

AYEDAWBON TREATISES¹

Soe Thuzar Myint²

บทคัดย่อ

นักวิจัยที่ศึกษาประวัติศาสตร์ประเทศเมียนมาร์พบว่าจดหมายเหตุ “อเย-คอบน” เป็นงานเขียนภาษาพม่าที่ยิ่งใหญ่มาก เป็นงานที่บันทึกเหตุการณ์ทางประวัติศาสตร์ ซึ่งมีนัยสำคัญรองลงมาจากพงศาวดารพม่า คำว่า “อเย-คอบน” ในภาษาพม่ามีความหมายเหมือนกับคำภาษาไทยว่า “จดหมายเหตุ” หรือ “กฎหมายเหตุ” ซึ่งเป็นเอกสารที่เล่าเรื่องหรือรายงานเหตุการณ์ต่างๆ แต่เนื่องด้วยสภาวะแวดล้อมและการต้องใช้เวลามหาศาล จึงไม่มีผู้ใดแปลผลงานที่มีชื่อเสียงนี้เป็นภาษาอังกฤษ มีงานที่เขียนโดยนักวิชาการพม่าเกี่ยวกับจดหมายเหตุอเย-คอบนอยู่บ้าง แต่ผลงานเหล่านั้นไม่ได้เน้นส่วนที่เกี่ยวกับความสัมพันธ์ไทย-เมียนมาร์ ดังนั้นถ้านักวิชาการด้านไทยศึกษาใช้จดหมายเหตุอเย-คอบนก็จะได้รับความเข้าใจอย่างลึกซึ้งและเข้าถึงการตีความใหม่ๆ ตลอดจนแหล่งข้อมูลที่สมบูรณ์มาก

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² (โซ่ ทูซาร์ มินท์) Author of “The Portrayal of Battle of Ayutthaya in Myanmar Literature”, PhD graduate from the Thai Studies Program, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University.

ขึ้นด้วย งานวิจัยนี้ใช้ข้อมูลเอกสาร คือจดหมายเหตุอเย-คอบน 7 ฉบับซึ่งตกทอดมาหลายรุ่นอายุ คนเราพบข้อเท็จจริงทางประวัติศาสตร์ที่มีคุณค่าและไม่เคยมีผู้ใดกล่าวถึงมาก่อนเลยในพงศาวดารสยามและพม่า นอกจากนั้นจดหมายเหตุเหล่านี้ยังกล่าวถึงสงครามสยามกับพม่าอย่างละเอียดลึกซึ้ง บทความนี้เน้นไปที่นัยสำคัญของจดหมายเหตุอเย-คอบนและการพรรณนาที่ซ่อนเร้นในจดหมายเหตุ 7 ฉบับดังกล่าว

Abstract

Researchers on Myanmar's history have found the Ayedawbon treatises to be a highly momentous Myanmar literary genre which give a record of historical events, next in significance to the Myanmar chronicles. The Myanmar term 'Ayedawbon' is synonymous with the Thai term, Chotmai het or Kotmai het and it deals with an account or report of particular events.³ Owing to circumstances and the time consuming nature, never before has anyone attempted to translate these famous works into the English language. There are some works by Myanmar scholars on Ayedawbon kyans but they do not highlight the section involving Siam-Myanmar relations. Thus, by studying Ayedawbon treatises, scholars of Thai studies will acquire new insight, reach new interpretations and gain access to richer source materials. The data used in this article relies on a historical

³ Aye Kyaw, Dr., ‘Burmese sources for Lan Na Thai History, p. 247.

approach and is primarily based on documentary materials. I have surveyed seven Ayedawbon treatises which have been handed down from generation to generation. We have found invaluable historical facts which were not mentioned in Siamese and Myanmar chronicles. In addition, these treatises refer to Siam-Myanmar warfare in detail. This paper focuses on the significance of the Ayedawbon treatises and the cryptic descriptions of seven Ayedawbon treatises.

