

A Study of Siam- Myanmar 18th Century Relations as Reflected in *Yodayar Naing Mawgun* by Letwe Nawrahta

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การศึกษาค้นคว้าความสัมพันธ์ของสยาม-พม่าในคริสต์ศตวรรษที่ 18 ที่ปรากฏในวรรณคดีร้อยกรองของพม่า
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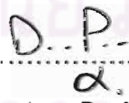
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“Mawgun” เป็นวรรณคดีรูปแบบหนึ่งของพม่า ที่ได้บันทึกเหตุการณ์ในประวัติศาสตร์อันยาวนานของพม่า เอาไว้ วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มุ่งศึกษา Mawgun อันเป็นผลงานการประพันธ์ของละเวนธรา ที่ได้บรรยายถึงมหากาพย์สงครามในปี ค.ศ. 1767 ซึ่งเป็นภาพสะท้อนของประวัติศาสตร์ร่วมกันของสยามและพม่าในบริบทความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างสยามกับพม่าในคริสต์ศตวรรษที่ 18 โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งสงครามระหว่างสองประเทศนี้

วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ได้รวบรวมหลากหลายประเด็นทางประวัติศาสตร์ ที่เป็นทั้งเหตุการณ์ทางการเมืองที่เกิดขึ้นในสองประเทศ บทพรรณนาที่กล่าวถึงความขัดแย้ง ขนบธรรมเนียมและจารีตของกษัตริย์และสามัญชน และอื่น ๆ Mawgun เป็นวรรณคดีที่ได้นำเสนอกลวิธีทางวรรณคดี 4 ประเภท ในการศึกษาสงครามระหว่างสยามกับพม่า ซึ่งไม่สามารถพบได้ในเอกสารใด ๆ ของไทย การศึกษาข้อมูลอย่างละเอียดของ Mawgun ตลอดจนการตรวจสอบเหตุการณ์จริงของสงครามที่เกิดขึ้น รวมถึงงานเขียนทางประวัติศาสตร์ทั้งของสยามและพม่า ล้วนแต่แสดงให้เห็นถึงผลกระทบจากสงครามที่มีต่อความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างสองประเทศ

Mawgun เป็นหลักฐานทางประวัติศาสตร์ที่เก่าแก่ที่มีอายุตั้งแต่สมัยราชวงศ์ของพม่า และยังเป็นเอกสารร่วมสมัยที่มีประโยชน์ต่อความเข้าใจบริบทความสัมพันธ์ของสยามกับพม่าในคริสต์ศตวรรษที่ 18 คุณประโยชน์ที่ได้จากการศึกษา Mawgun ซึ่งได้นำเสนอทั้งข้อเท็จจริงและภาพทางประวัติศาสตร์นั้น ลักษณะที่โดดเด่นของ Mawgun ซึ่งเป็นหนึ่งในรูปแบบของวรรณคดีพม่า ได้ถูกนำมาศึกษาในกรอบของ “ไทยศึกษา” เป็นครั้งแรก

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SOE THUZAR MYINT: SIAM-MYANMAR 18TH- CENTURY RELATIONS AS REFLECTED IN YODAYAR NAING MAWGUN BY LETWE NAWRAHTA. THESIS ADVISOR: SUNAIT CHUTINTARANOND, Ph.D.. 159pp.

Mawgun is a genre of Myanmar literature which records the memorable events in history. In this thesis, the Mawgun written by Minister-poet Letwe Nawrahta whose endeavor of weaving intricate but vivid episodes of the war of 1767 carrying the reflections of a shared history of Siam and Myanmar is examined in the context of 18th century Siam-Myanmar relations, especially wars between the two countries.

This thesis includes many aspects of history in terms of political situations which prevailed in both countries, economic explanations for the conflict, traditions and practices adopted by the kings and the people and so on. Based on the Mawgun, it provides brief sketches of 4 genres of Myanmar literature useful in the study of Siam-Myanmar warfare which cannot be found anywhere in the Thai documents, a detailed study of the Mawgun and a thorough examination of the real happenings of the war and the historical writings of both Siam and Myanmar followed by the far-reaching effects of this war on relations between the two countries.

The Mawgun is a rare manuscript which has survived since the time of Myanmar kings. It is a contemporary account useful to understand the context of Siam-Myanmar relations in the 18th century. Posterity can benefit from studying this Mawgun which provides many historical facts and figures. It is unique in a sense that Mawgun, one of the Myanmar literary forms, has been used for the first time in the field of Thai studies.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of the attempt of the famous Minister Poet Letwe Nawrahta of Myanmar to describe the scenes of the war between Myanmar and Siam in 1767, having chanced to portray this Great War. It questions whether his endeavor of weaving intricate but vivid episodes carrying the reflection of the 18th century Myanmar-Thai relations especially activities of war between the two countries was successful and how it contributes to the histories of both countries.

Relations between the two countries date back to the reign of Queen Chammadevi of Haripunjaya (Lamphun) during which Theravada Buddhism was imported first from Lopburi and later Thaton*. The old Chammadevi chronicle mentions that when a cholera epidemic broke out, people of Haripunjaya were evacuated and temporarily retreated to Thaton. Relations continued throughout the Mangrai dynasty starting from the King Mangrai of Chiang Mai, founder of the Lanna Kingdom.

Many arts of the region remarkably resemble those that are indigenous to Myanmar.¹ One example is the architecture of the great seven spires chedi at Wat Maha Photaram, built by King Tilokarat in 1998 B.E. It was influenced by the chedi in Bagan called "Maha Bhothi" the proto type of which was "the Maha Bodh Gaya" in India.² In latter periods, owing to rivalry over control of the lower part of Myanmar including Tenasserim and the wars of territorial expansion, long drawn conflicts between Myanmar and Siam continued for more than four centuries from the 16th to 19th century.

If we narrow down the scope and time for the convenience of this thesis, only one big event can be highlighted as most important. This is the last fall of Ayutthaya in 1767

* Pa. Sudhamapura in Ramanya Desa (Lower Myanmar)

¹ Aroonrut Wichienkeo, "Lan Na Relations with Myanmar", **Comparative Studies on Literature and history of Thailand and Myanmar**, (Yangon, 1997). Page 56.

² University of Rangoon, **Glimpses of Glorious Bagan**, (Rangoon: The University Press, 1986). Page 31.

during the reign of King Hsinphyushin also known as Myedumin (1763-1776), second son of King Alaungpaya. It abruptly ended the long line of thirty three Ayutthaya kings covering the period of 417 years. This led to the emergence of Thonburi-Bangkok dynasties.

The Myanmar term for “Yodayar” means Ayutthaya. “Naing” in Myanmar language carries the meaning of victory and “Mawgun” is an epic poem immortalizing memorable events or things. Thus, the literal meaning of “Yodayar Naing Mawgun” implies “record on victory over Ayutthaya”.

This Mawgun is about the war of 1767 between Myanmar and Siam. It was written by the contemporary minister-writer Letwe Nawrahta, who grasped the opportunity to portray the campaign, using his outstanding talent observantly to paint a remarkable picture of that unforgettable war.

In finding the Mawgun which seemed to be lost, I have encountered many difficulties. First of all, it was not in book form. Secondly, though different in times and events, there was another Mawgun bearing the same title written by court lyricist Sale U Pon Nya in the late Konboun period. Moreover, Letwe Nawrahta's Mawgun was overshadowed by this work of Sale U Pon Nya. And thirdly, the author's works were mixed up with that of Letwe Thondra, another contemporary minister-writer belonging to the same reign.

At first, the Mawgun remained hidden at the various libraries in Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw for many months. Fortuitously, I was able to trace back the full text of Mawgun in the National Library of Myanmar. It was in the form of palm leaf manuscript and the verses in it were often unintelligible if they were not translated into prose.

In searching for the Mawgun, I had to use the reference Tin-38 made in the Myanmar scholar Dr. Daw Ye Ye Khin's "Sit-naung Mawgun (3) saung hnint A-phwint kyan" (Treatise on the analysis and explanations of three war victory Mawguns; Yodayar Naing Mawgun, Dhanyawadi Naing Mawgun and Assam Naing Mawgun) submitted for

the Degree of PhD in Myanmar literature at the University of Yangon in 2007. There are four classifications of documents in the National Library of Myanmar, Yangon namely collections of U Tin (Tin group), Kinwon Mingyi (Kin group), Taung Twingyi monastery (Taung group) and others (A ma ta group, an abbreviation of the word 'Amyothar' meaning national). So much gratitude is owed to Dr. Ye Ye Khin for her keen interest in the life and works of Letwe Nawrahta, and particularly in this Mawgun.

In Myanmar, these kinds of documents are not scanty. I suppose I should mention now that Myanmar is rich in historical evidence: for example, Kyauk sa (stone inscriptions), Yazwin (Chronicles), Eigyin (a kind of royal lullaby), Mawguns (record of important events), various types of poems, Ayedawbon Kyan (record of struggle by the king in his quest for the throne) and so on, which describe the important events of particular times in history.)

Throughout history, they are written in prose or in verse. I would like to present sources of Myanmar history in order to get the general understanding of Myanmar historiography which can be classified into four categories: Kyauk sa (stone inscription), Chronicles, Thamaing and Ayedawbon, a variety of verse and treatises and royal edicts and official records.

1.1 Kyauk sa (stone inscriptions)

The Myanmar alphabet is developed from that of old Brahmi, dating back to the eighth and seventh centuries BC and flowering in ancient India during the 3rd century BC. As time passed, a large number of Pali and a few Sanskrit words were adopted into Myanmar language through Mons.³

The earliest form of writing, stone inscriptions date back to the eleventh century in Bagan period and nearly 625 inscriptions attest to its greatness⁴. This art of writing

³ Myanmar **Abidan**, Union of Burma, "Introduction" Ministry of Education, Myanmar Language Commission, part 1, (Published in No 27, Pyi Road, Yangon, 1978), Page 1.

⁴ U Myo Myint,"Problems in Myanmar Historiography", *Comparative studies on literature, history of Thailand and Myanmar*, (Bangkok , 1997), Page 104.

flourished between the 12th and 14th century and declined from fifteen century until 19th century. Only 100 stone inscriptions are found in Konboun period. They were mostly written in prose. Kyauk sa is the most important primary source of Myanmar history. Thanks to these valuable sources, historian can construct Myanmar history in a more reliable manner except pre Bagan period.

The earliest stone inscription by Prince Yazakumar of 1113 AD, also known as Myazeidi Inscription, has become famous as the Rosetta Stone of Myanmar. The four faces of the stone has Myanmar inscription on the front, with the same text in Pyu, Mon and Pali on its sides and back. We have found that the expressions of Myanmar language on Myazeidi inscription are in a rudimentary stage. The Myanmar language greatly improved towards the end of Bagan period.

Many of them are dedicatory in nature as the authors of these stone inscriptions were kings, members of the royal families and court officials. The theme is almost entirely limited to religion and royalty, thus the scope is relatively restricted.

Typically, inscriptions duly record the erection of pagoda and the sacred edifices, dedication of glebe land and pagoda slaves, a prayer to attain merit or award, the bitter denunciation of would be spoilers of the offerings and the blessing and rewards to those who bountifully support their work of merit and so on.

1. 2 Yazawin (Chronicles), Thamaing and Ayedawbon

There are two kinds of Myanmar historiography; history writing in prose and in verse. Historical writing in prose includes Chronicles, Thamaing and Ayedawbon. Myanmar chronicles are also primary sources. We have witnessed a continuous history of Myanmar in chronicles. Chronicles known to have been written since sixteenth century can be divided into two; old and standard chronicles.

Some of the old chronicles are Bagan Yazawin, Tagaung Yazawin, Hynet Pyit Taung Yazawin, etc. The standard chronicles are U Kala's Mahayazawindawgyi, Hmanan Yazawindawgyi (the Glass Palace Chronicle), Wetmasutt Nawaday's Maha Yazawin Thit, Monywa abbot's Yazawin Kyaw, The Second Maha Yazawindawgyi and

U Maung Maung Tin's Koungboungset Mahayazawindawgyi. The distinction between the two is that the former is limited in scope but the other is more extensive.

In addition to these chronicles, many regional and racial chronicles such as Taungoo Yazawin, Talaing Yazawin Choke, Zatawbon Yazawin, U Uttama's Chin chronicle, U Tha Tun Aung's Rakhine chronicle, U Naw's Mon chronicle, U Saw's Kayin (Karen) chronicle exist. There were also religious chronicles compiled in the nineteenth century, giving an account of the history of Buddhism and of its establishment in Myanmar.

Thamaing are accounts of the foundation of pagodas and monasteries and local histories of towns and districts. It is of little value as historical sources because many of them are legends of kings, cities, lakes or pagodas. Ayedawbon Kyans can be classified as subsidiary sources for the historiography of Myanmar. They are royal biographies or memoirs of the struggle of an individual ruler and his military campaigns.

1.3 Literature and treatises

Myanmar literature is mostly comprised of poems. Apart from stone inscriptions, they dominate the scene from 15th to 19th century. Most of them can be classified as subsidiary sources for Myanmar historiography. Myanmar term for poetry is Kabya linga which derived from the two Sanskrit words Kavya, a name for a certain kind of poetry, and alamkara, an ornament of the sound or the sense.⁵

Historical writing in poetic forms include a variety of verse such as Mawgun, Eigyin, Pyo, Igyin, Kar gyin, Yadu, Yagan, Taw la, Baw-le, etc. There are over 50 genres of poems in Myanmar literature. Above all these Poems, Yadu, Pyo, Mawgun and Eigyin are oldest poems dating from the 14th century and carry a bulk of historical values.

⁵ U Hla Pe, **Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life and Buddhism**. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Heng Mui Keng Terrace, Pasir Panjang, Singapore 0511, © (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), Page 4

A large number of Treatises are written on various subjects – history, spelling, orthography, carpentry, astrology, medicine, culinary, etiquette, cremation, coronation, ect. They can be written both in prose and in verse. Some of the important treatises are Dharmathat (law books), Jetapon (the work on royal horoscopes), Yazawada (morals for kings), Hlyauk htone (a compilation of discourses presented to the king), A-mei-daw-phyay kyan (a compilation of questions and answers on religious or secular matters) and so on.

1.4 Royal Edicts and Official Records

Royal Orders or ameindaws is an important source for Myanmar historical writings. Royal orders deal with appointments of important central and provincial officials, laws of taxation, salaries, trade, coinage, customs duties, continuation of land titles, mobilization of war, etc. Dr. Than Tun's massive ten volume work on royal orders is a mine of information for the study of pre-colonial Myanmar administration.

Official records may be divided into different subjects. They are written on court ceremonies, investiture of rank and insignias, administration, foreign relations, revenue inquest (sittan) which is like the English Domesday Book of 1086 and so on. There are also journals, diaries (accounts of the arrival of foreign emissaries and Myanmar envoys to foreign lands) and pictorial records.

Apart from these Myanmar historiographies, many Europeans from the 15th century onwards have left eye-witness accounts of Myanmar. Not only local and vernacular writers but also these writers play an important role in constructing Myanmar history. To name a few there are the Venetians Marco Polo and Nicolo de Conti, the Portuguese adventurer Mendes Pinto, the Italian Father Sangermano, the English envoys Michael Symes, Hiram Cox and John Crawfurd, the English merchant Henry Gouger, the

American missionary Adoniram Judson, the English scholar-administrators Henry Burney and Sir Arthur Phayre.⁶

Near the end of the Monarchical period, a great number of Myanmar literary works were in the form of palm leaf manuscripts and Parabaiks* kept in the royal library of King Mindon and King Thibaw, the last two kings of Konboug* dynasty. The Keeper or librarian was then U Yan. His bibliography entitled "Pitakat-taw Thamaing" has become the main reference source for scholars of Myanmar literature. When the British troops occupied the King's palace, many books of literary merit were vandalized, looted or lost.

Furthermore, these documents had been sent to three places: The British Oriental and India Office in London, to the Palace of the King of Siam and Sir Charles Bernard's Free Library in Yangon.⁷ Later, the merger of the Bernard Free Library with the private collections of Kinwun Mingyi and U Maung Maung Tin (1) K.S.M, A.T.M* brought forth the National Library of Myanmar in 1952.⁸ It is now under the Historical and Archeological Research Department, Ministry of Culture.

A sizeable number of these documents can also be found in some private collections and in a number of monasteries. All these historical evidences proved to be reliable sources or treasure troves for the researchers on Myanmar literature as well as on history.

⁶ Thaung Blackmore, "Burmese Historical Literature and Native and Foreign Scholarship: A Few Observations" **Historical Archaeological and Linguistic Studies**, ed. F.S.Drak (Hongkong, 1967), Page 319.

* White or black folded book made of paper, gold, bamboo, silver, bronze, copper, hides, wood, straw, etc.

* The word "Konboug" came from the high ridge of land (levee) running north to south constructed by King Alaung Sithu (1112-1167) to the east of Shwebo.

⁷ "sixty four types of temporal and spiritual documents sent to the king of Siam as a Dharma present include (6) volumes of Vinya, (19) Suttan (discourse), Yodayar Queen Eigyin, Mahosadha jataka, Vessantara jataka, Paleiksa Eegyin, Zinatthapakasani treatise (the life of Buddha) , Swe Son Kyaw Htin Kyan (Treatise which contains 1115 mundane and religious questions and answers) and so on", Ma Kyan, a famous historian, **Thamaing shar-pon taw hnint a char sartan myar(A journey to search out history and other papers)**, (Kyauktadar Yangon, Myanmar Yadanar sarpay, 2002.)

* Khetthayay Saung Shwe Salwe Ya Min, Amuhtan Kaung Min (bearer of the gracious gold sash, outstanding government official)

⁸ **Lecture notes of the course on basic skills in library work**, (Yangon, National Library, 2009)

Before we delve into Yodayar Naing Mawgun, I would like to mention four genres of Myanmar literature which possess historical value: namely Yazawin, Ayedawbon, Eigyin and Mawgun in order to have a bird's eye view on Myanmar literature. Then we will be able to appreciate the Mawgun in a more extensive way.

These genres of literature have distinct characteristics and historical value in their own right, which are useful for historians. I will explain what they are all about, the origin and their development throughout history. It is required of us to study them thoroughly to check and verify the dates and authenticity of the events in history besides other sources. And we should also appreciate them since most of them are great works of high literary merit by numerous poets and writers from ancient times to the end of Myanmar Monarchical system in 1885.

1.5 Yazawin* (Chronicles)

Myanmar started compiling chronicles in the sixteenth century. The chronicles duly recorded the affairs of the state, the royal family, religion, economy, wars, royal ceremonies, foreign relations and so on.

The oldest extant chronicle is “Maha Samata Wuntha Kyan” which means a work on descendants of Mahasamata, the first king on earth. It was written in 1520 by a monk, Thilawuntha, a great Myanmar poet and a learned Pali scholar. It can be divided into 3 parts; Majjhima Yazawin from Maha Sammata to King Asoka of India, Ceylon Yazawin from King Wizaya to King Maha Nan and Myanmar Yazawin from King Duttabaung to Innwa King Maha Thiha Thura.⁹ The main part concerns the translation of Mahavamsa* or Mahawin, a history of Buddhist kings in Pali. Only one fourth of information is about Sri Lanka and the line of Myanmar kings. It was modeled on the Mahavamsa (of the 6th century AD), the great chronicle of Ceylon. Later, the name Yazawin gyaw was applied to his work by the admirers.

* Myanmar adaptation from Pali rajavamsa, meaning lineage of the king.

⁹ U Pe Maung Tin, **Myanmar sarpay thamaing (History of Burmese Literature)** . (No. 122, 31 street Yangon, U Mya Thaung (01784) Khittayar publishing house, 1987), Page 77.

* Pa. great lineage

The significance of this work lies in the fact that for the first time the Myanmar kings were linked up with those of India and Ceylon, thereby establishing a tradition which was to be developed further by later chroniclers.¹⁰

The first full scale Myanmar Yazawin or Chronicle (Maha Yazawindaw-gyi) was written by U Kala, scion of a man of wealth (Dewa Tha Htay*) and mother Mani Awga who was of noble lineage, during the reign of Tanninganwe min (1714-33) in the late Nyaungyan dynasty.¹¹ At that particular point of time in history, a schism developed in Buddhist ecumenism in Myanmar. The problems included confrontation between forest and town dwelling monks and disputes over the draping of monks' upper robes to cover both shoulders and only one shoulder (Arone sect and Atin sect).¹² The country was also in turmoil due to scarcity of food caused by famine and frequent invasions of foreign tribes. Thinking that invaluable historical evidences would soon be lost under these circumstances, U Kala compiled the chronicle with the interest of saving the priceless historical facts and figures. It covers the period of the Buddhist kings in ancient India to the reign of Tanninganwe min. There are three versions of U Kala's Magnum Opus; Maha Yazawin Gyi (the great chronicle in twenty one volumes), Yazawin Lat (the shorter version in ten volumes) and Yazawin Choke (the brief chronicle in one volume).¹³

In the reign of King Bodawpaya (1782-1819), Court Minister Twin Thin Taik Wun Mahasithu, when he was assigned to inspect the stone inscriptions in order to draw clear lines of demarcation between glebe and taxable lands, came across some errors in U Kala's Chronicle. He then made the strenuous effort to correct these errors to

¹⁰ U Tin Ohn, "Modern Historical Writing in Burmese 1724-1942", **Historians of South East Asia**, D.G.E. Hall London, editor, (Oxford University press, 1961), Page 86.

* Myanmar corruption of the Pali Setthi, rich man or banker. In the year 1661, when King Pyi ascended the throne, he gave Tha Htay titles to many men.

¹¹ U Tin Ohn, "Modern Historical Writing in Burmese 1724-1942", **Historians of South East Asia**, D.G.E. Hall, editor, (London: Oxford University press, 1961), Page 86.

¹² Michael W. Charney, **POWERFUL LEARNING, Buddhist Literati and the Throne in Burma's Last Dynasty, 1752-1885**, (Centers for South and Southeast Asian Studies, The University of Michigan, 2006). Page 20.

¹³ U Tin Ohn, "Modern Historical Writing in Burmese 1724-1942", **Historians of South East Asia**, D.G.E. Hall London, editor, (Oxford University press, 1961), Page 87.

synchronize with the stone inscriptions. Having easy access to all stone inscriptions, he wrote *Yazawin-thit* (New Chronicle) with the sanction and approval of the King in 1798.

With the intention of keeping an official record of events, King Bagyidaw (1819-37) ordered the formation of a royal historical commission of thirteen learned scholars to assign them the task of compiling an official Chronicle in the year 1829. This chronicle is called "*Hmannan Yazawindawgyi* or Glass Palace Chronicle" because compilation work was done in the front chamber of the Palace of Glass. It begins with the first king of the world Mahasamata and ends with the early reign of King Bagyidaw. It was published in book form, volume 1 in 1883 and vol.2 in 1884 by the order of King Thibaw at the Royal Palace Press and has been reprinted several times.

While the process of compiling the Glass Palace Chronicle was underway, the head of the royal historical commission Monywa abbot (second) was in disagreement with the other members of the commission on interpreting and recording some place names, events, dates, etc. Moreover, the Monywa abbot did not accept the Mahasamata theory.¹⁴ He must have noted down the differences because after completion of *Hmannan Yazawin*, he wrote another version of his own called "*Maha Yazawin-Kyaw*".

By the order of King Mindon (1853-78), a group of scholars was formed to write on the events from the reign of King Bagyidaw to the early reign of King Mindon. They were added to the *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi* and this chronicle is called "the Second *Yazawindawgyi*".

During the British colonial period, U Maung Maung Tin (1) completed the eras of the last two kings of Konboug period in his chronicle called "Konbougset Mahayazawindawgyi". It covers the period from King Alaungpaya to the last king Thibaw.

U Kala's Great Chronicle (1724), *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi* (Glass Palace Chronicle) (1829) and U Maung Maung Tin's *Konbougset Mahayazawindawgyi* (1905)

¹⁴U Hla Pe, **Burma: Literature , Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life and Buddhism**, (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985). Page 50.

are standard chronicles. There are many other regional and racial chronicles such as Bagan Yazawin, Tagaung Yazawin, Portugi Yazawin, Chin Yazawin and so on. They cannot be classified as standard chronicles because most of them are either too brief or mainly focusing on a particular place or region.

1.6 Ayedawbon kyan

Another important Myanmar literary genre is Ayedawbon kyan. It is a form of “Mein Kampf” - a historical account of a military campaign, or struggle for power or a cause.¹⁵ There are about 8 to 10 Ayedawbon Kyans but only five can be classified as most prominent.

Dhanyawadi Ayedawbon Kyan covers the period from the reign of King Kanrajagyi (c.825 AD) to AD 1784 when Rakhine was incorporated into Myanmar by King Bodawpaya. Emphasis is not given to the life of a particular king but on events in Rakhine region. It is written by a Rakhine abbot whose religious title was "Kawitharabi Thiri-Pawa Egga-Maha Dharma-Razadi-Razagura".¹⁶ Since time immemorial, Rakhine has been called Dhanyawadi – the land of Bounteous Rice. There are five periods in Rakhine history; Dhanyawadi period (3325 BC to 327 AD), Vesali period (350 to 776 AD), Lemro period (818 to 1250 AD), Laungret period (1250 to 1420 AD) and Mrauk-U period (1430 to 1785 AD).¹⁷

Rajadirit Ayedawbon was written and translated into Myanmar by Banya Dala, Mon minister and general under King Bayinnaung. The text begins with Magadu also known as King Wareru* (AD 1287-1296) and ends with the death of King Rajadirit in 1423. The focus is on King Rajadirit's wars against King Min Gaung in the First Innwa

¹⁵ U Hla Pe, **Burma: Literature , Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life and Buddhism**, (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), Page 42.

¹⁶ U Thaw Kaung, "Ayedawbon Kyan, an Important Myanmar Literary Genre Recording Historical Events," in **Aspects of Myanmar History and Culture**, (Kyauktadar Township, Yangon, First Edition, March 2010). Page 25.

¹⁷ U Shwe Zan, **The Golden Mrauk-U; An ancient Capital of Rakhine**, (Yangon, Second Edition 1997), Pages 149-152.

* The name signifies the founder of the Mon Kingdom of Pegu or Hanthawaddy.

period. To observe old Myanmar military strategies and tactics, This Ayedawbon was translated into Siamese during the reign of King Rama I.

Hanthawaddy Hsinphyumyashin Ayedawbon* describes the life and the military campaigns of King Bayintnaung (Braginoco) (1551-1581). It is a detailed record of his military campaigns both at home and abroad during his lifetime. In the history of Myanmar, this energetic King Bayintnaung is variously named as "A king without a kingdom", "The conqueror of ten directions" and "Emperor without empire". He died at the age of 66. The authorship has been attributed to Yazataman, a minister in the court of Hanthawaddy, and the date of compilation was in ME 926 (AD. 1564).¹⁸

Alaung Mintaya Ayedawbon* (3 different texts) covers Alaungpaya's struggle for the reunification of the country and the establishment of the Konboug dynasty after crushing the Mon power. It ends with Alaungpaya's death on his return journey after a failed campaign against Ayutthaya in 1760. Myanmar historians attributed the authorship of two different texts to Letwe Nawrahta and the other to Twin Thin Taik Wun Maha sithu.¹⁹

Nyaungyan Mintaya Ayedawbon gives an historical account of the life of King Nyaungyan and his military campaigns. He established the dynasty after Hanthawaddy was destroyed by Taungoo and Rakhine forces. He was a son of King Bayintnaung and Khin Pyi Sone, a country girl from Nyaungyan (near Tharsi in Mandalay Division)²⁰. Thus, many western scholars named the dynasty founded by him as the restored Taungoo dynasty.

* The word Hanthawaddy means the pleasant place where Hamsa or Brahminy ducks inhabit happily.

¹⁸ U Thaw Kaung, "Ayedawbon Kyan, an Important Myanmar Literary Genre Recording Historical Events", in **Aspects of Myanmar History and Culture**, (Kyauktadar Township, Yangon. March 2010), Page 21.

* Dharmaraja or King of the Law

¹⁹ _____, "Ayedawbon Kyan, an Important Myanmar Literary Genre Recording Historical Events", in **Aspects of Myanmar History and Culture**, (Kyauktadar Township, Yangon. March 2010), Page 23.

²⁰ **Myanmar Sweson Kyan**, Vol. IV, (Encyclopedia Myanmarica, IV) (Great Britain, 1960), Pages 379-380.

Those are collectively known as "Ayedawbon Nga Saung Dwe" meaning five volumes of Ayedawbon as they were first printed in one single volume by the Thudharmawadi press under this title in 1923.²¹ The other two are Majjhima detha* Ayedawbon and Hsinphyushin Ayedawbon. Majjhima means middle and detha is region so its meaning implies "middle country" in central India. It includes events in Rakhine region and one Myanmar mission led by author Zeya Kyaw Htin to India during the reign of king Bodawpaya. Hsinphyushin Ayedawbon is on the early reign of King Bodaw written by Letwe Nawrahta.

The word "Ayedawbon" is still widely used in modern times. There are books called "Thakhin Nu Ayedawbon," "Peasant Ayedawbon" , "Student Ayedawbon" etc.

1.7 Eigyin

A special type of cradle song for royal children or ballad was known as Eigyin. They were written in verse form glorifying the military achievements of the ruling family to instil pride of family and race in the royal children.

An Eigyin may be as long as twenty to forty pages.²² These kinds of poems were written only by courtiers. A poem by Adu Min Nyo, a Rakhine courtier of the 15th century, known as "Rakhine Princess Eigyin" is the oldest extant Eigyin.

Originally, Eigyin was meant for royal infants, but some were written for adult princes or kings, in which case they are known as Shwenadawthwin Eigyin (songs worthy of the golden ears of royalty).²³ One example of them is Paleiksa Eigyin also known as Nga Singumin Eigyin which described successive dynasties of kings from Mahasamada, the first king of the world, to the Konboun Hsinphyushin. It is synonymous with a shortened form of U Kala's Yazawin given in verses. Further

²¹ _____, "Ayedawbon Kyan, an Important Myanmar Literary Genre Recording Historical Events", in **Aspects of Myanmar History and Culture**, (Kyauktadar Township, Yangon. March 2010), Page 14.

* In Sanskrit-Pali desa or desh

²² U Hla Pe, **Burma: Literature , Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life and Buddhism**, (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), Page 9.

²³Thaung Blackmore. "Burmese Historical Literature and Native And Foreign Scholarship: A Few Observations," **Historical Archaeological and Linguistic Studies**, (Hongkong, 1967), Page 312.

abridged forms of it are "Minset Linka"* by Monywa abbot and "Yazawin Thanpauk"* by U Aw in the late Konbaung period.

There are over forty Eigyins in Myanmar literature. The oldest known eigyin in Myanmar proper is "Thakinhtwe eigyin" by soldier-poet Shinthuye in 1476. I will depict this eigyin as an example to understand what an eigyin is like;

*"In times long gone by, and in a distant country, Duttabaung, the great grandfather of your grandfather, by the power of Saka from the heavens above and of Naga and Garuda (Mythical beasts), enslaved all who dwell on earth, in water and in the sky. Men of this generation, who see it not, cherish the memory and repeat the story. But O how your father surpasses this! For him the lord of the Raksa, the celestial ogre, came gliding down with rushing roaring, and said, "If you need help to fight, I am your Lordship's slave, bold and defiant". Both spirits and men have seen this, and his renown reverberates with wondrous clamour far and wide over the entire face of the earth. And you little (Princess) Htwe, great and noble blessing ----- sleep, softly, sleep."*²⁴

(Translated by J. Okell)

Another fascinating eigyin was composed for the Bayin Hna Ma Daw (sister of the King) by Pyi Nawadaygyi in 1478 AD (BE 940). The recipient of the eigyin was the daughter to the second son of King Bayintnaung, Nawrahta Saw, and King of Chiang Mai. She had three brothers and the eigyin was so named when her eldest brother received the crown of Chiang Mai.²⁵ She and one of her brothers grew up as hostages in King Naresuan's court and was later married to the king. Thus, it is also called "Yodayar queen eigyin."

* Epigram on dynastic history

* Historical epigram

²⁴ Shin Thuye, **Thakin Htwe Eigyin**, AD 1476, (Rangoon, 1900), Page 13.

²⁵ U Pe Maung Tin, **Myanmar sarpay thamaing (History of Myanmar literature)**, U Mya Thung (01784) (Yangon, Khittayar Publishing house, 1987), Pages 120-122.

A further interesting one is an Eigyin by Agga Maha Panita U Lin composed during the visit of the future king Edward VIII to Myanmar as Prince of Wales in 1921. The poet received Rs. 1000 as a prize for the Eigyin.²⁶

1.8 Mawgun

The term 'Mawgun' is derived from an archaic Myanmar word which is to be found on stone inscriptions from the Bagan period as 'amu kun', 'mau kun' or 'maw kun'.²⁷ Literally, it means keeping some kind of lasting record of a memorable event. Earliest examples of its usage appear in connexion with the building of religious edifices, dedication of goods, chattels and even persons to religious service. Then later its usage was extended to record successful military campaigns, acquiring of a royal elephant, a noble steed, completion of a pagoda, royal lake, palace, etc.

Mawgun has all the embellishment - literary devices such as similes, metaphors, tropes, allusions and synonyms. They were written by monks and laymen alike. The monks, however, generally confined the subject of their Mawgun to the building of religious edifices and other events of religious significance, while the laymen wrote on secular subjects.

Although the nature and characteristic of Mawgun and Eigyin are different from one another, both are the oldest and most reliable sources for the historians after stone inscriptions. And at the same time, they can be considered panegyric epic poems to some extent. Myanmar still uses the word Mawgun frequently in everyday life whereas Eigyin has become a rarely used word. There are many applications of Mawgun such as "Mawgunwin" (historical event, thing or person), "Mawgun film" (documentary film), "Mawgun Htain" (keeper of documents or registrar in the University) and so on.

²⁶ U Hla Pe, **Burma: Literature , Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life and Buddhism**, (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), Page 50.

²⁷ U Po Latt, **Treaties on the Explanation of Burmese Language, vol.1** , (Yangon, Pyin-nyar Nanda Offset, 1962), Pages 218-220.

To differentiate between Yazawin or Chronicle and Ayedawbon kyan, a chronicle is the generalization of lives of all kings and happenings in every dynasty treated in chronological order. Ayedawbon kyan is only meant for a certain king and his struggle in a particular period of time in history.

