese troops landed on Junkceylon. They were not, however, suffered to remain long on the island. The governor Phya Chalang having recently died, his widow and her sister took the field at the head of their troops and drove the Burmese off.²

Bodawpaya himself was largely responsible for the failure of this personal attempt at the reconquest of Siam, but the new king of Siam was the founder of a new dynasty (the present Chakri) and had been the right hand man of Phya Tak. He was an energetic leader, able

1. Symes: Embassy to Ava, p.111.

2. Gerini: Historical retrospect of Junkceylon island. Journal of the Siamese Society, p.60.

to rally and effectively deploy the Siamese resources, and this combined with the implacable hostility of Chiengmai towards the Burmese meant that Burma was never again to be in a position to repeat Hsinbyushin's success.

Bodawpaya, however was not the sort of man to be sensible about matters affecting his prestige. He himself never took the field again for he concentrated his personal efforts on the erection and construction of vainglorious works of merit which called for the large-scale conscription of unpaid labour and resulted in depopulation and intense misery.¹ He continued, however, to send expeditions. They were never again on the grand scale, and even the figures of the troops sent were officially exaggerated, for men like Cox who personally saw the troops being marshalled at the capital, noted that it was getting more and more difficult to reconcile official figures with actuality.

1. For example, the Mingun pagoda, which was intended to be the largest pagoda in the world, the construction of which after seven years was still not completed, though men worked by day and night, and the nat spirits were supposed to be helping (see Hiram Cox: *Journal of a Residence in the Burmhan Empire*. p.108) till finally someone took advantage of the king's superstition, and spread a story to the effect that the completion of the pagoda meant his ruin; that stopped him.

The Siamese were more sensible, and confined themselves to frontier raids, and the instigation of border governors and vassal states to rebel. The two countries were really too weak for one effectively to subdue the other, and the Burmese struggle with Siam degenerated into a series of raids and counter raids. In 1781 the Burmese, who still held Chiangsen and Chiengrai, sent an army to drive the Chiengrai noble Kawila out of the area; but with the assistance of a Siamese force under the Maha Uparat (the heir-apparent of Siam),¹ they were driven out. In the same year Siamese troops raided Tavoy, but they in turn were driven out.

In 1791, however, the Siamese policy of encouraging Burmese subjects to rebel bore fruit, and hostilities on a larger scale broke out once again. Nga Myat Pyu, the Governor of Tavoy was disappointed in not being promoted to the Governorship of Martaban on the death of the incumbent, and invited the Siamese into the town. The Burmese king acting with traditional ferocity burnt Nga Myat Pyu's family alive; a strong force was sent out under the command of the crown prince, and at the first halting stage, Nga Myat Pyu's father, the Mekhaya Bo

1. Wood: History of Siam p.274. Konbaungzet p.624.

was also burnt alive before the troops. Tavoy was ultimately retaken. The whole incident serves to illustrate the futility of the struggle.

Once again in 1797 Bodawpaya sent an expedition to retake Chiengmai. He scraped together with much difficulty 50,000 men¹ and sent them off to march on Chiengmai. Desertion was chronic by now,² and it is doubtful whether a third of them fought; the Burmese were again defeated and driven off. Burmese power in this region had ebbed away almost completely, and in 1802, the Burmese forces which had held on tenaciously to the desolated area round Chiangsen and Chiengrai, were finally driven out.

The visible decline of Burmese power in the area, combined with their heavy exactions and extortions, proved too much for the long suffering Shans of Keng Tung, and once again the Siamese policy of specious promises bore fruit. The Keng Tung people³ now became pawns in the game of unending hostilities between Siam and Burma. They rose in rebellion under their princes and migrated en masse across the frontier to Chiengmai, where as had been promised, land was marked out for their settlements. But

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1. Hiram Cox: Journal of a Residence in the Burmahan Empire p.118.
 2. Crawford: Embassy to the Court of Ava, Vol.II. p.59.
 3. G.U.B. Vol.II. Part I, p.407. Macleod: J.A.S.B. 1837, p.991.

they found no peace there, and Macleod, who visited them in 1836, found them bitter, frustrated people; the Siamese had used them as the Burmese had previously used the people of Chiengmai, to repair the ravage of enemy slave raids by counter raids.

Bodawpaya's policy of resuming hostile relations with Siam in 1785 had, in the South, resulted in repercussions which led Burma to take a political interest in a region she had previously not bothered about. The invasion of 1785 by the Burmese column starting off from Tavoy had necessitated the despatch of large bodies of Siamese troops into Nakon Sritammarat. The rapid collapse of the Burmese invasions left the troops free to undertake the task of enforcing Siamese suzerainty in parts of the Malay Peninsula, a region where since the fall of Ayudhya, Siamese influence had been practically nil.¹

The Malay state of Kedah, being the nearest to Nakon Sritammarat, came first under Siamese pressure. It was forced to accede to heavy demands for men and supplies, and had to acknowledge Siamese suzerainty by the sending in of the traditional gold and silver trees of submission (the Bunga Mas).² The Sultan looked round for help and

1. Wood: History of Siam: p.273.

2. L.A.Mills: British Malaya 1824-67, p.24.

ceded the island of Penang in 1786, and in 1800 ceded province Wellesly on the mainland, to the East India Company hoping for British help. British help however, was not forthcoming in our period, and the Sultan had to look round for some other source of succour. It is in this connection that the Burmese record¹ of an embassy from Yodaya (Siam) must be examined.

In February 1807, some Siamese subjects are reported to have arrived at Mingun with presents and letters. The Konbaung chronicle then closes this incident and it is not mentioned in our period again. It is impossible to imagine that it was from Bangkok that the mission came for the Siamese never changed their hostile attitude towards Burma; it must have been from Kedah, for soon the Siamese were accusing Kedah of intriguing with Burma. Apparently the East India Company knew the facts and in an excessively punctilious manner informed the Siamese Governor of Nakon Sritammarat to that effect.²

The incident presented Bodawpaya with a welcome opportunity to harass the Siamese.