Introduction

Owing to rivalry over control of the lower part of Myanmar including Tenasserim and the wars of territorial expansion, long conflicts between Myanmar and Siam ensued for more than four hundred years from the 16th to 19th century. In spite of the fact that the history of the two countries' relationship is so full of conflict, Myanmar-Thai history is more than just a history of warfare.

As wars with Siam raged on over centuries, the interaction between the two countries increased significantly in terms of politics, economics and culture. Among them, the cultural aspect is more spectacular, so to speak. Myanmar and Siam share many similarities dating back centuries. Myanmar has had historical contact with Siam since the Dvarawadi period through Mon in the lower part of Myanmar. Relations between the two countries date back to the reign of Queen Chammadevi of Haripunjaya (Lamphun) when Theravada Buddhism was imported into Haripunjaya, first from Lopburi and later

from Thaton.⁴ The old Chammadevi chronicle mentions that when a cholera epidemic broke out, the people of Haripunjaya relocated temporarily to Thaton. Relations continued throughout the Mangrai dynasty starting from the time of King Mangrai of Chiang Mai, founder of the Lan Na kingdom. After the establishment of the Tai kingdoms of Lan Na, Sukothai and Phayao, the relationship between Myanmar and these early kingdoms of Siam had become manifold. Cultural exchanges multiplied after 'the war of the demise of Queen Suriyothai' and 'the war of the white elephants' during the Taungoo period. Dr. Ba Han, the learned lexicographer, wrote in the journal of the Burma Research Society: 'The wind of change in regard to both the matter and manner of dramatic performance came from Siam, now Thailand. In the irony of things Siam whose relations with Burma were punctuated by recurring wars exercised a paramount influence on the growth of the Burmese Drama. Burma attacked Ayuthia, the then Siamese capital no less than six times. Yet the aftermath of each war was a cultural gain to Burma to a greater or less degree.'⁵

In subsequent periods namely Nyaung Yan and Konboun, people to people contact and interactions between the two countries grew to a great extent. The Konboun era has been dubbed 'the Golden Age of

⁴ Aroonrut Wichienkeo, 'Lan Na Relations with Myanmar,' *Comparative Studies on Literature and History of Thailand and Myanmar* (Yangon, 1997), p. 56.

⁵ Ba Han, Dr., 'The evolution of Burmese dramatic performances and festival occasions,' *JBR*, vol. 49, pt.1 (June 1966) p.8.

Literature' in Myanmar because Enaung Zat,⁶ the first Myanmar court drama, followed by Ramayana which was brought by the prisoners of war of 1767 to the Myanmar court, paved the way for the blossoming of Myanmar dramatic plays. Moreover, Myanmar adapted Siamese songs and created (35) new classical verses such as *taydat*,⁷ *dwaygyo*,⁸ *laygyo*,⁹ *bawle*,¹⁰ etc.

What's more, the Crown Prince Thado Minsaw in King Bodawpaya's reign was ordered to form an eight member commission to translate the stories and plays that has been brought back from Ayutthaya and Chiang Mai over the previous two decades. Therefore, many writings and poems reflecting Myanmar-Siam relation are copious in Myanmar literature.

Likewise, Thailand has had many great kings as well as heroes and heroines who have risen from past conflicts with Myanmar. Heroic struggles between these people have been portrayed in novels, plays, films and in school text books. Furthermore, Royal chronicles, literary classics and historical novels relating to the wars with Myanmar are ever present in Thai literature.

Thus, in the context of Siam-Myanmar relations, Myanmar and Siamese classical literature have become a source of history

when studying Myanmar- Siam relations. As we are well aware, both Myanmar and Siamese literature can boast a respectable antiquity. However, very little is actually known by scholars of both countries except for a few professional historians who know of both literatures and this vast field has yet to be investigated systematically.

Myanmar classical literature has several genres written in prose or in poetic form which provide a historical account of successive dynasties. Examples of prominent prose writings in Myanmar literature are: Yazawin,¹¹ Ayedawbon treatises,¹² Dhamathat,¹³ Royal orders, Myitarsar,¹⁴ Hlaik Htone,¹⁵ Amaydawphyay Kyan,¹⁶ Sitan,¹⁷ Minkhandaw Sardan,¹⁸ and Thanyawgadipani,¹⁹ as well as others.