We can conclude that a variety of Myanmar literature indicates the historical accounts of a certain period of a king in history. Apart from these genres, over fifty forms of verses can be distinguished as Pyo, Taw-la, Yadu, Yagan, Folk songs, Drama, and so on. Each one of them has its own rules and regulations to compose it. Let me skip all these things as they are very wide subjects and impossible to touch upon every one of them in this thesis.

1.8.1 Yodayar Naing Mawgun

Regarding the Yodaya Naing Mawgun, I have found two Mawguns bearing the same title written by two learned court officials, one in the era of early Konboun period and the other in the late Konboun period. These two lyricists were Letwe Nawrahta and Sale U Pon Nya.

The author Letwe Nawrahta served under six successive kings starting from the last king of Innwa in Nyaungyan period to the early kings of Konboun dynasties. His Mawgun was about the conquest of Lan Na, Lan Xing and Ayutthaya, the capital of Siam from 1764 to 1767 AD.

The other Mawgun was an account of the war which occurred during the reign of King Mindon in the late Konboun period. According to the Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan states and the Keng Tung annals, a series of Thai military campaigns were made during the early reign of King Mindon, in 1849, 1853 and 1854. All these incursions were successfully repulsed. I have given the biography of Sale U Pon Nya and his works in chapter two of this thesis.

The Yodayar Naing Mawgun by Letwe Nawrahta is composed of five parts, which, in turn, consists of 46 stanzas. Part I from stanzas 1 to 9 mentions that the unstable situation in Chiang Mai supported to ensure what King Alaungpaya enjoined his sons,

before his death, to spark an invasion into Siam. It was King Hsinphyushin, second son of Alaungpaya, who fulfilled his father's dream. The strategy of this warrior king in investing Siam was to conquer 57 provinces of the Shan-Yun (Chiang Mai) and Lan Xang (Laos) first before Ayutthaya was beleaguered.

Part II from stanzas 10 to 18 is a description of the marching of two Myanmar armies, one from the north and the other from the south, to lay siege on Ayutthaya. The accounts of the Siamese attacks on both armies, the heavy rains and the ensuing flood during the monsoon and details of naval battles were given in verses. As Ayutthaya was a city surrounded by rivers and well defended from the attack, it was no easy feat for the Myanmar army to invest such a seemingly impregnable city.

Part III from stanzas 19 to 26 is related to the long siege of the city. It reveals Myanmar strategies to build a number of small out-lying forts outside the city wall that confront Ayutthaya bastions and the surreptitious digging of 5 underground tunnels which led to the base of the city wall of Ayutthaya.

Part IV from stanzas 28 to 35 concerns the sending of emissaries by the Siamese king to sue for peace but the offer was turned down on the grounds that it was not an unconditional surrender. It was followed by the breach of the wall, fierce battles and blood curdling scenes from the fall of Ayutthaya. In this episode, how captives and properties were managed was also mentioned.

And in Part V, a comparison was made between the invading armies of King Bayintnaung which had strength of 5 lakh troops in 1568 and the present Hsinphyushin's army of forty thousand. Hsinphushin's army was lauded for the victory over Lanna, Lan Xang and Ayutthaya with a relatively few forces led by mere generals in much shorter time span.

The backdrop of the Mawgun is Myanmar, which, after conquering Mon and Shan tribes became a powerful kingdom. At the peak of its height, Myanmar was strong enough to repel the four Chinese military advances under the Emperor Chien Lung the Great while conquering Manipur, Northern Thailand and Tenasserim. The Myanmar king

was a great warrior who fought many battles during his father's wars of unification of Myanmar as well as foreign wars.

On the other hand, Siam was in disarray due to division, hatred and rivalry between the two groups of mandarins in Ayutthaya court. One of the groups favored King Ekathat and the other was in support of King Uthumphon. Though King Uthumphon had successfully thwarted King Alaungpaya's attempt to conquer Ayutthaya, he entered priesthood again to stay aloof from court affairs. Moreover, according to Siamese history, King Ekathat was said to be devoid of foresight and diligence.²⁸ Siam under him was weak and vulnerable. Taking all these into consideration, the stage was then set for the final fall of Ayutthaya.

However, according to the modern scholars, the main cause of the Myanmar-Siam wars was due to the rivalry for firm control over the lower part of Myanmar, including Tenasserim, for seaports there were important for foreign trades. The new kings of Konboun dynasty, apart from taking control over Mon Kingdom, thought Ayutthaya should be neutralized or crushed, because they deliberately played Mon politics as a defense strategy.

1.9 Objectives

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the value of Mawgun is immeasurable. One obvious advantage of the Mawgun is that it is written by the perception of a contemporary writer to this war in 1767.

I wrote this thesis only from the academic point of view. It is my sincere hope that this thesis will not reopen the old wounds but explore below the surface of things and to analyze it in a constructive manner.

²⁸ Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, **The Chronicle Of Our Wars With The Burmese; Hostilities Between Siamese And Burmese When Ayutthaya was the Capital of Siam**, (White Lotus Co.Ltd, 2001), Pages 297-314.

Since it plays an important role in the histories of both countries, it is my immense pleasure to translate it into English for the benefit of a wider circle of scholars and the general readership.

This Mawgun is useful not only for the scholars of Myanmar literature but also for the researchers of histories of both countries. Some bias may be found in the Mawgun, but we can safely make an assertion that it holds the truth to a great extent. Even the respectable compilers of famous Hman Nan Yazawin had to refer to this Mawgun in describing the episodes of the war. The author gives each and every episode of the Mawgun in detailed accounts.

In the thesis, Chapter II gives an emphasis on Mawgun out of these 4 genres of Myanmar literature to be more explicit as this thesis is directly related to this kind. It covers origin, development, the importance of Mawguns, and its role in history.

Next, the other “Yodayar Naing Mawgun” written by Sale U Pon Nya, a great poet writer during the reign of King Mindon will be discussed. This is also called “Zinmme Naing Mawgun” mainly because the attackers were from Chiang Mai, Lanna and others from the northern part of Thailand.

As I have stated before, three successive Thai military campaigns were launched during the reign of King Mindon in attempts to invest Keng Tung. All these incursions met with failure. Though these wars were not comparable to the battle of Ayutthaya, one can easily imagine how sweet the victories must have been for the Myanmar people who suffered humiliation after humiliation at the hands of the British in the 19th century.

Then the life of U Pon Nya and his various works will be touched on. Because of his consummate skill in composing poems and writing prose that in modern times, he was named the "Shakespeare of Myanmar."

Chapter III studies the life of Letwe Nawrahta, a long serving Minister under six kings of Nyaung Yan and early Konboun periods from his teens until his death and his other works in detail.

Chapter IV examines the full text of Mawgun. Explanations and comments will be given whenever necessary. In Chapter V, further analysis on the physical aspects of the war such as background of Mawgun, cause of war, battles, strategy, tactics and so forth and the psychological aspects of the war like Cakravartin theory (King of Kings) will be pursued. It also provide the Myanmar economy in brief and the economic explanations for the war.

Chapter VI offers the conclusion, followed by recommendations for further research.

1.10 Methodology

The methodology applied in this thesis comprises a detailed study on the Mawgun, a research on Myanmar literature, and personal observation.

A detailed study on the Mawgun includes a verbatim translation of the Mawgun, making comparisons and conclusions with historical writings including Myanmar and Thai chronicles, and analyzing aspects of political, economic and social conditions of the Myanmar-Thai relations in the 18th century.

Research on Myanmar literature is an integral part in the study of history. There are many kinds of Myanmar literature which contain historical facts and figures in a host of ways. As such, this thesis probably represents one of these sources for the first time; Mawgun has been used in Thai Studies.

For personal observation, a visit to historical sites in Ayutthaya was made to glean as much information on the ground as possible. Then I journeyed to Chiang Mai, Phitsanulok and Sukothai in the north of Thailand. Personal observations on all these historical sites enhanced my geographical knowledge and it contributes to the writing of this thesis.

1.1 Myazedi Stone Inscription



**Four languages of the inscription: Pali, Myanmar,
Mon and Pyu**

ศูนย์วิจัยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



Figure. 1.2 Myanmar Folded Parabaik , reproduced from Myanmar Encyclopaedia CD-Rom.

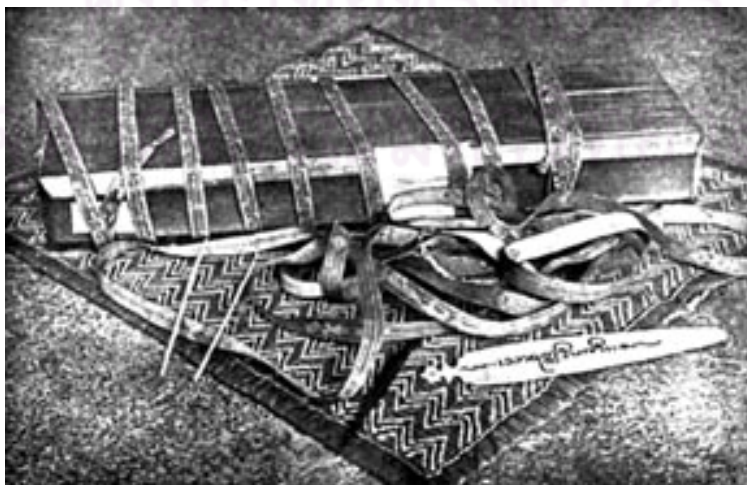


Figure. 1.3 Myanmar Palm-leaf Manuscript , reproduced from Myanmar Encyclopaedia CD-Rom.



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

CHAPTER II

LIFE AND WORKS OF U PON NYA AND HIS YODAYAR NAING MAWGUN

In this chapter, I will explain further about Mawgun, the life and works of U Pon Nya and his Yodayar Naing Mawgun. From thence, we will be able to evaluate the quality of U Pon Nya's Mawgun as well as compare and contrast with the one written by Letwe Nawrahta. In addition, I will be discussing Buddhist cosmology and the history of Mandalay. The whole picture of the Mawgun cannot be grasped or appreciated unless these subjects have been fully comprehended. However, since they are not directly linked to the main topic and to avoid confusion and mix up of events, they appear as appendix A and B.

2.1 More about Mawgun

The Myanmar alphabet is developed from that of old Brahmi, dating back to the 8th and 7th centuries BC and flowering in ancient India during the 3rd century BC. As time passed, a large number of Pali and a few Sanskrit words were adopted into Myanmar language through Mons.¹ According to available sources, the Myanmar language was first put to use in 1113 AD.² The assumption is that “Amugun” was born side by side with the advent of Myanmar language.

With the development of the Myanmar language, important literary works such as Buddhawin, Mahawin and Yazawin emerged. To record them and other important events in the life of the people for the benefit of posterity, Amugun had been widely employed. As textual evidences, many Amuguns inscribed on stone inscriptions were found in

¹ Myanmar **Abidan**, Union of Burma, “Introduction” Ministry of Education, Myanmar Language Commission, part 1, (Published in No 27, Pyi Road, Yangon, 1978), page 1.

² U Hla Pe, **Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life and Buddhism**, (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), pages 35, 106.

Bagan and Sagaing periods. At that time, Mawgun had been written only in prose. One archetypal Mawgun of Bagan period was the description about the donation of offerings to the Lord Buddha. The kings, court officials and the people of Bagan put a list of their donated items in the Mawgun: monastery, garden, cows and goats, slaves, etc.

The change of word from “Amugun” to “Mawgun” took place in the First Innwa period. The style of writing also evolved from prose to epic poem. Likewise, the subject matters had transformed from the donation of things to the descriptions of royal elephants, palaces, royal long boats, battles, royal lakes, pagodas and so on.

In the traditional court of the Myanmar kings, the person who could compose a Mawgun was regarded as a man of great learning. People paid respect to him, for only a few could write in the grandiloquent style of the Mawgun.

According to the New Mawgun list, there are more than (120) extant Mawguns.³ The greatest Mawgun writer in history was Watmasut Nawaday who, in his lifetime, wrote as many as (20) Mawguns. Acclaimed as a prolific writer, King Bodawpaya conferred on him the prestigious title of “Nawaday” which connotes “flawless writer”. In the history of Myanmar literature, there exists five Nawadays. Even then, only two were the recipients of the title officially conferred by the kings. These versatile writers were Pyi Nawaday Gyi in the First Innwa period and Watmasut Nawaday in the late Konboun period.

Mawgun are perhaps the oldest kind of Burmese verse. One negative aspect was that the panegyric treatment of the subject matter often lessened the historical value of these poems.

The first Mawgun composed in verse form was “Pyi Sone Mawgun” by soldier-poet Shin Htwe Nyo.⁴ It was an account of King Maha Thiha Thura’s military campaign

³ Dr. Ye Ye Khin, *Sit-naing Mawgun (3) saung hnit Aphwint kyan*, Ph.D Myanmar literature thesis (Yangon University, 2007, unpublished), page 7.

⁴ U Pe Maung Tin, **Myanmar sarpay thamaing (History of Burmese Literature**, (No. 122, 31 street Yangon, U Mya Thaug (01784) Khittayar publishing house, 1987), Page 59.

when he sailed down the river Irrawaddy to suppress his renegade son and uncle in the year 1472. It was brilliantly composed in a much detailed way that U Kala, a great chronicler, and the compilers of Hmannan Yazawin made the best use of this Mawgun in the writing of their respective chronicles.⁵

Relatively few Mawguns were found in Taungoo period because it was a period of fighting both internally and externally. Mawguns, however, re-flourished in the Nyaungyang period or Second Innwa period.

The tradition of writing Mawgun was passed down from generation to generation. Since the Mawgun prospered in the Konboun period, it can otherwise be named “the era of the Mawgun”. During the colonial period, Myanmar literature went into eclipse. Mawgun writings also met the same fate. It was only with the founding of the Burma Research Society in 1910 that an impetus was given towards the systematic study and revival of Myanmar classics. Even then, the study of Myanmar literature found a proper place in the curriculum of Rangoon University only in the 1930s thanks to the efforts of late Professor U Pe Maung Tin. In the aftermath of independence, nationalist fervor came to the fore. There were attempts to revive everything Myanmar. Old Myanmar words like Mawgun regained their stature. This time, the meaning of the word amounts to “permanent record”. Nowadays, Mawgun is commonly written when the construction of new roads, bridges or buildings have been completed.

In his book “**On both sides of the Tenasserim range**”, Sunait Chutintaranond rightly pointed out that Mawgun, Eigyin, Chronicles and Ayedawbon kyan, all these important documents are a collection of invaluable sources for the study of Thai-Myanmar warfare history or Myanmar–Siam warfare which cannot be found anywhere in the Thai documents.⁶

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Sunait Chutintaranond and Than Tun. **On Both Sides of the Tenasserim Range: History of Siamese Burmese Relations**, (Bangkok 10330, Thailand, Chulalongkorn University Phyathai, 1995), Page 54.

2.2 The life of U Pon Nya and his works

Since the olden days, there have been numerous well known poets and writers in Myanmar. But we can say that only a few can match U Pon Nya in fame. In addition to his skills in composing various kinds of poems, U Pon Nya was one of the founders of Burmese drama after Myawaddi Mingyi U Sa who wrote the first Myanmar court play "Enaung Zat (Prince Inao)" and U Kyin U, a pioneer dramatist in the reign of King Bodaw. U Pon Nya was a humorist-satirist and excelled in burlesque.

His fame spread high and low but his life, full of ups and downs, ended shortly after the rebellion by two princes, Myingun and Myingondaing, against their father, King Mindon.

It is befitting to describe the background of U Pon Nya's time before his biography and literary achievements are presented. Only then, will the life and works of U Pon Nya be more comprehensible and confusion can be avoided over mix ups of events and the people.

At the end of the early Konboun period which started from King Alaungpaya to King Bodawpaya, the late Konboun period began with the era of King Bagyidaw (AD 1819-37). This king moved his capital from Amarapura to Sagaing. It was during his reign that Myanmar lost the first Anglo-Burmese war of 1824 the result of which was the imposition of huge war indemnities of 10 million rupees or 1 million pound sterling on Myanmar, a demand for the provision of a British resident and the subsequent annexation of Manipur, Rakhine and Tenasserim regions by the British.

At the close of the war, internal struggle between King Bagyidaw and his brother, Prince Tharrawaddy broke out. Powerful Min-tha-Gyi U O, a brother of the chief queen, devised a plot to arrest prince Tharrawaddy. The prince retreated to the town of Tharrawaddy. Later, he emerged victorious and became king (1837-46). On the death of the king, his son Baganmin (1846-53) ascended the throne. In his reign, Myanmar was defeated again in the second Anglo-Burmese war of 1852 and the British carved out the

lower part of Myanmar from the map. Out of despair, the king entered a state of semi-insanity and the country was in chaos.

Here, we witness history repeating itself. A conspiracy was hatched by Minister U Pwa, the Minister for Granaries, to force Prince Mindon to leave from the royal capital. The prince together with his brother Prince Kanaung retreated to Shwebo. After securing sufficient men and weapons, an army under the command of Prince Kanaung besieged the Capital. At that time, the royal army had to fight on two fronts; against the British and against Mindon and Kanaung's army. The king surrendered with his notorious Queen Nan Madaw Mae Nu. Prince Kanaung brought 5 regalia to Shwe Bo for Mindon to ascend the throne.⁷ Kanaung was then made the Crown Prince, an act which upset many of King's sons. The King founded the new city of Mandalay and named his capital “Yadanabon Naypyitaw” (The bejeweled capital).

Although Prince Kanaung was an official heir apparent to the throne, many the king's sons did not like him. One reason was that the crown prince restricted the sending of senior princes to rule their given appanages.⁸ Moreover, they thought that only a son should receive the crown and sceptre. And King Mindon, having fifty three official wives and an indefinite number of concubines, had forty eight sons to choose from, complete with sixty two daughters.⁹

Thus, the two sons by the name of Myingun and Myingondaing rebelled against their father and uncle. In fact, Crown Prince Kanaung was not only their uncle but also father in law of the ring leader Prince Myingun. The rebellion was eventually put down but the Crown Prince fell dead during the fight between rebels and the royalists. The two princes escaped; Myingun to Vietnam which was then French Indochina and Myingondaing to Yangon. U Pon Nya, a famous astrologer, was charged with revealing the opportune moment to start the rebellion to the princes.

⁷ Dr. Ma Tin Win, History of Ten Kings, (Yangon 2008), page 286-287

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Shway Yoe ,**The Burman, His Life and Notions**, (the Dominion of Canada by George J. Mclead Limited, Toronto, 1963, Norton Library), Page 456.

Owing to the King's attempted purge of rebel leaders, suspicion stalked Mandalay. Another rebellion had been set off by prince Padein, son of murdered crown prince Kanaung. He attracted large masses of followers, treaded the victory ground at Shwebo and marched on Mandalay. There were reasons to believe that the king seriously contemplated abdication. Nevertheless, with the advice of his chief queen, a respected astrologer, who consulted her charts and predicted victory, he carried on to fight and crushed the rebellion.¹⁰

2.2.1 The life of U Pon Nya

U Pon Nya was born in the town of Sale about the year 1807.¹¹ His father U Myat Htwa was a tutor of prince Tharrawaddy who fell fighting for the prince during the rebellion. His mother Daw Hson was from the lineage of the Governor of Sale. He was named Maung Poat Si and at six years of age, he was ordained a novice.

From his religious title “Shin Pon Nya”, he came to be known as U Pon Nya. He learned the scriptures under the tutelage of Khin Gyi Sa and Khin Gyi Thar,¹² both abbots from Sale. Being a precocious child, he could recite various treatises, poems and chronicles by heart when he was still a novice. At the age of 20, he became a monk. His teacher was then the Bamaw abbot.

At a time when Baganmin ascended the throne, U Pon Nya’s uncle U Pwa, a tutor of Baganmin, and his teacher Bamaw Abbot were entrusted with the high posts in the court. Taking advantage of it, U Pon Nya left the monastic order and became a layman. Through them, he gained access to the court and attended on the king.

In 1853, Baganmin was dethroned by Princes Mindon and Kanaung. As customary, the new rulers executed U Pwa who was then a powerful Minister in the

¹⁰ Thant Myint U, **The River of Lost Footsteps**, (Oxford University Press, 2007), Page 142.

¹¹ Maung Htin Aung, **Burmese Drama**, (Oxford University Press, Amen House, London, E.C.4, First published 1937, Fourth impression 1957), page 72.

¹² U Pe Maung Tin, **Myanmar sarpay thamaing (History of Myanmar literature)**, (Yangon, U Mya Thaung (01784) Khittayar Publishing house, 1987), page 282.

court. Circumstances forced U Pon Nya to enter monkhood again. Later, with the help of the Bamaw abbot, he again took the life of a layman and served under the new king.

It is interesting to note that though he received fame from foretelling the fortune of others and writing astrological works, he jeopardized his own life by trying to serve many times in the court. He may have known from the very beginning of his fate or destiny. One oral history stated that he begged the king for the exemption from the punishment by death and that a proclamation was made according to his wish, for the king was a great admirer of U Pon Nya.

U Pon Nya was conferred the title "Minhla Thinkkaya" and granted the village of Ywasi as his appanage.¹³ Despite being born with a crippled arm, he was popular among court ladies as well as female commoners. This aroused the jealousy of men which in the end led to his demise.

In 1865, the Myingun–Myingondaing Ayedawbon (struggle) broke out. The rebels attacked the palace exactly at noon. Soon after the attack, the crown prince and a number of important court ministers were killed. The king was then in the Summer Palace with the British resident Col. Sladen.¹⁴ The Summer Palace was a small building outside the stockade of the main palace. There was an entrance called the Eastern gate. The rebels foresaw the event that the king would appear in this way, and they stationed a man near the gate to murder the king.

On hearing about the rebellion, the king rushed back to enter the main palace through the eastern gate. When the King saw the man, not knowing that he was waiting to kill him, he ordered the man to carry him to the inner circle of the main palace as it was the custom of royalty not to travel on foot. The man who was also an old servant of the king was too frightened and stupefied to carry out the assigned duty when he encountered the king. So, the king had a narrow escape by riding on the back of his would be assassin.

¹³ Thant Myint U, **The Making of Modern Burma**, Page 112. See also Sasodaw Mya Attupatti, **Biographies of Royal poets**, Hmawbi Saya Thein, Pages 390-394.

¹⁴ Shway Yoe, **The Burman, His Life and Notions**, (the Dominion of Canada by George J. Mcleod Limited, Toronto, 1963, Norton Library), Page 255 .

Upon reaching the main palace, the man's sword accidentally slipped away from its scabbard as he knelt down for the king to dismount. Eyeing the misfortune, Hlaythin Atwinwun who happened to be close by immediately beheaded the old servant as it was forbidden to carry any weapons inside the inner palace. The revolt was finally quelled by the king's men on the selfsame day.

U Pon Nya was allegedly thought to have connived with the rebel princes. He gave the princes an appropriate time to revolt as foretold by the stars. Later, U Pon Nya defended himself that he was compelled to make this ungrateful act to the king for fear of the nearest sword. However, U Pon Nya was charged with treason. After the trial, he was sent to the house of Myotha Governor U Thar Oh as a prisoner on parole.¹⁵ During custody, it was revealed that he had some amorous adventures with the junior wife of the Governor.

In the following months, another plot to overthrow the king was discovered and the conspirators were executed. U Pon Nya was also put to death with them under the Governor's order. The king, after all things returned to normalcy, remembered U Pon Nya and asked his whereabouts. When he heard the news of the tragic death of the great poet at the hands of an obscure Governor, he said wearily "Alas, a man was killed by a dog".¹⁶ U Pon Nya died in the year 1866.

However, King Mindon's attitude was worthy of note. According to G E Harvey, when the king disliked someone, he just said "Take him away, let me never see his face again." Then, everybody knew what followed these words¹⁷. Some days later, the king asked the man's whereabouts. When he was told the fate of that man, the king took out some lines from the books on religion or Lokaniti* to recite regretfully. After that, he was occupied with other important affairs as usual.

¹⁵ Maung Htin Aung, **Burmese Drama**, A Study, with Translations of Brumese Plays, (Oxford University Press, Amen House , London, E.C.4 , First Published 1937, Fourth edition 1957). Page 74.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ G E Harvey, **History of Burma**, (The Beginning of the English Conquest; Longmans, Green and Co. 39 Paternoster Row, London, E.C.4 , New York, Toronto Bombay, Calcutta and Madras , 1967), Page 321.

* Book of Morality.

Thinking himself a bodhisattva (the future Buddha) and being a great convener of the fifth Buddhist synod, he boasted that in his reign, never a death sentence was passed on anyone by himself. Considering the King's behavior and the nature of sins committed by U Pon Nya, the cause of his death was clear from the very outset.

Now follows the last poem of U Pon Nya just before the boatman sailed him home;

"Well, there it is. If I must part my lips to speak,

I'd say the outcome of my former lives is now revealed.

Even such as the kings of Kosala – Monarchs and rulers of people living lives

Of great renown in their palaces of gold, must ever perish when their time is

At an end – this thought gave me a pang of fear at the sceptre of relentless births and deaths.

And as the sins committed in his past existence, turned against him, came – as mine do now – to cut him down, he fled to a rest house,

There to die like a dog, unheeded.

Well, I knew the wrong, and yet when driven on by fate – the return for actions of the past – this splendid intellect of mine did not see so clear. Now am I face to face with my misdeed."¹⁸

2.2.2 His works

U Pon Nya was a writer of humorous satire against various types of men. His humor was also to satirize the fads and fashions of the time. He had often been criticized for his coarse jokes.

¹⁸ **80th anniversary of Than Tun**, Articles and Papers of Than Tun, (Published by Po Wa Offset, No 147, 45 street, Botataung, Yangon, April 2003). pp 228-229.

An aggregate of (4) Mawguns written in his life time were "Yadana Nadi Mawgun", "Hpondaw Bwe Mawgun", "Yodayar Naing Mawgun" and "Mandalay Bwe Mawgun".¹⁹ Among them, "Yadana Nadi Mawgun" was said to be the best. The main concern of the Mawgun was the beauty of the river, but he wrote less about it and extremely extolled the glory of the king. The king himself warned him to reduce the amount of praises and wonders put to him. This kind of excessive praising was also found in his "Yodayar Naing Mawgun". However, it can be said that by writing these Mawguns, U Pon Nya became more prominent in the royal court.

U Pon Nya wrote a variety of poems. Apart from these poems, he wrote over (60) Mittar Sar (letter of affection). These letters were one of the Myanmar literary forms. It emerged in the first Innwa period. Though it sounds like "love letters", it is not the kind of letter exchanged between lovers. Originally, it was a letter of guidance to the king sent by monks advising him to rule the country in accordance with the code of conduct and kingly virtues. In the ensuing periods, these letters were written by both monks and laymen alike. In it, the elders gave guidance to the youths for dealing with worldly affairs. It can also be a didactic letter consisting of homilies and advice.

Later, these letters were sent from brothers to sisters, mothers to sons, teachers to pupils, monks to laymen and vice versa. It became a line of communication, imparting wisdom from one person to another based on their fondness of each other. In the Konboun period, the subject matter of these letters expanded and covered various subjects such as letters of sympathy on cow, shin byu* and so forth. His expertise in writing these letters established fame in this field also.

He wrote over (30) dramas and religious novels. Out of all his work, 'Chandaka elephant king' novel was the most artistic of all. This story and many others were taken from the Jatakas. He was so successful in modifying them that many of them became classics in Myanmar literature.

¹⁹ U Pe Maung Tin, **Myanmar sarpay thamaing (History of Myanmar literature)**, (Yangon, U Mya Thaung(01784) Khittayar Publishing house, 1987), Pages 211,214,311.

* Shinbyu ceremony refers to a Buddhist rite by which a male youth (usually) is initiated into the order as a novice and is termed noviciation or novitiation.

U Pon Nya was a realist in Drama. His masterpieces were “Paduma”, “Vessantara”, “Wizaya” and “Water Seller”. His dramas reflected the political situations of the day. He wrote his first play “Paduma” as an admonition to those ladies of the court who were indulging in romantic intrigues with courtiers. When confronted with anger and complaints of the court ladies, he wrote “Vessantara” at the behest of the King to appease them. “Wizaya” was said to have been written in support of Prince Myingun who had been wild and troublesome as the youthful Wizaya. The proposition was that Myingun would bring greatness to Myanmar if he were entrusted with the throne.²⁰ By writing this play, U Pon Nya was suspected of popularizing the prince who later rebelled against the king. “The water seller” was aimed to remedy the rupture which was brought about at one time between the King and the Crown Prince.

He was the foremost poet, scholar and essayist of the day. He wrote astrological works and won further fame as an astrologer.

So great was the fame of U Pon Nya that in those days, whenever a piece of good work came out, people were quick to give credit to U Pon Nya for it. As such, the contemporary writers of U Pon Nya were very upset and discouraged. They expressed their bitter feelings through their works that as it happened more often than not, they no longer had the guts to undertake their writings under those circumstances.

2.3 U Pon Nya’s Yodayar Naing Mawgun

Despite this Mawgun being widely known as "Zimme Naing Mawgun" or "Yodayar Naing Mawgun", it is also called “Mandalay Bwe Mawgun”. U Pon Nya, while eulogizing the glory of the successive kings from Mahasamada up to King Mindon, wrote about the incursions by the Siamese in the year 1853 and the royal city of Yadanabon Naypyitaw (Mandalay).

The Mawgun with its (56) stanzas comprises three parts. The first part deals with brightness and fortitude of King Mindon. The second part is about the three battles

²⁰ Maung Htin Aung , **Burmese Drama**, A Study, with Translations of Brumese Plays, (Oxford University Press, Amen House , London, E.C.4 , First Published 1937, Fourth edition 1957), Page 107 .

between Myanmar and Siam over Keng Tung and the last one is related to the founding of Mandalay in the year 1857.

2.3.1 Part I of U Pon Nya's Mawgun (Hpondaw Bwe Mawgun)

This Mawgun starts with the coronation ceremony of King Mindon. U Pon Nya made an assertion that the king was a scion of solar race* and descendant of the sakyan* clan. His forebears were from Mahasamata to Prince Siddahta*, the last descendant of the Sakyan clan and then to the successive rulers of old capitals of Myanmar. It mentions that at one time, Innwa was destroyed by the Mons, the event of which was in some ways analogous to the world destroyed by fire. Out of this chaotic situation, King Alaungpaya united the country, became a refuge for his countrymen and the dominant ruler of Jambudipa* Island.

Each descendant king of Alaungpaya up to Baganmin was duly glorified and the movements of the capital cities from Shwebo to Amarapura to Sagaing were mentioned. Then U Pon Nya described the period of turbulence during which the British Raj came from India and caused trouble and consternation in the land as the fortune of the country was dimmed.

As foretold in prophetic saying and divine auguries, thievery and heresy thrived, famine stalked the land, the country's glory dwindled and the teachings of Lord Buddha were on the wane. In searching for a person who could lead the country out of this predicament, the Saka*, ruler of two realms of Tavatimsa* and Catummaharajika*,

* There are two royal lines of descent from Mahasamata, one is solar race and the other is moon race. (Pa. adiccavamsa)

* Llegendary Indian Prince Okkamukha (mouth of furnace) founded the Sakya race together with his younger brothers and sisters in ancient India. (Pa. Sakiyavamsa)

* Secular name of Lord Buddha meaning "One whose desire are fulfilled."

* One of the four islands located south of Mt. Meru in Buddhist cosmology.

* Lord Indra in Hindu mythology.

* Six level of paradise above Mt. Meru.

* The realm of four guardian spirits of the world.

stumbled upon the future Buddha i.e., King Mindon, residing in Tusita* celestial realm. He was deferentially requested to be reborn as a human being and become the defender of the Buddhist faith.

Owing to rumors that Prince Mindon would plan to grab the throne, he was compelled to leave the palace for Shwebo. U Pon Nya paralleled this incident to the situation in which Lord Buddha departed from the palace at night to take refuge in the forest. In the struggle, it was Prince Mindon who emerged victorious and became king. Unlike their past arrogant attitude, the British paid great respect to the new king and sent valuable presents including the ship “Ye Nann Cakra”. A hundred other kings who ruled the countries around Myanmar also rallied round him*.

Then the kingly virtue and the aptitudes of King Mindon are mentioned. The king was a man of considerable learning, cultured and polished. He was well versed in the intricacies of astrology and had thoroughgoing knowledge of Vedic learning. The king also envisaged the creation of a new city “Mandalay”. Although King Duttabaung of Sri Ksetra* city, King Asoka from Pataliputta*, King Duttagamani of Ceylon and King Anawrata of Arimaddana* city were the upholders of Buddhist faith, they had been guilty of taking others’ life. But in the case of King Mindon, he was totally free from any sin or blemish. Moreover, the young king was in the mould of a Universal Monarch. His power and glory was immeasurable. No one could discover a single fault with the king just as Mara the evil one and the youth Uttara* could not find out any mistake on the part of Lord Buddha after the enlightenment.

* Tusita, literally the Realm of the Happy Dwellers, the fourth highest out of six planes of habitats of celestial gods, is the realm where the Bodhisatta, the future Buddha, traditionally dwells until it is time for him to be reborn as a human being and achieve enlightenment.

* Myanmar kings traditionally style themselves as the monarch of 101 nations.

* Fields of Glory, name of the city of Pye in ancient times.

* Modern Patna in Bihar state, India.

* The ancient formal title of Bagan meaning "crusher of enemies".

* Uttara was the pupil of Brahmayu who stayed close to the Lord Buddha for seven months. He was sent by his mentor to find out whether the Buddha was replete with the 32 distinguishing marks of a superman.

U Pon Nya concludes the first part with the event of the consecration ceremony of pouring water on the king's head. Gods and demi-gods, Brahma deities, the four kings of Catummaharajika did not fail to attend. Gods sent gifts as tribute to the king; a wish fulfilling gem, a cat's eye gem with fifty six rays, a cloud formed pearl, a thunderbolt-like weapon with a hundred teeth, a thoroughbred horse and a white elephant. And kings from diverse lands and various islands paid tribute to the unrivalled king.

2.3.2 Part II of the U Pon Nya's Mawgun (Yodayar Naing Mawgun)

In this part, U Pon Nya gives full accounts of the three battles which broke out in 1852, 1853 and 1854. He starts with the events happening in the year 1852 AD, two years before the ceremony of anointing the king's head with pure and limpid water.* The king of Ayutthaya, having carried out minor aggressions against the Shan Yuan territory during the previous reigns of Myanmar kings, was said to have entertained thoughts of encroaching Myanmar territory.

Hsenwi-Bwa, governor of Keng Yung Gyi and the 12 Lu Shan districts approached the King of Ayutthaya to plant incongruous ideas. The King fell in with the plan and appointed his younger brother Chao Sivarat as commander in chief to invest as far as Keng Tung. Under his command, twenty four armies were mobilized and the army advanced with the accompaniment of the sounding of trumpet and drums. The lord of the town of Nan with a force of over five thousand from Mong Pong later followed the main army.