In 1809 he sent ships to raid the Siamese coastal

1. Konbaungzet p.731.

2. L.A.Mills - British Malaya 1824-67. p.130.

villages South of the Isthmus of Kra, and to invade Junkceylon. The Burmese were driven out, but he sent yet another, and in the years 1809-11 there were altogether four of these unsuccessful expeditions which later on brought fearful retribution on Kedah from Siam. The Burmese had no heart in these wars now; when they were recruited they would be tied hand and foot together, and such material was pitifully inadequate for the achievement of the conquests the king so passionately desired.¹

Friendly relations were never resumed between Siam and Burma. The Siamese were too prudent to carry out large scale invasions, but they did anything they could, from slave raids, propaganda inciting rebellion, and support, even though it might not be effective, of anyone who was the enemy of the Burmese, from the fugitive Mons to the East India Company. In 1814 they sent princes of the blood to escort the Mon fugitives into Siam (Maha Mongkut later the king, in the famous book 'Anna and the king of Siam' was one of them);² in 1825 they planned to send an army under a Mon chief to help the British

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1. Crawford: Embassy to the Court of Ava Vol.II, p.159.
 2. Halliday: Journal of the Siamese Society, Immigration of the Mons into Siam, 1913.

in the first Anglo-Burmese War;¹ in 1836, Macleod found that even Shan subjects of Ava were not allowed to set foot in Siamese territory; in 1854 they carried out a great invasion of KengTung which was not successful, and in 1943 they joined the Japanese, and obtained Keng Tung and Mong Pan from them as their payment.

Every aspect of Burma's relations with Siam in our period, is depressing. In the days of the Toungoo dynasty, it was the everlasting unfriendliness of Burma's relations with Siam that contributed so largely to that dynasty's temporary collapse in 1599. In the Konbaung dynasty, it was the same thing all over again. Canning, the British Agent at Rangoon in 1809, found the misery of the country beyond description.² Deserters unable to return to their villages roamed about in murderous gangs; the administration of the country almost collapsed, and all this was largely due to the boundless pretensions of the Burmese kings which had poisoned the country's relations with Siam. Burma might have collapsed, and much earlier if MahaThihaThura had not exhibited rare independence in his negotiations with the Chinese in 1769, but fortunately for Burma he had, and this opportunity for

1. Halliday - op.cit.

2. Halliday - Europe and Burma. p.98.

Chinese face saving, and the later intrigues of the Yunnan authorities combined to take advantage of the king's vanity, and so channeled Burmese relations with China into a saner, more beneficial atmosphere.

The beneficent nature of Burma's relations with China in Bodawpaya's reign was a later product, and came into effect only after 1788. The reign had opened with Sino-Burmese relations frozen on a note of hostility, and it did not start off very well, evidence on the particular manner and style in which relations were resumed is to some extent contradictory. Colonel Burney¹ the Burmese Resident at Ava, in 1836, states that he was given to understand that Bodawpaya had in 1781, deputed a small party for the purpose of opening a communication with China. G.E. Harvey², perhaps relying on his knowledge that Bodawpaya came to the throne in 1782, places 1782 at the head of a string of dates of Burmese embassies to China. E.H. Parker in treating of Burma's relations with China³ during the period completely omits any mention of either a 1781 or 1782 mission. Li Ung Bin, the Chinese

1. J.A.S.B. 1837, p.405.

2. History of Burma, p.279.

3. E.H.Parker - Burma, Relations with China, p.91.

historian, writes¹ "Misfortunes now fell upon Burmah. Weakened by civil strife, she found herself completely at the mercy of her neighbour and historic enemy, the Siamese. Inasmuch as Siam had sent missions of tribute to China, Bhoḍo Phra, the new king of Burmah, thought that the cheapest way for him to get out of the trouble would be to follow her example. In 1788, he too sent an embassy to China; to pay tribute, and to ask for pardon." The Burmese chronicle for the period, the Konbaungzet, does not mention any diplomatic mission in 1782. The Konbaungzet does, however, record a Burmese embassy in the year 1788.² The Let Ywe Gyi Hmu (officer of the Great Company of picked men) Nemyo Shwe Taung, Thiha Kyaw Gaung and Welu Thaya were the mission officials sent. These envoys returned in January 1789 and in their report mention is made of the Burmese demand for the persons of the fugitive sawbwas and the six men, Nga Uh (probably Nga Oh) Nga Lhe Gho, Nga Tsit To, Nga Tsit Li (possibly Chinese interpreters) Nga Po Bin, and Nga Po Yi;³ who had been seized and sent to Tartary.

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1. Li Ung Bin: Outlines of Chinese History p.452.
 2. Konbaungzet, p.612.
 3. Burney: J.A.S.B. 1837, p.420.

Thus, there does seem to have been an embassy preceding the one of 1788, but it is obvious from the fact that the six men had been seized and kept imprisoned that the mission was not a tribute mission.

Now, the Burmese do admit having sent an embassy to Peking in 1788, (it is said to have borne a letter from the king addressed to the Emperor in reply to one from him which had been delivered by a Chinese Embassy in 1787). "The Chinese annals which are very minute in all other details, do not give the text of the king's letter;"¹ this is surprising when one bears in mind that the Burmese monarch's letter was very plainly an acknowledgement of one from the Chinese Emperor. It seems strange that such an important letter bearing a message of humble submission, a thing for which the Chinese had fought three very costly wars, and for which they had waited nearly 20 years, should not have been recorded in its entirety, just to prove to all that the king of Burma had indeed sent in his submission to the Son of Heaven.

The explanation would appear to be that the Chinese Shans of Kaingma and the Bhamo Sawbwa were acting in

1. E.H.Parker: Burma, Relations with China, p.91.

collusion with the Chinese officials of Yunnan and Peking to bamboozle both Bodawpaya and Chien Lung. There are certain aspects in the behaviour of the Yunnan officials which would tend to support this view. In the first place, it is not without significance that the Burmese envoys, who were sent in 1788, were kept waiting five months in Yunnan,¹ before sanction was given by Peking to let them proceed. Now this would be strange if it were really a Chinese embassy genuinely from Peking itself, for it must be remembered that the Chinese ambassador had brought what was supposed to be the Chinese Emperor's own letter, and would have returned straight from Amaraapura to Peking taking as a matter of course the Burmese with them without a delay that stretched into five months; after all, the Chinese had an excellent courier service which took only ten days to cover the distance from Yunnan to Peking.² If however, the Chinese embassy of 1787 had not been sent by the Emperor, then the delay would be a natural one in the circumstances, for it would be from an irritating and impertinent Burma, which had at last crawled in to submit, and which

1. Burney: J.A.S.B. 1837, p.414.

2. See Chapter six.

therefore must be treated with a certain amount of displeasure at the beginning, and in any case the completion of proper arrangements would have taken a considerable time.