As Myanmar literature grew, poetry became the most popular form. The flexibility of the Myanmar language, because of its monosyllabic and tonal nature and its lack of many consonantal finals allowed poetry to utilize various rhyme schemes. There are over fifty forms

⁶ Prince Inao play

⁷ type of Myanmar lyric poem.

⁸ kind of Myanmar poem consisting of two stanzas.

⁹ kind of four stanza verse.

¹⁰ plaintive song.

¹¹ chronicle.

¹² records of the struggle by the king

¹³ law books.

¹⁴ letters of affection, not love letters.

¹⁵ a compilation of learned discourses or memorable sayings presented to the king by scholars or ministers

¹⁶ a compilation of questions and problems posed by the king, or learned ministers, with answers given by venerable monks or eminent scholars

¹⁷ revenue inquest

¹⁸ Treatise on Royal Ceremonies

¹⁹ Treaties on orthography

of verse such as *Pyo*,²⁰ *Yadu*,²¹ *Mawgun*,²² *eigyin*,²³ *Igyin*,²⁴ *angyin*,²⁵ *thagyin*,²⁶ *Kargyin*,²⁷ *tajagyin*.²⁸ Each one of them has its own rules and composition. They are worth studying as they supply a mass of historical facts and figures.

All researchers accept that out of the texts in prose and in poetic form, the Ayedawbon treatises are one of the momentous genres in Myanmar literature. In fact, they are next in significance to stone inscriptions and chronicles. They are the historical account of the struggle of one king and his military campaigns both at home and abroad. According to Dr. Hla Pe, they are a subsidiary source in Myanmar historiography.²⁹

In spite of the fact that these Ayedawbon treatises are few in number, they are of immense importance and they are one of the vital genres in Myanmar literature. It should also be noted that though most Ayedawbon treatises focus on individual kings, some Ayedawbons such as Dhanyawadi Ayedawbon does not place

emphasis on the life of a particular king but on events in Rakhine region.

In his book *On Both Sides of the Tenasserim Range*, Sunait Chutintaranond rightly points out that the Mawgun, Eigyin, Chronicles, and Ayedawbon kyans are all invaluable sources for the study of Myanmar-Siam warfare, providing details which cannot be found anywhere in Thai documents.³⁰

Most people give full priority only to the Chronicles and conveniently forget to pay attention to the Ayedawbon treatises. It would not be an exaggeration to say that if we neglect this prominent genre of Myanmar literature in studying Myanmar-Thai relations, we would be like trying to catch a moon beam or a blind man looking for a black cat in a dark room that isn't there. Owing to the reasons above and the significance of the Ayedawbon treatises in Myanmar literature, I chose to focus on this genre.

Ayedawbon Treatises

As mentioned earlier, the Ayedawbon treatise is basically a detailed record of the struggle by one person. It matters not whether he was successful in his endeavour. History has shown that there were many brave people who struggled for their causes and eventually gained possession of the throne but others, such

²⁰ poems based on the Jataka Tales

²¹ lyrical ode on the seasons, love

²² record of important events

²³ a royal lullaby

²⁴ a kind of folk song

²⁵ song sung by royal raft men

²⁶ melodious song about past events

²⁷ martial song

²⁸ a kind of Myanmar classical song with the same opening and closing note

²⁹ Hla Pe, U. *Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life and Buddhism*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Heng Mui Keng Terrace, Pasir Panjang, Singapore 0511, 1985. P 41.

³⁰ Sunait Chutintaranond. and Than Tun. *On Both Sides of the Tenasserim Range: History of Siamese Burmese Relations*. Chulalongkorn University Phyathai, Bangkok 10330, Thailand. 1995. p 54.

as Princes Myingon and Myinkhontaing's Ayedawbon, ended up in utter failure. It also records military campaigns waged by one king to expand territories or make his influence felt by neighbouring countries and invariably includes a plethora of military strategies and tactics to be applied in war. Apart from these, Ayedawbon could be the record of the achievements of great kings such as the building of a new royal palace or city, construction and repairing of pagodas, propagating the Buddha Sasana, etc.