Anticipating the situation in the nine Maw Shan states in the east, King Mindon raised General Min Hla Min Htain Kyaw to a kingly status to overall charge of the campaign. Commander of the vanguard Tein Gyar Min Gaung who was farsighted and skillful in generalship was sent forward to give battle. He entrusted senior warrior Bala

* Muddha bhiseka or head-consecration

Jeyya Kyaw a regiment of three units each a hundred strong from Keng Yung, to take up defensive positions.

On the east sandbank of Thanlwin River, Shan leaders headed by the Chieftain of Keng Tung were given an army of three thousand men to march as one column. Deputy Commanders Naymyo Thamanta Kyaw Thu, Naymyo Thura Nawratha and Min Kyaw Thiha Minhtin took the command of the regiments from Tagaung - Mo Dar region and preparations were made for the coming battle.

Due to the assault of three columns of the Vanguard each with the strength of five hundred under the command of Tein Gyar Min Gaung on the twenty four units of Yun Shan at a place called Pyeng Sam, two miles south of Keng Tung, Yuan Shan forces had to retreat from their original stand to re-position at Sawmsili, west of Keng Tung after making a detour of Kho Po Ho. While they were on the move, the Myanmar army launched an attack and went after them. In this battle, the two generals, Sao Vanna, heir apparent of Chiang Mai and the brother of the Chief of Lampang were captured dead. A war elephant, fully caparisoned, was also captured as booty.

While besieging the town, twenty eight armies under the command of Chao Hsenviraja, brother of the king of Bangkok made several attempts to overrun the city. However, their efforts were all futile. Then the forces led by Tein Gyar Min Gaung headed for the Sawmsili hills where the Ayutthaya forces were stationed and attacked along three routes crushing the enemies in a pincer movement.

Due to immeasurable virtue and power of the king who was on the threshold of nirvana, a wondrous event occurred in which deities misled a contingent of one thousand five hundred troops headed by Tak Hsenvisse, the lord of Mong Lun, into Keng Tung and they were easily captured.

This is the description of the first victory won by King Mindon over Ayutthaya forces in the year 1852.

The King of Ayutthaya reviewed the battle and proclaimed at the royal audience that even Saka with his adamantine weapon would not be able to deter him from his

course. He spoke of his intention to attack the neighboring nine Shan states in Myanmar territory.

The King ordered the Crown Prince, Viceroy of Keng Yung and his uncle to lead the campaign. The army of twenty thousand soldiers with one thousand war elephants, cavalry and uncountable chariots were formed under the command of warrior mandarins Phra Bayiddhi, Phra Grumbahu and Sawbwa Trivumsa, lord of Keng Lun and Binnya Pravum, lord of Mong Nam, and the whole army marched into the territory of Myanmar.

One column penetrated up to Mong Niong, sixty miles east of Keng Tung and bivouacked there. Another column came by way of south of Keng Tung and encamped at Ho Pong clearing. Their strategy was first to overrun Keng Yung Gyi and the twelve districts of Lu Shan and then take over nine Keng (fortified) towns and the nine Mong regions.

On the other hand, King Mindon deputized General Mingyi Maha Nawratha to administer the nine highland Kamboja Shan states and ordered him to base at Mongnai where six thousand troops could be called up to national service. In addition to five long standing units of Mongnai, many stalwarts were called into service from all Shan states which lay west of the Than Lwin river.

Two well known mandarins, Minhla Minkhaung Kyaw and Nemyo Minhtin Thihathu were appointed as deputy commanders. The Myanmar army marched on the 14th day in the months of rains (Waso). Commandant of Yin Khe contingent, Nga Kyaw Gaung was given the task of garrisoning and holding the city of Keng Tung. Kareni chieftain Ah Baw of Kye bogyi deployed his forces to seal off the road from Chiang Mai. After these tactical manouvours had been made, Mingyi Maha Nawratha with his four combat arms²¹ arrived at the bank of Than Lwin river. While the armies were about to cross the river, one strange incident occurred. A battle hardened Elephant named Yan Naing violently refused to plunge into the river. It swam out to cross the river only when the royal order was read out.

²¹ The four combat arms consist of elephantry, cavalry, chariots and infantry.

While stationed at Keng Tung, forces led by Deputy Commander of Hsenwi were sent out to lure the enemy. The battle between Chiang Mai forces of three thousand troops with a hundred rampaging war elephants and Myanmar forces under the command of Minhla Minkhaung Kyaw in Mong Hsat broke out. Unable to withstand the attack, the lord of Chiang Mai had to make a detour to the east of Loi Leng hill. On their retreat, they were shot at by the Karenni who had been laying in ambush. In this battle, three generals were wounded and taken prisoner.

At this juncture, the King of Yonaka with his sixteen regiments arrived and was able to lay siege on Keng Tung. They concentrated on attacking three places: the pagoda hill, Keng Lep and Kamkaw. However, the three commanders from Myanmar armies, chieftain of Laikha, Crown Prince of Keng Tung and the governor of Mong Lap sallied out to lure the enemy. When the enemy were trapped, seven thousand troops carried out an assault to crush them. The Siamese were totally dispersed and the general in command by the name of Phra was decapitated.

Here, U Pon Nya wrote another humorous scene. Owing to King Mindon's glory, the two powerful big guns (a pair of cannon) from the Siamese side defied the order to open fire and remained silent. At worst, they rolled themselves into the Myanmar stockade.

Seeing the signs of assuming the defensive from the enemy's side, the chief of the Shan armies hurled himself into the thick of the battle. Though the governor of Keng Lun, Trivumsa tried to contain the attack, he himself was seriously injured and had to run away while governor of Keng Hsen lost his life. The commander in chief of Phrae also tried to escape abandoning his umbrella and drum which was the symbol of his official status. When the king of Ayutthaya saw this shameful act, the king blocked his retreats and killed him on the spot. Many troops were rounded up and all kinds of weapons, elephants and horses were taken.

This is U Pon Nya's description of the second battle which broke out in the year 1853.

It is mentioned that the third battle broke out in 1854 AD. General Maha Nawratha chose Crown Prince of Laikha's throne to destroy the enemy's elephantry which was being used for resupply of troops. Though the forces of the crown prince were checked with elephantry, they were able to smash it into smithereens.

The generals of the king of Ayutthaya held the view that the city of Keng Tung could be won through siege tactics. While enemy troops were being replenished, Saka who wanted to show the perfection and the greatness of the king to the Yun lords, created a miracle in which millions upon millions of celestial warriors were revealed to enter into Keng Tung. By seeing it, the Uncle of the king of Ayutthaya under cover of the forests ran away from the battle field. Without the leader, the whole army retreated from the siege of Keng Tung.

Knowing the possibility of the enemy's retreat beforehand, Myanmar and Shan troops cut off the escape route and avidly pursued. It took seven consecutive days to carry piles and piles of various weapons, equipment, elephants and horses.

2.3.3 Part III of the U Pon Nya's Mawgun (*Mandalay Bwe Mawgun*)

The third part of Mawgun begins with the accomplishment by the king of the founding of the city of Mandalay. Legend has it that once Lord Buddha visited and alighted on top of the Mandalay hill. Ten thousand ogres who dwelled in it brought offerings for the Buddha. Among them was a sweet and lovely sixteen year old ogress named Canda Mukhi. So much was the reverence for the Lord Buddha that the young and lissom ogress plucked off her breast and made an offering of it.

Upon seeing this great devotion, Lord Buddha preordained that after half of a fifth millennium year later; this ogress would be reborn as a king and found a great city at this place. Then, his religion would shine like a sun in that city.

As the Saka and Brahma deities appealed to King Mindon to build a new city, the mandarins of the court set out on the journey to reconnoiter the ground. With the help of

Visukamma, chief architect of Tavatimsa heaven on Mount Meru, the auspicious site was chosen in the year 1856.

The ground was consecrated with the recitation of mantras by eighty one Brahmins. No matter how majestic and magnificent the palaces of King Maha Panada, primeval king and direct descendent of Mahasamada and Saka, ruler of Tavatimsa must have been, one could not see them with one's own eyes. However, everybody could see personally the palace of king Mindon to extol the wonders of such a fabulous palace.

Vejjayanta palatial mansion* and the palace of King Mindon might equally be marvelous but the latter should be considered as more serene and pleasing because the king was soon to be endowed with the three qualities of full enlightenment: remembering past existence, acquiring divine eyes and finding the Dharma.

In the year 1857 AD, a royal procession was made with great pomp and ceremony to transfer the capital from Amarapura to Mandalay. Here, U Pon Nya gave the description of the organization of the Myanmar army. The formation of the basic unit of the traditional four combat arms of Myanmar army was the combination of one war elephant with its three mounted elephantry troops, one war chariot, three cavalymen and five infantrymen. It is called "patti". There are altogether nine stages: patti, senamukkha, gumba, gana, vahini, putana, samu, aniki and akkhobhini. Formation higher than patti may arrive at by multiplying the base with three at each stage, proceeding in this manner to complete eight stages. Only the ninth stage of "akkhobhini" is made by multiplying with 10.

The procession of the great King and his retinue was escorted by gods and deities also. The king was exceedingly glorious and as he observed the code of kingly conduct, a rare occurrence took place. The Saka sent the valahaka pearl, a gleaming pearl born of the sky which was guarded day and night by ogres on top of Mount Vepulla, to King Mindon through a courtier god in the guise of a crow.

* Saka's palace in Tavatimsa heaven

Another gift Saka presented to the king was a white elephant from Kalay country in the northern part of Chindwin River. During King Mindon's reign, the country with its capital Mandalay was peaceful and its opulence rivaled the divine realm of Nimmanarati, the fifth highest realm of Tavatimsa. The king practiced the five principles of moderate or sensible living. As the king was a pre-eminent person, he was regarded as august an entity as a stupa, the crest of a pinnacle symbolizing preeminence.

2.4 Conclusion

According to Dr. Hla Pe, the lineage of the Myanmar kings is baffling to the Myanmar as well as to foreign scholars for it is mentioned in Myanmar literature that Burmese kings had two main fountain-heads of ancestorship: Pyu-zaw-di of the pre-Bagan period, and Mahasamada, the first elected king of this world cycle.²² In describing the ancestorship of Myanmar kings, U Pon Nya follows the Mahasamada theory.

And his writing reflected the political situation of the country at that time. Myanmar landed on hard times when the British came twice to plunder the country and took away the land. The King had no choice but to make peace with the British. The need of the hour was to remedy the general deterioration of the country. The King manipulated the situation so deftly that the British gave due respect to him. U Pon Nya extolled the towering magnificence of the king's glory and even called him a future Buddha.

U Pon Nya wrote only four Mawguns in his life time and they were not as outstanding as his other works. We can even venture to say that U Pon Nya was more brilliant in writing poetry and drama than Mawguns. One weakness of the Mawgun was tendency to over eulogize on the king's glory. It may be his personal trait but we can also guess that the king himself, like all other kings do, would more or less expect some sort of eulogy from him as was the custom of the court.

²² Dr. Hla Pe, **Burma: Literature , Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life and Buddhis**, (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), Page 49.

U Pon Nya peppered his Mawgun with some humor and describes incredible scenes. We found his writing on a pair of cannons and the parade of Saka's celestial warriors was so amusing when we read through all tedious details of the wars.

U Pon Nya was skilful in combining three subject matters to place in one Mawgun. As he came from monkhood, his writings revealed his in depth knowledge about Buddhist literature. He showed his mastery of enlivening the characters whether they were from heaven or hell such as Saka, Brahma and so on.

He was flawless in weaving the vivid episodes of the Mawgun but the description of the scenes of the battles was not as clear and comprehensible as the one written by Letwe Nawrahta. One reason for this is that U Pon Nya's wars were smaller in size and less important than that of Letwe Nawrahta.

Mawgun contains many historical facts and figures. There are many important dates and events in history. It reflects the critical moment of the country during the reign of Baganmin. We can partly learn about the conditions prevailing in Siam and the Shan states. The documentation of the making of a new capital city and the organization of old Myanmar four combat arms are also interesting to note.

All in all, though we cannot say that U Pon Nya's Yodayar Naing Mawgun is excellent, it contains a lot of facts and figures about the country and the people at that time. Hence it has the merit of being considerably informative.

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



Figure. 2.1 King Mindon(1853-71) , reproduced from Myanmar Encyclopaedia CD-Rom.



Figure. 2.2 Prince Kanaung , reproduced from Myanmar Encyclopaedia CD-Rom.



Figure. 2.3. Mandalay palace (bejewelled city), reproduced from Myanmar Encyclopaedia CD-Rom.



Figure. 2.4 Mandalay palace, reproduced from Myanmar Encyclopaedia CD-Rom.

CHAPTER III

LIFE AND WORKS OF MIN LETWE NAWRATHA AND HIS YODAYAR NAING MAWGUN

In this chapter, the biography of Letwe Nawrahta and his work will mainly be dealt with. As he served under six successive kings of Nyaungyan and Konbounng dynasties, his life under each king will duly be discussed. Then, accounts of the battles before 1767 will be provided to afford a bird's eye view of the wars from Tabin Shwe Hti's reign to King Naungdawgyi's.

3.1 Life of Letwe Nawrahta

Letwe Nawrahta was born in Monywe village, Monywe district, Sagaing Division in the year 1723 AD. He was named Myat Thar Nay and variously called U Myat Nay, U Myat Thar or U Nay. He first served under King Mahadharma Yazadipati (1733-1752), the last king of Nyaungyan period. He then served under five successive kings of Konbounng dynasties namely Alaung-min-tayagyi, Dipeyin Min (Naungdawgyi), Hsinphyushin, Singumin and Bodawpaya. So far, we cannot trace back his genealogy and the names of his parents or wife. However, we have been informed of the fact that he had sons named "Chan Nyein Yar" and "Chan Nyein Thar", Brother "Myat Thar Wai" and Sister "Amae Phyu".

3.1.1 Mahadharma Yazadipati

He started his career at the age of twenty under King Mahadharma Yazadipati in 1743. He became a tutor to the eldest son, Thiri Mahathudharma Yazar of the king of Sagaing. He was conferred the title of "Yana Kyaw Thu" and given the Taung Twin village to govern. Sometime later, he received another title "Pyanchi Kyaw Htin".

He recorded an account of the exchange of emissaries between Ayutthaya and Innwa in 1746. Owing to a Mon uprising in Martaban and Tavoy, the Myanmar governors of these towns had to flee to Siam. Despite helping the Mons, King

Borommakot of Ayutthaya treated them well. In acknowledging the goodwill of the Siamese king, King Mahadharmayaza Dipati sent an embassy with the presents to the Ayutthaya court. King Borommakot, in return, "sent envoys to Innwa with gilded lacquer goblets, dishes and betel-boxes, velvets and silks of dragon pattern, a royal barge, and a letter on gold leaf: the letter was enclosed in caskets of ivory and crystal studded with rubies, wrapped in velvet and tied with gold cord, and it was borne on the back of an elephant."¹

Moreover, Letwe Nawrahta duly stated the plight of the people of Innwa during the reign of King Mahadharma Yazadipati in his *Alaung-min-tayagyi Ayedawbon Kyan*. Some details were not mentioned even in *Hmannan Yazawin* but he related every detail of the happenings of this critical moment in history.

At that unfortunate time, the situation of the country was going from bad to worse. Within the wall of the city and the surrounding areas, thieves, dacoits and robbers looted the properties of the people. Some influential monks even consumed intoxicants and no one dared to make complaints against them. One heretic monk preached that a person who accepted his teaching could become a Sotapanna². His adherents unduly boasted that they had reached the stage of Sotapanna and accordingly gave themselves titles unfitting to them.

The king countered these problems by applying both peaceful means and harsh methods but was unable to stop the general deterioration of the country. The country was so disorganized that even when the Mon army came to attack Innwa, they easily reached the outskirts of the capital without any serious defense put up by the Myanmar Army to halt them. When the capital was besieged, rare incidents unheard of in history took place. Because the Mon army blockaded the supply line from the Leidwin (9) districts, the

¹G.E. Harvey, **History of Burma**, (The Beginning of the English Conquest; Longmans, Green and Co. 39 Paternoster Row, London, E.C.4 , New York, Toronto Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, 1967), Page. 214; see also **Hman-nan Yazawin-daw-gyi (The Glass Palace Chronicle)**. Vol.II Mandalay: Mandalay Pitaka Book Depot, 1941. (reprint). vol. III. (Mandalay: Rangoon, Mandalay Book Depot, 1955), Pages 378-384.

² "a type of deity who had embarked on the first of four stages to enlightenment: Stream-winner, once returner, never returner, arahat", C. Wyatt, (Thailand), Page 143.

granary of the country, the price of rice shot up exorbitantly. The king had to provide the people with the treasure from his coffer. When the coffer emptied, a great famine fell on the people. So great was their hunger that people even ate the flesh of the corpses floating in the lakes. The king finally surrendered himself to the Mons who later exercised a scorched earth policy in destroying the royal city and upper Myanmar. They took the king to their capital Hanthawaddy.

Due to this scorched earth policy, almost all important literary works of Innwa were destroyed or lost. Letwe Nawrahta collected as many of these documents as possible from various monasteries located in remote areas and made a list for posterity. When Innwa fell at the hands of the Mon, he went back to his native village with a heavy heart.

3.1.2 Alaungpaya (U Aung Zeya)

Mons became the rulers of the country for a short period. Many chieftains hastened to make submission to the new power and drank water of allegiance. The origin of this tradition can be traced back to the days of the Angkorian Empire.³ However, one man named Aung Zeya from Moksobo did not yield to Mons. He built a stockade made with palm logs encircling forty six villages and defied the authority of the Mons.

When he heard the news of U Aung Zaya, Letwe Nawrahta decided to serve under him and set out on a journey to Moksobo in 1752. He was then about 28 years of age. He was taken by Min Khaung Nawrahta (Bo Ton) to King Alaungpaya in Moksobo. The king on first meeting him asked whether he could write a Yadu poem. He immediately composed a Yadu named “Zayatuthan”. Pleased, the King asked his name to which he replied as “Nga Nay” (master Sun). Being contented, the King proclaimed at the audience hall that to receive a man by the name of Sun is a good omen. When the sun comes, all other planets and stars have to move away. Likewise, because of his power and glory, all the enemies would surely disappear.

³ Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies*, Pages 193, 195-98.

In the task of unifying Myanmar, Alaungpaya had formed 68 Commanders (Comrades-in-Arms). When Alaungpaya became king, the tale of these sixty-eight men came to be the subject of a folk-ballad, the Ye-tin Linka. U Nay was added as number (69). Though he was included in the list, his main duty was not to take part in battles but to write records, poems, and other administrative works and be constantly with the king. He also had the privilege to follow the king's military campaigns both at home and abroad. As he knew about royal tradition, custom, and etiquette of the court of Nyaungyan dynasty, he rose to prominence rapidly in the new royal court.

It is interesting to note how U Aung Zeya received the title of "Alaungpaya" meaning "embryo Buddha". When U Aung Zeya made Shwebo a new capital and became king, a question arose to which title the new king should be held. Previously, he made a solemn wish that if his destiny was to become an embryo Buddha and a good king to upkeep and propagate the religion, all the battles he won quickly and otherwise, be defeated in a very short while. From that incident, he became known as Alaung Mintaya gyi.

In 1754, Alaungpaya ascended the throne in Yatana Theinka (Shwebo). U Nay designed the plan of the city and gave the propitious time according to the good position of the planets and stars. On that very day, he received the title of "Letwe Thondra". The king was of common blood who attained kingship by virtue of his own merit; and so he was unaccustomed to the royal traditions, custom and law and heavily dependent upon him.

In 1755, U Nay accompanied Alaungpaya's campaign to Hanthawaddy, Capital of the Mons. The king conquered the towns and villages leading to Hanthawaddy. While besieging the city, U Nay built a new town called "Zaytuwadi" for temporary station of the king. The Mon king gave his daughter in marriage to the king and other propitiatory tributes were sent. After the king's conquest of Hanthawaddy, he was awarded the title of "Letwe Nawrahta".

During King Alaungpaya's campaigns, many towns and villages were renamed from "Ye Pa Tan" to "Yan Aung kyun", "Bagan" to "San Yar kyun", "Pa Khan Nge" to

"Zaya kyun", "Karma Myo Thaung kyun" to "Aung Naing kyun", "Magwe" to "Yan Myo Nain", "Lon Gyi" to "Aung Pon kyun", "Lon Say" to "Myan Aung", and "Dagon" to "Yangon". All these names were given by him.⁴ These new names were somewhat related to the meaning of victory. The purpose of renaming these towns and villages was to boost the morale of Myanmar people who had to bear the suffering and were in a desperate state under the Mons for quite some time.

Another historical fact revealed by Letwe Nawrahta concerns the demise of the captive King Mahadharma Yazadipati. When he heard that over sixty people including the king and his three sons were drowned in the river by the Mons, King Alaungpaya was absolutely livid and said that the motif behind his struggle was not to crown himself but to reinstate the old king on the throne. Now his efforts were all in vain and he was so irritated by this incident that when he came down to attack the Mons, he acted violently and ruthlessly.

With the blessing of the king, Letwe Nawrahta made a donation of a religious building at his native Monywa village in 1758. He later built a Cedi in the reign of King Naungdawgyi and dedicated golden bells and stone inscription in Hsinphyushin's reign. These historical evidences are important for the historians to unmask the many details of Letwe Nawrahta's life. The name of his Cedi is called "Tilawka" and the religious building was named after the Kalyani inscription by Mon King Damazaydi.

From available sources, it can be assumed that he was left behind in Naypyitaw when Alaungpaya launched an offensive on Manipur, but he went along with the king's campaign to Ayutthaya in 1760.

As mentioned earlier, King Alaungpaya was not from the royal lineage and he knew very little about both religious and worldly matters, therefore, the King made quite a number of queries on various subjects. Letwe Nawrahta, on behalf of the King, as well as for himself, posed many erudite questions to the learned monks. Most of them were

⁴ Maung Kyauk Taing, "Thu-kha-mein U Nay i Say-pay gita thu-tay-thana," in **Min Letwe Nawrahta, 1085-1335**, (Yangon: Myan-sar Pyant, 1974), Pages 132-133

answered by famous monks in accordance with the Buddhist scriptures. His famous “Letwe Nawrahta Hlauk-htone” was completed in 1763.

3.1.3 Naungdawgyi (Dipeyin Min)

On the death of King Alaungpaya, Naungdawgyi (big brother) Min ascended the throne. Letwe Nawrahta was given the title of “Sithu Kyaw Htin”. He completed “Tha yo ga dipani”, a treatise on grammar, and “Sithu Kyaw Htin Hlyauk Htone”, a compilation of questions and answers, during this reign. Thanks to the bell inscription inscribed by the Monywa abbot, we now know that he received another title of “Nanda Thura Kyaw Htin”.

Letwe Nawrahta was said to have written over two hundred Yadu poems second only to Pyi Nawaday Gyi who recorded Yadu writings with more than three hundred. Unfortunately, we have so far found only eleven sets of yadu poems written by Letwe Nawrahta. Yadu is a popular kind of poem which normally consists of three stanzas. The subject matter may concern the giving of advice or in the praise of the king but the main feature of it was one’s feeling of sadness and longing arising out of separation from one’s lover or being away from the place that one loves and so on.⁵

Being a great Yadu writer himself, he compiled and edited Yadu poems of Pyi Nawadaygyi and Natshinnaung and made an anthology of Yadu written by sixty seven poets of Nyaungyan period. As stated before, the last forty years of the Naungyan period were years of turmoil in the history of Myanmar. Due to his relentless efforts, posterity has easy access to those works of great laureates.

Among the Pyos written by Letwe Nawrahta, "Razaniti Pyo" is the best. Pyo differs from Yadu and Mawgun. Pyo are verse renderings of Buddhist stories and teachings which transferred the Pali originals to a Burmese setting and made them more

⁵ U Hla Pe, **Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life and Buddhism**, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Heng Mui Keng Terrace, Pasir Panjang, (Singapore 0511, © Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), Page 11.

vivid by adding small imaginative details and homilies.⁶ The following is an example extracted from the Ko-gan Pyo written by Shin Maha Rahta Thara in AD 1526;

*"Birth after birth, over and again, with dirt and besmirching, oppression and evil, fading and withering, longing and craving, crying and groaning, clutching and clinging, panting and grasping, sobbing and weeping, toil and weariness, all pervading, round and round like a spinning reel."*⁷

(Translated by J. Okell)

The Lawkathara Pyo composed in the years between AD 1333-1343 by a Rakhine poet Thu Mratt can be considered as the forerunner of Pyo verses in Myanmar literature at large.⁸ It has usually about 200-300 stanzas in the entire poem. In his Razaniti pyo, Letwe Nawrahta urged the king to emulate the specific characteristics of Lion, Bird, Chicken, Crows, Dogs and Mules. It was completed in 1763.

3.1.4 Hsinphyushin (Myedumin)

When Hsinphyushin was the reigning king, Letwe Nawrahta was appointed as Atwin Wun* and received three titles; Naymyo Thiri Zaya Kyaw Htin, Naymyo Maha Kyaw Htin and Naymyo Maha Thinkayar Kyaw Htin. He posed erudite questions to the Nyaung Kan Abbot from 1765 to 1771. Those questions and answers were recorded in his book of "Naymyo Thiri Zaya Kyaw Htin Hlyauk Htone".

During the reign of Hsinphyushin, another court bard Letwe Thondra, whose works had been later mixed up with those of Letwe Nawrahta, was banished from the capital to the far-flung areas of Meza region in Katha district in 1763. Since this Letwe Thondra was a great poet whose Yadu poem "Meza Taung Che (at the foot of the Meza

⁶ U Hla Pe, **Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life and Buddhism**, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Heng Mui Keng Terrace, Pasir Panjang, (Singapore 0511, © Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), Page 6.

⁷ Ko-gan Pyo in Buddha's birth story No. 509 (Mandalay, 1923), Page 24.

⁸ U Shwe Zan, **The Golden Mrauk-U; An ancient capital of Rakhine**, U Shwe Zan, Patron, (Rakhine Thahaya Association, Yangon. Second Edition 1997), Page 152.

* junior councilor in the privy council

hill)” got high marks of literary merit in the history of Myanmar literature, I would like to make a brief account of his tragic life in Hsinphyushin’s reign;

Soon after Hsinphyushin succeeded the throne, the secret love affairs of Nga Aung Htwe, a courtier of the Prince Amyint Min, and court lady Mi Maik was uncovered. In anger, King Hsinphyushin demanded Prince Amyintmin to give him the possession of Nga Aung Htwe. When the king’s request was denied by the prince who was also the third son of King Alaungpaya, a royal order was sent to expel Letwe Thondra, tutor to Amyintmin, to the remote area of Meza place. This incident is like a Myanmar proverb saying “because one cannot drive away mice, one sets the whole barn on fire”. All ministers and courtiers of the palace were inexpressibly shocked by the king’s attitude.

While in Meza, Letwe Thondra composed a famous Yadu poem expressing his grief and loneliness. Relenting on hearing the Yadu, the king immediately recalled him from banishment and reinstated in his post. However, it is said that the poet was greatly disappointed and discouraged by the incident that his desire to compose poems dwindled in his later years.⁹

The influence of Maza Taung Che Yadu poem was so great that with this poem alone, the poet’s status is equally raised to the level of Pyi Nawadaygyi and Natshinnaung, both were kings of Yadu poems by the learned scholars. The following is the third verse of the Meza Taung Che Yadu to understand the tone of misery expressed by the poet;

*"At the Nyaung-ye festival
Meza people, all devout
Duly fall in prayer and pour
Water on the banyan-tree
From the valley, see, the shrine
Rises even to the sky
Meza! Thy pagoda old*

⁹ Nan Nyunt Swe. "Letwe Nawhta's Gon Myrauk sarpay mya," in **Min Letwe Nawrahta, 1085-1335**, (Yangon: Myan-sar Pyant, 1974), Page 26.

*Of the Golden Cave is there
 Fair to look on evermore
 Dimly glimmering o'er the mount
 Dusky floor to shadowy head
 Steady hang night's vapours yet
 Soon, as a billowing net, are stirred
 Surging fretful as a flood
 Huddle upward, tower, and crowd
 Then in cloudy streamers free
 Stretched across the sea of dawn
 Darkling wreath the heights around
 Lost and drowned. The raveled mist
 Shredded now by twisting winds
 Patters – listen! – to the ground
 Drip – drop – the sound is loud
 Like the rounded clear refrain
 Of the rain, though none there be
 See! The chariot of the sun
 Peeps o'er Mount Yugandhara
 Stooping under vapours wan
 Numbed, the noon I fondly wait
 Counting on my fingers chill
 Hours and minutes, till the rays
 Spreading fill the world with warmth."¹⁰*

Letwe Nawrahta worked together with this great poet under the same kings. They received the same title of “Letwe Thondra” and his works were not only confused with but also overshadowed by Letwe Thondra’s. Thanks to the writings of the Monywa abbot on the bell donated by Letwe Nawrahta and the efforts of our historians and archeologists, we now solved this problem through Letwe Nawrahta’s Cedi, golden bells

¹⁰ G.E. Harvey, **History of Burma**, The Beginning of the English Conquest; Longmans, Green and Co. 39 Paternoster Row, (London, E.C.4 , New York, Toronto Bombay, Calcutta and Madars , 1967), Pages 249-250.

and a stone inscription. Letwe Nawrahta started writing Alaung Mintaya Ayedawbon during this period. Among the three different texts of Alaung Mintaya Gyi Ayedawbon, Letwe Nawrahta's two versions were more detailed and comprehensive than that of U Htun Nyo. It is about how Alaungpaya rose to power, his conquest of Hanthawaddy and the reunification of the country, and how he tried to expand his sphere of influence over neighboring countries.

When Myanmar conquered Ayutthaya in the year 1767, he composed "Yodayar Naing Mawgun". He later wrote a yadu poem about a pair of big guns brought from Ayutthaya in the same year.

In the advent of guns and cannons introduced by the Europeans in the sixteenth century, it is worth remembering the reaction of King Min Gaung of Innwa when he first witnessed the destructive power of a cannon. He sadly wept and lamented that from thence onwards, man would not be able to show his personal prowess of military affairs in warfare to fight each other in a manly exercise.

If we traced back the whereabouts of twin cannons from Ayutthaya, one bronze cannon was dug out from old Innwa by an excavator. Written on it was "ME 1128, taken from Dwarawati". This cannon is said to be one of two sister cannons. It is indeed one of the two thousand five hundred and fifty cannons taken from Ayutthaya during the reign of Hsinphyushin. It is now displayed in the Defense Historical Museum.¹¹

There also exist other cannons bearing similar inscriptions. In the Ayutthaya period, a variety of cannons beautifully designed with mythical beasts were made in Siam as well as imported annually from China. In King Narai's reign, Siamese cannons including a pair of cannon were sent to King of France as gifts and they were used in the siege of the Bastille during the French revolution. Thus, it should be noted that many pair of cannons had been manufactured in Siam during the Ayutthaya era.

¹¹ Daw Kyan, **Thamaing shar pon taw hnint a char sar tan myar (A journey to search out history and other papers)**, (Kyauktadar Yangon: Myanmar Yadanar sarpay, 2002), Page 100- 107.

When the British occupied Myanmar in 1885, over one thousand and eight hundred cannons were captured as war booty. By the order of the Viceroy of India, General Sir Harry Prendergast destroyed many of them. To commemorate the victory over Burma and to keep them as souvenirs, sixty five beautifully decorated cannons were sent to the Queen of England and other nobilities. Among them, eight cannons which can be of Siamese origin were sent to the Queen, Prince of Wales, Duke of Edinburgh, Viceroy of India, Rangoon Volunteer Army and Commander of Madras.¹²

According to General Prendergast's report, six cannons bear inscriptions and the other two were molded in a similar design with the one sent to the queen. It is found that General Prendergast mistook Dwaravati for Dhanyawadi. His remark in the list was "taken from Sandaway (capital of Rakhine)".¹³ Due to this fatal mistake, many historians lost their way in finding the whereabouts of these cannons, especially a pair of big guns. Further study or research is still needed to discover their final destination.

Another debatable issue is whether Letwe Nawrahta went along with one of the campaigns to Ayutthaya. My personal view on that is the Mawgun could not be an eye witness account. My argument is based on three points.

First, since the career of Letwe Nawrahta did not belong to the military profession though he was appointed as Tat Ye* at one time, it is unlikely that he participated in one of those campaigns to Ayutthaya from the very start.

Secondly, the king did not lead any expedition to march on Ayutthaya. He launched a campaign only to Manipur in 1764 and from 1765 to 1769, he was busy defending the country from the four massive Chinese invasions against Myanmar. For this reason, Letwe Nawrahta would not have chanced to be in Ayutthaya.

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

* Adjutant Officer

The third reason is simply a lack of evidence to prove in the documents. I would like to quote some lines from "Aspect of Myanmar History and Culture" by U Thaw Kaung, a famous historian of Myanmar;

"It was probably in December 1766, about six years after the great King's death that LN started writing this important eye-witness account of Alaungpaya's rise to power. At the time LN was in ill-health and resting from court duties for a while."¹⁴

If that be true, Letwe Nawrahta could not be an eye-witness to the war since the fall of Ayutthaya took place in April, 1767. It is very tempting to assume that Yodayar Naing Mawgun is an eye-witness account because Letwe Nawrahta vividly described every detail of a series of battles from the very beginning to the end. However, the values of the Mawgun do not rest on his being present or absent in the battles.

Letwe Nawrahta had a nimble wit and discernment to compose poems on the spot. He spontaneously composed "Zayatuthan Yadu", "Pyu Kan Mawgun", "Zina Aung Char Shwe Bontha Mawgun" under time pressure.

He was included in a select band of Thwe-thout*, blood brothers formed during Hsinphyushin's reign. He also wrote quite a number of songs and musical compositions from 1763 to 1770.

3.1.5 Singumin

Letwe Nawrahta did not mention much about his service under Singumin though he received the title of "Mingyi Kyaw Htin". He completed "Letwe Nawrahta's Than Daw U Tin Pon Sar Htan" during this period. Singumin was notorious, fun loving and carefree and so his reign was short. There is little literature produced in the reign and Letwe Nawrahta's literary work in this era was relatively small when compared to those in other reigns.