To reinforce one's suspicion of the bona-fides of the first Chinese embassy, the Chinese ambassador did not accompany the Burmese to Peking. They were detained in Yunnan on various pretexts during which time presumably report of the arrival of a tribute-bearing Burmese mission was sent to Peking and Imperial orders awaited. The Burmese envoys were sent off to Peking with an escort from Yunnan, including an interpreter presumably chosen by Yunnan. . Once before the emperor, there would be no difficulty about the Burmese envoys behaving in a satisfactorily humble manner. The Chinese demanded as a matter of course, the kow-tow from all non-Chinese nations, but they got it easily enough from Burmese envoys who were also junior officials. For example in 1744 the king of Burma sent an embassy to Ayudhya and on that occasion the Burmese envoys were willing to kow tow not only to the king of Ayudhya but to the senior ministers and generals of the Siamese king.¹ Actually the Burmese envoys not only kowtowed, but accepted

1. Wood's History of Siam, p.234. G.E.Harvey: History of Burma, p.214.

the orders of the Chinese ministers to wait in the early mornings at stray corners, and then to offer, as instructed, the most fulsome flattery to Chien Lung.

A comparison of the dates on which Chinese embassies arrived at Amarapura with the dates on which the Chinese annals record any kind of communication from China to Amarapura might help to clear up this matter. The Burmese account states that in 1787¹ a mission led by the brother of the lord of Kaing Ma arrived to arrange for the resumption of friendly relations. In 1790 another mission arrived at Amarapura with three Chinese princesses for Bodawpaya's harem.² In 1795 another Chinese embassy³ arrived to ask Bodawpaya to recognize Chien Lung's grandson as the heir to the Chinese throne and to regard him as his own brother or son.

From the Chinese annals we may infer that a mission from Burma arrived some years before 1788, and since they were seized and hurried away to Tartary, they could not have been tribute bearers, because the first Burmese embassy which was acceptable to Chien Lung arrived in 1788,⁴ and was given an imperial letter and some presents.

1. Konbaungzet p.613.

2. Ibid. p.638.

3. Ibid, p.672.

4. E.H.Parker, Burma, Relations with China. p.91.

This date tallies with that of the Burmese account. In 1790, the king of Burma was given a seal of investiture. In 1791, the Emperor sent some presents in acknowledgement of certain Chinese prisoners taken from the Siamese and restored to China. In 1793, a Manchu seal for the Sawbwa of Manmu (Bhamo) was granted to the Sawbwa who explained that he made the application with the consent of the king of Burma. The Emperor replied in granting the seal, that the king of Burma need entertain no suspicions as Manmu and Muh Pang (North Hsenwi) would of course continue to be subject to Burma, and that the granting of seals to those two sawbwas was but an additional honour to Burma and to them. It is recorded in 1795, that the Burmese sent a mission to congratulate the Emperor Chien Lung on the 60th anniversary of his reign, and also brought tribute. In 1796 the Emperor Kiaking censured the Viceroy of Yunnan for refusing a Burmese tribute mission on the grounds that it was not yet due, adding that on an occasion such as this, it was unnecessary to adhere too strictly to the letter. The Emperor however sent some complimentary presents in acknowledgement of his civility.¹

To add to the impression obtained from the dates, it

1. E.H.Parker: Burma, Relations with China pp.92-94.

would be relevant to say from the Burmese records in Bodawpaya's reign (1782-1819) Burma sent, sometime before the 1788 embassy, a mission of some kind which definitely did not bear tribute; while in 1788 an embassy was sent in return to the one the Chinese sent. In October 1792, Bodawpaya sent an embassy with some valuable presents. The Sawbwa of Bhamo was the chief envoy. In 1795 polite acknowledgement of the Emperor's letter asking recognition for his grandson was sent. In 1796, an embassy was sent under a Sayedawgyi which was turned back at the frontier.

It is shown from this comparison of dates that both the courts of Ava (Amarapura) and Peking were being fooled by some person or persons unknown.

The Emperor of China it is seen never sent any of the missions which arrived at Amarapura, and the Burmese mission of 1790 asking for investiture, and in 1795 to congratulate the Emperor on the 60th anniversary of his reign were sent without the knowledge or at any rate, official sanction of the Burmese monarch.

The Burmese account of the 1787 Chinese embassy gives further proof of the bogus status of the embassy. In the Konbaungzet¹ it is given "On Tuesday the 3rd April 1787 Mintayagyi (Great Lord of Righteousness - Bodawpaya)

1. Konbaungzet pp.613-22.

received a report from the Sawbwa and officers of Hsenwi that a Chinese embassy consisting of upwards of 300 men with Etsoye as the chief envoy had arrived at Hsenwi with a letter on gold and costly presents from the Emperor of China, for the purpose of establishing peace and friendship between the two great countries. Mintayagyi ordered the Chinese embassy to be conveyed to the capital." After the Chinese mission had been brought down to Amarapura and a translation of the letter made, a formal procession was made through the decorated streets of Amarapura with the letter and the chief envoy on elephants, and the junior envoys on horseback. At the She Yon (the Criminal Court) they dismounted and after the Ein-she-min (the heir apparent) had passed into the palace, the envoys "stopping and kowtowing along the whole road in the usual manner" followed. Now, this reference to the "kowtowing" in the "usual manner" is significant, for Imperial Chinese would never consent to kowtow to the palace of a vassal prince. The Burmese reference to the "usual manner" meant that they regarded the Chinese as having come from a nation at most an equal, but certainly not Burma's superior.

After Bodawpaya had made his ceremonial entry and the preliminary blessings from the ponnas had been pronounced,

and the dispatch of offering at the pagoda had been completed, the letter purporting to be from the Chinese Emperor (Udibwa) was read out. It ran as follows:

"The elder brother, Udibwa (Emperor of China) who rules over the great kingdoms to the eastward, and a multitude of umbrella-wearing chiefs, addresses affectionately his younger brother, the lord of the white, red and mottled elephants, who rules over the great kingdoms to the westward and a multitude of umbrella-wearing chiefs, lord of the amber mines, the sun-descended king and master of the golden palace. The ancestors of the two brothers have inherited and ruled in succession in this Zabudipa island, lying to the southward of Myen mo mount, from the first creation of the world; and the two brothers are enjoying in the eastern and western great kingdoms, prosperity equal to that of the Thagya Nat, with very great glory, power and authority. From the time even of our ancestors there has been no enmity. The younger brother, the sun-descended king, is an independent sovereign, receiving the homage of great kingdoms, and of an hundred umbrella-wearing chiefs. The elder brother also is an independent sovereign, receiving the homage of great kingdoms, and of an hundred umbrella-wearing chiefs. If the two brothers enter into a permanent agreement and friendship,

conformably to the union which has existed between them uninterruptedly in former states of existence, it will be like a nail driven in (as firm) to their posterity. The elder brother, who possesses the great kingdoms, and the golden umbrella and palace to the eastward, as well as his queen, sons, daughters, nobles, officers, and the inhabitants of his country, are in the enjoyment of health, peace and happiness; and he desires to learn that his younger brother, who possesses the great kingdoms and the golden umbrella and palace to the westward, the master of the golden palace, as well as his queen, eldest son the heir-apparent, his other sons and daughters, nobles, officers, and all the inhabitants of his country, are also in the enjoyment of health, peace and happiness.