There are about seven Ayedawbon kyans or treatises but Myanmar historians classify only five as prominent.

Dhanyawadi Ayedawbon
Rajadirit Ayedawbon
Hanthawadi Hsin Phyu Mya Shin Ayedawbon
Alaung Mintayagyi Ayedawbon
Nyaung Yan Mintaya Ayedawbon

These five Ayedawbon texts were first printed as a whole in 1923 with the collective title: Ayedawbon Nga Saung Dwe or 'five volumes of Ayedawbon', by the Thudhamawadi Press of Yangon.³¹ Since then, there have been later editions of these collective Ayedawbon texts, enlarged from the original five to six after another version of the Alaung Mintayagyi Ayedawbon was found in the National Library of Myanmar, and published in

1961 by the Ministry of Culture.³² Still another version of Alaungpaya Ayedawbon was collated and edited by Daw Ohn Kyi (a member of Myanmar historical commission) and has been published in book form under the title 'Alaung Mintaya Ayedawbon.'

The remaining two Ayedawbon kyans *Majjhimadesa Ayedawbon* and *Hsin Phyu Shin Ayedawbon* will also be discussed in this dissertation. Though these treatises are not defined as real Ayedawbons, they are great works of the Myanmar literati of the Konboun era. These treatises concern some important events in the reign of King Bodawpaya.

Meaning of the word 'Ayedawbon'

The meaning of the word *Ayedawbon* must first be explained, for its meaning has changed slightly over the years from its former use.

The standard Myanmar-English Dictionary compiled and published by the Myanmar Language Commission of the Ministry of Education generates two English meanings of the Myanmar word *Ayedawbon*

noun	1. [archaic] historical account of a royal campaign (as in Rajadirit Ayedawbon)
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³¹ Ayedawbon Nga Saung Twe, Yangon: Thudamawadi Press....1961. See also Thaw Kaung, 'Aspects of Myanmar history and culture,' p. 128.

³² Ayedawbon Chauk Saung Twe. Also Alaungpaya Ayedawbon hnit Saung Twe: ed. By U Hla Tin (Hla Thamain)....1961.

2. social or political
uprising; revolution.³³

The Judson Burmese-English Dictionary, compiled by Dr. Adoniram Judson, revised and enlarged by Robert C. Stevenson and Rev. F. H. Eveleth does not have an entry for *Ayedawbon*, but has entries for the root word *Ayedaw* and another for *Ayebonsa* a less common Myanmar word, a variant of the word Ayedawbon treatises.³⁴

Judson gives the following English meanings:

[*Ayedawbon*]. noun. a representation of affairs, account, history.³⁵

[*Ayedaw*], noun. literary. A royal affair; a term applied to wars waged by the king, rebellions, etc.

[*Ayebonsa*], noun. a journal of military occurrences.³⁶

Dr. Hla Pe, in his article entitled 'Observation on some of the indigenous sources for Burmese history down to 1886', also defines *Ayedawbon* as a 'royal affair: it generally consists of the struggle for power, a savouring of Hitler's Mein kampf'.³⁷

³³ Myanmar-English Dictionary, 2nd edition, 1993. p 578

³⁴ Thaw Kaung, U. *Ayedawbon kyan*, Aspect of Myanmar history and culture. Loka Ahlinn publishing house, Yangon, 2010. p. 14.

³⁵ Judson, Adoniram, 'A Dictionary of the Burman Language, Unauthorized 1st ed. Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1826, p.28.

³⁶ *The Judson Burmese-English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1921, p.100.