¹⁴ U Thaw Kaung, "Letwe Nawrahta (1723-1791), Recorder of Myanmar History," **in Aspects of Myanmar History and Culture**, (Loka Ahlinn Publishing House, No. 167/173, Room D4, Seikkantha Yeikmon, Seikkantha Street, Kyauktada Township, Yangon, First Edition, March 2010), Page 81.

* Men contract brotherhood by drinking each other's blood mixed up in a bowl.

3.1.6 Bodawpaya

During the regnal years of king Bodawpaya, Letwe Nawrahta became a governor of Amarapura city (the immortal city) and received the highest title of “Maha Thiha Thura”. Questions posed by the king and answers by the Maung Daung abbot was treated as Ameidaw Phyay Kyan by him.

Towards the end of his life, he wrote Hsinphyushin Mintayagyi Ayedawbon. It includes the events of the first five years of King Bodaw's reign because the author died after nine years of the king's accession. In Myanmar history, despite almost all the kings possessing white elephants, only King Bayinnaung of Toungoo period and Myedumin of Konboun era were widely known as Hsinphyushins. Confusion arose when he wrote about the struggle of King Bodawpaya as Hsinphyushin Ayedawbon.

He was in the company of the Crown Prince Thado Minsaw's campaign to Rakhine which ended the long lines of Rakhine kings starting from King Kanrajagyi. We have seen only five invasions to Rakhine occurred from the time of Anawrahta to King Bodaw whereas numerous invasions to lower Myanmar, Chiang Mai and Ayutthaya took place. From that time henceforth, Rakhine was permanently incorporated into Myanmar as one of its states. He wrote an eye-witness account of “Dhanyawadi Naing Mawgun”.

On his return journey, Letwe Nawrahta undertook the onerous task to bring the Maha Muni Buddha Image to Amarapura in 1785. He recorded in his "Dhanyawadi Naing Mawgun or Min Khan Sardan Taw Gyi" a difficult journey in transporting the huge image through the passes of over one hundred and thirty mountain ranges and by water routes on rafts. It is said that this image was cast in the exact likeness of Lord Buddha during Rakhine King Canda Thuriya's rule in 554 BC. In a fifteenth century Eigyin by Adu Min Nyo the casting of the image is described thus:

"By the help of Visukarma

The divine creative genius

It was wrought

The present Mahamuni,

*When it could not be done
 With his hollow of the hand
 The Master gave
 Exactly seven times
 The precious metals,
 "With the warmth of His bosom"
 And behold The likeness of
 The Master appeared
 To be revered by
 Brahma, Devas and men
 The gift of the purest
 Of all hearts"¹⁵.*

In Bagan period, the attempts of King Anawrahta and King Alaung Sithu to bring this ponderous image to Bagan were met with failure.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to mention the history of anthropomorphic representation of Lord Buddha. For 500 years after his demise, the Lord Buddha was represented only through Buddhist symbolism. It was believed that he was too divine to be represented in human form.

At the end of first century AD, Buddha images started to emerge from two Buddhist centres in Gandhara, a north west province in Pakistan and in Mathura, in central northern India. The art of Gandhara benefited from centuries of interaction with Greek culture since the conquest of Alexander the Great in 332 BC and the subsequent establishment of the Indo-Greek kingdoms.¹⁶ The art of Mathura is based on a strong Indian tradition, exemplified by the anthropomorphic representation of divinities. According to archeological evidences, Gandhara school of sculpture is said to have

¹⁵ U Shwe Zan, **The Golden Mrauk-U; An ancient capital of Rakhine**, U Shwe Zan, Patron, Rakhine Thahaya Association, (Yangon. Second Edition 1997), Page 155.

¹⁶ Internet

contributed the drapery covering both shoulders whereas the Mathura school contributed clothes covering the left shoulder.

In Myanmar, the main features of Buddha images in the first Innwa period were the large protruding ears, exaggerated eye brows and thin lips. During the Konboun period, a new style of Buddha images emerged which remains popular to this day. In this style, Buddha faces are more natural with normal eyebrows and thicker lips. Another form of art is Shan style in which Buddha is depicted with angular features, a large pointed nose and a small and thin mouth.¹⁷

The last Mawgun composed by Letwe Nawrahta was “Mingyon Pa Hto Taw Gyi” in 1792. After serving six kings with the time span of 50 years, Letwe Nawrahta passed away at the age of sixty eight in the same year.

3.2 His work

Letwe Nawrahta was the most qualified writer of his time. He was not only a recorder of events but also preserver of Myanmar literature.

He wrote two Ayedawbon kyans namely Alaung mintaya gyi Ayedawbon Kyan and Hsinphyushin Mintayagyi Phaya Ayedawbon Thamaingdaw. As stated before, there are three versions of Alaung mintaya gyi Ayedawbon; two different texts by Letwe Nawrahta and the other by Twin Thin Taik Won Maha Sithu. This Ayedawbon includes many interesting events such as Alaungpaya's military campaigns, ritual of court ceremonies, state obsequies, welcoming ceremonies of foreign envoys and so on. He also wrote Hsinphyushin Mintayagyi Phaya Ayedawbon Thamaingdaw which also has another title "Min Khan Sardan daw gyi." It gives an account of early reign of King Bodaw. As he died 5 years after King Bodaw's accession, his work covers only from the period of the founding of Amarapura to the conquest of Rakhine in 1785.

We have so far identified eight mawguns written by Letwe Nawrahta. Out of these works, 4 Mawguns are still missing: Maha Wizaya Yan Thi Sigondaw Mawgun

¹⁷ Ibid

(1784), Mingun Cedi Mawgun, Pyi-gyi-lar Mawgun (1765), and Zina Aung-cha Shwebontha Mawgun.¹⁸ The two war victory Mawguns are Dhanyawadi Naing Mawgun (1785) and Yodayar Naing Mawgun (1767). Pyu Kan Bwe Mawgun is about Hsinphyushin's visit to Pyu Lake in 1771 and Muddar Beiktheik Mawgun is on the two coronations and other royal ceremonies of King Bodawpaya.

He composed this Mawgun in honor of King Bodaw's coronation. In the olden days of Myanmar, there were 14 different bhiseka or abhiseka¹⁹ and that the Muddar Beiktheik is the most important of all. In one of his edicts, King Bodawpaya claimed that

*"We the Lord king of kings ---- of great glory, have taken the Muda Abisekha twice, while lesser kings have dared not attempt it even once; have observed the ten kingly precepts, the 7 Appariyati precepts, the 3 Thingaha precepts and also have observed the 3 Saryiyati precepts enjoined in all Boddhisttvas, and by virtue of all these have become a kshatriya (prince ruling the land)."*²⁰

His work also consists of 4 Hlyauk htones and one Ameidaw Phyay Kyans; Letwe Nawrahta Hlyauk htone answered by Taungdwin abbot Khin Gyi Phyaw, Letwe Nawrahta Hlauk htone by Paline abbot phyay, Sithu Kyaw Htin Hlyauk htone by Ashin

¹⁸ Thaw Kaung, U, **Aspects of Myanmar History and Culture**, Loka Ahlinn Publishing House, No. 167/173, Room D4, Seikkantha Yeikmon, Seikkantha Street, Kyauktadar Township, Yangon, First Edition (March 2010), Page 73.

¹⁹"Yi Yi observes that the Burmese had more than one kind of bhisek. For instance there were the

a) muddhabhiseka	anointing of the head
b) mahesibhiseka	the coronation of the Chief Queen
c) uparajabhiseka	the installation of the Crown Prince
d) jeyyabhiseka	in order to win victories
e) mangala bhiseka	held to celebrate the possession of white elephants
f) siriyaabhiseka	to renew one's glory
g) ayudigha bhiseka	consecration to gain long life
h) maha bhiseka	celebrated to increase prosperity
i) sakalabhiseka	held to ensure peace in the Empire

Of these, the rajabhiseka, which may be synonymous with maddhabhisik, was to be held 5 years after accession, mahabhiseka 7 years after accession, jeyyabhiseka 9 years after accession, sakalabhiseka 12 years after accession, while siriyaabhiseka and ayudighabhiseka were to be celebrated from time to time." Sunait Chutintaranond, **Cakravartin: The Ideology of Traditional Warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605**, Ph.D. Thesis, (Cornell University,1990), footnotes, Page 206.

²⁰ _____, **Cakravartin: The Ideology of Traditional Warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605**, Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University,1990) footnotes, Page 207.

Nanda Mala, Naymyo Thiri Zeya Kyaw Htin Hlayauk htone by First Nyaung gan abbot and Ameidaw phyay kyan by First Maung Daung abbot.

In these treatises, Letwe Nawrahta posed all or some questions and numerous others are by the king and court ministers. Most questions are answered by famous abbots of the day in accordance with scriptures both in Pali and in Sanskrit. The queries varied from religious matters to secular and worldly affairs.

To differentiate between Hlyauk htone and Ameidaw Phyay Kyan, Hlyauk htone is a compilation of learned discourses, or memorable sayings presented to the king by scholars, or ministers. On the other hand, Ameidaw phyay kyan, or Ameidaw bon is a compilation of questions and problems posed by the king, or learned ministers, and comprehensive answers were given by venerable monks, or eminent scholars.²¹

The orthographic work of Letwe Nawrahta is "Myanmar Than Yaw Ga Dipani" which concerns the application of Myanmar spelling *Pin-yit*. His other work on the explanation of concluding parts of pyo poems is Pyo Ni gone su A phyay kyan.²² He wrote approximately 200-400 Yadu poems. His contribution to Myanmar songs and musical composition is also immense.²³

3.3 Battles before 1767

There are numerous descriptions in old chronicles of the conquest of King Anawrahta over Siam, Lan Xang, Malay peninsula and even part of Cambodia. There is also mentioning of confrontation between Chiang Mai and Myanmar armies during the reign of Mingyi Swasawkei in the early Innwa period in Myanmar chronicles.

²¹ U Thaw Kaung, "Letwe Nawrahta (1723-1791), Recorder of Myanmar History," in **Aspects of Myanmar History and Culture**. (Loka Ahlinn Publishing House, No. 167/173, Room D4, Seikkantha Yeikmon, Seikkantha Street, Kyauktadar Township, Yangon, First Edition, March 2010), Page 93.

²² _____, "Letwe Nawrahta (1723-1791), Recorder of Myanmar History," in **Aspects of Myanmar History and Culture**, (Loka Ahlinn Publishing House, No. 167/173, Room D4, Seikkantha Yeikmon, Seikkantha Street, Kyauktadar Township, Yangon, First Edition, March 2010), Page 78.

²³ For more information concerning Letwe Nawrahta's work, see **Aspect of Myanmar History and Culture** by U Thaw Kaung.

The intense rivalry between the two powerful countries in the mainland Southeast Asia began during King Tabinshwehti's reign. The 1548 war waged by Tabinshwehti was one of the greatest military operations in the history of Southeast Asia which set the precedence for the successive Myanmar kings of latter periods.²⁴ During Tabinshwehti's wars in Siam, a brave Queen Suriyothai of King Mahacakkraphat was made a martyr when she rushed to interpose herself between her husband and the sword of the ruler of Pui (Prome) in an elephant ridden combat.

The successor of Tabinshwehti, King Bayintnaung invested Chiang Mai in 1558 and in 1564. The former war was simply the extended military operation after subduing the Shan states in Myanmar territories and the latter was the punitive expedition for the attitude of the King of Chiang Mai who did not render assistance during the siege of Ayutthaya in 1563. Since then, Chiang Mai fell under Myanmar's rule for more than 200 years. It is also worthy of attention that King Mekut of Chiang Mai became one of the 37 nats (spirits) traditionally worshipped by Myanmar people. He was taken to Pegu and died of dysentery in Myanmar.

King Bayintnaung conquered Ayutthaya twice in 1563 and in 1569. He was called "the Emperor without empire" because he ruled his empire through vassal kings without imposing effective administration. The great marches of Myanmar armies and the beautiful scenes of Chiang Mai and Ayutthaya abound in Myanmar literature. Some contemporary Yudu writers of the time revealed the fact that as the time went by; soldiers from the Myanmar army grew homesick and longed for their loved ones in Hanthawaddy. Dismay clutched them when they found out that the king was totally enchanted by the beauty and the pleasantness of these cities, not wishing to go back to Hanthawaddy any time soon. Therefore, they composed poems to counsel the king of the magnificence of the capital of Myanmar and the beauty of his queens.

²⁴ Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond, "Suriyothai in the Context of Thai-Myanmar History and Historical perception", **From Fact to Fiction; History of Thai-Myanmar Relations in Cultural Context**, (Chulalongkorn University, 2001), Page 31.

When Nanda Bayin became king, he made five inroads into Siam but all failed. In one expedition, the Myanmar crown prince fell dead in a single combat with king Naresuan. Min Ye Naya wrote in one remarkable Eigyin the following description of a failed campaign of Nanda Bayin;²⁵

When the Myanmar army retreated, the whole city of Ayutthaya marched out and gave chase from both land and water routes. The Myanmar army was totally routed and some fled to forests, some drowned in rivers dripping with blood. Notwithstanding to fight back, they were too exhausted to mutter even a word.

It was about this time another controversial and legendary figure Princess Supankalayar, elder sister of King Naresuan, was said to have lived. Since the time of the collapse of Hanthawaddy by the unholy alliance of Taungoo and Rakhine, king Naresuan invaded Myanmar no less than five times.

Throughout the Nyaungyang period, Ayutthaya was free from the danger on the north and only Chiang Mai was occasionally invested. It was King Alaungpaya who reclaimed the overlordship of Ayutthaya. His campaign was nearly met with disaster as he took the unprecedented and risky route in marching to Ayutthaya. Soon after he reached Ayutthaya, he fell ill and died on his retreat to Innwa. During the short reign of King Naungdawgyi, a rebellion in Chiang Mai was suppressed and his successor Hsinphyushin conquered Chiang Mai (Lanna), Lan Xang (Laos) and Ayutthaya (Siam).

As wars with Siam continued from 16th to 18th century, many poems about Chiang Mai and Ayutthaya could be found in Eigyins, Yadus and Igyins. Igyin was a kind of folk song as opposed to literary poems written by courtiers such as Eigyins and Yadus.²⁶ Many Igyins have no recognized names as they were composed by rural people. One Igyin says as follows; when the royal order came to conscript the army to invest Siam, many villagers who were afraid of hardships, ran into forests and mountains to evade the

²⁵ Saw Lu, "Yun Ayutthaya in Myanmar Literature (1548-1614)", **Myanmar Historical Research Journal**, no. 8. Yangon. (June 2001). Page 100.

²⁶ U Hla Pe, **Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life and Buddhism**. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Heng Mui Keng Terrace, Pasir Panjang, Singapore 0511, © (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), Page 14.

king's decree. But some youths were exceptionally eager and overzealous to take part in the war. The lovers of these youths had doubts on whether their partners wanted to meet with the fair and lovely maidens residing in Chiang Mai and Ayutthaya. So the girls demanded the motive behind their lovers' enthusiasm to serve in the royal army. In responding to these questions, the youths simply put all the blame on the King's decree.²⁷

The year 1767 was a watershed in the history of Myanmar-Thai relations. Prior to that war, Thai people did not seriously take Myanmar as a formidable enemy but after the conquest of Ayutthaya, Myanmar became a sworn enemy of Thailand and destroyer of Buddhism. I will be discussing this development in Thailand in latter chapters.

3.4 Conclusion

Though Letwe Nawrahta lived in Myanmar over two centuries ago, Myanmar people owe a great deal of gratitude to him for his tireless efforts in saving and preserving invaluable literary works for posterity during the most turbulent and chaotic years in Myanmar history. Through his writings, he bridged the missing gap of 40 years between the Nyaung Yan and Konboug periods in the history of Myanmar.

Letwe Nawrahta's contributions to Myanmar literature as well as history were varied and enormous. His works of Alaungmintayagyi Ayedawbon kyan, Letwe Nawrahta hlaung Htone, Yodayar Naing Mawgun, and Dhanyawadi Naing Mawgun became classics in Myanmar literature. We are grateful for his collection and edition of Yadu poems by Natshinaung and 1st Nawadaygyi and an anthology of literati from Nyaung Yan period. Otherwise, most of them would have perished or been lost. He made a lot of contributions to Myanmar songs and musical composition. He did many of these things on his own account, not because of any outside influence from others.

He was skillful at recording historical events. Although he was a good composer of poems and yadus, his works were first confused with Letwe Thondra's and later

²⁷ Saw Lu, "Yun Ayutthaya in Myanmar Literature (1548-1614)", **Myanmar Historical Research Journal**, no. 8. (Yangon: June 2001). Page 107.

overshadowed by the works of Wetmasutt Nawaday and U Pon Nya. According to U Thaw Kaung, confusion had started during King Thibaw's reign. In an important discussion on orthography held at the royal palace on 6th December 1878, the assembled scholars misattributed Letwe Nawrahta's "Myanmar Than-yaw-ga Dipani" to Letwe Thondra.²⁸

If we compare and contrast the two Mawguns under the same title by U Pon Nya and Letwe Nawrahta, the former embellished the accounts with invented scenes, metaphors, similes and ironies but Letwe Nawrahta wrote each episode vividly and went everything into detail. We can conclude that his Mawgun is less panegyric and more comprehensible than that of U Pon Nya.

Though many writers on history assume that Yodayar Naing Mawgun was an eye witness account, there is a lack of evidence of his being present in Ayutthaya at that time. Even when the king sent mandarins to bring a pair of cannons from Htar Raik (three pagodas pass), he might not have been included in the sent party or team. He composed a yadu poem about these guns only when they arrived at the capital. Further research on this question is still needed to uncover the truth.

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²⁸ For more information, see U Thaw Kaung, **Aspects of Myanmar History and Culture**, (Yangon, 2010) Page 91.

Chapter IV

Letwe Nawrahta's Yodayar Naing Mawgun

4.1 Introduction

Just before the commencement of my third semester, I consulted Ajarn Sunait to select the topic of the thesis. Ajarn advised me that it would be beneficial to both countries if I could find and write about this Mawgun. Accordingly, I searched for the Mawgun (it took many months) in various libraries of Yangon, Mandalay and Napyitaw. I couldn't find it at first mainly because it was overshadowed by another Mawgun bearing the same title by Sale U Pon Nya. Then I found the thesis paper submitted by Daw Ye Ye Khin for the PhD degree in Myanmar Literature at the University of Yangon in 2007, in which the mention was made of the source; Tin-38 at the National Library of Myanmar. In the process of finding the manuscript, I am grateful to Ko Than Htaik (Research) for his help and translating it from verses to prose.

4.2 The Document

This palm leaf manuscript is not an original one. It is a hand written copy of the original palm-leaf manuscript, made in 1889. This manuscript is part of the U Tin's collection. It can be consulted in the Manuscript section of the National library of Myanmar.

The manuscript is entitled "Nawaddy hso Yodayar Naing Mawgun". The name is supposed to be given by the copyist. "hso" in Myanmar means sing or tell figuratively. "Nawaddy" is meant for any flawless writer. There is no mention of the name of the scribe. However, we can safely assume that this manuscript is a nineteenth century copy made from the original palm-leaf manuscript.

The text began with a very short prayer. At the end of the text, it is stated that the merit gained by writing one word is equivalent to that of sculpting a Buddha image. For the merit accumulated by copying the Mawgun, the scribe wished to attain Nirvana and

the text was fully copied at one o'clock on the 9th waxing day of Waso month ME 1251 (1889).

The manuscript is an ordinary palmleaf. It is neither kyan sit or shwe bain or shwe Myin cha all of which were used for the court officials or royalty. Measurement and catalogue number were not noted. The manuscript starts with ka and ends with kar. It is composed of one anga, 12 leaves, each with 11 lines.

4.3 Translation

The Mawgun is written in verse. Before the nineteenth century, Myanmar people seem to have preferred poetry to prose. These verses are often difficult to understand if they are not translated into prose. They are full of literary words and expressions. Most of them even contain structures, words and expressions that dated or that are no longer used even in writing. A translator with a sound knowledge of Myanmar literature is essential. I owe a debt of gratitude to U San Lwin (Taungoe), retired Director General and Chairman of the Myanmar Language Commission, who studied the Mawgun and gave invaluable suggestions and advise to me. In translating the Mawgun into English, I used mainly the Mawgun and carefully edited two other translated texts by Ko Than Htaik and Daw Ye Ye Khin. Owing to circumstances, I could not translate the Mawgun word for word. However, assiduous efforts have been made to be as precise as possible. Furthermore, I used Konbounset Yazawindawgyi as a reference book to get an insight into the episodes mentioned in the Mawgun.

There are some confusing words in the Mawgun. Though Dvarawati is the name of the ancient Mon settlement which flourished around Nakhon Pathom, Khubua and U Thong in central Thailand from the 6th to 10th century AD, Myanmar kings used to refer to the place as Siam (Ayutthaya). It is possible because one of the titles commonly held by the Kings of Ayutthaya was "ruler of Dvarawati". Similarly, despite the fact that the original place of Haripunjaya was Lamphun which was later annexed by King Mangrai of Chaing Mai, Myanmar kings still referred to it as Chaing Mai.

There is mention of many prominent place names such as nine kyangs, nine maings, nine htars, fifty seven districts of Chiang Mai and so on. The country of the eastern Shans of nine fortified cities were called Keng. Maing is also a town. Myanmar called it Mo or Maing whereas Siamese pronounced it Mong. These nine maings were situated in the eastern part of Kamboja Shan state. nine special seats of Shan Sabwas under the Myanmar kings were Mo hnyin, Mo gaung, Mo meik, Mo ne, Thein ni, Nyaung Shwe, Thi baw and Mo bye.¹ Rulers of these towns were given the right to use the five symbols of kingship: white umbrella, royal headdress, yak-hair swish, royal slippers and royal dagger. nine htars happened to be the military outposts located in the eastern frontiers with Siam.

The boundary or geographical demarcation of 57 districts of Chiang Mai included: the frontier with Kyaw Kathe Myetname (Vietnam) on the east, Lan Xang on the Southeast, Siam (Ayutthaya) on the South, Mottama on the Southwest, Moe Bye on the West, Keng Tung on the Northwest, Kyaik Nga The on the north, and the territories of Utibwa (China) on the northeast.

In the Mawgun, the author used the name of the northern column under the command of General Naymyo Thihapati as Zimme column (Myanmar rendering of Chiang Mai) and the southern column led by General Maha Nawrahta as Dawei column.

As described in the Mawgun, Saopha (Sawbwa)^{*} was chief of the Shan tribes. His brother is designated as Sawkan and Zarpan was the ruler of territories which is larger than the village but smaller than the town.

Regarding the unit of measurement, Tar is used for measuring circumstances and Taung for heights. One taung equals 19.5 inches and one tar is equivalent to 7 taungs.

As I have mentioned earlier, the Mawgun is composed of (5) parts. The author made a clear description of each episode of the whole Mawgun. Letwe Nawrahta finished

¹ U Tin, **The Royal Administration of Burma VOL. 2**, (Bangkok: Ava Publishing House, 2001), Page 180.

^{*} Lord of the sky

his work in sakkaraj 1129 which is 1767. I have so far found only two books written around 1770 on this war; "The Chronicle of the Testimony of the Old Inhabitants of Ayutthaya" by the captives of war of 1767 and the French Jesuit priest F. H Turpin's "A History of the Kingdom of Siam up to 1770." Unlike the Mawgun, both of them lack consistency in describing the episodes of the war.

4.4 Conclusion

By recovering this text, more concrete historical facts have been gathered. Its importance is immeasurable because it is the only manuscript which has survived from ancient times. It is a contemporary account useful to understand the context of Myanmar-Thai relations in the mid 18 century.

This manuscript had been lost until recently. It shows the lack of coordination between historians and scholars of Myanmar literature. As these two disciplines are like head and tail of a coin, a close cooperation between them needs to be further strengthened.



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4.5 The Translation of the Yodayar Naing Mawgun

Stz(1)

Praising in the right way, I will open the ears of the people (to clear their conscience and intelligence). In every military campaign, the most renowned and well known Alaungpaya at various times placed our lord Hsinphyushin, second son of Alaungpaya, at the head of the armies or vanguard. It was like sharpening Hsinphyushin's physical prowess and raising the awareness of the people from elsewhere to realize it. The unstable situation in Siam supported to ensure what King Alaungpaya, before his death, enjoined his son Hsinphyushin to spark the invasion of Siam, the inheritance of our forebears, at a later date. Therefore, Hsinphyushin appointed mandarins to march, invest and occupy Dwarrawati that lay adjacent to Khemavara (Keng Tung), Mahanagra and Haribunja (Chiang Mai) in ninety nine Shan states which was difficult to be subdued because the sea, rivers and streams surrounded it.

To long endure these events of overcoming the country and the palace of the king of Siam, continually, until the extinction of the world and to augment auspiciousness, Yodayar Naing Mawgun, the topmost of all poems, is being submitted.

Stz(2)

The phases of war in investing Yodayar and the conquest of it will be described in a rows as in the making of a string of pearls with selected beads of the same size. Glorious, sacred and well known Alaungpaya conquered the lands of Kyawkathe-Myetname (Viet Nam), Phrae, Nan, Yun/Chiang Mai, and Siam (Ayutthaya) subjugating them as vassal states and compelled them to pay annual tributes. During the reign of king Naungdawgyi, the donor of a golden stupa in Mahananda Lake (The Kandwin Zigon), these lands stopped paying tribute to the king. Furthermore, peace could not prevail because leaders of these regions caused stirs or committed crimes and looting in the outskirts of these eastern regions. Therefore, King Naungdawgyi dispatched an army to search and arrest the leader of those rebels or instigators and to occupy Chiang Mai where few Myanmar royal servants were present or no garrison stationed.

Stz(3)

The four mandarins assigned to march into Chiang Mai were Abaya Garmani, Thiri Raza Thingyan, Taingyar Min Gaung and Minhla Thiri. In overwhelming Chiang Mai with three army columns, many victories had been won because of seven commanders from these columns who forcibly attacked the enemy without cease for rest as a musth elephant. After conquering fifty seven districts of Chiang Mai such as Chiang Mai, Lampang, Nan, Phrae, Maung Thwin, Chiang Saen, Payao; Minye Thiri was left to garrison at Chiang Mai to prevent another recurrence in future. The Myanmar army brought princes and princesses, grandsons of king, chieftains, prisoners, elephants and horses as well as gold, silver and gems from Chiang Mai. They arrived back to the palace of Sagaing in the month of Tabaung , Myanmar era 1124 (on 4th March 1762) and presented these booties to the king.

Stz(4)

Not long after the conquest of Chiang Mai, King Naungdawgyi died (on 28th November 1763). The acme of the nation and the glorious king Hsinphyushin, in accordance with the auguries and oracles, ascended the throne at the propitious time in Buddhist Era 2307, Kosa era 1125 (on 29th November 1763). He ruled Sagaing and Ava.

Stz(5)

In the early reign of Hsinphyushin, Nwemano, ruler of Lamphun destroyed such regions over Chiang Mai as Maing Saen, Maing Hlyin, Maing Nyut, Maing Law, Maing Pin, Maing Hin, Maing Hsat, Maing Sut, Maing Kin, Maing Han, Maing Pan, Naing Maw, Maing Paw, Maing Win, Naung Khwin , Lawin, Maung Long, Maing Htar, Maing Tar, Maing Nin, Chiang Tung, Chiang Kaung, Thalaw, Phyao, Chiang Kwon, Phrae, Nan Chiang Won, Maing Thong, Maing Nyaung, Maing Hit, Maing Hae, Chiang Ye, Chiang Saen, Maing Kwat, Chiang Lap, Chiang Wine, Maing Kung, Maing Nyat, Maing Ngaw, Maing Tain, Maing Pawn, Maing Sin, Maing Pu, Maing Khinm Thamat, Maing Pai, Bukwar, Maing Nwe. His rank was not of Sawbwa, Sawkan or Zarpar but of chief thief or rebel only. Only when he was suppressed, the upheavals caused by him and other

chieftains from the Chiang Mai region would cease. As such, Hsinphyushin, as a gesture to show his martial prowess, decided to quell all these rebels.

Stz(6)

Rural villages in far flung areas submitted in unison to the King that Nwemano, resembling a filthy moss on the surface of the lakes, should be suppressed with the glory and the power of the king's august royal personage once and for all. Therefore, the king appointed Naymyo Thiha Pati (supreme commander and general of Zimme column), Kyaw Gaung Kyaw Thu, Thiri Nanda Kyaw Htin, and Thiri Yaza Thingyan as commanders to march on Chaing Mai on Tuesday, the 6th waxing day of Taboung month 1125 ME (on 6th July 1764)*. The Zimme column marched on approximately nine stations up to Thanlwin jetty and crossed the nine ferries or fords on the Thanlwin River; Htar Saen Nyut, Htar Bar Hlaing, Htar Zagar, Htar Pa, Htar Theh, Htar Hpyant, Htar Wint, Htar Pa Lu and Htar Bar Yu. When they heard the coming of Zimme column, rulers of towns in Chiang Mai region fortified their respective towns. While the Zimme column arrived Keng Tung through Mong Nai, they encountered the messenger who carried the news of the advance of Chiang Mai town guard; Min Ye Thiri's army. They received information about the eastern towns of Thanlwin River such as fifty seven districts of Chiang Mai. General Naymyo Thihapati sent ten armies consisting of Myelatt Sawbwa's seven armies, Kyaw Gaung Kyaw Thu's army, Thiri Yaza Thingyan's army, and second in command Tuyin Yama Kyaw's army to Maing Pu - Maing Tha route. Twenty five armies under the command of Naymyo Thiha Pati and Thiri Nanda Kyaw Htin of the main army took Maing Thwin- Kyaing Ye (Chiang Rai) route.

After sending families to take refuge in the Lwai Lon Mountain ridge, Nge Thu Tit, Nge San Khong and forces from Chiang Mai besieged Payao town with the strength of twenty four armies. Myanmar army seized the families of Nge Thu Tit, Nge San Khong and over three thousand followers from Lwai Lon mountain range. When they heard the marching of Myanmar army heading towards the town of Payao, Nge Thu Tit

* (agrees with U Maung Maung Tin's Konbaunghset Yazawin)

and townsmen of Chiang Mai dared not contend with the Myanmar army and accordingly joined their forces with Nwemano's at Lamphun town.

Naymyo Thiha Pati's army continued marching on Lamphun town and Nwemano who could neither take nor conceal his family fled and deserted elephants, horses and weapons. The Zimme column demolished all dangers in the fifty seven districts of Chiang Mai and captured a sum of elephants, horses and prisoners of war.

Stz(7)

I will relate the victories over Maing-lon Kha Pin (Luang Prabang) as another episode to take note. Upon receiving the royal order to seize the town of Maing-lon Kha Pin in Lan Xang, the army marched from Nan* on the 8th waxing day of Tazaungmon month 1126 ME (31st October 1764). Twenty five armies led by Naymyo Thiha Pati went by water route passing thirty nine stations and reached Maing Laik, which lay adjacent to Lan Xang. Ten armies under the command of deputy commander Tuyin Yama Kyaw went by land route passing fifteen stations and arrived at Maing Lon Kha Ping. Maing Lon Kha Ping was the town built between Nam Khan River, eastern side of the city and Mekong River, on the city's backyard. The king of Lan Xang and his mandarins with the forces of one thousand war elephants, two thousand horses, and fifty thousand troops took to the bank of Mekong which lay behind the city and attacked Myanmar troops. The Myanmar army valiantly repulsed the attack of the enemy and forced them to retreat to the city. Many weapons were captured from the battle and over ten thousand corpses were piled up by Myanmar army beside the Lan Xang creek (Mekong River). The Myanmar army crossed the Mekong River and established camp by the river. They erected the fighting towers near the town and placed their big guns on supports and bombarded the city day and night. Half the city lay devastated. Despite defending at best from the remaining portion of the city, the King and the people surrendered in fear of round the clock bombardment of big guns and cannon from the nearby hillocks and knolls.

* Zimme column balked at Nan town during the rainy season.

Stz(8)

An oath of loyalty was given to the King of Lan Xang, court mandarins and the rulers of Nine Maung namely Maing Lon, Maing Pan, Maing Han, Maing Nyin, Maing Thwin, Maing San, Maing Lar, Maing Hnaung and Moe Thayn. When the Lan Xang crisis ended, three princesses, a Minister's daughter, one thousand slaves, gold and silver, five hundred each of cannon, muskets, war elephants, spears, swords, shields, saddleries, and three Lan Xang court mandarins were sent to the royal foot of the king. The army marched from Maing-lon Kha Pin on the 5th waxing day of Tagu month 1126 ME (on 25th March 1765) and arrived at Lampang on the 10th waxing day of Kason month 1127 ME (on 28th April 1765). While being stationed at Lampang during the rainy season, difficulties arose for the armies to stay there because of a flood. After brandishing a sword and reading out the royal order at the God of Water who was invited to the scene, the water receded to accommodate the armies.

Stz(9)

The first part from the stanzas 1 to 8 collectively shows the conquest of Myanmar armies over Chiang Mai which lay in the midst of a ring of Nine Kengs and the Kingdom of Lan Xang (Luang Prabang) before investing Siam.

Stz(10)

I will describe the praiseworthy events which will have to be talked about in every dynasty or era in the right way.

Since the times of grandfather and great grandfather of Hsinphyushin, Siamese kings acknowledged Myanmar suzerainty by sending sons, daughters, elephants and horses. In Hsinphyushin's reign, they ceased paying tributes. Therefore, 29 armies and navies of Dawei column (Muttama/Martaban route) led by General Maha Nawrahta, Deputy Commanders Naymyo Gunarat and Tuyin Yan Aung Kyaw were sent to Siam through Htar Raik on the 8th waxing day of Nattaw month 1126 ME (on 30th November 1764).

When the Zimme column was stationed in Lampang in the months of rain, the king's order which amounts to Saka's, the celestial ruler of Tavatimsa, arrived. The royal order stated that the Zimme column was to march on Yodayar and invest Ayutthaya in combination with the Dawei column which was encamped at Kani village as to attack the city from the two directions.*

Stz(11)

Upholding Hsinphyushin's order on their foreheads, ranks and files from the Zimme column would not fear but gladly march on Mount Meru even if they were given order to do so. Due to Hsinphyushin's order, they choose not to spend the rains and marched from Lampang to Yodayar (Ayutthaya) by land and water routes on the 8th waxing day of Tawthaly month 1127 ME (on 22nd August 1765), a day of victory and auspiciousness, foretold by the omen. The strength of the army consisted of nine armies, three hundred war elephants, three hundred horses and twenty thousand troops. They marched along the stations towards the towns of Tak, Yarhai, Kampaeng Phet, Sawankhalok, Sukhothai, Rathama, Phitsanulok, and Phichit (befwuf? &Gm[dkif;? urefydkuf? o0efcavmuf? aomufuwJ? &orm? ydóavmuf? ydwfpJ). On the route during the march, they fought unflinchingly to suppress those towns which did not surrender and resisted the Myanmar army that the Siamese had completely been routed and dispersed. Casualties from the enemy's side were high.