For one reason, because friendship has existed from former states of being; and for another, because the elder loves the younger brother, he sends with a royal letter on gold, a piece of gold, and desires that two pieces of gold may become like this one piece. It is now seventeen years since the gold and silver road, and gold and silver bridge have not been opened or traversed between the elder brother and younger brother, pursuant to the arrangement made in 1769, that ambassadors of rank should pass between the two great countries, in order that

a sincere freindship and esteem might arise. When friendship has been established between the two great countries, each must receive favours from the other. The elder brother has in front of his palace and worships eight images of Byamaha which it has been the custom to worship from the creation of the world; but loving the younger brother, and desiring that he should worship in the same manner, the elder brother presents these images to the younger. If the younger brother worships them, his glory and power will be as resplendent as the rising sun. The son of the lord of Kaing Ma, who wears a red umbrella and is always near the person of the elder brother, is sent to the younger brother with a royal letter on gold, and with the following presents:-

Eight images of Byamah, cast in gold.

Eight carpets.

Ten pieces of gold cloth.

Ten horses.

Let the younger brother, master of the golden palace, delay not after the arrival of this ambassador in his presence, to appoint ambassadors on his part, and send them with a royal letter on gold. When the son of the lord of Kaing Ma returns to the elder brother, it will be the same as if the royal countenance of the younger brother, the master of the golden palace, has been seen."

Now the tone of this is not that of a haughty Manchu Emperor, but of an equal, desiring to resume friendly relations. Bodawpaya had no claims to suzerainty over China, and after the failure of his Siamese campaign of 1786 must have realized that he could not hope to conquer China; the prudence his years of obscurity under Singu had developed made him seize this opportunity to have a friendly neighbour in a powerful China, which would leave him free for adventures elsewhere.

He deputed three Burmese envoys to accompany the Chinese mission to Peking, and sent a letter, which did not beg for forgiveness or acknowledge the suzerainty of the Chinese. The letter is as follows:¹

"The protector of religion, the sun-descended king of righteousness, bearing the name and title of Thiri pawara wizaya nanta yatha tiri bawala ditiya dipadi pandita maha dhama raja diraja, owner of the white, red and mottled elephants, and proprietor of mines of gold, silver, rubies, and amber, who rules over the great kingdoms and all the umbrella-wearing chiefs of the westward, affectionately addresses the royal friend, the lord of the golden palace, who rules over the great kingdoms and all the umbrella-wearing chiefs to the eastward. No having existed between the two great eastern and western

1. Konbaungzet p.622.

kingdoms from the first creation of the world, and both being independent sovereigns who have possessed a golden umbrella and palace from generation to generation, and the homage of a multitude of umbrella-wearing chiefs, the royal friend deputed the son of the lord of Kaing Ma who arrived at the great and golden city of Amarapura on the 26th May 1787. The royal letter and the presents consisting of eight images of the A'batthara Byamha, ten carpets, ten pieces of gold cloth, and ten horses, having been arranged in front of the throne and hall of audience, his Majesty; attended by the heir-apparent, his royal brothers and sons, and all his officers, came forth and sat on the throne, and caused the royal letter to be read out. His Majesty was exceedingly pleased to hear, that if a friendship like the union which has always existed in former states of existence between the kings of the two countries, and an agreement as fixed and permanent as a nail driven in, be entered into, it would be to posterity from generation to generation like two pieces of gold converted into one (as inseparable); and also, that the royal friend, the lord of the golden palace himself and his queen, royal children, and relatives and all his officers are in the enjoyment of health. The royal friend, lord of the golden palace, who rules over a hundred umbrella-wearing

chiefs to the westward, is also in the enjoyment of health as well as his queen, heir-apparent, royal children, and relatives, and all his officers. Friendship which had always existed in former states of existence, is now become a royal friendship. When the two great countries have established friendship, each must receive favours from the other. The eight images of A'batthara Byamha which were sent with a desire that they might be worshipped by the royal friend, have been placed in a proper and suitable manner in front of the palace, under pyramidical buildings covered with gold and silver. Desire is also felt that approbation be given to the merit of constantly upholding and protecting the religion of the deity (Gautama), who is full of glory and power, who can give relief to the kings of men, Nats and Byamhas, who has no equal in the three worlds, and who has been worshipped from generation to generation by the sun-descended independent kings, that have ruled over the great kingdoms to the westward. Nemyo Shwedaung, a noble man who is in the immediate service of the royal friend, and Thiha KyawGaung and Weluthara have been appointed ambassadors to accompany the son of the lord of Kaing Ma., and are deputed with a royal letter on gold and with royal presents, consisting of four elephants, one hundred viss weight of elephant's teeth, an ivory helmet surmounted by a ruby, and another

encircled with rubies and surmounted by a sapphire, two ruby rings, one sapphire ring, one viss weight of Mobyestone, one piece of yellow broad cloth, one piece of green broad cloth, ten pieces of chintz, two pieces of handkerchiefs, ten carpets, one hundred books of gold leaf, one hundred books of silver leaf, ten viss weight of white perfume, four large lacquered-ware boxes, and fifty small lacquered-ware boxes. Let the ambassadors return quickly and without delay, and when they return it will be as if the royal friend had been met, and conversed with."

If the purpose of this embassy had been to promote the resumption of friendly relations between China and Burma, then that was achieved. The Burmese king, in politeness could not but send some prisoners along with the embassy,¹ and this combined with the extreme humility of the Burmese envoys presumably convinced the Chinese Emperor that Burma had indeed repented and reformed, and so all the surviving Burmese prisoners were ordered to be released and presumably the trade embargo lifted as well.