³⁷ Hla Pe, 'Observations on some of the indigenous sources for Burmese history down

In his article 'Burmese Concepts of Revolution', a fresh meaning of Ayedawbon has been given by Dr. Robert H. Taylor. He also discusses the original meaning:

"The root of Ayedawbon is ayei, meaning a business or affair, to which is appended taw (daw) the suffix denoting royalty, a deity, or (now) the state – and bon (pun), a narrative or sequence of events, giving literally 'story of royal or state affairs'. Judson, in a dictionary he prepared in the early nineteenth century, noted that ayei-daw, while literally meaning royal affairs, was a term applied especially to wars waged by kings, but also rebellions, etc., while ayei-bon-sa (meaning paper) was a journal of military occurrences. In current daily parlance the term is generally taken to mean the style or nature of a movement or matter concerning royalty or the state; it indicates a political movement in a similar but more forceful sense than the alternative but neutral term hlok-sha-hmu. An ayei-daw-bon is also a body of literature, being the five or six historical accounts of the struggle for power by Kings Danyawdi, Yazadarit, Hanthawadi Hsinbyushin, Nyaungyan Min, and Alaungpaya."³⁸

to 1886', *Burma: Literature, historiography, scholarship, language, life and Buddhism*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985, p. 42.

³⁸ R H. Taylor, *Burmese concepts of revolution, in Context meaning and power in*

Characteristics of the Ayedawbon Treatises

The following characteristics will be evident in a classic Ayedawbon dissertation: accounts of

- (1) how individuals of prowess pursue and overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles to achieve success (but not necessarily to obtain the throne),
- (2) how Myanmar kings deal with various states of affairs in their realm, be it the crushing of rebellions, gaining of white elephants or the building of pagodas, cities, roads, etc.
- (3) how wars were waged to amalgamate the breakaway small kingdoms and to make the king's influence felt by the neighboring countries,
- (4) Important achievements in a particular king's reign.

Significance of the Ayedawbon Treatises

The uniqueness of these Ayedawbon treatises is that while almost all historical writings from 16th to 19th century were written in poetic form, they are historical texts in prose written by different Myanmar literati at different times in history. Some Ayedawbons like Rajadirit Ayedawbon are good examples of Myanmar prose of the 16th century and also examples of early translation into Myanmar from Mon.

Ayedawbon treatises contain a vast quantity of facts and figures. Many of the authors were military commanders, able ministers and competent writers who had access to court records. They are contemporary writings as well as reliable sources and have the merit of being extremely informative. It is essential to explore these treatises so as to be more efficient in dealing with the histories of both countries and the relations between them.

For example, the contemporary, eye-witness account of the campaigns and achievements of King Bayintnaung is an invaluable record of Myanmar history. The author mentions in the colophon that he compiled the Ayedawbon using contemporary sources, some inscriptions and 235 records of notable events that took place during the reign. From these records he selected 135, of which 100 were rejected as not worthy of being recorded in his Ayedawbon.³⁹

Likewise, Alaungpaya's campaign against Ayutthaya is an eye-witness account because the author Letwe Nawrahta accompanied the king on the campaign in Ayutthaya. Similarly, Rajadirit Ayedawbon is a compilation and translation into the Myanmar language from Mon historical records. It was written nearly 500 years ago.

Southeast Asia. (Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University SEAP, 1986). p 82.

³⁹ Thaw Kaung, Ayedawbon Kyan, an Important Myanmar Literary Genre Recording Historical Events, *Aspects of Myanmar History and Culture*, P.21.

Ayedawbon kyans were known in the past, and parts were summarized in well known Myanmar chronicles and other documents. They may not revolutionize our view of the history of the relationship between the two countries but it is full of fascinating details as they were written by men who took a leading part in the events that were recorded.

Apart from Myanmar-Siam relations and warfare, these Ayedawbon treatises cover the histories of the four principal tribes of Myanmar; for example, Dhanyawdi Ayedawbon deals with successive dynasties of Rakhine kings. Similarly, Razadirit Ayedawbon kyan is related to Mon Kings Magadu or Wareru and Rajadirit. And the other treatises involve Myanmar kings, Myanmarised Shan kings and the rulers of petty Shan states. So they are a mine of information on the histories of these tribes.

The subjects covered in the Ayedawbon treatises, are events during the reigns of some of the great kings of Myanmar and are important not only for Myanmar history but for Thai history as well, especially Rajadirit, Hanthawadi Hsin Phyu Mya Shin and Alaung Mintayagyi Ayedawbon treatises.