Stz(12)

One hundred and fifty cannons, big and small, with the capacity of one viss to 15 viss ball captured along the journey were sent to Chiang Mai. In the month of Tabotwe 1127 ME (on 14th January 1766), the Zimme Column established camps at Pa Thoke village (a distance of over 400 tars from the north eastern side of Ayutthaya). Ranks and

* They stayed at Tavoy for the rainy season and marched from Tavoy to Ayutthaya on the 10th waxing day of Tanzaungmon month, 1127 ME (on 22nd October 1765). This column, after storming the towns of Phetburi, Ratburi, Suphanburi, Kanchanaburi, Chainorth and Singburi (jAwfbD;? &yfbD;? ozef;yHk? uHyl&D? q,m;? qGef;jzKef;) were stationed at Kani village, a distance of five stations from the west of Ayutthaya.

files from the Zimme column fought in concert every enemy defending from whether under the base of the wall or outside the town and achieved success in capturing a number of elephants and horses. Their qualifications were much the same as those of celestial warriors. Just as the eagle swoops down on its prey unhaltingly, these fearless warriors fought unhesitatingly when confronted with the enemies.

Stz(13)

Four officers from the Zimme column were assigned duties to send elephants, horses and cannons back to the royal foot of the king. When news of the coming of Zimme column to Pa Thoke village was heard, the Dawei column under the command of General Maha Nawrahta left Kani village and pitched camp at a place* with the distance of one thousand tars. When the Siamese king was informed by the court mandarins of the stationing of Zimme column on the northern side of the city and Dawei column on the western side of Ayutthaya, he pronounced that even if they did not go out and fight, Myanmar armies will find difficulties to encamp when the rain lay the city several feet under water. Thus Myanmar armies would have to retreat and we would not be in any danger. Any Myanmar soldier who got near the wall must be captured alive. With a great deal of enthusiasm to attack Myanmar armies, the Siamese king sent forces of great strength by both land and sea routes to give battle.

Stz(14)

I will vividly describe the significant events and battles among various episodes of how best the Siamese tried to defend the city, how difficult it was to fight with Myanmar armies and how they were defeated. The Zimme column stationed at Pa Thoke village established nine armies on both sides of the Mae Ping River. They stored provision of food and collected elephants, horses and troops. The Siamese king ordered Banya Kuratit to attack Zimme column with a force of one thousand cannons and fifty thousand troops. General Naymyo Thiha Pati sent combined forces of three armies under

* It was situated behind the Cedi built by King Bayintnaung, a distance of 5000 tars from the north western side of Ayutthaya.

the command of Deputy Commanders Tuyin Yama Kyaw, Kyaw Gaung Kyaw Thu and Shwe Taung Situ to withstand the attacks. Myanmar forces countered valiantly and as a result, the Siamese armies were worsted and retreated in defeat. Over one thousand war elephants, five hundred cannons and one thousand prisoners of war were captured. On the same day, the king of Siam dispatched two columns each having the strength of fifty thousand troops under the command of Minister Byathan and Banyā Tet to attack Dawei column, which stationed at a distance of one thousand tars from the backyard of Ayutthaya. The same thing happened and Siamese armies re-entered the city. Since many troops, elephants and horses were lost in those battles, the strength of Siamese armies was reduced by a great number just as water goes out in the weir. When the rain came and flooded, Myanmar armies found difficulties to hold the ground.

Stz(15)

When the water level around Ayutthaya city rose, the Myanmar soldiery laid brick walls and built mounds of earth around their fortifications and built many war boats. Siamese Minister Byathan came out with a force of two hundred war boats, five hundred sampans, mortars and cannons to attack Myanmar armies. When the Myanmar warboats closed in, they used grappling-irons to draw alongside and boarded the Siamese warboats, smashed and hacked off the enemies*. Though all crew on board died in action, the Minister did not lay down his arms. The boat of the captain of the artillery forces San Tun came side by side with the Minister's boat to capture him alive. The Minister, with a weapon in his grasp, jumped on the boat to arrest Myanmar captain but was taken down by a smash from a ramrod by San Tun. He was captured alive.* The Siamese armies, not seeing the Minister, assumed that the Minister fell dead in the battle and ran away. In this battle, the Myanmar army seized fifty thousand prisoners of war.

* While directing the Siamese war boats, Minister Banyā's boat was attacked from all sides by twenty Myanmar war boats.

* According to Siamese chronicles, Minister Banyā died in the battle.

Stz(16)

General Maha Nawrahta pardoned the lives of five thousand prisoners and treated them well. They were provided with food and shelter. He ordered a search for the people who, during the times of the arrival of Myanmar armies, evaded and fled to the sanctuary of forests and mountains. Those who avoided and hid could live again with their families peacefully in villages and towns. The heads of those who took refuge in Myanmar armies were administered to take an oath of allegiance and granted to serve in the royal service.

The Minister Banya Kuratit came out from the city* to invest Zimme column. While the Siamese stood at Hsin Kyouin place, General Naymyo Thiha Pati sent fifty war boats to hide on both sides of Mae Ping River near the U-yin village. Armies under the command of Kyaw Gaung Kyaw Thu, Tuyin Yama Kyaw, Shwe Taung Si Thu, and Banya Yan Tai lured the enemy to the Uyin village from Hsin Kyouin place. When the Siamese armies reached the spot where Myanmar army lay in wait, they were ambushed from all three directions. Within the blink of an eye, the Siamese armies were completely routed. The Myanmar army captured five hundred boats and sampans (barges), many weapons and prisoners. The entire country trembled with fear from this debacle.

Stz(17)

When a country was besieged by a great number of land and water forces, elephants and war boats of another country, this town, if they were not in a position to repulse the enemy, could withstand by closing the city gate, supported its inside with full lines of bricks while taking other measures to make the city strong. For coming in and going out of the city, it could be done only by scaling up and climbing down the wall by the use of ropes.

When the water from the rivers round the city subsided and hot dry season arrived, the Siamese king made an attempt to fight again with a total strength of 40000 to

* (with a force of one thousand war boats, five hundred Tonkins (cargo barge), fifty thousand troops, mortars and cannons)

50000 troops fully equipped in armours.* Despite being invested with the two columns, the victory plan of Siamese king over Myanmar armies met with failure and suffered a great loss in one snap of the fingers. The Siamese king, having failed several attempts, built many ships, sampans, boats to strengthen the naval forces. Moreover, he built fifty masonry bastions with the width of five hundred tars between the city walls and the moat encircling the whole city. The provisions of food, elephants, horses, weapons and troops were replenished.

Stz(18)

From stanzas 10 to 17 is the description of the second part which collectively stated that despite the Siamese launched a number of offensives, these efforts were all in vain. Even though the Siamese withstood from within the city wall, they were still vulnerable. Therefore, they fortified the city by closing the main gate and guarding the moat with numerous war boats. It shows the difficult task Myanmar army had to undertake in attacking Ayutthya.

Stz(19)

Preserve the events which I will reveal now for long. The Siamese strengthened the defense of Ayutthaya by building fifty outlying bastions, replenishing the weapons, elephants, horses and troops, laying the fields of iron spikes, tree stumps, elephant and horse impediments, and digging thorny pits outside the city. The situation was as such, General Maha Nawrahta consulted with the commanders the strategies to overrun the city.

Stz(20)

In close consultation, General Maha Nawrahta said that since they were the upholders of royal order on their foreheads which stated that the country must be taken

* He dispatched army under the command of Minister BayarTaik to fight General Maha Nawrahta's army and another army under Minister Bayar Byanarit to the army of General Naymyo Thiha Pati, each army having the strength of three hundred elephants, five hundred chariot mounted guns, and thirty thousand troops.

before long, they could not stay idle without calculating and finding the quickest way to overcome the Siamese capital. At a time when the Siamese strengthened their land and water forces to stand against Myanmar armies, they should apply the strategies used by the embryo Buddha, Mohosadha the sage, who built the city and dug the underground tunnel to carry off the king's mother, queen, sons and daughters of Pyinsalayaza. If he devised this stratagem, the city could easily be captured. Commanders of the armies unanimously agreed to this plan.

Stz(21)

The strategy of Myanmar armies to build the outlying city will remain something to be talked about till the world disappears. At a distance of four hundred tars (x 3.5 yards) from the north eastern side of the city, General Naymyo Thiha Pati built a masonry fort with the circumference of 350 tar (x 3.5 yards) and seven cubits in height. Shwe Taung Sithu established a town with two hundred tars in circumferences and seven taungs in height on the western edge of the north of Ayutthaya. In front of that town, another town with the circumference of one hundred and fifty tars and seven taungs in height was constructed by Ponya Kyaw Htin. On the eastern side of the river before that town which flows into Ayutthaya, Chaung U Bo established a town with the circumference of one hundred and fifty tars and seven taungs in height. In front of that town, Kyaw Gaung Kyaw Thu erected a town, with the circumference of three hundred tars and seven cubits in height. They were the towns built on the northern side of Ayutthaya.

Stz(22)

On the south-east of that elephant moat fort, Giri Naya established a fort with the circumference of one hundred and fifty tars and seven taungs in height. The string of towns that run south was constructed by Tuyin Yama Kyaw, Tuyin Yan Kyaw, Thiri Thara Kyawswa, and Thiri Yaza Thingyan. The circumferences and heights of these towns were one hundred and seventy by seven, one hundred and seventy by seven, one hundred and seventy by seven and three hundred by seven. These forts were built on the eastern side of Ayutthaya.

Stz(23)

On the south east of Ayutthaya, Shwe Taung Kyaw Swa erected a fort the circumference of which was one hundred and fifty tars and seven taungs in height. At the back of that fort, another fort was constructed by Taza Bala Kyaw with the ratio of 170 by 7. Behind that city, Thidi Kyaw Thu built a fort with the circumference of two hundred tars and seven taungs in height. At the eastern bank of Bangkok River on the rear side of the town, Mingyi Zayathu established a fort of two hundred tars in circumferences and seven taungs in height. The iron chain was stretched out in a straight line from east to west of the river to obstruct the entry of boats into Bangkok river. These four forts were situated before the Bangkok River on the south of Ayutthaya.

Stz(24)

The forts on the west bank of Bangkok River will be described in serial order. Nanda Udain Kyaw Htin erected a fort on the other side of the river parallel to the fort built by Mingyi Zayathu with the circumference of one hundred and fifty tars and seven taungs in height. The chain of forts that run backyard was built by Bala Nanda Kyaw Htin, Letwe Kyaw Swa, Yan Ngu Thiri Kyaw Htin and Nandamaik Sithu. The proportion of the circumferences and the heights were one hundred and fifty by seven, one hundred and seventy by seven, one hundred and seventy by seven and three hundred by seven according to order*. On the north of the fort built by Nanda Maik Sithu, Shwe Taung Letwe Nawrahta built a fort with circumferences of one hundred and seventy tars and seven taungs in height. A string of forts that run north was established by Letyar Bala, Thiri Yanamaik Kyaw Htin and Thidi Kyaw Tin . The circumferences and heights of these towns were one hundred and seventy by seven, one hundred and eighty by seven and one hundred and seventy by seven.

* These five forts were built behind the Bangkok River to the south of Ayutthaya.

Stz(25)

On the north of the fort built by Thaikdi Kyaw Htin, Thiha Dhammarat constructed a fort with the circumference of two hundred tars and seven taungs in height. In front of it, a fort was erected with the circumference of two hundred tars and seven taungs by Bala Pyan Chi. All of these twenty four forts were constructed by way of approaching from one side of the moat of Ayutthaya.

Satu Gamani built a fort of three hundred tars in circumference and seven taungs in height encircling the pagoda built by Bayintnaung, a distance on five hundred tars from the north eastern side of Ayutthaya. At a distance of one thousand tars on the back side of Ayutthaya, General Maha Nawrahta established a fort of five hundred tars in circumferences and nine taungs in height. By virtue of good administration and control, Commanders and the thirty one armies had been able to build twenty seven forts, as strong as fortresses of iron, by seeing to that their men put their hearts and souls into this project. Such ability to erect these forts was the manifestation of overcoming the enemies.

Stz(26)

As thirty one Myanmar armies built twenty seven forts confronting the fifty outlying bastions of Ayutthaya to lay siege of the city, the people of Ayutthaya felt constrained and suffered hardship. Securing reinforcements, people from nearby villages of Sawankhalok, Sukothai, and Baner with the strength of twenty thousand men and hundreds of elephants marched up to Kut Taw village, a distance of five tars on the north of Ayutthaya and stationed there. When they came to know of it, the two generals sent Thiri Yaza Thingyan from Zimme column with a force of three thousand troops as the eastern route and Thiri Yana Kyaw Htin from Dawei column with equal forces as the western route to stand against them.

Among the Siamese who came into submission, a contingent of selected one thousand best men was exacted under the command of Diva Sakathu to march as a vanguard and give battles. The Siamese were caught unawares merely thinking that they

were people from the reinforcement of other towns and villages. In the battle, the Siamese were totally routed, and ran away like a bundle of bamboos unfurled.

Stz(27)

The third part from stanzas 19 to 26 describes the difficulties in investing Ayutthaya which was surrounded by rivers and tributaries. While shutting the gates of the city, it was well fortified with 50 outlying bastions. This memorable episode of erecting 30 forts that confront the Ayutthaya bastions by the Myanmar army is being recorded for the posterity.

Stz(28)

Clearly note the description of events I am now about to make. Having been built fifty outlying bastions to defend the city, the Siamese placed big guns and cannon on numerous ships and boats and fired incessantly. They attacked Myanmar armies many times with millions and millions of Indians, Panthay (Chinese Muslims) , Chinese, Malays, and Siamese. Despite these attacks, they suffered reverses several times and were gradually devoid of strength just as water recedes in the weir.

Due to the shortage of provisions, the townspeople became frightened and panicked. The Siamese king in a moment of weakness dispatched a letter through the court ministers to sound out the interest of Myanmar army* .

Stz(29)

* Minister Banya Kuratit made a suggestion that a letter be sent by a courtier in which the mentioning of sending annual tributes of elephants, horses, gifts, taxes and revenues was made. When Myanmar commanders withdrew their armies from the satellite towns, another plan should be devised. In line with the advice, a letter was conveyed through the Minister Banya who was accompanied by four courtiers to the Myanmar commanders.

Excerpts from letter contained therein will be made. The Siamese Ministers (Byamunari) conveyed the message through Minister Banyan who had a shrewd discretion in dealing with various matters under the ruler of Dvaravati country in Ayutthaya region and the possessor of white, red and striped elephants, to the generals endowed with diligence, bravery and knowledge who placed the royal order on their forehead of the lord of living things, the ruler of Ava and other white umbrella bearing kings and the possessor of gold, silver, amber and ten gems mines. Since the times of their grand fathers and great grand fathers, the two countries of Siam and Ava were devoid of war, united as one just as foiled gold sheet, peaceful and calm. Tributes of elephants and horses were duly paid while sending envoys continually. However, because of disloyalty of Talaing (Mon) and their revolts, Ayutthaya could not pay tribute or send envoys at the royal foot of the king. Ayutthaya would continue to pay tributes of elephants and horses as was the tradition and custom.

Stz(30)

The letter written in Shan Language (Siamese) was translated into Myanmar and when the generals, second in commands, the royal listeners* and commanders had been informed of the contents of the letter, a reply letter was sent to the Siamese ministers in the following manner: information was conveyed by generals and commanders who were servants of the lord of living things and ruler of Ava and a hundred white umbrellas bearing kings to the Siamese Ministers; when we observed the present situation of the war between the two countries, the discrepancy was so wide that it was like weighing one seed of plant or tree equivalent of weight on one hand of the most balanced scale and one viss on the other. If that be true, to send sons, daughters, elephants and horses as was the ancient practice, a pair of cannons from the city of Ayutthaya should be sent to the Myanmar armies first. If discontented and wanted to make war, a thousand men from the Siamese side would be fought with a hundred from the Myanmar side and ten thousand

* Officers who receive and pronounce the king's decree (royal reporter)

with one thousand in similar fashion. Just as our breath blows away cotton, we can easily win over the Siamese* .

In order to overwhelm the city in the shortest time possible, underground tunnels must be dug to gain access to the base of the wall and to climb over the city wall. In digging five tunnels, the three towns, with a circumference of eighty tars and ten taungs in height, were erected parallel to each other at the edge of the moat on the north of the city leaning against the Mae Ping River for the smooth transportation of the dug up soil to the river so as to conceal the digging.

Stz(31)

After establishing forts, Myanmar armies fortified these three forts and dug the five underground tunnels which led to base of the city wall. In Mahosadha Jataka, the sage dug a tunnel up to the base of the staircase of king Culani-Brahmadatta's palace as to carry off Princess Pancalacandi. The earth that came out whilst constructing the tunnels had been secretly thrown into Ganges River. Likewise, earth that came out from digging tunnels was transmitted into Mae Ping (Chiang Mai) river. When all the tunnels reached at the base of the wall, Byamunari, the brother in law of the King, came out with a force of 5000 troops to attack the satellite towns situated on the north of the city. Having not a shadow of a doubt about the strategy of the Myanmar army, they were eager to attack Myanmar armies with new vim and vigor. The Siamese armies fired cannons

* After five days of sending a reply letter, General Maha Nawrahta passed away on account of ill health. General Naymyo Thiha Pati sent Zaya Naya to inform about the death of Maha Nawrahta, his sway over both armies, the siege of Ayutthaya from land and water routes and the submission of the king of Siam and the whole country to be made in no time. He arrived at the foot of the king on 9-1-1767. When he came to know all these things, the king ordered that he himself would fight and occupy the Chinese country. After taking Ayutthaya to fulfill the desires of the king, the city, the wall and the moat shall be destroyed and carried away shall be the whole of Siamese country and its king. General Maha Nawrahta must be buried according to the funeral rites of the death of senior court ministers. When Zaya Naya returned, Maha Nawrahta was buried with extraordinary honors.

aiming at the newly built forts. However, just as the footprint of a bird in flight does not appear on the ground, not a single cannon ball hit the Myanmar armies. It only resulted in wasting cannon balls and rising heat of the muzzle of a gun.

Stz(32)

Though Byamunari guaranteed to capture Myanmar forts at the cost of his life to the Siamese king, he could not turn it into reality*. However hard a city was to overcome, it can be succeeded if one combined his wit with diligence. There's a precedence that by virtue of intelligence and diligence, Prince Wahthu Deva and his dozen brothers can

* This is what Byamunari submitted to the king; Now, King of Ava besieged our town with the Zimme and Dawei columns more than two years almost reaching three years. As we had been blocked by land and water routes for nearly three years, all monks, troops and people inside the city went hungry and suffered great hardships due to shortage of provisions. This became not only the affairs of the Majesty the king but the common struggle for all people. As such, all good men, elephants, horses and weapons available should be gathered to capture the satellite forts at the cost of our lives which were now being built near the base of the wall and to set fire on all besiegers. Even if this failed to produce success, let our fate and the people's be in accordance with the wheel of fortunes.

This was unanimously agreed by the king, royalties, court ministers and commanders. Echoes of war cry to attack the satellite towns on the north of the city to the accompaniment of the sounding of oboes, bugles and drums which resounded the whole city, Siamese armies with the force of five hundred selected war elephants and over five thousand troops came out and attack the three newly built towns held respectively by Thado Min Htin, Supyargone Bo and Thit Sant Bo. They bombarded the cities incessantly like a rain of fire with over one thousand mortars and cannons. Approaching the towns on their elephants and horses as the swarming bees, some dug the base of the wall and some scale the wall by planting ladders.

Many perished when they climbed the city wall. In response to this Byamunari's fierce planned attack, Myanmar troops positioned at the top of the wall smacked and hacked off each and every climber. Under the stringent command of Byamunari, Siamese armies determinedly fought and jumped over the corpse to reach the top of the wall. They disregarded the hail of fires and the cutting down. A thousand made a way to enter into the towns and fought Myanmar armies in close quarters.

When the commanders of the eastern and western satellite towns of the river saw the furious assault on the three towns by Byamunari with over fifty thousand troops which veiled the sky with smoke, as the sound of mortars and cannons uninterrupted, and the echoes of battle flooded the ground and sky, the four armies led by Shwe Taung Sithu, Ponya Kyaw, Kyaw Gaung Kyaw Thu and Chaung Oo Bo with the strength of two hundred war elephants, a thousand horses came and attacked the Siamese armies with all out effort/without delay. The Siamese could not withstand, as they were attacked from the two fronts, retreated to the city. Among a thousand Siamese who entered the cities, eight hundred were captured dead and two hundred captured alive. A thousand troops, a hundred elephants and over two hundred horses were captured alive. Byamunari riding on the elephant re-entered the city. He underwent a narrow escape thanks to the swiftness of his elephant.

capture the town of Thantwe which was guarded by ogres*. Also, Myanmar armies used intelligence and diligence in capturing the town of Ayutthaya; they put fuels such as firewood, bamboo, and dried grass at the end of the tunnels and set fire near the base of the wall. The wall cracked and fell down. A large mass of smoke and tongue of flames went up from the burning of the wall as the world ended up in flames.

The boisterous sound of the collapse of the wall and echoes of elephant's trumpeting, horse's neighing and war cry of troops resounded on the ground and reached the sky. This event is immortal and significant, to be talked about elsewhere till the world is exhausted to its extinction.

Stz(33)

The city of Ayutthaya was dark with clouds of smoke. The exchange of cannon fires had resounded like the striking sound of thunder. The war cries of Myanmar armies were boisterous as the echoes of a whirlpool. At that time, five thousand Myanmar troops with their swords penetrated through the tunnels or the ruins of the wall. Though they knew the physical prowess and the capabilities of Myanmar armies, Siamese Ministers Banya and Banya Kuratit tried to defend again within the city wall. They reorganized Siamese people by order with the strength of ten thousand troops who were demoralized to fight back. Despite defending at best, they could not hinder the intrusion of Myanmar armies into the city. If stirred by typical winds, grass, litter and silk cotton blossoms could not cling to their place of origin but had to move away. If it was a storm, even a tiny piece of it could not be traced back as it disappeared. The same thing applies to the Siamese armies which, when confronted with Myanmar armies were destroyed and

* The Dwarawadi (Sandoway) was the town guarded by Ogres. When the enemy approached, the signal sound of a mule which lived outside the moat of the town was made. By the magical power of ogres, the town flew up the sky and rested at one of the islands in the ocean. When enemies retreated, the town came back to its original site. Wahthu deva and his brothers pleaded to the mule as suggested by the hermit.

In conformity with what the mule said, the four princes positioning themselves at each entrance gate of the wall at night which faces the four corners of the world and drove/peg iron stake into the doors. They held four iron rods fixed with iron chains on top of them. When the mule made a warning sound and the town was about to fly, they put iron chains fixed at rods on the stakes at the doors. The town couldn't fly then. After this, they marched into the town, killed the king and occupied the city.

disappeared. The two ministers headed for disaster for they could not rely on their armies as the boatswain of a cracked boat whose bow and stern were in utter destruction.

Just as the Garuda swoops down on the Naga, Ayutthaya and its palace which had various names such as Ayujapura, Dwarawati, and Yuan were overrun by the Myanmar armies on the night of the 10th waxing day in the month of Tagu in Myanmar era 1129 (on 8th April 1767).

Stz(34)

Before the arrival of Myanmar armies, Siamese King Ekathat thought highly of himself. He proclaimed loudly that Saka was the ruler of Tavitimsa and so was he in the realm of human beings. In actual fact, the rank of king Ekathat was of Swabwa only. When he tried to escape, he was hit and killed. Myanmar armies set fire to the palace and the whole city. Ayutthaya suffered as if all things on earth be scorched due to the intense heat of seven suns said to have come out near the extinction of the world. Because of the moat and the river outside the town were teeming with corpses, water was extremely loathsome with the colour and the smell of blood.

Myanmar armies carried away seven hundred elephants fit for the king to ride, one hundred ships, ten thousand gold and silver inlaid guns as well as fuse and flint locked guns, a total of 2550 guns, big and small, made of bronze and iron, such as a pair of big guns, cannon crafted in the very shape of the Makara Sea Monster (mythical sea monster resembling a crocodile), cannon shaped in the similar image of the Nayar (mythical animal like septent or dragon), chariot mounted cannon, bow mounted cannon, elephant mounted cannon, city destructing cannon, Yan Pyo or Yan Lan cannon (enemy-repulsing cannon) and Thar Thut (Thar Thwin)* cannon.

One big gun with the length of twenty taungs and two taungs in width, and other big guns with the thirty to forty viss of ball, were either drawn into the sea or demolished.

* the name of the cannon

Stz(35)

In the proliferation of muskets, matchlocks, guns and cannons, with barrels short and long, of large and small calibre, big and small in size, that has been seized, four gigantic cannon should be mentioned with a view to keep a record for posterity. Each of these four cannon made of brass and iron measured 6 lan (or 36 feet) in length fully, the breech required five men joining hands to span it from the outside and being a full cubit wide at the muzzle, the barrel could easily accommodate a man. There was a variety of ordnance, solid cannon balls (complete with powder charge) each weighing fifteen, twenty or thirty viss each; some had been manufactured in China, or in the Shan States and some in the West ; canister rounds or case shot designed to split into four parts when launched, chain shot made of spheroids or half-spheres linked together by chain; cannonade shells packed into bags and sheathed with wire; grenades fitted with fuses; and grape shot that scatters into a lethal wedge-shaped pattern, with stocks enough to deter a siege, heaped together. From this great heap of ordnance only a selection of amazing weapons were taken and the rest cast into the river.

Magnificent elephants and horses, gold and silver, boats and barges, princes and princesses and their retinue more than two thousand in number, over 800 queens bearing titles “Bra Om” and “Bra San”, royal regalia like ruby trimmed mirrors, rubies worth a kingdom were carefully inventoried by the commanding generals and presented in due course to his majesty. Such acts of achievement follow this resounding victory.

Stz(36)

The fourth part from stanzas 28 to 35 described the conquest of Ayutthaya and its palace. Ayutthaya was a vast city and means of sustenance were abundant. Its land and water forces were strong with guns aplenty.

Outside the town, fifty outlying bastions and the moat protected the city from danger. In addition, the natural barrier of river, stream and the sea seemed to hinder the enemy from reaching Ayutthaya. During the reigns of older kings, the king himself took the command of a great force of boats, elephants, horses and troops to invest Siam or

where such kind of city lay. To overcome Siam, one invasion was not enough and it took several attempts covering a long period of months and years. In the present Hsinphyushin's reign, mere minister general, second in commands, commanders who were trusted servants of the royalty, were assigned to invest Siam. The three big countries of Chiang Mai, Lan Xang and Siam were conquered within the time span of five years.

Stz(37)

Taking all the past events into consideration, one should believe that the cause of conquest of Chiang Mai, Lan Xang and Saim with the palaces was only by the power and glory of Hsinphyushin. In Myanmar Era 930, on the 6th waxing day in the month of Thidingkyut (11th October 1568), the possessor of white and red elephants king Bayintnaung, the ruler of Hanthawaddy, parallel to the six seats of celestial realm, surrounded by thirty two towns of Hanthawaddy such as Dagon, Kyaik Katha, Myaung Tangyar, Hmyaw Pi, Maw Lon, Phaung Lin, Kawliya, Ma Kaw, Kyauk Maw, Dun Zayit, Kyauk Sit, Htan Tawgyi, Za ywe Thon, Yamarnago, Arkayain, La Gon Byee, Byapati, Lonsanu, made a march to Siam.

I will relate and write the marching armies of that time in sequence. Commander and deputy commander of the army deployed in front of the king's armies were Thiri Zeya Kyaw Htin and Letwe Yanathu. Commander and second in command of the army on the right side were Thet Shay Kyaw Htin and Let Yar Yanathu. For the army on the left side, Nanda Kyaw Htin was the commander and deputy commander was Letwe Yanamaik. The commander of the rearguard was Baya Kyaw Htin and second in command was Dharma Thiri. Each army of certain wings had one hundred war elephants, a thousand horses and ten thousand troops. Therefore, the king's armies include four hundred war elephants, four thousand horses and forty thousand troops.

Stz(38)

General Maha Uparat's column consisted of eleven armies including Maha Uparat's army. The deputy commanders were Letwe Kyaw Thu in Mo Kaung Sawbwa's army, Deva Kummar in Mo Maik Sawbwa's army, Zaya Thura in Banya Dalla's army,

Athawat in Thiri Thawdharma's army, Letyar Khin Mon in Banya Einra's army, Saka Yoda in Yaza Thingyan's army, Yama Yoda in Anawrahta's army, Saw Tai Kan in Banyarsat's army, Zweya Thanran in Nay Myo Kyaw Htin's army, Abaya Zaya in Nanda Yoda's army and Zaya Kyaw Htin in Maha Uparat's army. In each army, a hundred war elephants, one thousand horses and ten thousand troops were included.

Stz(39)

Pyi Thado Dharma Yaza's (General) column consisted of eleven armies including Pyi Thado Dharma Yaza's army. The deputy commanders were Zaya Taman in Mo Nyin Sawbwa's army, Letyar Zaya Thaya in Bamaw Sawbwa's army, Yaza Taman in Banya Pat's army, Htaw Maing Ye in Min Maha's army, Nanda Thura in Banya Phru's (Banya Maru) army, Mani Deva in Baya Thingyan's army, Zaya Kyawthu in Emondra's (Emondaryar) army, and Nanda Kamar in Thiri Zaya Nawrahta's army, Letyar Pyit in Thikayar's army and Manipura in Nandapa Kyan's army. With the exception of Pyi Thado Dharma Yaza's army which had two hundred war elephants, each army included one hundred war elephants, one thousand horses, and ten thousand troops.

Stz(40)

General Taungoo Min Gaung's column consisted of eleven armies including Taungoo Min Gaung's army. Deputy commanders were Tuyin Yoda in Hsei Baw Sawbwa's army, Thiri Nandarar in Hseni Sawbwa's army, Thiri Manarat in Abaya Garmani's army, Tuyin Shwe Taung in Banya Bye's army, Byon Kamar in Thetawshay's army, Zaya Yodar in Thamain Epaye's army, Paikamar in Baya Kyaw Thu's army, Tuyin Bala in Thamain Ngao Khwin's army, Thiri Gonarat in Nanda Thuriya's army, Thiri Dharmarat in Nanda Thingyan's and Zeya Yanamaik in Taungoo Min Gaung's army. Each army contained one hundred war elephants, one thousand horses and ten thousand troops.

General Innwa Thado Minsaw's column consisted of ten armies including Thado Min Saw's army. Deputy commanders were Tuyin Thiri in Nyaung Shwe Sawbwa's army, Letwe Nanda Thu in Oung Baung Sawbwa's army, Saka Deva in Mo Nai

Sawbwa's army, Tuyin Thidi in Yokayat's army, Sana Yoda in Min Kyaw Htin's army, Thiri Yodar in Thamain Thanlite's army, Ponya Deva in Banya Bayan's army, Ponya Yawdar in Thamain La Gon Eain's army and Thiri Zeya in Nanda Zeya's army.

Stz(41)

The total strength of those forty armies, were four thousand and four hundred elephants, forty four thousand horses and four lakh and forty thousand troops. General Min Ye Kyaw Htin commanded five armies. There were Banya Thay Lon's army from Chaing Mai and General Min Ye Kyaw Htin's army. The deputy commanders were Tuyin Yazar in Banya Thay Lon's army, Tuyin Pyitsi in Banya Thanlan's, Bawga Thayna in Banya Nan's army, Swanar Yazar in Keng Tung's army, and Nanda Thiri in General Min Ye Kyaw Htin's army. An aggregate of Hanthawaddy Hsinphyumyashin's four wings, forty armies, and five armies under General Min Ye Kyaw Htin were approximately five lakhs. It took ages to overrun Siam with such strong forces of five lakhs during the reign of Hanthawaddy Hsinphyumyashin. In marching Siam during the present reign of Hsinphyushin, the strength of the forces was less than those of Hanthawaddy Hsinphyumyashin.

Ayutthaya had strong land and water forces and possessed a number of superior weapons. The city was well protected by fifty outlying bastions around the city, moat, rivers and its tributaries. Under these circumstances, this conquest of Ayutthaya and its palace and the capturing of many prisoners of war were parallel to the break up of millions upon millions of Gyuns troops (Khmer) caused by only four warriors namely Kyansittha, Nga Htwe Yu, Nge Lone Let Pe and Nyaung U Phee during King Anawrahta's reign will remain to be recorded in the myriad cycles of worlds.

Stz(42)

The abovementioned conquest of Chiang Mai, Lan Xang and Ayutthaya are events and happenings which will remain till the extinction of the world. Praise worthy, brave, active and united Myanmar armies marched to Siam during Hsinphyushin's reign will be described.

In the armies of Zimme column, deputy commanders in General Naymyo Thiha Pati's army were Kyaw Htin Thiha Thu and Tuyin Yama Kyaw while royal listeners were Tuyin Yan Kyaw and Shwe Taung Si Thu. Adjutant was Thway Thout Letwe Sakakyaw. There were one thousand guns in this army. In Kyaw Gaung Kyaw Thu's army, deputy commanders were Thiri Zaya Kyaw and Giri Nayar while royal listener was Wailu Thingyan. Adjutants were Shwe Taung Ye Htin, Taman Kyaw Thu, and Saka Thidi Kyaw. There were five hundred guns in this army. There were 900 guns in Banya Law's army which established its reputation around Anyar region in upper Myanmar. In Thiri Yaza Thingyan's army, deputy commanders were Sada Thiri Kyaw Htin and Eidra Kyaw Swa while royal listeners were Thamana Ponyar and Dipa Yazar. Adjutant was Dipa Nayar. There were five hundred guns in Pyan Chi Kyaw Htin's army and five hundred horses in Ye Gaung Kyaw Swa's army.

Stz(43)

Among Yun armies, deputy commander in Thiri Nanda Kyaw Htin's army was Nanda Thiri Kyaw Htin, while royal listeners were Shwe Taung Yanathu, and Udai Saka Kyaw. Adjutants were Tuyin Saka Thu and Pyan Chi Ye Hla. Each army of seven armies of midland Shan sawbwas includes five hundred infantry troops carrying guns and spears. Cavalry units commanded by Nara Shwe Taung, Dipa Ye Htut Kyaw, Nara Pawza, and Khetta Nara were composed of five hundred horses each. Every enemy feared the armies from Zimme column.