The next Chinese embassy to Amarapura is even more unlikely to be what it purported to be. This one arrived at Bhamo in 1790² and brought three Chinese girls who were

1. E.H.Parker: Burma, Relations with China, p.91.

2. Konbaungzet p.638.

said to be daughters of the Emperor Chien Lung. Bodawpaya of course was eager to accept them at their face value, for the Chinese girls above all else would impress his subjects: gifts of daughters being a recognized Burmese sign of submission, and the Burmese seem to have been suitably impressed for when Nemo Sura (Nemyo Thuya) the Governor of Ramree wrote to the British Governor General in 1818¹ he referred to the Udibwa (Chinese Emperor) "presenting three of his esteemed daughters as offering to the golden soles of the royal feet" of Bodawpaya. The significance of the second embassy would be to support the view that Bodawpaya did not regard himself as a vassal, and that the embassy was a fraud, for Chien Lung would never have dreamed of sending one, let alone three daughters to a 'Southern barbarian' like Bodawpaya.

Now, the Chinese account states, that Bodawpaya applied for investiture, after, with the Emperor's permission, the Viceroy of Yunnan promised rich rewards if he would send an embassy to congratulate the emperor on his 80th birthday,² and that a seal had been granted to him conferring the title of king. There is no record of such

1. G.E. Harvey, History of Burma, p.291.

2. E.H. Parker: Burma, Relations with China, p.93.

a seal being received at Amarapura, but it could be part of the presents which were brought with the princesses. It was reported to be a large gold seal,¹ weighing ten pounds. It was supposed to give Bodawpaya the same power and authority that the Emperor himself possessed over every part of the Chinese Empire. Chien Lung would of course be in fits before he would dream of doing any such thing, but the seal would be regarded on the occasion of daughters being presented as a very suitable and natural gesture, by Bodawpaya.

With regard to the application by the Sawbwa of Bhamo, the sanction of the Burmese king is extremely unlikely. In the first place it would be quite unnecessary from the point of view of Amarapura, even if he had been a vassal king and secondly Bodawpaya had demonstrated in the case of Nga Myat Byu, the rebel governor of Tavoy, what his attitude would be in such a case.

Bhamo, it will be remembered, is a frontier state right on the borders of Yunnan. It was the first state to be attacked by the Chinese in all their invasions, and was exceedingly vulnerable to Chinese pressure from Yunnan. The embargo on trade affected considerably its prosperity, for Bhamo town was the main exchange centre for Burmese and Chinese goods. The transit trade was a large factor

1. Burney, J.A.S.B. 1837, p.434.

in the Bhamo Sawbwa's revenue. He could easily have succumbed in view of all this, to threats or pressure from Yunnan, to force him to become a tool of the Chinese who desired to trick the Burmese into an admission of vassalage, enjoy the benefits of resumed trade, and gain the favour of Chien Lung by the sending in of Burmese missions of tribute.

The suspicion that Bhamo was an agent becomes a certainty, when we find that the Sawbwa of Bhamo, a man of unprepossessing appearance and behaviour,¹ was seized and imprisoned by Bodawpaya.

In 1795, a Chinese mission which Symes met, arrived at Amarapura to ask Bodawpaya to recognize Chien Lung's grandson as the Chinese heir apparent.² Even Symes who is not noted for penetration on this embassy was convinced that the Chinese embassy could not have come from Peking.³ Symes was right, for the Burmese themselves grew suspicious.

In March 1796, the Sawbwa of Bhamo on suspicion of having imposed on the king in the affair of the Chinese

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1. Hiram Cox: Journal of a Residence in the Burmehman Empire, p.102.
 2. Konbaungzet p.462.
 3. Symes: Embassy to Ava. p.299.

ambassadors¹ was arrested and imprisoned.

In April 1796,² a Sayedawgyi was sent to China to enquire, but was refused permission to proceed to Peking; an insurrection it was said prevented his travelling. This must have been the refused tribute mission about which Kiaking the new Chinese Emperor censured the Yunnan Vice-roy.

After 1796 Bodawpaya sent no more embassies. His pride was hurt, but he had to keep up appearances, and also, he could not afford hostilities. Whatever it was that brought about the resumption of friendly relations between China and Burma, Bodawpaya was prudent enough to keep relations friendly, and trade was resumed. Annual caravans of 400 oxen or 2,000 ponies brought down silks,³ raw silks, velvet, tea, gold leaf, hams, copper, steel, mercury, large quantities of needle and thread, and paper. The Burmese now had a market for their surplus cotton, and the Chinese merchants soon formed a large colony in Amarapura which bought up the cotton, salt, birds feathers and lac. The Chinese were now able to open up the various mines, a task for which there was no incentive before, and which the Burmese did not undertake.

1. Hiram Cox: op.cit. p.142.

2. Hiram Cox: op.cit. p.340.

3. In 1824 silk import was worth about 71,000 ticals of silver.

In 1798, the Chinese traders at Amarapura, with the assistance of the Burmese Government opened up a new route to the jade mines, via Monywa and up the Chindwin, and the jade trade developed rapidly. The Burmese profited from this, and they established a collectorate at Mogaung to protect the trade and collect royalties.¹

The picture of Bodawpaya's relations with China is a refreshing contrast to his Siamese relations. Circumspection and moderation resulted in nothing but good. The Chinese, the most energetic and capable merchants, were able to settle in Burma, and the natural friendliness of the Burmese was ultimately to absorb this valuable community for the benefit of Burma. In the 20th century, the greatest merchant princes of Burma were Chinese - Chan Ma Phee and Lim Ching Tsong. They were Burmanised Chinese, and had Burmese wives. Their children were brought up as Burmese, as were almost all other Chinese in Burma since Bodawpaya's time, and by the third generation, the descendants were completely Burmese. There is in England today, a grandson of Chan Ma Phee, who regards himself as a Burmese, and speaks only Burmese. My own grandfather was a pure Chinese and yet I would not even begin to dream of regarding myself as anything but a Burman.

1. Warry. G.U.B. Part I, Vol.II, p.280.

It is on this note that this account of Burma's relations with her Eastern neighbours must end, for the West was already looming menacingly on the horizon of all three. All three were to challenge by making an attempt at conducting their relations with the West in the traditional pattern. In Burma we have the Burmese raiding the frontier of British East India; in China we have the snubbing of Lord Macartney and Lord Elgin's embassies, and the attempt to exploit the West through the co-hong system of trading; and in Siam, the Siamese clashed with Britain over control of the Malay states. Their challenge was to have disastrous repercussions, and in time the European entry took such a large place in Chinese, Burmese, and Siamese affairs that the traditional relations of these countries, one with the other, lapsed and slid unnoticed into the farthest background.