Historical Periods Covered in Each Ayedawbon Kyan

Dhanyawadi Ayedawbon

The authorship of Dhanyawadi Ayedawbon is attributed to Dwarawati (Thandwe) Sayadaw Kavisarabhi Siripavara Agga Maha Dharmma Rajadhi Raja Guru. It was

compiled three years after the conquest of Rakhine by King Bodawpaya of the Konboun dynasty and was finished in ME 1150 (1788 CE).

He was one of the missionary monks sent by King Bodawpaya to Rakhine to take charge of the clergy in Sandoway district.⁴⁰ At the conclusion, Dwarawati Sayadaw clearly states that the work was based on the great chronicle of 48 anga⁴¹ compiled by the learned Rakhine scholar *Maram Amat Myo So Phat Tat Toe We* who was well versed in affairs both Loki (secular affairs) and Lokuttara (affairs not concerned with worldly desires and attachments).

It covers the period from the reign of King Kanraja Gyi (c. 825 CE) to 1784 CE when Rakhine was incorporated into Myanmar by King Bodawpaya.

From time immemorial, Rakhine has been called Dhanyawadi, the land of bountiful rice. There are 5 periods in Rakhine history;

Dhanyawadi period (3325 BCE to 327 CE),

Vesali period (350 to 776 CE),

Lemro period (818 to 1250 CE),

Laungret period (1250 to 1420 CE), and

⁴⁰ UTet Htoot, U. 'The Nature of the Burmese Chronicles', p. 51

⁴¹ (One anga has 12 palm leaves and so twenty-four pages of writing. The old chronicle must have had 576 palm leaves and double the amount in pages) Tet Htoot, U. The Nature of the Burmese Chronicles, p 57.

Mrauk-U period (1430 to 1785 CE).

This Ayedawbon treatise provides short accounts of the early reigns of the Rakhine kings. In the olden days, Rakhine was independent of Myanmar proper and its influence expanded to the Bengal region. Successive Rakhine kings ruled over twelve Bhanga cities⁴² such as Dhaka, Chittagong and Murshidabad up to 1666 CE. At that time, there existed three independent kingdoms namely the Sultanate of Dhaka, the Sultanate of Delhi and the kingdom of Tipura in the northern and eastern part of India. Early Rakhine history covers the uninterrupted rivalry between these three kingdoms.

The text also reveals the many homilies and wise counsels given to various kings on good governance by sagacious men and ministers.

In 1406, King Narramaikhla fled from the Myanmar invasion and took refuge in Gaur, the capital of the Sultanate of Dhaka. After spending twelve years in Gaur, he came back to Rakhine around 1428 CE and retook the throne with the help of the Sultan of Dhaka and his brother, the ruler of Sandoway. The king established a new capital at Mrauk U. As a token of gratitude for helping him, he gave twelve cities back to the Sultan of Dhaka. Moreover, he and his descendent kings adopted Muslim titles and had their coins minted according to the Bhanga model.

⁴² All these cities are in present day Bangladesh.

When King Min Ba ascended the throne in 1531, he asserted that this debt of gratitude had to come to an end and these lands had to be returned. Accordingly, he invaded Bhanga and re-conquered these lands. His successors were also warrior kings. From 1578 to 1629, they established Rakhine as the regional power status.

One interesting event took place during the reign of King Man Raja-kri (1593-1612). He joined the King of Taungoo in an attack on Hanthawadi and sent a fleet under the command of his son, prince Man Khamaung. Hanthawadi fell to the combined forces of Rakhine and Taungoo. Shortly after this, the Siamese king Naresuan invaded Myanmar, went up to Taungoo to capture Nanda Bayin⁴³ but failed. He carried off a sizeable number of Siamese and Mon people to Siam. In the land and sea battles, Rakhine naval forces cut off the supply lines of the Siamese forces. While retreating, King Naresuan's army was invested by Sak (Thet) tribes,⁴⁴ allies of Rakhine king. They achieved success in capturing the White Prince, the younger brother of King Naresaun and