Stz(44)

In Dawei (Mottama) column which advanced by water route, deputy commanders of General Maha Nawrahta's armies were Naymyo Gonarat and Tuyin Yan Aung Kyaw, while Royal listeners were Deva Kyaw and Letwe Kyaw Swa. Adjutants were Thway Thout Ye Gaung and Shwe Taung Kyaw Swa. In this army, there were one thousand troops carrying either guns or bows. In Thiri Zeya Kyawswa's army, deputy commanders were Shwe Taung Bala and Sanda Garmani, while Royal listener was Thiha Nara Kyaw Gaung. Adjutants were Thara Yazar, Thiri Nara Kyaw Thu and Letyar Thidi Kyaw Thu. In this army, there were five hundred war boats and one thousand gun troops. In

Nawrahta Kyaw Swa's army, deputy commanders were Bala Nanda Kyaw Htin, Tuyin Ye Gaung, and Shwe Taung Letwe Nawrahta. Royal listener was Thidi Kyaw Htin. In this army, there were five hundred each of lance and fire-arm troops.

In Satu Garmani's army, Deputy Commander was Shwe Taung Pyan, and Royal listener was Bala Yan Aung. Adjutant was Thidi. In Thiri Yanamaik Kyaw Htin's army, Deputy Commanders were Nanda Phitsi and Shwe taung Thiri Kyaw Htin while Royal listener was Pyan Chi Zeya Kyaw Swa. There were two adjutants in this army. In marching on Siam by land and water routes, the two generals of the armies were Naymyo Thiha Pati and Maha Nawrahta who can annihilate all enemies and dangers.

Stz(45)

The victory over Chiang Mai, Lan Xang and Ayutthaya by Myanmar armies with few land and water forces can be attributed to the abilities of the rank and files of Myanmar armies. Myanmar army carried off a medley of over one lakh nationalities of prisoners of war. They had been doled out as three hundred families each for commanders, fifty families each for Deputy Commanders, Royal listeners and adjutants, and two families each for troops. The Myanmar armies marched from Siam on 3rd waxing day of Nayon month ME 1129 (on 30th May 1767) and reached Innwa in the months of Waguang (July/ August in the year 1767)

Stz(46)

The fifth part is from stanzas 37 to 45. This part shows that owing to the capabilities of second in commands, commanders, deputy commanders, royal listeners, adjutants and Thwe Thouts, the two columns of Myanmar army under the command of General Naymyo Thiha Pati and General Maha Nawrahta conquered Chiang Mai, Lan Xang and Ayutthaya with only forty thousand land and water forces. The enemies were defeated as if they were cut off by the adamantine weapon of Saka.



Figure. 4.1. Palm Leaf Manuscript of Yodayar Naing Mawgun by Letwe Nawrahta.

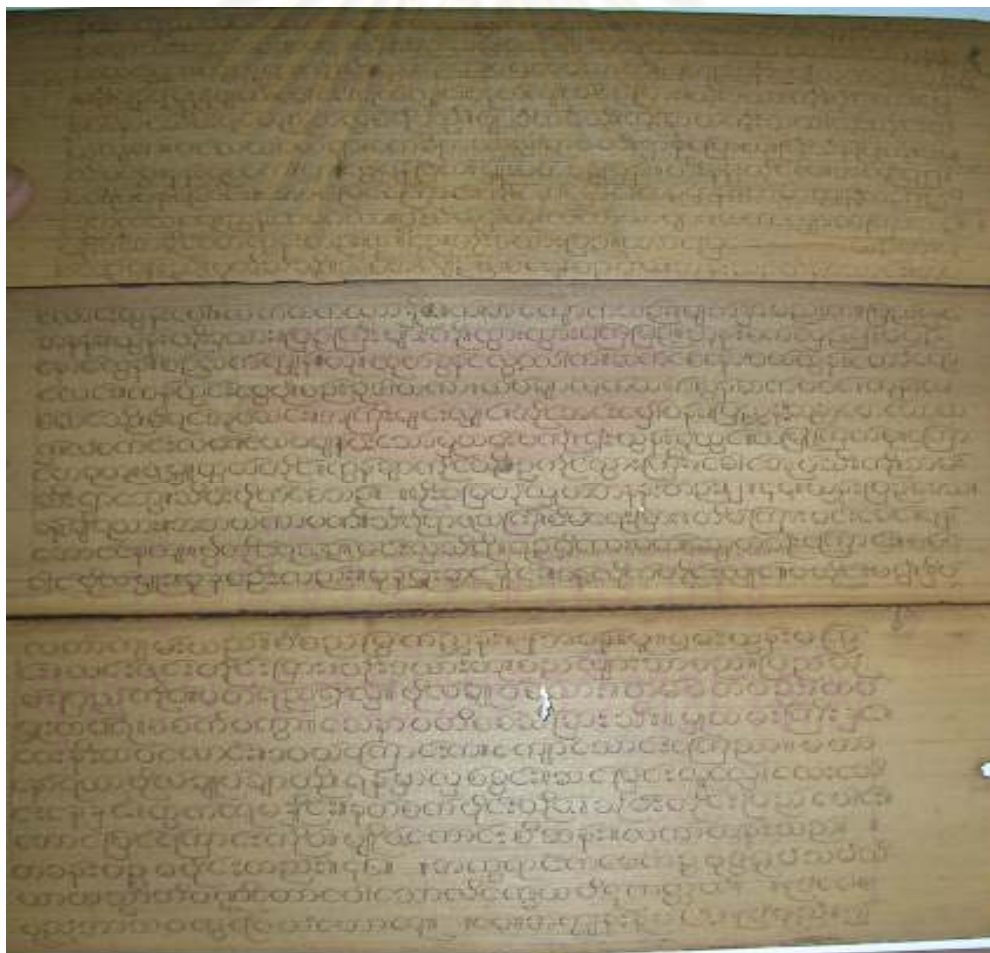




Figure. 4.2 Palm Leaf Manuscripts at the National Library of Myanmar in Yangon.

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS, COMPARISON AND CONTRAST ON LETWE NAWRAHTA'S YODAYAR NAING MAWGUN

In this chapter, analysis on the Mawgun will be made and the sources from Myanmar and Siamese chronicles shall be compared and contrasted whenever necessary. In the analysis, I shall touch upon the physical aspects of the war such as background of the war, root causes, routes, strategies, battles, Ayutthaya defence and the situation after the conquest. Moreover, I will be discussing the economic conditions of Myanmar in brief and economic explanation for the Myanmar-Siam warfare. For psychological aspects of the war, the two important concepts adopted by Myanmar Kings will also be given; Mahasamata theory and the concept of Cakravartin. Since the founding of Bagan, Mahasammata theory had been used by Myanmar kings to strengthen the legitimacy for their kingship. The concept of Cakravartin which is vital in Myanmar-Siam war activities may also provide the answers to why Myanmar kings invaded Siam from time to time. Finally, I will explain about battles after 1767 to have a complete picture of the 18th and 19th century Myanmar-Thai relations.

5.1 Background

King Alaungpaya established the Konboun dynasty and his descendants ruled the country up to the end of Myanmar monarchical system. We can divide this era into two periods; early Konboun period from King Alaungpaya to King Bodaw and the late Konboun period from King Bagyidaw to King Thibaw. The former period is called “Age of Triumph” because during this period, Myanmar power reached its zenith and especially in Hsinphyshin’s reign, it became the terror of the neighbouring countries.

Soon after the ascension of Hsinphyushin in 1763, the king moved his capital from Sagaing to Innwa which took only 106 days. Being a new king, his power was tested by both Chiang Mai and Lan Xang. Another problem he had to deal with was the rebellion in Tavoy which was supported by Ayutthaya. In addition, he should launch an

invasion of Manipur which had given trouble to the king. The biggest challenge posed to him was a series of Chinese invasions from 1765 to 1770.

On the other hand, Ayutthaya had been plagued by royal succession intrigues before the time of King Borommakot. In the struggle between the two sons of King Somdet Phra Phumintharacha and the king's brother Maha Uparat Chaofa Phon (who later became King Borommakot), majority of the government servants from the palace who sided with the princes, were removed and executed when Maha Uparat emerged victorious and became king. Government institutional structure was weakened as new and inexperienced mandarins were appointed in place of those old guards.

Another succession problem arose when King Borommakot removed Maha Uparat Chaofa Tham Thibet and gave the throne to the third son, Chaofa Uthumphon instead of his disfavored son Chaofa Ekathat. When the king died, Chaofa Uthumphon ceded the throne to Ekathat.

Apart from these dynastic crises, three major problems can be attributed to the vulnerability of Ayutthaya. The first problem was the restriction of the dangerous appointments of senior princes to the provincial towns. The king placed them in special palaces in Ayutthaya in order to monitor them. Though this move boosted the centralization of the royal power, it later caused a difficulty for the king to conscript royal troops and lack of assistance from the provinces when needed.

The growing size of government departments caused another problem. These departments were monopolized by the ministerial families for many years and factionalism became the order of the day in the Ayutthaya court. The third problem was the king's control over manpower. Under the Corvee system in Ayutthaya time, phrai som (private retainers) had to serve their lords but they had no obligation to the throne. On the other hand, Phrai Luang (royal servicemen) had to work six months a year for the crown. The workload of phrai luang was much heavier than that of phrai som. As a result, many phrai luang fled from the city to avoid the onerous duties imposed on them. Because of the heavy loss of phrai luang, the power of the king was weakened.

According to Victor Lieberman, these problems engendered fresh instabilities in Ayutthaya.¹

If we look at the contemporaneous events of the world during this period, by 1761 the British East India Company had taken a firm root in India and controlled Bengal. After seven years wars between England and France, a peace treaty of 1763 was signed to acknowledge English supremacy over America, Canada and India. In 1765, James Watt improved the steam engine invented by the Englishman Thomas Newcomen, a very important date in the history of Industrialism. In 1766, the British stamp act was repealed due to stiff resistance by colonials in America. In the year 1767, the British government disbanded American import duty on tea. The most prominent rulers of the time were King George III of England, Catherine the Great of Russia, Prussia's Frederick the Great and Louis XVI of France.

5.2 Casus belli

As stated in the previous chapters, the causes for this war can be one or all of the following reasons; the strong personality of King Hsinphyushin and the weakness on the part of the Ayutthaya state, rebellions and upheavals in Chiang Mai and Tavoy, the influence of the then prevailing concepts of Mandala and Cakravartin and other subsidiary reasons.

The immediate cause for this war was the revolt against Innwa hatched in Chiang Mai in early 1764 and in Tavoy since King Naungdawgyi's reign. Also, in Lan Xang, the Vietnamese backed regime of Vientiane, Old Lan Xang kingdom with its capital Luang Prabang and the Siamese backed city of Champassak existed. The king of Vientiane had already offered to become a vassal of Innwa but the king of Luang Prabang who refused to acknowledge suzerainty of King Hsinphyushin would be crushed in March 1765. With regard to the Ayutthaya question, it was mentioned in the Mawgun that King Alaungpaya, before his death, enjoined his sons to conquer Ayutthaya but this could not

¹ Victor Lieberman, **Strang Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c 1800-1830**, Vol 1, (Cambridge University, 2003), Page 282.

be traced in Myanmar chronicles. We can only guess that King Hsinphyushin, when he was a prince, took command of his father's armies to invest Ayutthaya in 1760. The Myanmar army had to curb their pride and return at that time. As a warrior king, he might have had a strong desire to conquer Ayutthaya during his reign.

There's a discrepancy in sources regarding the intention of the king to attack Ayutthaya. G.E Harvey wrote that Hsinphyushin's claim rest on Bayintnaung's conquest. According to Father Sangermano, the reason Hsinphyushin dispatched his army against Ayutthaya was because of the Siamese king's refusal to pay the tribute promised to his father, Alaungpaya. Prince Damrong took the assumption in his book *Our Wars with the Burmese* that initially, the Myanmar army did not intend to invest Ayutthaya but to loot and plunder the Siamese territories. Only when they found out the weakness on the part of Siamese, did they invest Ayutthaya. This is because Myanmar armies spent quite some time in Siam before the real offensive began. But the king's order was clearly stated in the famous Myanmar chronicle "Konboun Set Mahayazawindawgyi," that the Myanmar armies while utilizing the strength of Chiang Mai and Lan Xang should invest Ayutthaya from the north and the south in a classic pincer movement.

If we look back at the dates of the marches of the two armies, Zimme column to Chaing Mai was in February 1764 and Dawei column to Tavoy in November 1764. The first Chinese invasion of Keng Tung took place in December 1765. The two armies were not called back in defence of the country. Similarly, despite the second Chinese invasion which occurred in January 1767, these two armies had to continue their siege on Ayutthaya. (The second fall of Ayutthaya was in April 1767). These Chinese invasions were comparable to those which had destroyed Bagan in the thirteenth century AD. Most of the time in Myanmar-Chinese warfare, China was the aggressor and Myanmar was the defender. The word "Tayoke" (Chinese) in Myanmar means "intruder".² It simply indicated how firm the resolution of the king was to conquer Ayutthaya from the very beginning.

² U Po Latt, *Treaties on the Explanations of Burmese Language*, vol. 1, Pyin-nyar Nanda Offset, Yangon. 1962. Page 267.

5.3 Routes

In former times, Myanmar kings except King Alaungpaya's armies had the tradition of encroaching Siamese territories via Me Lamaw and Chiang Mai or by way of the outpost of Three Padogas pass. This time, Myanmar armies beat the old tracks, the Zimme column marched along the Chiang Mai route from the north and the Dawei column took the route by way of Tavoy from the south.

Zimme column marched from Innwa on approximately nine stations up to Thanlwin Jetty and crossed nine Htar* regions. When they arrived at Keng Tung through Mo Nai, one column marched along Maing Pu - Maing Tha route and the main army took the Maing Thwin-Kyaing Ye (Chiang Rai) route, to attack enemies at the Lwai Lon mountain ridges and Lamphun town respectively.

After suppressing the rebellion in Chiang Mai, the Zimme column stayed at the town of Nan during the rainy season. The army marched from Nan to Maing Lon Kha Ping (Luang Prabang) on 31 October, 1764 by both land and water routes. After subduing Lan Xang regions, the army left from Maing Lon Kha Ping on 25 March 1765 and arrived at Lampang town on 28 April 1765.

Upon receiving the royal order, they marched from Lampang town to Ayutthaya by land and water routes on 22-8-1765. They marched along the stations towards the towns of Tak, Yarhai, Kampaeng Phet, Sawankhalok, Sukhothai, Rathama, Phitsanulok, and Phichit. After taking these towns, the Zimme column established camp at Pa Thoke (Pa Sak) village a distance of over 400 tars from the north eastern side of Ayutthaya.

Twenty nine armies of the Dawei column (Martaban route) was sent to Tavoy on 30-11-1764. They stayed at Tavoy for the rainy season and marched from Tavoy to Ayuthaya on 22-10-1765. This column, after storming the towns on the route to Ayutthaya, was stationed at Kani (Kaja) village, a distance of five stations on the west of Ayutthaya. When Zimme column arrived at Pa Thoke village, the Dawei column moved

* Myanmar military outposts during monarchical periods.

from Kani village and pitched camp at the back of the pagoda built by King Bayintnaung, a distance of one thousand tars from the north western side of Ayutthaya.

In the Mawgun, Letwe Nawrahta described the route of the Zimme column more clearly than the route taken by Dawei column. For this, we can rely on Kongboun Set Mahayazawindawgyi in which it was mentioned that the Dawei column made submission of the towns of Phetburi, Rachaburi, Kanpuri, Nothernburi, Salin, and Sonphyon before reaching Ayutthaya.

These sources are reliable for Konbounset Maha Yazawintawgyi is made up of the accounts dealing with the Alaungpaya dynasty from the Glass Palace Chronicle and the 2nd Mahayazawindawgyi and the events of the last two kings of Konboun dynasty; King Mindon and King Thibaw.

When we look at the routes taken by Myanmar kings to invest Ayutthaya, King Tabinshwehti used the southern route from 3 pagoda pass. King Bayintnaung marched through Melmaw, the northern route while King Alaungpaya marched along Tavoy, Mergui and Tenasserim routes. Hsinphyushin's army took the routes of Melmaw from the north and Mottama (Martaban) and Tavoy from the south.

5.4 Strategies

David Wyatt describes the strategies of Myanmar and Siamese kings of this period thus:

" The Burmese campaigns against Siam in the 1760's and 1770's were based in part upon Burma political and military presence virtually encircling Ayutthaya on all sides, including a large section of the Malay Peninsula, Lan Na and the Shan states, and Lan Sang in Laos. To break this encirclement, Taksin had to work to expel the Burmans and

*their allies from these regions, and narrow the zone in which subsequent campaigns would be fought."*³

The Zimme column under the command of Naymyo Thiha Pati started its campaign to the north of Siam in the early 1764 and within months, all the fifty seven provinces of old kingdom of Lanna (a million ricefields) fell under him. Furthermore, after the battle of Lan Xang (a million elephants), he had complete control of the upper part of Siam and was able to tap the resources from the north.

The Dawei column under the command of Maha Nawrahta marched from Innwa in November 1764 and after storming towns on the route of the march reached Ayutthaya in January 1766. Counting from the dates of the start of their campaign, Zimme column spent approximately 2 years and Dawei column 1 year before the siege of Ayutthaya began. This is possible because in most of the time in Myanmar-Siam warfare, both sides avoided the rainy season from June to September as it was difficult for the armies to march and invest the enemies as well as the likelihood of the outbreak of endemic diseases such as malaria and cholera were present. If possible, they also shunned the hottest months of March, April and May as well. Thus, the best time for fighting was from October to February, so to speak. One of the reasons why King Alaungpaya failed in his campaign was his late march to Ayutthaya. He arrived at Ayutthaya on April 17, 1760.

As stated before, Myanmar engaged in expansionist war in Siam and at the same time, a defensive war on the home front. The history would be likely to repeat itself when one of the two columns of Chinese army reached near Innwa during the third Chinese invasion in December 1767. The court mandarins urged the king to develop a plan B, a plan to escape but Hsinphyushin disregarded the advice and declared his determination to fight down to the last man. Myanmar could turn the tide only when one Myanmar column cut out the supply line of the invading Chinese army. The strategy of the Myanmar king

³ David K. Wyatt, "The 'Subtle Revolution' of King Rama I of Siam," ed. David K Wyatt and Alexander Woodside, **Moral order and the Question of Change: Essays on Southeast Asian Thought**, (New Haven: Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, 1982), Pages 13-14.

was very convincing: that he himself would fight the Chinese and the two columns led by the generals should triumph over the Siamese by attacking Ayutthaya from the two directions.

Myanmar had the tradition of conscripting the auxiliary levies under the local chiefs from the conquered lands to assist the campaign. Initially, the Zimme column consisted of only 30 armies. The strength of the army increased from 30 to 74 after storming town after town on the route to Ayutthaya. Similarly, the Dawei column swelled from 28 to 57 armies by the time they besieged Ayutthaya. We saw another stratagem of Myanmar armies to place these armies in the vanguard.

In previous wars, Myanmar kings took the field in person, thus giving their armies the immense advantage of unity of command, which was seldom attainable by ordinary commanders.⁴ It is said that the Shan chief, being loyal, took orders from the crown alone. However, the two able generals commanding the respect and loyalty from their respective armies, synchronized the movement of the armies in attacking Ayutthaya.

The most formidable disadvantage for the Myanmar armies since Tabinshwehti's time in attacking Ayutthaya was the water coming from the north which flooded the area around Ayutthaya during the rainy seasons. Unlike previous occasions, the generals resolved to carry on the war regardless of the rains. Myanmar soldiery laid brick walls and built mounds of earth around their fortifications. They also built, collected and commandeered the boats to keep the armies in action.

In defending the city, the Siamese erected fifty masonry bastions between the city walls of Ayutthaya and the moat encircling the whole city. Myanmar armies built 27 forts confronting these bastions thus enabling them to tighten the siege. As Ayutthaya would laugh a siege to scorn, it would take a much longer time to inundate the city unless five underground tunnels which led to the base to the city walls were dug clandestinely.

⁴ G.E. Harvey, **History of Burma**, The Beginning of the English Conquest; Longmans, Green and Co. 39 Paternoster Row, (London, E.C.4 , New York, Toronto Bombay, Calcutta and Madars , 1967), Page 270.

Myanmar generals took the example from Mahosoda Jataka in which the sage Mahosada saved his king's life and carried off the daughter of the enemy king through the tunnel. This stratagem was often used in the history of siege warfare but implementing it without the knowledge of the enemies was not an easy task and the effectiveness of these tunnels led to the fall of Ayutthaya.

In siege warfare, this method is known as mining. The defenders could dig counter tunnels to cut into the attackers' works or use large bellows (the type the Chinese commonly used in heating up a blast furnace for smelting cast iron) to pump smoke into the tunnels in order to suffocate the intruders.⁵

Other tactics include setting fire against castle or fortress walls to decompose the cement that held together the individual stones so they could be readily knocked over.

On the other hand, Siamese defense was belated and uncoordinated. Upon request by Chiang Mai, Ayutthaya sent a small contingency but it arrived late and did not engage Myanmar army during King Naungdawgyi's reign. Thus, the Siamese lost their chance to withstand Myanmar offensive from strategically located Chiang Mai. Furthermore, Ayutthaya stayed idle concentrating only on the defense of the capital while the Myanmar army had been fighting for control of the north from 1764 to 1765.

In addition, the Siamese king's strategy was too much dependent on the summer monsoon and the subsequent flood around Ayutthaya so as to fight the fight of sit down. Previously, Myanmar armies had to retreat during the rainy season. It is normally difficult even to hold the ground at this time of the year. The Siamese hoped that Myanmar armies would return homeward as in the previous times. This strategy was seriously flawed when Myanmar armies tenaciously held out their posts till the monsoon was over.

When the provision became scarce, the Siamese planned to employ a delaying tactic. According to the plan, they would admit defeat and when Myanmar armies remove

⁵ Turnbull, Stephen R. **Siege Weapons of the Far East**, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd. 2002), Page 40.

the satellite forts, another stratagem to be devised. This kind of tactics was also employed during the King Alaungpaya's campaign. Unfortunately, Myanmar generals, conceited and ambitious by the smell of victory, demanded only total submission from the Siamese.

The Siamese also followed the rules and tactics of siege warfare. Ayutthaya's moat was deep and the wall was high. Its outlying defenses proved difficult to capture even for a well equipped army. Special attention was paid to defend the city gate. In addition, the Siamese made their city strong by replenishing the weapons, elephants, horses and troops, laying the fields of iron spikes, tree stumps, elephant and horse impediments, and digging thorny pits outside the city. They built and collected boats for the use of the navy. For coming in and going out of the city, it could be done only by scaling up and climbing down the wall by the use of ropes. They relaxed no effort in their defence.

5.5 Battles

Throughout history, Myanmar and Siamese kings had been acquainted with the siege warfare which dominated the conduct of war between Myanmar and Siam. We can trace the beginning of the siege warfare in King Anawrahta's time. When King Anawrahta's demand for the three pitikas (Scriptures) was turned down by the Mon King Manuha, Myanmar armies came down and lay siege on the town of Thaton, the capital of the Mon country.

Three months had passed but King Anawrahta's attempt to overwhelm the city was of no avail. Legend has it that the two Indian brothers, Byattwi and Byatta were shipwrecked and reached the shore of Thaton. Having eaten the flesh of a magician, they became awfully strong. Being afraid of their incredible strength, the King of Thaton tried to kill them both. Byattwi escaped to Bagan but Byatta was killed. According to the magical rites, parts of his body were buried at places around the city walls. As the spirit

of Byatta guarded the town, the city was impregnable. Thaton fell only after Anawrahta exhumed the remains of Byatta and cast them into the sea.⁶

According to Cambodian chronicles, the expedition led by King Ramathibodi, the first king of Ayutthaya invested Angkor in 1351. The siege took 16 months. Ramathibodi built wooden towers as high as the walls of the town in order to be able to shoot fire arrows into the town. Finally the king gave an order for general onslaught on the eastern gate of the town of forces with the help of heavy battering-rams.⁷

From thence onwards, Myanmar and Siamese kings made the fortresses of their cities strong fighting each other with siege tactics both offensive and defensive. I would like to brief a background of siege warfare to understand more about the nature of it.

A siege is a military blockade of a city or fortress. The term derives from Sedere, Latin for “to sit”. It involves surrounding the target and blocking the reinforcement or escape of troops or provision of supplies. Sieges probably predate the development of cities as large population centers. During the Renaissance and the Early Modern period, siege warfare dominated the conduct of war in Europe. In Napoleonic era, increasing use of powerful cannon reduced the value of fortifications. In modern times, trenches replaced walls, and bunkers obscured castles.⁸

The importance of siege warfare should not be underestimated. One of the reasons why Hannibal's army could not defeat Rome was his lack of a siege train. He was able to defeat Roman armies in the field, but he was unable to capture Rome itself.⁹

To overrun the fortresses, various methods had been employed to overwhelm fortifications, and a large variety of siege engines were developed for use in the course of time.

⁶ Harvey, **History of Burma; from the earliest time to 1824, the beginning of the English conquest**, (Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1967), Page 27.

⁷ M.L. Manich Jumsai, **History of Thailand and Cambodia**, published by Chalermnit, 108 Sukhumvit 53, (Bangkok 10110, Thailand, Seventh Revised Edition, January 2001), Page 30-31.

⁸ Internet, <http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/siege>

⁹ Ibid

Ladders could be used to climb over the defenses. Battering rams and siege hooks were in the use of forcing through gates or walls, while catapults and trebuchets launch projectiles in order to destroy a city's fortifications and kill its defenders. A siege tower built to equal or greater height than the fortification's walls, could allow the attackers to fire down upon the defenders and also advance troops to the wall with less danger than using ladders.

In addition to launching projectiles at the fortifications, it was quite common to attempt to undermine the fortifications, causing them to collapse. This could be accomplished by digging a tunnel beneath the foundations of the walls, and then deliberately exploding the tunnel.

Disease was another effective siege weapon, although the attackers were often as vulnerable as the defenders. In some instances, catapults or similar weapons were used to fling diseased animals over city walls in an early example of biological warfare.¹⁰

In 1346, the bodies of Mongol warriors of the Golden Horde who had died of plague were thrown over the walls of the besieged Crimean city of Caffa. It has been speculated that this operation may have been responsible for the advent of the Black Death in Europe.¹¹

The universal method for defending against siege is the use of fortifications, walls and ditches to supplement natural features. A sufficient supply of food and water was also important to defeat starvation. Particular attention would be paid to defending entrances. Moats and other water defenses, whether natural or augmented, were also vital to defenders.

¹⁰ Mark Wheelis, **Biological Warfare at the 1346 Siege of Caffa**, California, USA 2002. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidoc/EID/vol8no9/01-0536htm>

¹¹ Ibid

Until the invention of gunpowder-based weapons, defenders had the upper hand. With the invention of gunpowder and cannon, the traditional methods of defense became less effective against a determined siege.

If we moved back to the Mawgun, Myanmar armies mopped up the rebellion in Chiang Mai without much difficulty. I would like to borrow some lines from Hman Nan Yazawindawgyi in describing the conditions after the suppression of Myanmar army that within months, situation in Chiang Mai was as smooth as the surface of the water. But the other two battles fought in Maing Lon Kha Ping (Luang Prabang) were quite opposite to the battles in the Chiang Mai region.

Being situated between two rivers, the city of Luang Prabang was difficult even to approach. Myanmar armies fought so fiercely that after the first battle, piles of heads of ten thousand Lan Xang soldiers were heaped up by Myanmar armies near the bank of the river in order to terrify the defenders. In the second battle, siege tactics was applied and before the surrender, half the city lay devastated by the cannon fired from the nearby hillocks and knolls. One army from Vientiane is said to have assisted Myanmar forces.

On the Ayutthaya front, one interesting thing to note is that in the Mawgun and other Myanmar chronicles, there is no mentioning of an English ship aiding the Siamese in delaying the advance of the Dawei column and the confrontation between the Zimme column and the patriotic villagers from Bang Ranhan, situated to the north of Ayutthaya.

Coming from the two directions, both the Zimme column and Dawei column seized the towns on the way to Ayutthaya. Some cities offered no resistance but some fought at best to defend their cities. All these battles were won by means of ladder assault or by breaking walls or gates.

A total of eight battles broke out in and around Ayutthaya during the siege; 2 naval battles and 6 land battles. Out of these battles, I would like to point out some discrepancy in sources from Myanmar and Siamese chronicles. In the battle between reinforcements from northern Siam and the Zimme column, Myanmar chronicle stated that these reinforcements were from Northern provinces of Siam. The testimony of the

old residents of Ayutthaya chronicle agrees with the Myanmar chronicles but Prince Damrong in his book 'Our wars with the Burmese' described that they came from the South. Likewise, he stated in the same book that King Ekathat escaped to the nearby village and died there only after a few days of the battle. The testimony of the old residents of Ayutthaya and Myanmar Chronicles agree that the king was killed within the city walls.

One battle can change the course of war or delay the victory of Myanmar armies. Nearing the end of the war, the Siamese forces under the command of Minister Byathan made a furious assault on the three Myanmar newly built forts from where the surreptitious digging of 5 underground tunnels to the base of the city walls was being carried out by the Myanmar armies.

Owing to the Siamese attack, Myanmar armies at these forts were on the verge of being routed. Unless Myanmar armies from the nearby forts came to their rescue, these three forts would fall into the hands of the Siamese. If that was the case, Myanmar armies' tunneling scheme would be uncovered and the Siamese could have defended Ayutthaya more effectively.

5.6 Ayutthaya Defence

The very first wall of Ayutthaya from King Ramathibodi's reign to 16th century AD was moat and mound with wooden posts. Its site, situated at the confluence of Chao Phraya River and old Lopburi River, was deliberately chosen for defense purpose. The north, south and west sides of the city was surrounded by rivers. As the Pa Sak River ran a few kilometers east, only the eastern flank of Ayutthaya was vulnerable to attack. Thus, a defensive canal called "Front City Canal" was dug for eastern defense. It no longer exists nowadays.

Realizing the power of guns and large cannon, King Maha Chakkraphat strengthened the Ayutthaya defense by digging an exterior moat called "Maha Nak canal" and building walled fortresses along the city wall, mostly at waterway intersections.

When Ayutthaya became temporarily a vassal state of Myanmar, King Maha Thammaracha was allowed to build new walls around the city under the pretext of threat from Cambodia, These walls extended to the river banks in 1580. The moat was dug 20 m wide and 6 m deep from Maha Chai fortress down to connect with Pom Phet fortress near Kaja village (south of the city on the left bank of the Chao Phraya river.)¹²

Since the 16th century onwards, Ayutthaya had become a fully fortified city surrounded by rivers, dug canals and thick brick walls. It was probably constructed under the supervision of the Portuguese. It was so impressive that in 1591, King Nandabayin "ordered all the gates, battlements, and towers of the city (Pegu) to be demolished and to be rebuilt on the model of those round the city of Yodaya."¹³

King Narai (1656-1688) appointed the Sicilian Jesuit priest Tommaso Valguarnera to rebuild the walls and fortresses of Ayutthaya in 1663. At the request of the king, the French engineer La Mare designed and superintended the construction of new fortifications in 1685.¹⁴

Records from foreign visitors of that time mentioned that there were over some 800 canons lining the city walls. The wall was 12 kilometers long, 6 meters high and 5 meters wide, with 16 forts and a total of 99 gates: 18 city gates, 61 smaller gates and 20 water gates.¹⁵

In 1767, the Myanmar army built 30 new forts and dug 5 tunnels to overwhelm the city. I have given the imaginary locations of Myanmar forts that confront the Ayutthaya 50 bastions surrounding the city.

Regarding the 50 bastions erected by the Siamese, Prince Damrong tried to locate the establishment of these fortifications to protect the city on every side. He even

¹² <http://www.ayutthaya-history.com>

¹³ Sunait Chutintaranond, **Cakravartin: The Ideology of Traditional Warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605**, Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University,1990), Page 195. Aung Thein, "Intercourse between Burma and Siam as Recorded in Hmannan Mahayazawin dawgyi," in JSS, 8:2 (Bangkok, 1911: Kraus Reprint, 1969), Pages 48-49.

¹⁴ <http://www.ayutthaya-history.com>

¹⁵ Ibid

mentioned some places in his book *Our wars with the Burmese*. However, he admitted that he had examined many histories and records but the places mentioned in his book may probably be wrong.

Most parts of the wall and the fortresses were dismantled in the reign of King Rama I. They were used in the construction of the new capital in Bangkok.

5.7 Afterward

On 8th April 1767, when the wall had been breached, the Myanmar troops effected the entry via tunnels or the ruins of the city wall. After putting down the resistance, thousands of inhabitants of Ayutthaya had been rounded up and carried away in captivity. "The king of Hanthawaddy (King Bayintnaung) waged war like a monarch," wrote a Siamese chronicler "but the king of Innwa like a robber." The wholesale destruction of Ayutthaya by Myanmar armies might partly be due to the news from the capital calling the armies back to defend the Chinese invasion.

As stated in the Mawgun, Myanmar armies carried away the royal family and the vanquished population which consisted of artisans, musicians, dancers, soldiers, etc, and settled them near Sagaing. In the history of Southeast Asia, we have learnt that land was abundant and manpower was in short supply. The situation was that such wars became "glorified slave raids."¹⁶ Almost all the powerful kings had strong desires for accumulation of manpower and wealth at the expense of his neighbors.

Prisoners of war taken from Ayutthaya since Tabinshwehti and Bayintnaung eras were located in the country. We have only stray references to them in Myanmar chronicles and the Royal Orders of Burma (ROB). They can be divided into four groups; farmers, artisans and artists, slaves and soldiers. The majority engaged in cultivation and few sold at slave markets in Bengal. Artisans and artists exclusively served in the royal service. As Ayutthaya men were skilled at soldiering, they were recruited in the service of Myanmar kings. Their contingents marched along on the Kings' expeditions to foreign

¹⁶Dr. Myo Myint, "Alaungpaya's Campaign in Thailand (1759-1760)". **Myanmar Historical Research Journal**, no. 9. (Yangon: June 2002), Page 45.

lands. Owing to their bravery and loyalty, they were entrusted with the duty even to guard the gates of Innwa during King Nyaung Yan's reign.¹⁷

5.8 18th century Myanmar Economy in brief and economic explanations for Myanmar-Siam warfare

The economies of Myanmar in the mid 18th century can be classified into three categories: Inland trade with China, the export of agricultural products, forest goods, gems and minerals from the interior and the maritime trade via port cities in the south.