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1. Hmannan Yazawin (3 volumes Mandalay 1908).

The compilers were the palace officials of Bagyidaw's reign and they started the work on the order of the king in 1829. They did their best, but as Mr. Luce¹ says, they proceeded on the king's orders to eke out what scanty materials they had in the shape of inscriptions which they could not read properly, with fiction, stories borrowed from the Jatakas, miracles, portents which incidentally the chroniclers of 1829 still believed in when they wrote.

The Burmese seem to have gone wrong mostly in detail, and that in varying degrees of error; for from Chinese accounts of the Pyu who preceded the Pagan, there is a large similarity between the life of the pre-pagan Pyu king, and say that of Bayinnaung. I have not, however relied on the Hmannan except to give the colour provided for a background to my period, and even then I have relied on checks from the Chinese and from modern readings of the inscriptions. The

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1. Journal of the Burma Research Society Vol.32, Part II, p.80.

main cause of unreliability seems to have been the lack of provisions by private individuals for the achievement of continuity. The Burmese were a literate race, probably more so in the days of the Burmese kings than at present, but the frequent sack of capitals and the rise of new dynasties on the ashes of the old, when all the eggs of literary evidences were confined in the palace, certainly contributed to the errors of the Hmannan.

It is stated that the Hmannan chroniclers wrote their annals to the year 1821¹ and in 1867 Mindon ordered the Kanni Atwin Wun Mingyi Maha Min Knaung Thinkaya, the Nanna Daw Paya Wun (minister of the Nanmadaw Queen), the Royal Librarian Maha Thiri Zeyathu, the Atwin Wun of the Heir-Apparent Maha Minhla Thinkaya, the Sayegyí Minhla Zeyathu, and the Saye Daw Nemyo Sithu Yaza to resume the narrative from where the compilers of the Hmannan left off.

2. The Konbaungzet, (published by the Pinmyaing Kin Le. Mandalay 1905).

The Konbaungzet therefore in the chapters that deal with the period previous to 1821, the Konbaung is

1. Konbaungzet p.905.

largely the work of the 1829 compilers. The style and tone however is difficult to distinguish; the only distinguishing mark of the later chapters, i.e. the chapters dealing with the Mindon and Thibaw periods, is the elaborate treatment given to comparatively unimportant affairs, which reads badly after the fiery gusto of the earlier chapters.

After the 1869 compilers took up the task of compiling the Mahayazawin (the Great Chronicle of the kings) and carried the narrative to 1854 after which though it were collected material was not sifted and arranged to go into the Mahayazawin. It is from this point that U Tin the compiler of this Mandalay edition of the Konbaungzet Mahayazawin takes up the task.

U Tin was the son of the MyinHmu Mintha (the Prince commander of the horse) and served in the Burmese court, under Thibaw. He showed Mr. G.H.Luce, the manuscripts in his possession¹ for part of the period 1854 to 1886. The manuscripts were supposed to be practically identical with those which the Monywa Sayadaw possessed which argues that U Tin's sources were official records or diaries. U Tet Htoot

1. G.H. Luce, J.B.R.S. Vol.15. Part II.

who has been living in Bloomsbury through the last fifteen years has shown me parts of the Monywa Sayadaw's palm leaf manuscripts, and I have found this to be true. U Tet Htoot incidentally is a relative of the Monywa Sayadaw and himself comes from the Upper Burma village of Marywe, near Monywa.

The main argument against the Konbaungzet Mahayazawin is made by Crawford¹ who gives his telescoped version of the Burmese account of the Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-26. The Konbaungzet actually gives eighty pages to the war² and though the humiliation of defeat is toned down by the flowery palace language, the picture of defeat is clear enough. I hold no special brief for the Konbaungzet, but it should be remembered that the Japanese Emperor Hirohito in his eve of surrender broadcast used almost the same phrases that Crawford holds up to such derision. The point is that though no one was expected to believe in the flowery explanation of defeat, it was not quite proper to set such total defeat in plain words.

Mr. G.E. Harvey³ questions the accuracy of the

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1. Crawford: Embassy to the Court of Ava Vol. I, p. 304.
 2. ~~Crawford: ibid.~~ ^{Konbaungzet} pp. 944-1064.
 3. G. E. Harvey P 355. History of Burma.

Konbaungzet for even Alaungpaya's period, on the accusation that on page 141 of the Mandalay edition, Lester's Embassy to ~~Mandalay~~^{Alaungpaya} is placed in 1755 whereas it was really in 1757. Now, on this occasion, at any rate the accusation is unfounded; the Konbaungzet on page 141 only refers to some arms and presents which it is said Alaungpaya obtained from some English ships. It is only the Burmese Chronicle's way of recording the fact that in May 1755 - the date in question - Alaungpaya, finding three small ships in Rangoon harbour after he had captured the town, sent men to seize their cannon, small arms and ammunition; Mr. Harvey himself gives the account of this arbitrary action on page 224 of his book. Generally, the dates given of the main events apart from the Negrais massacre of 1759, are confirmed by non-Burmese sources.

There is a convincing ring about some of Alaungpaya's, Hsinbyushin's and Minkhaung Nawrahta's reported words, and some of the defeats in battle are quite plainly admitted. The Konbaungzet has many limitations of style and matter, but on the whole, it is a valuable source book.

- 3) Myamma Min OkchokPon Sadan - with Appendix to King Bodawphaya's Yazathat Hkaw "Ameindaw Tangyi" compiled by U Tin - in five volumes. Rangoon 1931. (A treatise on the Administration of the Burmese Kings).

U Tin was appointed by Sir Reginald Craddock in 1923 to catalogue the enormous amount of Sittans (sworn statements giving particulars of administration) and palm leaf manuscripts, some of them 200 years old, which the Rangoon Secretariat then possessed. He spent some years on the task and ultimately from his selection of all relevant data, including modern editions of the 'Inscriptions' U Tin produced this work. U Tin did not know the English language but his method of comparison, collation and sifting has a competent air about it all. He bases his work on various royal edicts on palm leaf and stone. His only fault is that he tends to accept sometimes the authority of fairly modern works to support aspects of his work.

- 4) Selections from the Records of the Hluttaw by Taw Sein Kho, Rangoon 1889.

The selections are largely of Thibaw's period, but is useful because it offers proof that in Thibaw's time, the system of Administration in Burma

was still based on the same conception of governance, as in the earlier Konbaung period, and also because it indicated that nominal control was still exercised over the Shan States as far East as Keng Hung.

5) Inscriptions - six volumes published Rangoon.

The first volume dealing with the inscriptions of Pagan, Pinya and Ava published in 1892.

6) Letwe Thondara's Theninga Byuha Sit Thamaing. (A treatise on the Art of War) published Rangoon 1943.

It is a modern edition based on palm leaf manuscripts. Letwethondara was the great poet who served the Konbaung kings, and it offers a picture of the theoretical basis of the Burmese military system.

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APPENDIX A.The Burmese Era.

The introduction of the Burmese Era is traditionally assigned to Popa Sawrahan who ruled in Pagan 613 - 40. It started in March 638. The months are Burman consisting alternately of 29 and 30 days and an intercalatory month is added every third year, to make up for the difference with the solar year.

In 1440 Mohyyin Thado (1427-40) made an alteration in the calender, and at present, the Burmese New Year starts on the 12th of April, beginning when the sun finishes its course through the caliptic.

APPENDIX B.

Alaungpaya's original 68 followers.

- 1) MIN HLA SITHU (son of the sister of Alaungpaya's Chief Queen).
- 2) NGA NYON later MIN HLA KYAW THU, later MIN YE MIN KYAW - the Ava General (husband of his sister-in-law).
- 3) NGA KAUNG later MIN KYAW PYANCHI MINHHA MIN KHAUNG, later MINHHA MIN KHAUNG KYAW, later MAHA THENAPATI, and finally AGGA MAHA THENAPATI, Commander of the Musketeers.
- 4) NGA OH later MIN YE KYAW SWA.
- 5) NGA NE later MIN YE SI THU (Alaungpaya's nephew).
- 6) NGA HTUN later THIRI SHWE TAUNG, later MINHHA SHWE TAUNG, later MINHRA MIN KHAUNG, and finally the famous MIN KHAUNG NAWRAHTA.
- 7) KHIN BA later YE SET KYAW KHAUNG.
- 8) KYAW HMAT later YE SET TAGUN.
- 9) PAN HTWE later BALA KYAW KHAUNG, later MIN YE KYAW HTUT.
- 10) PEIN KYAW later MIN HLA KYAW KHAUNG.
- 11) NGA AUNG later THIRI KYAW HTIN.
- 12) LUN THA later MIN YE KYAW HTIN.
- 13) NGA MYA later NANDA KYAW, later MIN KYAW THEIKDI, later BALA ZEYA KYAW HTIN, later ABAYA KARKANI THUYA, later THUYA KYAW HTIN, later KARMANI THINKYAN, later NEMYO THIIHA THINK-HATHU.

- 14) NGA HTAW AUNG later EINDA BINNYA.
- 15) NGA HTUN YA later MINHIA KYAW SWA
- 16) NGA ET later SETYA PYANCHI.
- 17) THA MYAT later THIRI PYANCHI, later MIN KYAW PYANCHI.
- 18) NGA AUNG NGE later YE HTIN PYANCHI.
- 19) SAN KHE later IN YIN TUYIN.
- 20) SAN HMAT later YAN NAINO THIRI, later LET WE KYAN THAING, later BANDU THENA KYAW HTIN, later MINGYI PYISSAW TA, finally YAZA OTTAMA THINKYAN.
- 22) PAW HTIN later NGWE TAUNG PAW, later SHWE TAUNG KYAW SWA, later SHWE TAUNG KYAW SWA KYAW, and finally THIRI ZEYA THINKYAN.
- 23) NGA PAN NYO later NARATHEINKHA KYAW, later KYAW HTIN SHWE TAUNG, later THIRI NANDAMEIT KYAW HTIN, later KYAW HTIN TARABYA, later MAHA TAKABYA.
- 24) SHWE YI later BALA ZEYA KYAW, later MINKYAW SITHU, later NE MYO NAWRAHTA, later MINGYI KHAUNG KYAW, later MAHA THIRI ZEYA THUYA, later OTTAMO ZEYA THUYA, later THADO MAHA THETTAW SHE.
- 25) THA TUN AUNG later TUYIN BALA.
- 26) NGA THA later MINHIA YAZA, later MIN KYAW HTIN, later MAHA THIHATHU, later MAHA THIRI THIHATHU, finally MAHA THIHA THURA (the great general of the Chinese Invasions).
- 27) NGA THWIN later MIN NGE KYAW, MIN YE NANDA THU, later THADO THIHA KYAW (the son of Alaungpaya's sister-in-law).

- 28) PHYO THA later UDEIN YE NAING, later LET YA KYAW THAING, later LETYA KYAW SWA, later MINGYI MAHA WITHA.
- 29) KYAW HTIN later YAN AUNG THENA.
- 30) SHWE YI later NARA PYANCHI KYAW, later SHWE TAUNG ZEYA KYAW, later SHWE TAUNG SITHU.
- 31) MYAT THU later LETWE SHWE TAUNG, MIN KYAW TA SAUNG.
- 32) KYAW ZAN later NANDA KYAW HTIN, later MIN KYAW UDEIN, later MINGYI KYAW HTIN, later MIN GYI MIN KYAW KHAUNG, later MAHA THIRI ZEYA KYAW THU, later MAHA YAZA THINKYAN, later MAHA THIRI ZEYA THINKAYA.
- 33) NGA HTWE later NANDA THIHA, later NANDA THIHA KYAW HTIN.
- 34) SEIN NGON later MIN KYAW HTIN, later MIN YE KYAW, later MIN YE KYAW HTIN (grandson of Alaungpaya's uncle).
- 35) MYAT THA later ZEYA KYAW HTIN, later NEMYO THINKAYA.
- 36) SHWE KHE later SIT GAUNG THIRI, later SIT GAUNG THIRI KYAW, later MINGYI KYAW, later OTTAMA THIRI THINKAYA.
- 37) MYAT HTUN later MIN KYAW BINNYA, later MIN KYAW AGA, later MIN KYAW NAWRAHTA, later MAHA NANDA THINKYAN.
- 38) CHIT PHYO later BALA YAZA, later MINGYI YAZA, later OTTAMA YAZA.
- 39) NGA HNAUNG later LETYA KYAW HTIN, later MINHLA NAWRAHTA, later MINGYI MIN KHAUNG, finally MAHA SITHU (the general of the Chinese invasions)
- 40) NGA THA TIN later NANDA KYAW.