5.8.1 Overland Trade

In main land Southeast Asia, the most important routes for the inland trade were from Vientiane to Ayutthaya, from northern Burma and Laos into Yunnan and across the Malayan peninsular from Tenasserim.¹⁸ Merchants travelled along these routes in caravans.

From ancient time up to the 19th century, Myanmar courts conducted considerable inland trade with China. The main centre of inland trade was the town of Bhamo. In the 18th century, there was a large scale trade from the dry regions of central Myanmar to Yunnan. It can be seen that one of the immediate causes for a series of Chinese invasions from 1765 to 1770 was a quarrel between Chinese merchants and the local people.

I would like to cite an extraordinary event mentioned in Htin Aung's *History of Burma* to clearly depict the importance of overland trade between Myanmar and China:

"Although in Upper Burma the peace remained unbroken, Bodawpaya had many anxious moments because the Chinese emperor still remained petulant over the failure of his invasions, and on his instructions the governor of Yunnan occasionally sent

¹⁷ Dr. Than Tun, *Ayut'ia men in the Service of Burmese Kings, 6th and 7th Centuries*, **On Both Sides of the Tenasserim Range: History of Siamese Burmese Relation**, Chulalongkorn University Phyathai, (Bangkok 10330, Thailand 1995), Page 101.

¹⁸ Anthony Reid, **Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680**, Volume Two: Expansion and Crisis. (Yale University, 1998), Page 58.

threatening and insulting letters to the Burmese king. Bodawpaya was anxious to restore normal trade relations between the two countries. Officially the emperor had refused to honor the stipulation of the treaty of 1769 regarding trade relations, but unofficially, because of prevailing peace conditions, trade between the two countries had resumed to some extent.

The Sawbwa of Bhamo and some Chinese merchants from Yunnan were especially interested in the full resumption of trade relations, and they conspired to hoodwink both the emperor and Bodawpaya. They brought a bogus mission purporting to be from the Chinese emperor, and Bodawpaya received it with due honor. When Bodawpaya sent a return mission to Peking, the conspirators arranged that the mission's own interpreter should become separated from the mission on the journey. Then as the mission arrived before the emperor the conspirators explained that the mission was bringing tribute. The emperor was pleased and ordered full resumption of trade.

*Sometime later the conspirators again brought a bogus mission with three beautiful Chinese girls who were said to be the emperor's granddaughters. Bodawpaya now realized that he had been fooled and put the Sawbwa of Bhamo under arrest. Whether the emperor of China ever found out the truth is not known, but the conspirators did achieve their objective – normal trade relations were restored. "*¹⁹

Some of these traders were from the huge Bawdwin silver mines in the Shan area tributary to Myanmar. They were manned by 20000 to 30000 Chinese workers. These mines were brought about by the exodus of Chinese talent at the time of the Ming dynasty's downfall (1644-1662).²⁰ These mines were officially abandoned before 1800.

According to Victor Lieberman, by 1830, the overland trade may have come to represent one-half to two-thirds the level of the maritime trade.²¹ In later years, one

¹⁹ Maung Htin Aung, **A History of Burma**, (Columbia University Press, New York and London , 1967), Pages 199-200.

²⁰ U Thaw Kaung, "Palm-leaf Manuscript Record of a Mission", in **Aspects of Myanmar History & Culture**, (Yangon: March 2010), Page 176.

²¹ Anthony Reid, "Economic and Social Change, c 1400-1800", **The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol 1, part 2 From c.1500 to c.1800**, (Cambridge University Press, 1999), Page 139.

reason behind the third Anglo Burmese war was also the interest of English merchant group resident in Yangon to open up the new land routes to China.

Ayutthaya also conducted overland trade with Laos, Cambodia, and the Malay Peninsula. It is said that overland trade flourished as a consequence of the age of commerce (maritime trade) in South East Asia from 1400 to 1650 AD.²²

5.8.2 Internal trade and revenues

The economies of Myanmar and Siam like other Southeast Asian countries were based on agriculture. In Myanmar since the founding of Bagan dynasty, weirs, canals and dams were built around kyaukse and Minbu areas for the irrigated cultivation of rice. They became rich bowls of upper Myanmar. Apart from agricultural products, forest goods, gems, minerals and cotton were the mainstay of the Myanmar economy.

During the 17th and 18th century, much state revenue was in kind. Agricultural goods as well as services were demanded as a substitute for taxes. Revenue flowed not only from the customs duties and associated charges. There are also royal monopolies on many of the lucrative export items, tolls on internal trade, taxes on markets and the personal trade of the ruler himself.

According to Wil O. Dijk in her article "Life in Seventeenth Century Burma through Dutch Eyes", the country's monetary system was a bimetallic system of parallel standard. The two metallic media of exchange were silver bullion and ganza (an alloy of copper and lead or copper, lead, and tin). Silver was normally used for wholesale transactions while ganza served the retail market. Since neither was coined but came in smooth chunks of varying sizes and shapes, the least transaction involved weighing so that scales and weights were always at the ready.²³

²² Anthony Reid, "Economic and Social Change, c 1400-1800", **The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol 1, part 2 From c.1500 to c.1800**, (Cambridge University Press, 1999), Page 160.

²³ Dijk Wil O, "Life in Seventeenth Century Burma through Dutch Eyes, Traditions of Knowledge in Southeast Asia", **TRADITIONS OF KNOWLEDGE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**, Myanmar Historical Commission, (Yangon, 2003), Page 123.

This monetary system would probably continue to exist in Myanmar nearly up to the end of the King Naungdawgyi's reign. King Bodawpaya standardized measure and weight and tried to initiate the coinage system but failed.

In the reign of King Bodawpaya, four types of coin were current, the Myanmar, the Rakhine, coinage from Vesali and from India. After the reign of King Bodawpaya, the copper coinage was withdrawn from use. In his time, the coinage bore an image of the shwe pyi soe bird; in the time of Shwe bo min, an image of the moon; in that of King Mindon, of a peacock.²⁴ Myanmar did not have a state monetary system that uses standard coinage till King Mindon's reign.

If we glimpsed at the Myanmar economy as a whole from ancient times up to Hsinphyushin's reign, the economy was in chaos throughout the first Innwa period (1364-1555) due to intermittent wars between several kingdoms. Under King Tabinshwehti and King Bayintnaung, the Myanmar economy recovered thanks to maritime trade which flourished during this period. In Nanda Bayin's reign, maritime trade suffered a heavy setback.

The restored Toungoo kings of Myanmar (during King Thalun's reign) shifted their capital to Innwa, in the rice-growing heartland of upper Myanmar, in 1635. The kyaukse rice bowl of upper Myanmar suffered increasingly frequent crop failure in the period from 1667 to 1740, as royal authority was no longer sufficient to see that irrigation channels were maintained.²⁵ King Alaungpaya and Hsinphyushin had to inherit this poor economic condition and they undertook the resurrection of the country. However, the flight of thousands more Mons into Siam in the 1750s caused ruin to the maritime economy.

Lieberman refutes Hall's (1955: 380) concept of "a long period of stagnation" in Myanmar from the mid-seventeenth century. Although the maritime regions of the delta

²⁴ U Tin, **Royal Administration of Burma**, VOL 2, (Bangkok: Ava Publishing House 2001), Page 132.

²⁵ Anthony Reid, "Economic and Social Change, c 1400-1800", **The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol 1, part 2 From c. 1500 to c. 1800**, (Cambridge University press 1999), Page 156.

were in disarray, the population of the core region slowly expanded, its market towns grew in number and size, and an internal market economy based on silver grew.²⁶

5.8.3 Long distance sea trade

The maritime trade of southern sea-ports in Myanmar with the Muslim traders flourished since 14th and 15th century. Even after the fall of Malacca in 1511, the volume of trade was still on the increase because of the more frequent use of old ports by these traders who wanted to avoid Portuguese interference.²⁷ However, it became stagnant in the latter part of 17th century. Not only did the English withdraw their factory in 1657 and the Dutch VOC removed theirs in 1679. In 18th century also, the maritime commerce suffered due to civil unrest in the lower part of Myanmar and wars with Siam. The major port cities which flourished from the 14th to 16th century were:

Mon port city of Pegu flourished throughout the 15th century while the interior was in chaos. In the 15th century, the busiest shipyards were in the Mon (Pegu) and Martaban. Mon traders often sold both ships and cargoes in Malacca after a trading voyage from their home land.²⁸ In 1539, the Myanmar dynasty seized control of the city from the Mons.

The new port of Ye (South of Martaban) opened in 1438, and as a Mon Chronicle put it, the reign of Queen Shinsawpu in Pegu (1453-72) inaugurated a period when merchants from afar arrived in great numbers, unusual wearing apparel became abundant and the people had fine clothes and prospered exceedingly.²⁹

²⁶ _____, **Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 145-1680**. Volume Two Expansion and Crisis. (Yale University, 1993), Page 157.

²⁷ Sunait Chutintaranond, **Cakravartin, the ideology of traditional warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605**. Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University, 1990) Page 165.

²⁸ Anthony Reid, "Economic and Social Change, c 1400-1800", **The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol 1, part 2 From c. 1500 to c. 1800**, (Cambridge University Press 1999), Page 133.

²⁹ Barbara Watson Andaya and Yoneo Ishii, "Religious Developments in Southeast Asia, c.1500-1800", **The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol I, Part II, From c.1500 to c.1800**, (Cambridge University Press, 1992) Page 262.

The shipyard of Martaban supplied many of the big junks to Malacca. Martaban and Nakhon Si Thammarat were ringed with stations for the collection of transit dues on every road and water way.

Mergui and Tenasserim on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula were also renowned for their ship building and fine timber.³⁰

5.8.4 Economic explanations for Myanmar-Siam warfare

The economic explanations for the conflict can be provided by the rivalry over the Tenasserim coast, rival claims over Chiang Mai and the need for manpower in under populated Innwa and Ayutthaya.

Over a long period of time, Myanmar and Siam rivaled each other for the control of the Tenasserim coast. It is evident that since Anawrahta and Kyansittha's time, Myanmar influence reached over the Tenasserim coast. In the 15th century, Ayutthaya kings' interests in maritime trade shifted from Malacca to Tenasserim coast when they lost control of Malacca and other sea-ports in Malaya. Accordingly, Ayutthaya seized control of Tenasserim in 1460 and Tavoy in 1488. The reason for King Tabinshwehti's first invasion to Siam was due to the capture of Tavoy by the Ayutthaya king. After the defeat of 1548 and 1564 wars, King Chakkraphat had to pay Tabinshwehti and Bayintnaung yearly 30 war elephants, 300 ticals for silver, and the custom revenue of Tenasserim.³¹ King Bayintnaung took the possession of Tavoy and Tenasserim in 1569. After the battle of Nong Sarai in 1593, Naresuan sent his army to again take control over Tenasserim. King Alaungpaya reclaimed the overlordship of Tenasserim during his resurrection of the country.

Another area of contention was the control over Chiang Mai. Ayutthaya kings tried many times to conquer Chiang Mai before Bayintnaung's occupation took place. In

³⁰ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the age of Commerce 1450-1680, Volume Two: Expansion and Crisis*, (Yale University, 1998), Page 156.

³¹ Sunait Chutintaranond, *Cakravartin, the ideology of traditional warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605*, Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University, 1990), Page 170.

addition to its militarily strategic location, Chiang Mai was a famous hinterland centre of Commerce. Moreover, Chiang Mai was regarded as Suvannabhumi instead of Thaton region up to the end of Nyaung Yan period. Bayintnaung, in one instance, forbade capture of prisoners of war when Chiang Mai fell into his hands, saying it was the land of Suvannabhumi from where Buddhism first came to Myanmar.³²

The third was simply the much needed manpower, and possibly wealth. As mentioned before, land was abundant but population was small in Southeast Asia. It became a tradition for mainland Southeast Asian kings to carry away the whole population of conquered lands and they are forced to cultivate land and help raise the royal revenue.

5.9 Mahasamata and Pyusawhti Theories

Myanmar and Siamese kings require raising their standing well above the other princes, court ministers, generals, etc. The real threat to the throne will not come from outside forces but from within. These king especially those who had not a drop of royal blood in their veins needed to strengthen the legitimacies for their claims to the throne. The fine examples of these kings are King Bayintnaung and King Alaungpaya. The former was a son of a toddy climber while the latter's father was a headman of Moksobo village. Throughout the history, Myanmar literati sought ways to legitimate the rulership of their kings. It is very interesting to note the various attempts of Myanmar literati in developing the legitimacy of their kings' rulership.

In his Mahayazawindawgyi, U Kala mentions that Pyusawhti, a legendary Pyu king descended from the union of solar god and naga (mythical serpent) princess, who liberated the people of Bagan from the five dangers,^{*} was the primogenitor of Myanmar kings. Myanmar probably borrowed this idea from Nanchao. In constructing Alaungpaya's royal ancestry, this Pyusawhti model of kingship was used. Alaungpaya's

³² U Tet Htoot, "The nature of the Burmese chronicles," *in* **Historians of South East Asia**. ed. by D.G.E. Hall. (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), Page 54.

^{*} About 3rd century AD, Bagan was menaced by five fearsome enemies, a gargantuan bird, a rampaging boar, a ferocious tiger, a mammoth flying squirrel and an untameably prolific gourd plant.

father became Thiri Maha Dharma Yaza, a direct descendant of Pyusawhti. Alaungpaya himself was the forty seventh king in the Pyusawhti line.³³ Later, he was raised to the status of embryo Buddha or bodhisattva.

In 1774, the grantee of Palaik U Hpyaw wrote Nga Singu Min Eigyin in which he introduced the Mahasamata theory. Its appeal was stronger than the localized Pyusawhti myth. This was the first connection between Mahasamata and the Konboun kings.

Shortly after this Eigyin, Rakhine court minister Maha Zaya Theinka compiled various documents and wrote Rakhine Yazawin. In it, he mentions the first migration of Sakyan king Abhiraja into Myanmar. Abhiraja's eldest son, Kan Raja the elder established Rakhine kingdom and the younger son Kan Raja the younger ruled Tagaung. When Kan Raja the younger died, a son of Kan Raja the elder inherited his uncle's throne. Thus, it provides for a clearer line connecting both Rakhine and Myanmar kings to Mahasamata.

The two Myanmar chronicles called "Mani Yadana Pon (1781)" by an obscure monk Shin Sanda Linkka and the "New Bagan Yazawin (1785)" by an anonymous writer connects the lineage of Tagaung kings with the Sakyan kings. The former mentions the Abhiraja's migration to Myanmar but the latter omits it and reveals the second migration of Dhajaraja. Some historians argued that Myanmar literati borrowed the idea of these migrations from Rakhine chronicles.

We have not found these migrations of Sakyan kings in other chronicles. There is no mention of them in old chronicles like Yazawin Kyaw, Zatadawpon Yazawin and other texts such as old Bagan chronicle and Taguang chronicle. Twinthin Taik Wun Maha Sithu did not insert these connections both in his Yazawin Thit and Alaungpaya Ayedawbon but he mentions only Pyusawhti. Thus, Myanmar kings' genealogy has two main fountain heads: Mahasamata and Pyusawhti. All these efforts to connect Mahasamata and Pyusawhti with Myanmar kings can be viewed as the attempts to raise the status of kings over others by Myanmar literati.

³³ Than Tun, "Historiography of Burma", *Shiroku*, (November, 1976) Page 4.

The description of these two migrations of Sakyan kings to Myanmar can be found in the Glass Palace Chronicle, which was officially written during the reign of King Bagyidaw. The compilers simply put both Mahasamata and Pyusawhti in their chronicle.

Though a few western scholars allege that all these myths were rearranged and combined by the chroniclers, it can otherwise be seen as the attempts of Myanmar literati to write the pre-Bagan history which was mostly conjectural to be more comprehensible while constructing the legitimacy of their kings' rulership.

5.10 Concept of Cakravartin (king of kings)

There are many books written on these subjects. In his book *On Both Sides of Tenasserim Range*, Sunait Chutintaranond explained vividly about the connection between these concepts and Myanmar-Siam war activities. My concern is not to elaborate them in every detail but to provide a general idea of what they are all about.

The idea of a universal monarch emerged in the old texts of many different religious sects. It was redefined in the work of Kautilya's "Arthashastra" in the Maurya period in ancient India. However, this concept is said to have fully developed under the influence of Buddhist thought and ideology.³⁴

Cakra means "a wheel or circle, then a disk and a discus (especially that of Vishnu), and vartin implies one who turns. Therefore, the literal meaning of Cakravartin is "wheel turner or wheel turning king".³⁵

With the power of Cakra, Cakravartin who possesses great merit and seven jewels³⁶ ruled four great continents through dharma. This Cakra transported him from

³⁴ Sunait Chutintaranond, **Cakravartin: The Ideology of Traditional Warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605**, Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University, 1990) Pages 85-95.

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ "the wheel treasure, the gem treasure, the queen treasure, the elephant treasure, the horse treasure, the general treasure and the rich man treasure", Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond, **Cakravartin: The Ideology of Traditional Warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605**, Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University, 1990), Page 119.

one continent to another. In Myanmar, they are known as Sekyawade min whereas Charkrapat was the Siamese rendering of Cakravartin.

Buddhist community later connected Buddhahood with a Cakravartin king. Thus, there is a notion that the Buddha could either be a cakravartin or a world renouncer. Like Cakravartin, the Buddha possesses thirty-two bodily marks. Therefore, the court astrologers can easily predict at his birth that only two destinies await him. Similarly, Buddha merits and receives same funerary rites performed for a Cakravartin; a funeral mound or stupa is raised over their ashes.³⁷

According to Abhidhammakosa of Vasubandhu cited by John S. Strong, there are four possible types of cakravartin: (1) the golden-wheeled cakravartin (Suvarna-cakravartin) who rules all four continents of the world; (2) the silver-wheeled cakravartin (Rupya-cakravartin) who rules three continents; (3) the copper-wheeled cakravartin (Tamra-cakravartin) whose sovereignty extends to two continents; and (4) iron-wheeled cakravartin (Ayas-cakravartin) who rules only Jumbudipa island.³⁸

Cakravartin can be of two kinds. The one who uses method of non-violence i.e. Dharma and the other who resorts to violent means. In Ceylon chronicle "Dipavamsa" of 4th or 5th century AD, King Asoka was depicted as an iron-wheeled cakravartin or balacakravartin (armed cakravartin) whose territories extended from Himalaya mountain ranges to the ocean. After witnessing the horrors of war, Asoka renounced wars of aggression and sought only the moral conquest of the world. This idealistic concept was later used by ambitious rulers as a pretext of war.

In the 6th century chronicle "Mahavamsa", King Duttagamani of Ceylon was portrayed as a violent cakravartin who successfully repelled the invasion of a Tamil king in the 2nd century BC. Myanmar and Siamese kings emulated the model of these kings

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ John S. Strong, **The Legend of King Asoka: A Study and Translation of the Asokawadana** (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), Page 61.

through various literary works of Ceylon. One interesting instance is the elephant ridden duel between King Duttagamani of Ceylon and the Tamil king from South India. King Duttagamani reasoned for this dual fight to protect his land and the law of dharma. This tradition had been influenced and passed down to Southeast Asian kings especially Myanmar and Siam.

According to Myakan stone inscription, king Kyansittha was depicted as a balacakravartin. Since Tabinshwehti established a custom to invade Siam, successive Myanmar kings, who took seriously their cakravartin pretensions, were required to reconquer the Siamese kingdom.

According to Father Sangermano, the ambition of King Bodawpaya was to invest the chief city of the Siamese, then to turn his arms against the Emperor of China, and to make him his tributary; thence he would bend his course towards the west, possess himself of the British colonies, attack the Great Mogul in his empire, and finally make himself undisputed master of the whole of the southern island, Zabudiba (Jambudipa).³⁹ Likewise, there were many instances of Siamese kings who were influenced by the vision of the world ruler.

Though these kings used violent methods in subjugating their subjects, they justified their actions by the assertion that they protect the country and defend the religion. They assumed themselves as devastators of the enemies of Buddhism. In time of peace, they acted as fair and just kings who showered mercy on their subjects and ruled according to the law of the land. In Myanmar, they took the title of Mintayagyi (a righteous monarch) and Siamese kings did the same.

In the Southeast Asian context, the political domain or circle of kings of these cakravartin is called Mandala (sphere of influence). The concept of mandala is referred to in various ancient sources. These include the Hindu epics, Mahabharata and the

³⁹ Sangermano, Father, **A Description of the Burmese Empire**, (New York, 1969), Page 62.

Ramayana, the Puranas, the Manusamhita (Code of Manu) and the celebrated Arthashastra by Mauryan Chief Minister Kautilya in the 4th century BC.⁴⁰

The Mandala of Myanmar and Siamese kings was in theory the entire Jumbudipa Island. However, it was impossible to rule by one king the whole Jumbudipa because it covers 10,000 yojana extent (1 yojana is about 9.94 statute miles)⁴¹. Therefore, they had to create their own mandalas.

At first, Myanmar mandala did not reach the eastern flank of the country as King Anawrahta and his grandson king Alaungsithu encroached upon Rakhine, Bengal, Malay peninsula and parts of China. It was king Bayintnaung who established the Myanmar mandala up to Lanna, Lan Xang and Ayutthaya. From then on, successive Myanmar kings had royal duties to subdue all these regions. The Ayutthaya mandala includes Lanna, Lan Xang, Cambodia, Malay peninsular and lower part of Myanmar (Mon kingdom and Tenasserim).

In Mandala system, there was no fixed boundary and bureaucratic apparatus. Moreover, Kings tried not to centralize the administration of these provincial rulers but give them independence in their internal affairs so long as they remained loyal and obligated.⁴² By doing so, they could draw support from their client states in times of war and annual tributes in times of peace. This system was further supported by kinship and marriage ties.

Later, Cakravartin theory was obscured by the Bodisatta concept. In Myanmar, it is evident that the chroniclers from U Kala onwards conceived all their kings as embryos or semi Buddhas. The emergence of western powers put an end to the traditional concept

⁴⁰ For more information, see Dellios, Rosita. "Mandala: from Sacred Origins to Sovereign Affairs in Southeast Asia," in **Traditions of Knowledge in Southeast Asia (Part-I)**. Myanmar Historical Commission, (Yangon, 2004), Page 41.

⁴¹ Taung Goe, **U Pon Nya's chronicle on overcoming the Siamese incursion of 1853**, (Yangon, 1995), Page 22.

⁴² Sunait Chutintaranond, **Cakravartin: The Ideology of Traditional Warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605**, Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University, 1990), Pages 296, 297.

of Cakravartin. Western ideas of fixed boundary and a sense of nationality overwhelmed both Cakravartin and Mandala theories.⁴³

5.11 Battles After 1767

After the wars with China ended in 1770, Hsinpyushin turned his attention to make fresh invasions to Siam. It opened the way to invade the region when the King of Vientiane implored him to help lift the siege of Vientiane by forces of Luang Prabang in 1771. The Myanmar army helped lift the siege of Vientiane but Chiang Mai was taken by King Taksin of Siam one year before Hsinphyushin's planned invasion of 1776.

During the invasion, the Myanmar army under the command of General Maha Thiha Thura, a hero of Myanmar-Chinese wars, stormed Sukothai and Pitsanulok but was unable to advance further. Owing partly to the death of Hsinphyushin and partly because of the shortages of supplies, the armies had to return homeward in the same year.

It is noteworthy that in one occasion, General Maha Thiha Thura met with Chao Phraya Chakri. During the encounter, Myanmar general predicted that Chao Phra Chakri had the bearing of a king and would one day become king.

Though the new king Singu min was less enthusiastic about waging wars with the Siamese, he made one further attempt to retake Chiang Mai which nearly succeeded. Owing to the devastations caused by the frequent invasions, Chiang Mai was so ruined that it was abandoned by the Governor and the people and they settled at Lampang. It remained practically deserted for some twenty years.⁴⁴

Another struggle between the two countries broke out during the reign of King Bodaw. Thinking himself a Cakravartin, he had boundless ambition to conquer all the neighboring countries. His rival at that time in Siam was King Rama I who subsequently moved his capital from Thonburi to Bangkok.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴David K. Wyatt, **Thailand: A Short History**. (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1984), Pages 139-144.

The massive campaign of king Bodaw took place in 1785. He sent his troops in 9 armies via five routes namely Mergui, Tavoy, Chaing Mai, Saiyoke and Rahaeng.⁴⁵ He also led the main army in person but his attempt was all in vain due to lack of logistics in the battlefield. One notable incident was that when southern column of King Bodaw invaded Phuket to encircle Bangkok, Lady Chan, wife of the Governor of Maung Thalang and her sister successfully saved their city from the Myanmar attack in 1785.⁴⁶ Another campaign taking only one route took place in 1786 with the defeat of Myanmar armies.

To retake Chiang Mai, king Bodaw staged two fairly large scale offensives- one in 1787 and the other in 1797, but both failed. The governor of Chiang Mai returned to Chiang Mai from Lampang in 1796. In 1803, the Siamese ravaged as far as Keng Hung and carried away the population to Chiang Mai. In 1809-11, King Bodaw launched another four campaigns but they were all futile. It can be seen that Chiang Mai, Keng Tung, Phuket, Mergui and Tavoy were the main areas of contention between the two countries.

His wars with Siam still went on up to the King Rama II's second reign. But during this time, it affected only the Malay Peninsula. In 1810, the Myanmar armies captured the island of Phuket and besieged Chumphon but they were later expelled by the Siamese armies.⁴⁷ At this stage, king Bodaw shifted his concentration upon gaining control over Manipur, Assam*, Jaintia and Cachar.

On the death of King Bodaw, his grandson King Bagyidaw was enthroned. This king, before the 1st Anglo-Burmese war, sent an embassy to Emperor Minh Mang of Vietnam to attack Bangkok from two directions. The mission was unproductive.

⁴⁵ Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond, "History of Siamese Burmese Relations", **On Both side of the Tenasserim range**, (Chulalongkorn University, 1995), Page 50.

⁴⁶ Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond, **Cakravartin: The Ideology of Traditional Warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605**, Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University, 1990), Page 48.

⁴⁷ David K. Wyatt, **Thailand: A Short History**. (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1984), Pages 166-180.

* Assam was founded by Tai speaking Ahom dynasty.

At King Rama III's ascension in 1824, the British hoped that Siam would join them in the war with Myanmar, but the king remained aloof, conscious of a clash of interest with the British in Malaya.⁴⁸ This is because the king was alarmed by the rumors that the British were preparing a great expedition to besiege Kedah, a Siamese vassal state in Malaya, after which they would proceed to attack Siam. However, when the Treaty of Yandabo was signed, Siam was mentioned in the treaty as a party to it.⁴⁹ The British first thought to cede Tenasserim to Siam in order to please the Siamese king, but they later dropped the subject and not even introduce it to the negotiations.⁵⁰

From the reign of King Bagyidaw onwards, the successive Myanmar kings, being occupied with the menace from the British at their back door, could not lead any expeditions to invade Siam. Only the Siamese underwent minor aggressions. In 1850, Rama III sent his troops to intervene in a civil war in the northern Lu state of Chaing Hung. It happened in the reign of Bagan min (1846-1852).

By 1852, the new ruler of Chiang Hung had sent tribute to Bangkok requesting protection against Myanmar, which exercised suzerainty over that region through Keng Tung.⁵¹ Accordingly, in 1852-53 and again in 1854, King Mongkut (Rama IV) sent expeditions against Keng Tung, led both times by his younger brother Prince Wongsathirat. The prince's army mainly consists of levies of troops from Lan Na. Neither expedition succeeded in taking Keng Tung. These are the wars written by U Pon Nya.

Dr. Sunait rightly pointed out that, a detailed study on other significant wars after 1767 should be done and comparisons between evidences belonging to both sides should

⁴⁸ David K. Wyatt, **Thailand: A Short History**. (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1984), Pages 166-180.

⁴⁹ U San Nyein, "Research on Myanmar-Thai Historical Relations", *Comparative Studies on Literature and History of Thailand and Myanmar*, (Yangon, 1997)Page 86.

⁵⁰ David K. Wyatt, **Thailand: A Short History**. (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1984), Page 166-180.

⁵¹ Ibid

be made. Then, the whole picture can be visualized and the evidence be differentiated between them.⁵²

5.12 Conclusion

The Mawgun represent Burmese history from the point of view of Innwa. Written at the moment of glory, Letwe Nawrahta finished its work in 1767. It had become a source for later chroniclers to refer to it. There are some discrepancies between Mawgun and Thai chronicles but they reconcile with each other in most of the events.

During the siege of Ayutthaya, Myanmar strategy was to prevent provisions and arms from entering the city. Having suffered a succession of defeat, Siamese fought the fight of "sitting down". Though Myanmar won many battles, there seemed no prospect of being successful in gaining the city. As the king's order was to take the city as quickly as possible, Myanmar generals had to win the war with all due speed.

Myanmar attacks on Siam served one constructive purpose; they aroused the Thai pride. Soon after the fall of Ayutthaya, their power grew rapidly and extended their control over Lanna, Lan Xang and Cambodia. Another bright side of the war was the captivity of Thai artists and artisans which contributed to the development of Myanmar cultural heritage. The conquest of Ayutthaya resulted in the dawning of Myanmar drama. Siamese plays including Ramayana were translated, improved and acted out by Myanmar artisans. It was so popular that a new Ministry was formed to keep track of the whole new development.⁵³ Yodayar songs had been Myanmarized and the puppet show, inspired by Siam, became celebrated. Cuisine also paved its way into the Myanmar diet.

Since the founding of the Bagan period, the concept of Cakravatin was widely held by Myanmar kings. It became prominent during Bayintnaung's reign as he was labeled as the conqueror of the ten directions. Taking King Bodaw as an example, we can see that his aim was to conquer all neighboring countries thus becoming Cakravartin of

⁵² Sunait Chutintaranond and Than Tun, **On Both Sides of the Tenasserim Range: History of Siamese Burmese Relations**. (Chulalongkorn University Phyathai, Bangkok 10330, Thailand 1995), Page 49.

⁵³ Thant Myint U, **The Making of Modern Burma**, (Cambridge University Press, 2005), Pages 92-93.

the Jumbudipa Island. Regarding Mandala of Myanmar and Siamese kings, Myanmar kings' mandala or sphere of influence include Chiang Mai and Ayutthaya but Siamese kings' mandala excludes Myanmar territories.

It is also interesting to note that the new thinking of Myanmar court in King Bodawpaya's reign was brought forth by the western campaigns; to restore Buddhism in India, a homeland of Lord Buddha.

Myanmar had traditionally been associated with the Ponna community who were adept at Hindu beliefs and court rituals. Ponna means Purohit in Myanmar, instructor to the king (according to the books of Veda⁵⁴). It is a Myanmar corruption of Sanskrit word for pundit.⁵⁵ In King Bodaw's reign, many Ponnas from Rakhine, Assam and Benares arrived in the court of Innwa. In Myanmar court, the Sanga is essential but so are the Ponnas too. He even appointed a Ponna Tharthana baing (primate).⁵⁶ He sent fact finding missions to India to obtain many works of Sanskrit both religious and secular. These contacts increased the influence of Ponna already existed in the capital. All these developments might lead to the new and bold idea of invading India.

King Bodawpaya stopped invading Siam partially due to the failure of many campaigns and partly to this grand scheme which would give the king a chance to gain the greatest merit. Having confidence in Myanmar military power, the possibilities to conquer India was excited by the court of Innwa. In 1813, a royal order announced that India was to be invaded, Benares occupied by the king in person, and Buddhism re-established in its place of birth.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Veda is myanmarized as Bei-din, refers almost exclusively to astrology.

⁵⁵ Thant Myint U, *The Making of Modern Burma*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005), Page 96-98.

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Ibid



5.1 Routes taken by Myanmar Army in 1767

5.2 Imaginary Map of Myanmar Forts



Myanmar forts around Ayutthaya

A1. Naymyo Thiha Pati

A2. Maha Nawrahta

A3. Satu Gamani

B. Shwe Taung Sithu

C. Ponya Kyaw Htin

D. Chaung U Bo

E. Kyaw Gaung Kyaw Thu

F. Giri Naya

G. Tuyin Yama Kyaw

H. Tuyin Yan Kyaw

I. Thiri Thara Kyawswa

J. Thiri Yaza Thingyan

K. Shwe Taung Kyaw Swa

L. Taza Bala Kyaw

M. Thidi Kyaw Thu

N. Mingyi Zayathu

O. Nanda Udain Kyaw Htin

P. Bala Nanda Kyaw Htin

Q. Letwe Kyaw Swa

R. Yan Ngu Thiri Kyaw Htin

S. Nandamaik Sithu

Shwe Taung Letwei Nawratha

U. Letyar Bala

V. Thiri Yanamaik Kyaw Htin

W. Thidi Kyaw Htin

X. Thiha Dhammarat

Y. Bala Pyan Chi

Z. Three newly built towns

Chapter VI

Conclusion

Myanmar and Thailand have existed through history. Both countries share a long border of over 1300 miles. They are among the five countries which practice Theravada Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia regions namely Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Laos and Cambodia. Not only this, Myanmar cultures are quite similar to those of Thailand to such an extent that sometimes it is hard to differentiate between the two.

However, it is natural that there have been some problems and discontents between them as the two countries shares a long border. To make matter worse, fierce rivalry between the two countries broke out for more than four Centuries which in the end led to the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767.

It is no wonder that the sentiments and mind-sets of Thai people are against Myanmar as a consequences of this war. Myanmar has been portrayed as a traditional foe of Thailand by the Thai royalist and nationalist leaders in the early part of the 20th century. Mainly because of that, there is bad blood between the two nations.

Myanmar and Thailand fought many wars before the final destruction of Ayutthaya but the impact of the war of 1767 was most devastating and far reaching. It was a black mark in the histories of the two countries which resulted in bringing about lasting suspicions and distrusts between Myanmar and Thailand. To put it bluntly, we still suffer the after-effects and consequences of this war until today.

In the Thais' perception, Myanmar was at first portrayed as destroyers of Ayutthaya and Buddhism. During the nation building period in the face of the menace of European colonialists in South East Asia in the reign of Rama V, Myanmar was portrayed as the traditional foe of the Thai nation.¹ Furthermore, General Phibun's propagandist Luang Wichitwathakan portrayed Myanmar as an enemy of the Thai nation

¹ Dr. Sunait, **On both sides of the Tenasserim range**, Thailand: Chulalongkorn University, 1995), Page19.

in his works on history and theatrical scripts. This has been reinforced through school textbooks, literature and movies which stressed patriotism.