- 41) SAN YA later LETYA PYANCHI, later MINDIN PYANCHI, later MINGYI KARMANI SANDA.
- 42) NGA THAW later NEMYO NANDA MEIT, later MINGYI NANDA YIT.
- 43) THA U later GA NA BALA, later SHWE TAUNG THINKHAWA.
- 44) NGA BWE later YAN KHWIN KYAW, later TUYIN THIHA KYAW, later THIRI YAZA MIN KYAW, later NEMYO ZEYA THINKYAN later NEMYO KYAW HTIN THIN KHAYA.
- 45) NGA NYO THU later MINDIN NAWRAHTA.
- 46) SU TAUNG later TULUT KYAW, later MINNGE BALA, later THET SHE KYAW HTIN, later THIRI THIHATHU, later NEMYO THIHA KYAW HTIN.
- 47) LUN KYAW later MINNGE KYAW SWA.
- 48) NGA LWIN later YE KYAW THUYA, later BALA MINDIN (later the great defender of KAUNGTON) later BALA NAWRAHTA.
- 49) NGA AUNG later UDEIN NAN THU, later NANDA KUTTA THINKYAN.
- 50) SWE NI later MINHLA NGE.
- 51) NGA PAN later NANDA YAW DA, later THETTAW SHE, later MINGYI THETTAW SHE, later THADO MINGYI THETTAW SHE.
- 52) SHWE HTIN later NEMYO KYAW HTIN (a Wungyi in Alaungpaya's time).
- 53) CHIN TI later MINHLA KYAW HTIN, later MINGYI KYAW HTIN, later MAHA PAKYAN, later MAHA OTTAMA PAKYAN MAHA NANDA THIN-KYAN, later MAHA OTTAMA ZEYA THUYA.
- 54) NYO MIN later MIN KYAW SHWE TAUNG (one of Alaungpaya's Wungyis).

55) NGA PWINT later NEMYO SHWE TAUNG, later
MIN HLA SHWE TAUNG, later NEMYO
THIRI ZEYA NAWRAHTA (one of
Alaungpaya's Wungyis).

The remaining 13 lived in the initial fighting at Moksobo

Though there was not a hereditary aristocracy it is seen from the list that the villagers of Moksobo had a large share of office and power in the Konbaung dynasty. Maha Thiha Thura it will be noticed was a Wungyi right down to Bodawpaya's reign.

Nemyo Zeya Karmani was Governor of Ava, through Alaungpaya, Naungdawgyi, Hsinbyushin and Singu's reigns, and then became a Wungyi in Bodawpaya's reign.

Nemyo Thihapate who became a Wungyi in Singu's time had a son who also became a Wungyi - the Kyi Wungyi whom Colonel Burney met in Bagyidaw's reign.

The Governor of Tavoy Myat Phyu was the son of Mekhaya Bo.

Thus though there was no definite rules of succession, family influence, especially of the families who came from Moksobo did provide the Burmese court with a kind of aristocracy. The marriages of the kings with their ministers' daughters would also create another claim for hereditary succession to office.

APPENDIX C.

The Gwe.

From the Journal of the Burma Research Society
Vol. 15, Part II, by Mr. G. Harvey.

"(Jangoma i.e. Chiengmai is) very ill neighboured by the Gueoni (Paulus Venetus giveth them the name Gaugigii) who possess the mountains, whence falling in great companies to hunt for men whom they take and eat, they commit cruel butcheries amongst them" (book III p.214 of Heylyn "Cosmographie in Four Books" publ. London 1669, Bodleian Radcliffe C. 13). Mr. W.A.Wood, H.B.M.'s Consul General, Chiengmai, writes to me: "The Laos placed themselves under Siamese protection in order to defend themselves against the hill people called "Gueoni" who used to eat their captives. In early times the most numerous 'hill people' were presumably the Lawas (Was) who are supposed to have been the aboriginal inhabitants of a great part of Siam, I do not know whether the Was were ever very numerous in Burma and the Sahn states, but I suggest the possibility that Gwe, = Lawa or Wa.'"

The Burmese mention two colonies, one at Awaing near Pegu town who in 1740 set up, as king of Pegu, Snim Htaw Buddhaketi (see para 12 below) - these are called Gwe Karen

(Hmannan III. 382); the other at Okpo near Madaya in Mandalay district who had as leader one Gwe-gonna-ein and rebelled against the king of Ava in 1747 - these are called Gwe in Hmannan III. 393 but Gwe Lawa (Lawa = Wa or Wild Wa) throughout Konbaungzet, e.g. p.71.

Bo Htwan, an old officer of the late Sawbwa of North Hsenwi, tells me there is a Mong Kwi north east of Kokang in North Hsenwi state, the Chinese call it Mong Kuei, and it is the home of very wild Shan Tayoks and dacoits.

The Board of Officials, Hsenwi, tell me a race called Kwi are found, but not very commonly, in Kongtung and in Yawnglong, Wa States, and they resemble in appearance the Chinese inhabiting the hilly places in the Hsenwi States.

The Chinese authorities quoted by Mr. Luce give the name of the Kuei (Gwe) leader's wife as Nang Ku or Nang Chan. Either form is ordinary as a Shan woman's name.

U Shwe Lin, a retired pleader aged 84 living at Paung, Thaton district, writes to me "When transcribing palm leaf MSS as Gwe . They are a separate race scattered over the hills in Lower Burma, chiefly near Shwegyin, 'OUNGOO, in the Hlaingbwe township, and east of the Salween. They are a boorish race. They live by manufacturing daks and spears and they are experts at steel work. They speak a distinct language and are neither Karens nor Talaings. They owed no allegiance to the Talaing king of Pegu." I made enquiries of district officers in the places mentioned by U Shwe Lin but none had ever heard of the Gwe.

APPENDIX D

The four reasons for the sending of Embassies:
from the M.M.O.S. Vol.II. pp.104.

- 1) For the eventual subjugation of the other king.
- 2) Thinking that he is about to wage war, to find out his intentions.
- 3) To overawe and terrify the other side.
- 4) To enquire about the other king's marvels, and to open trade negotiations.

The thirteen causes of war: from M.M.O.S. Vol.I p.178.

- 1) Boundary disputes.
- 2) Desire for riches (loot).
- 3) Desire for good elephants and horses.
- 4) Desire for princesses.
- 5) At a third party's instigation.
- 6) Treachery.
- 7) Disregard of embassies.
- 8) Attacks on the race.
- 9) Inefficiency of the king's arrangements for defence.
- 10) Lack of brave soldiers.

- 11) Trade disputes.
- 12) Vindictiveness.
- 13) Anger.