On the other hand, Myanmar people did not bear animosity against Thai people in the first place. However, frequent mistreatments by Thai people during interaction in the course of time sowed the seed of hatred among Myanmar people towards the Thais.²

One encouraging sign is the new approach held by famous Thai historians of the twenty first century. Among those outstanding scholars are Sunait Chutinthanond, Kusuma Raksamani, Aronrut Wichienkeo, Withaya Sucharithanarugse, Chalongsorntravanich, and Charnvit Karetsiri.

In analyzing the book *Our wars with the Burmese* by Prince Damrong, Sunait Chutinthanond rightly pointed out that "There is no mistaking the fact that Thai Rop Phama is one of the most influential historical works, responsible for popularizing the image of the Burmese as an enemy of the Thai nation."³

Nusara Thaitawat made a remark in an article entitled "The Shadow of an Enemy" appeared in the Bangkok Post in December 2000 that "In films, literature, and media, Burma is Thailand's arch enemy, but there may be little truth to the popular perception."⁴

Those feelings and sentiments are deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of the people. It became a thorn in the side of Myanmar-Thai relations. However, we should deal with this thorn before it pricks us. Failure to do so could have die consequences. In doing so, anti Myanmar or anti Thailand feelings should not be rekindled in the name of nationalism. We must accept that there were merely old rivalries between the neighbors

² Vorapun Srivoranart, "Burmese ties: More the enemy within than the enemy without", Page 75.

³ Prince Damrang Rajanubhab, **The Chronicle Of Our Wars With The Burmese; Hostilities between Siamese and Burmese when Ayutthaya was the capital of Siam.** (White Lotus Co.Ltd. 2001), Page 162.

⁴ Dr. Sunait Chutinthanond and Kanokphan U-sha, **From Fact to Fiction: History of Thai-Myanmar Relations in Cultural Context**, Sunait (ed), (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, April 2001), Pages 55-56.

in which kings fought against kings which has nothing to do with the peoples of both countries.

As stated before, Myanmar literature emerged since time immemorial. With the changing of times, many genres of Myanmar literature such as Eigyin, Igin, Yadu, etc, were grown up and fully developed. Many of them reflect the prevailing situations of the particular times in history. It is noteworthy that in the course of time, some genres have become obscured but Mawgun has achieved some sort of permanence over the last one thousand years or so. Posterity can benefit from studying these genres of Myanmar literature for the historical purposes.

Letwe Nawrahta's Yodayar Naing Mawgun is different from other Mawguns. It gives more emphasis on the clear and straightforward style of writing than high sounding and flowery written style. Needless to say, recording events in poem is far more difficult than in prose. Though written in poetic form, each episode of the Mawgun was composed vividly and in a most comprehensive way.

Letwe Nawrahta achieved high marks in discharging of his duties under six successive kings during those turbulent times in history. He received many titles under these kings and was given the highest title of Mingyi Maha Thiha Thura during the reign of King Bodawpaya.

Previously, Letwe Nawrahta's works were known only to a few scholars. This is because his work had been overshadowed and mixed up with that of another contemporary minister writer Letwe Thondra (1727-1799). They were about the same age, came from the same region and served under the same kings, rising to high positions of ministerial rank under the early kings of Konbaung Dynasty.⁵ Thanks to the efforts of our historians and archeologists and the inscriptions at Tilawka pagoda donated by Letwe Nawrahta in Monywe, we solved the problems distinguishing the life and work of Letwe Nawrahta from that of Letwe Thondra. However, many of his works are still missing and until recently, Yodayar Naing Mawgun was one of them.

⁵ To see more about it, U Thaw Kaung ,**Aspects of Myanmar History and Culture**

We have found that the content of the Mawgun is more or less similar to Konbounset Yazawindawgyi written by U Maung Maung Tin during the early British colonial period. It seems that the chroniclers of Hman nan Yazawindawgyi, Second Maha Yazawindawgyi and Konbounset Maha Yazawindawgyi made many references to Letwe Nawrahta's Mawgun and they later added to their chronicles more detailed accounts of the war.

If we look at some discrepancies between the Mawgun and the Konbounset Yazawindawgyi, Letwe Nawrahta mentions in the preamble that the unstable situation in Chiang Mai supported to ensure what Alaungpaya, before his death, enjoined his sons to spark an invasion to Ayutthaya. We could not find it anywhere in the Myanmar and Thai chronicles including Konbounset Maha Yazawindawgyi.

According to the Mawgun, Dawei column was sent to invest Ayutthaya via Tavoy because it stopped paying tribute to Hsinphyushin. Konbounset mentions that in sending troops to Tavoy to attack Ayutthaya, the king said that Ayutthaya with its palace of gold had never been badly defeated before. It is unlikely that Zimmme column alone could achieve the royal aim to overcome the Siamese capital. Only if the strength of Hanthawaddy, Martaban, Mergui and Tavoy could be utilized, will the Ayedaw (struggle) be successful.⁶

Another interesting event mentioned in the Mawgun was that the Siamese used only ropes for entering and exiting of the city as they relaxed no efforts in their defence. Konbounset Maha Yazawindawgyi omits it and the last part of the Mawgun from stanza 36 to 46 which mentions the names of the rank and file from king Bayintnaung and Hsinphyushin's armies.

Among the historical writings of Myanmar, Yazawin, Mawgun and Eigyin comprise the bulk of historical facts and figures. According to Hla Pe, Kyauk sa and

⁶ U Maung Maung Tin, **konbaungset Maha Yazawindawgyi** . (Yangon: Yar-pyi Sar-oke Taik, 2004), Page 276.

Yazawin are chronicles in prose and Mawgun and Eigyin are chronicles in verse.⁷ Owing to their nature and the circumstances under which they had to be composed, there are many panegyric writings in these documents. We can say that one of the flaws in Myanmar literature is none other than panegyric writing. The more panegyric writing is contained, the less historical value or facts will be in it. But if we look at it from a different angle, some of them are useful for historical purpose because they are eulogies of kings in praise of royal cities, palaces, regalia, etc.

One important factor in the study of historiography is its reliability. In Letwe Nawrahta's Yodayar Naing Mawgun, there is no evidence to prove that the author was an eyewitness to this war of 1767. Thus, the Mawgun is not an account of a single observer. However, as his account is a distillation of interviews with several rank and files from the armies who participated in the war, it may enhance the balance and dependability of the Mawgun.

Moreover, his knowledge on king's behavior and attitude, inner working of the court, military campaigns, ceremonial and religious affairs would surely contribute to the writing of the Mawgun.

With regard to the reliability of the chronicles, it is a common practice that Myanmar and Thai chronicles like other Southeast Asia chronicles were written or amended with bias and distortions under the influences of kings and the prevailing situation at that time. I would like to cite two examples from the history of Myanmar.

The first example concerns the reliability of U Kala's Yazawin. Some western scholars thought that his chronicle was a fairy tale published in a book form. Victor Lieberman, after checking U Kala's chronicle with the reports of two Jesuits priest at that time, concluded that besides the part of pre Bagan period, U Kala's chronicle is a reliable source supported by textual and archeological evidences. One of the important reasons

⁷ U Hla Pe, **Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life and Buddhism**, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Heng Mui Keng Terrace, Pasir Panjang, Singapore 0511, © (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), Page 37.

for this is U Kala's private and unofficial character. Because of his wealth, he was able to devote himself to a scholar's life. His writings were free from the excessive moralizing of the monks and the subservient tone of the ministers⁸.

The second example is that though King Bagyidaw ruled the country up to 1837, the writing of Hmanan Yazawindawgyi ends in 1821. The reason is that the first Anglo-Burmese war broke out in 1824 and ended with the defeat of Myanmar armies. The inclusion of this episode would have been embarrassing to the king so that the compilers may have felt that 1821 was a convenient place to stop the chronicle.⁹

I would like to add another interesting event that commenced after the 1st Anglo-Burmese war in 1826. When the war was over, the British envoy John Crawfurd (1763-1868) came to the capital to observe whether a permanent British resident should reside in Innwa. In his record, he mentioned that;

"This the Court Historiographer had recorded in the National Chronicle his account of the war with the English The strangers had spent vast sums of money in their enterprise; and by the time they reached Yandabo, their resources were exhausted and they were in great distress. They petitioned the king, who, in his clemency and generosity sent them vast sums of money to pay their expenses back, and ordered them out of the country."

The existence of such a historiographer or palace record became a bone of contention between Myanmar historians. Dr. Htin Aung, U Tet Htoot and British resident Henry Burney rejected Crawfurd's proposition but Dr. Hla Pe consented to agree with it.

Likewise, according to Victor Lieberman, the Pali Jinakalamali chronicle written in Chiang Mai in 1516, and the Luang Prasert version of the Ayutthaya chronicles written during Narai's reign (1656-88), boast a high degree of demonstrated chronological and

⁸ U Tin Ohn, "Modern Historical Writing in Burmese", 1724-1942, in **Historians of South East Asia**, D.G.E. Hall(ed) (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), Page 85.

⁹ U Hla Pe, **Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life and Buddhism**, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, heng Mui Keng Terrace, Pasir Panjang, Singapore 0511, © (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), Page 58.

narrative accuracy. However, the Luang Prasert chronicle was composed by a court astrologer with access to official records, possibly to answer foreigners' questions about Siamese history and the author of the Jinakalamali was a monastic exponent of a scholarly, textually-oriented school of Buddhism for whom contemporary political affairs were peripheral to his concern for universal Buddhist history.¹⁰

Yodayar Naing Mawgun is Letwe Nawrahta's masterpiece of simplicity as well as a work of high literary merit in the history of Myanmar literature. It is unique in terms of historically and literally.

From the historical point of view, it was written like a treatise on history. One significance of the Mawgun is the author's mentioning of the names of the places such nine htars region and fifty seven districts of Chiang Mai and the date of the conquest. Apart from the detailed episodes of the war, he duly recorded the ranks and files of the Myanmar armies to put their place in history. It clearly shows not only author's attitude towards these events or the peoples but also his mastery of recording events.

From the literary point of view, scholars of Myanmar literature observed that as the author gave more emphasis on the description of the war and the record of the events, his style of writing and use of language is not so splendid as Pon Taung Naing Mawgun by Shin Maha Rata Thara and Assam Naing Mawgun by second Nawaday. However, they conclude that the author's power of description is immense.

In conclusion, this thesis is unique in a sense that Mawgun, one of the Myanmar literary forms, has been used for the first time in the area of Thai Studies. Since this Mawgun provides integrated knowledge for understanding the shared history of Siam and Myanmar in the context of eighteenth century relations, it would be beneficial to the peoples of both countries.

¹⁰ Victor Liberman, **How Reliable is U Kala's Burmese Chronicle?**, (Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, September, 1986), Page 255.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This thesis mainly concerns the war of 1767 between Myanmar and Siam in the 18th century described in the Mawgun written by Letwe Nawrahta. However, in order to round off the study of the influence of this war on people to people relations in the latter centuries, further analysis on Myanmar-Thai relation is recommended.

As the Mawgun reflects the shared history of Myanmar and Thailand, a closer examination is needed of Myanmar and Thai literature which contained related histories and the influence of them on the people of both countries. In this regard, comparative studies of Myanmar-Thai relations should be pursued.

Though there are numerous works on Myanmar-Thai relations from King Tabinshwehti's time to the 2nd fall of Ayutthaya, relations concerning both pre Tabinshwehti reign and post Ayutthaya period have received relatively little attention from scholars. Further research is recommended to give intensive study on these two periods.

Finally, owing to the constraints of time and space, the author of this thesis has not been able to elaborate more about Myanmar and Thai Literature. As certain literature reflects the prevailing political, economic and social situation in a particular period in history, it is recommended to explore these areas to be more efficient in dealing with the histories of both countries and the relations between the two countries.

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APPENDICES

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Appendix A

Buddhist cosmology

Buddhist cosmology first originated in India and later expanded its perimeter to Ceylon, Myanmar, Siam, and others. Buddhist cosmology begins with the Buddha's enlightenment itself. In the long night of attaining Buddha hood, Buddha acquired "divine eyes" enabling to see the conditions and activities of all beings caught up in the cosmic cycle during the 2nd watch of the night. (On the 1st watch of the night, he remembered all his past existence and on the 3rd, he found the Dharma. Buddhology (Jatakas and Mahavimsa) came out from the event of his remembrance of all past existence and Abhidharma or higher Dharma from his finding the truth.)

As the traditions expand, these cosmic realms of heaven and hell were integrated into other realms such as realms of men, realms of asura, etc.. It can be seen in the 1st century Pali canon.¹ The concept of the three worlds was also formulated in canonical literature and the early commentaries.

In addition, the ancient Indian cosmography was accepted by Theravada community with minor adoptions which had Mount Meru as its central axis. Similarly, they acknowledged one important Indian cosmogonic mythology; the process of devolution which brings the universe into being at the each cosmic cycle. This also includes the accounts of the beginnings of human society and the crucial institution of kingship.²

In the Myanmar traditional Buddhist cosmology, there are innumerable kalpas or world in the universe. Among them, only some of which are blessed with the appearance of Buddhas. Five Buddhas may appear in some worlds while none may appear at all in others.

¹ Three Worlds according to King Ruang, *A Thai Buddhist Cosmology*. Frank E. Reynolds and Mani B. Reynolds, Translators' Introduction, p 16

² Three Worlds according to King Ruang, *A Thai Buddhist Cosmology*. Frank E. Reynolds and Mani B. Reynolds, Translators' Introduction, p 17

Such worlds lacking Buddha are known as zero worlds. Those where five Buddhas arise are called “Badda” worlds (Kalpas) and our world is one of them. It is believed that as many as twenty eight Buddhas have appeared so far. Besides, the world is being constantly destroyed and reproduced. Of sixty-four worlds, fifty-six are destroyed by fire, seven by water, and one by wind.

There are 31 planes of existence in Buddhist cosmology, namely 4 seats of Arupa bhumi (the incorporeal), 16 seats of Rupa bhumi (the corporeal plane) and the 11 realms of Kama bhumi (the sensuous plane).

The centre of the universe is the Mount Meru, the highest peak of the entire world. On top of it, the Vejjayanta celestial mansion of Saka (Lord Indra in Hinduism) exists. Hindu lord Indra was absorbed into Burmese Buddhist belief as Lord Thagya, who headed the pantheon of Nats. High above the Mount Meru, there are six levels of paradise called Tavatimsa. In the middle of the mountain, there exist Catummaharajika, the abode of four guardian spirits of the world. Saka rules both Tavatimsa and Catummaharajika.

Rising vertically above Tavatimsa, Bhramas dwell in the sixteen seats of Rupa, the corporeal plane. These Brahmas exist in a physical state detached from the desires of man. The Brahmas are asexual and strive to a higher plane through increasingly advanced forms of meditation. It is the plane of eternal peace and happiness, ruled by Suyama.

Above them, there are four seats of Arupa, the incorporeal plane. Nothing in physical form exists in the Arupa Bhumi. Beings (souls) exist in a sublime state of detachment from both status and form. It was ruled by Maha Bhrama.

Beyond Arupa, is Nivarna, the supreme state of perfection to which all Buddhists aspire to attain. Gautama Buddha is an example of an achiever, the one who has reached the state of perfection.

Surrounding Mount Meru are the seven ranges of the mountains, with seven seas interposed. In the sea round about Mount Meru, are the four great islands – Uttarakuru to the north, Pabbaindeha to the east, Aperagomana to the west, and Jambudipa to the south.

Each of the great islands has five hundred smaller ones round about it. Each island is named from the great tree which grows upon it and forms the sacred insignia of the island. Thus, the Southern Island where we live in is named from the Jambu tree, the great Eugenia. (It is the realm of human beings.)

Underneath the earth, in the deepest recesses of the Southern Island, the eight great Hells exist. These hells as traditionally recognized are as follows; Sanjiva Niraya (hells), Kalasutta Niraya, Sanghata Niraya, Roruva Niraya, Maha Roruva Niraya, Tapana Niraya, Patapana Niraya and Avici Niraya.

Lawkantarika niraya is said to be a purgatory located in the intervening space between three adjacent cosmic systems.

Yama is the ruler of the purgatories, but he is also said to be a Vemanika peta raja so that he enjoys the pleasures of the celestial realms at times and at other times oversees the purgatories. However, he is said to be just and when a being dies, that being is brought before Yama to be judged by him whether he should be consigned to hell or sent to the celestial realms.

Other realms are the realms of Animals, of grotesque beings and of Asura. The animals and grotesque beings live in Jumbudipa Island and Asuras at the foot of the Mount Meru. Our present earth, Badda, was peopled in the following way; Certain Bhramas came down on earth. They fell into sin and thence into misery. Owing to the lack of moral ethics, the crime first appeared in the world. Theft was the first crime committed, and as crime increased, people unanimously appoint a man to be a ruler over them. It is said that the first king chosen was an embryo Buddha, a person destined in future ages to be a Buddha.

From Mahasamada, the great first ruler of land and of sea, there were 334,569 sovereigns till the time of the most excellent Buddha Gautama.³ From thence onward,

³ Shway Yoe, *The Burman, His Life and Notions*, the Dominion of Canada by George J. Mclead Limited, Toronto, 1963, Norton Library. p. 446

Myanmar historians and chroniclers carefully records the sequence of the predecessors to the last ruler of the Eastern Land, Thibaw Min.



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Appendix B

Mandalay

“By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin

Eastward to the sea

There’s a Burma girl a – settin,

And I know she thinks o’me

For the wind is in the palm-trees

And the temple-bells they say

Come you back, you British soldier

Come you back to Mandalay

Come you back to Mandalay

Where the old Flotilla lay

Can’t you ‘ear their paddles chunkin’

From Rangoon to Mandalay

On the road to Mandalay

Where the flyin’-fishes play

And the dawn comes up like thunder

Outer China ‘crost the Bay

Rudyard Kipling

British colonial poet Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) wrote the poem “Mandalay” shortly after the annexation of Burma. His poem gave the world its first inkling of the exotic city. His poetic writing on Shwedagon pagoda “Waking, Winking, Wonder” was famous the world over. However, though his imaginative writings about Myanmar

received a generous reception, he had never set foot on Myanmar soil. His poem is on the experience of a British cockney soldier in Myanmar. The line "outer China, 'Croast the Bay' simply indicates the lack of geographical knowledge on the poet's part. To make matters worse, in describing the Myanmar girl, he wrote that she was named Supaya Latt, the identical name of Thibaw's queen. In truth, not even a princess could be named after their chief queen, let alone any court ladies or ordinary girls.

Established in 1857 by King Mindon (the penultimate king of the Konbaung Dynasty), the city has been in existence for 153 years. Though the city was founded in 1857, the actual shift of the royal palace from Amarapura to Mandalay took place in 1861. The construction plan of Mandalay was an imitation of the system of Amarapura. There are four parts dividing the city, namely Ashe-pyin (East part), Anuak-pyin (West part), Taung-pyin (Southern part) and Myauk-pyin (Northern part) with 54 plots. The whole royal city was called 'Lay Kyun Aung Mye, victorious land over the four islands,' and the Royal Palace, 'the Mya Nan San Kyaw, the royal Emerald Palace.'

The reason why King Mindon built a new city soon after Myanmar lost the 2nd Anglo-Burmese war was controversial. It is possible that the city was built in accordance with a prophecy made by the Lord Buddha during his life time. Another reason behind the founding of the new city was most probably the fact that Myanmar kings set great store by the title: "Founder of new capital and builder of new palace." The third was that the new king might not want to reside in the capital of the previous king who lost the battle with the British.

The royal palace was carefully set beyond the cannon shot of enemy warships of those days that might sail or steam up the Aeyarwaddy River. Unfortunately, the palace and the surrounding buildings were destroyed during World War II.

The original name of the city was Yadanabon Naypyidaw (The bejewelled Capital). But the people simply called it Mandalay as it lies near Mandalay Hill and the name has stuck. The name may have derived from the Pali word "mandala" one meaning of which is a broad, flat plain, or the Sanskrit word meaning circle or representation of the Universe!

After the British had conquered Mandalay in 1886, they turned the royal palace of Mandalay into their military headquarters and christened the complex 'Fort Dufferin'. It seemed that the country's great heritage was doomed for extinction in a few years' time. It was Lord Curzon, 2nd Viceroy of India who visited Myanmar and decided to preserve and restore the palaces. This decision was against the opinion held by the high British officials that Myanmar will be led by the preservation of the palace to think that there is a chance that monarchy will one day be restored. I would like to mention the following quotation from his speech;

*"If there be anyone who says to me that there is no duty devolving upon a Christian government to preserve the monuments of a Bagan art or the sanctuaries of an alien faith, I cannot pause to argue with such a man. Art and Beauty, and the reverence, of that is owing to all that has evolved human genius or has inspired human faith, are in dependent of, and in so far as they turn on the sphere of religion, are embraced by the common religion of all mankind. Viewed from this standpoint, the rock temple, of the Brahman stands on precisely the same footing as the Buddhist Vihara and the Mohammedan Masjid as the Christian Cathedral."*¹

Prior to that, the large scale Germans' robbing of antiquity from Bagan happened twice from 1890 to 1899. These situations and the enthusiasm of Lord Curzon induced the British government of Burma to form the Archaeological Survey of Burma (Myanmar) in 1902.²

One thing in favor of Mandalay is its great location: it lies smack in the centre of the country, surrounded by former capitals namely Pinya, Ava, Sagaing and Amarapura. Mandalay is abundant in historical sites and buildings, cultural memorials and Buddhist edifices. The two main magnets are;

¹ Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt, "Lord Curzon and the Mandalay Palace", *Myanmar Historical Research Journal, Number (9)*, Universities Historical Research Centre (June 2002). pp. 101-110

² U Myint Aung, "The Development of Myanmar Archaeology", *Myanmar Historical Research Journal, Number (9)*, Universities Historical Research Centre (June 2002). pp 11-30

Kuthodaw Pagoda. Pagoda modeled on the Shwe Zigon at Nyaung Oo. In the precincts of this pagoda, there are 729 monoliths on which the entire teachings of Buddha can be seen as edited and approved by the fifth Buddhist Synod.

Maha Muni Buddha Image. This pagoda was so named after the holy image, Maha Muni housed therein. Originally, this holy image belongs to Myohaung (an old town of Mrauk Oo in Rakhine State). In 1784, King Bodawpaya received the image brought by the crown prince Thado Minsaw, ruler of Shwedaung to the royal capital of Amarapura.

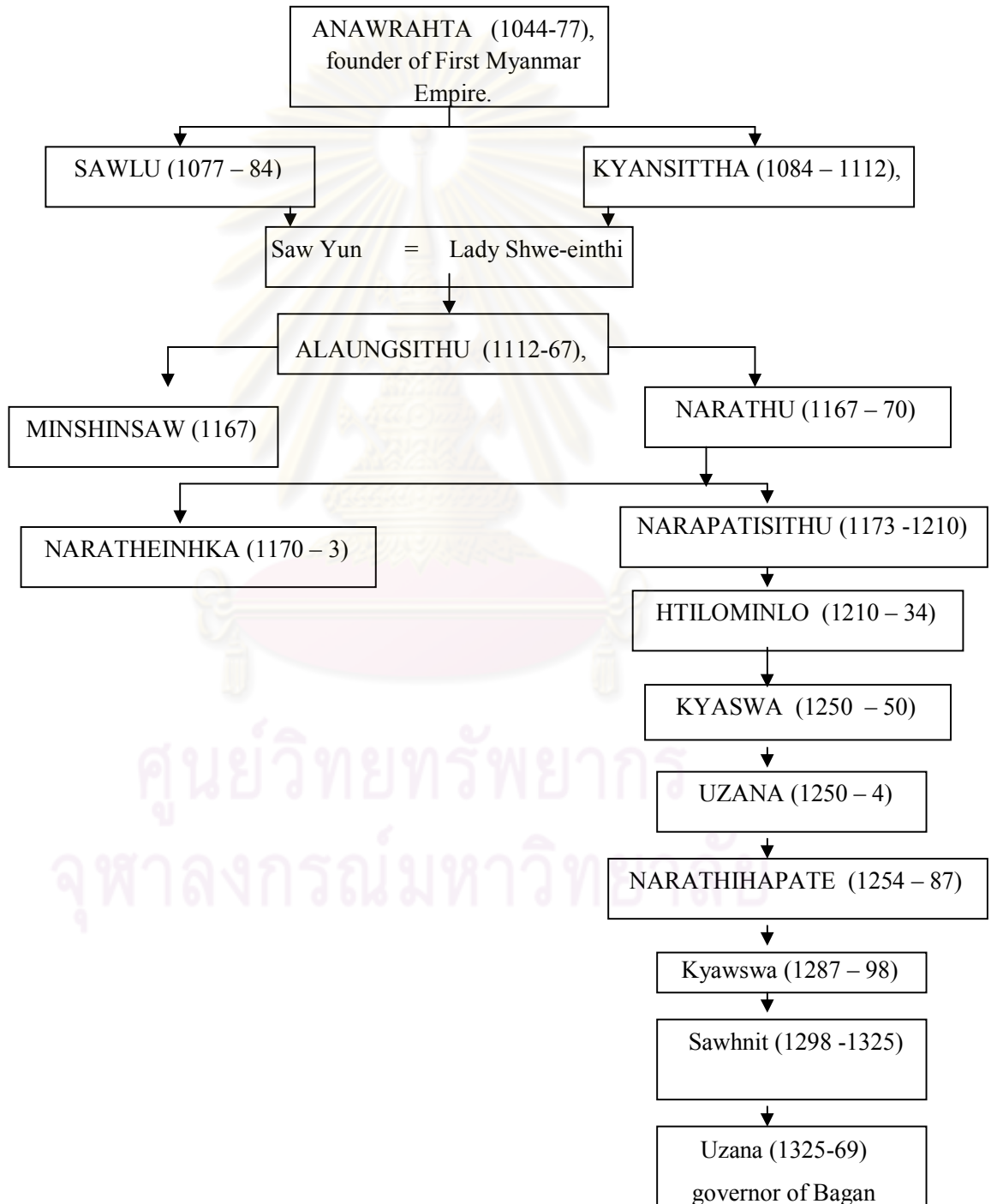


ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

Appendix C

Genealogies

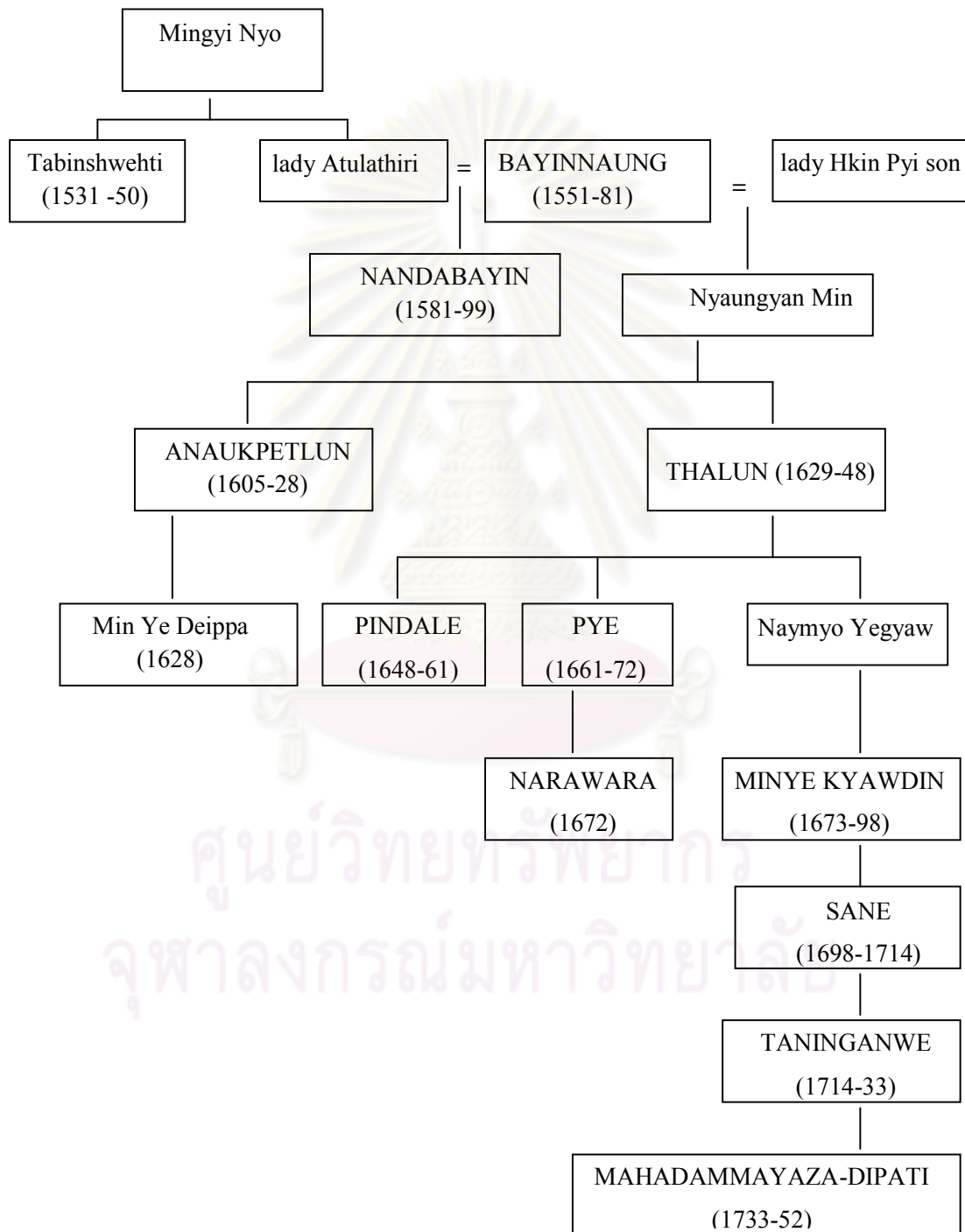
The dynasty of Bagan 1044 -1287



Appendix D

Taungoo Dynasty (1531 -1752)

Capitals – Pegu till 1635 , thereafter Innwa.

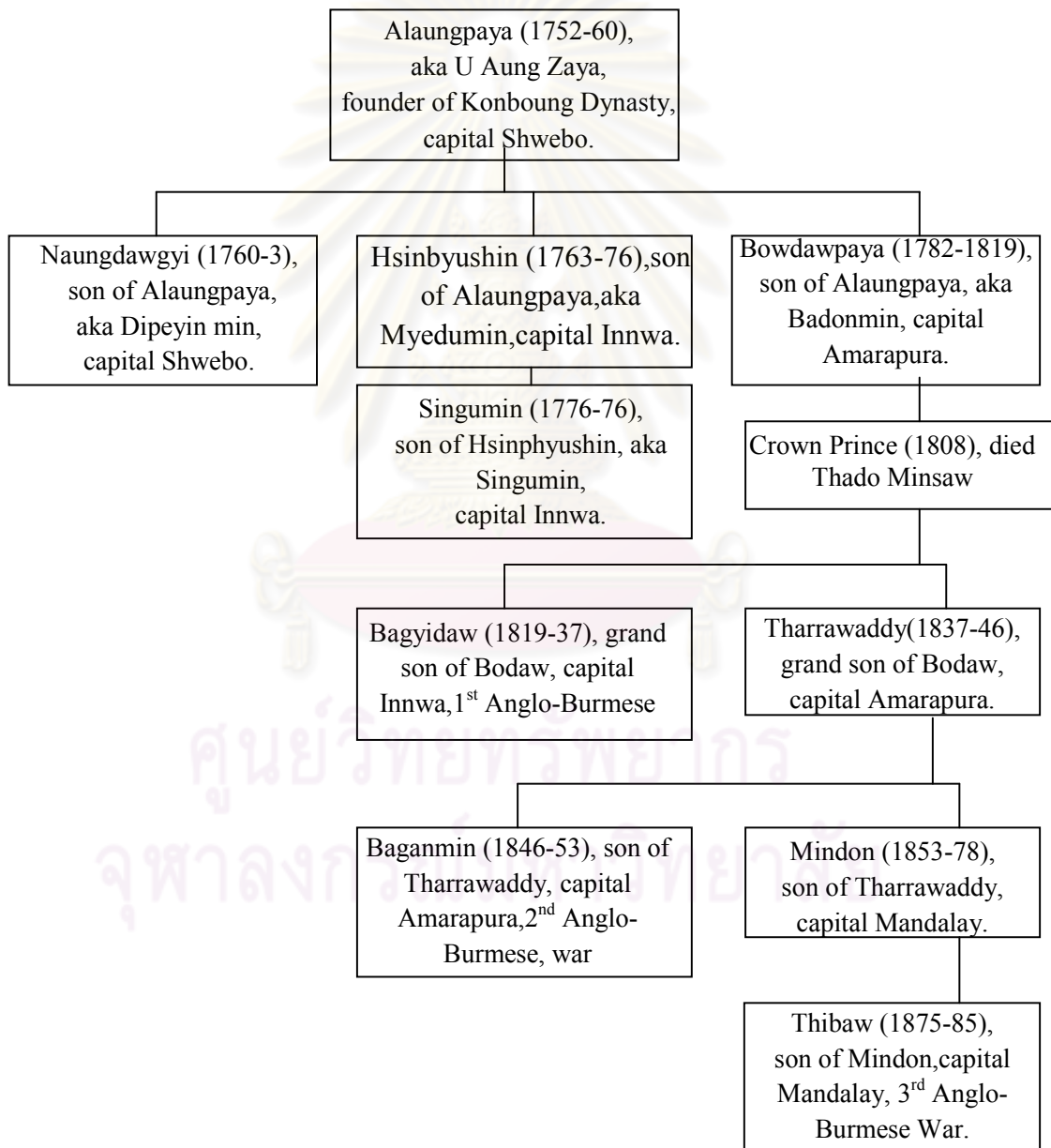


Appendix E

Konboun Dynasty (1752-1885)

Capital 1752-65 Shwebo, 1765-83 and 1823-37 Innwa, 1782-1823 and 1837-57 Amarapura, 1857-85 Mandalay

(Reproduced from G.E.Harvey, History of Burma, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.1967. p 367)



BIOGRAPHY

Soe Thuzar Myint was born in Yangon, Myanmar on the 26th of July, 1977. After Matriculating in 1995, she joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar in 1998. While working in the political department of the Ministry, she earned her BSc degree majoring in Botany from Yangon University in 2002. She received a Diploma in English Proficiency from Southeast Asia Ministers of Educational Organization (SEAMEO) in Yangon in 2004. In 2006, she further obtained a master's degree in Environmental Studies from Yangon University. Under the auspices of TICA, she has been granted a scholarship for a Master degree in Thai Studies for the academic year 2009-2010. She is now a graduate student at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand.



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