⁴³ Phayre adopted the name Nanda Bayin for the son of Bayintnaung. Nanda Bayin is very puzzling to the Burmese as it does not sound like a Burmese name. Nanda Bayin is known as Ngazudayaka in Burmese Chronicles. Tet Htut, 'The Nature of the Burmese Chronicles', foot note, p.58

⁴⁴ Thet, one of the nationalities of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar speaking Thet-Myanmar and mainly inhabiting the northern part of the Rakhine State,' from Myanmar-English Dictionary, printed by Yarpui, No.38, 109st, Manglataungnyut Tsp, Yangon, p. 346.

sent him to the Rakhine king. He was later ransomed and returned home.⁴⁵

From 1666 CE onwards, Rakhine power gradually declined. The later kings were non-entities and these weak kings failed to adjust to a rapidly changing political and economic environment in the second half of the seventeenth century.

This treatise ends with the fall of Mrauk U, the last capital of Rakhine in 1784 CE. It ended the long line of Rakhine kings when Rakhine was permanently incorporated into Myanmar by King Bodawpaya.

Rajadirit Ayedawbon

The history of Thaton-Hanthawadi was recorded in two volumes in ancient Mon literature. Banya Dala, the Mon minister and a general of King Bayintnaung, translated the first volume from King Wareru (Magadu) to Rajadirit into Myanmar and named it 'The Struggle of Rajadirit'.⁴⁶

For all his brilliance, the author Banya Dala was not loyal to the king. He plotted many times to assassinate Bayintnaung but the latter spared him because he was a wise man. When King Bayintnaung conquered Hanthawadi, Banya Dala, having conspired with the Mon bearers of the king's palanquin, buried a sword at one point of the procession route of the king.

⁴⁵ Though this information needs verifying, it is a rare act which is not mentioned in Siamese and Myanmar chronicles.

⁴⁶ C.T. Aung, 'The Struggle of Rajadharit, *The Guardian Daily*, Yangon, November 19, 1977

When the king reached that place, the sword emerged as the soldiers inadvertently trod on it. After investigation, frightened bearers revealed the truth. The king said that Banya Dala would not dare to make an attempt on his life. Even if he did, it would be impossible on a king such as himself. No action was taken against Banya Dala but all the Mon bearers were executed.

The second attempt on the king's life occurred at the Shwe Maw Daw pagoda. A dozen Mons were stationed at the Maha Ram arch entrance above the covered passage. When the king had climbed the stairway and arrived at the Archway, the would-be assassins could not stand and fell to the ground because of the omniscient power of the king. They confessed that they had acted on according to Banya Dala's plan. The king uttered the same words as on the previous occasion. Banya Dala was forgiven but all the assassins were killed.

Banya Dala's last attempt on the king's life happened during the king's pilgrimage to the Dagon Pagoda in the royal raft. Two Mon swordsmen who were able to submerge themselves under the water for quite a long time waited under the royal raft to murder the king when he mounted the raft. Because of the traces of the bubbles on the water, the two Mons were discovered. As in the previous two cases, the king pardoned Banya Dala but the two culprits were sentenced to death.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Ba Thaung, Bohmu (Maung Thuta). *Sarsodaw-mya athotkepatti...5th ed.* rev. by U Khin Aye. Yangon: Yarpyi Saroke Taik

He was disgraced by King Bayintnaung only when he committed a blunder in his military campaigns in Siam. As a result, he was banished from the court to a malarious place called Zanet in Siam and died in the province of Kamphaengphet.

When this Ayedawbon was first published in 1923, the Thudhamawadi editors erroneously attributed the authorship to Sithu Gamani Thingyan. But U Yan, Royal Librarian of King Mindon and King Thibaw in the Konboun period, states that Sithu Gamani Thingyan wrote only two historical works, namely the Zimme Yazawin (the Myanmar chronicle of Chiangmai) and the Rakhine Yazawin.

U Yan and later U Pe Maung Tin stated that this Ayedawbon was by Banya Dala, and this is supported by U Maung Maung Gyi and Dr. Yi Yi. So, there is no controversy in connection with the authorship of this Ayedawbon.

There is another palm-leaf manuscript entitled *Magadu Ayedawbon* in the British Library, Oriental and India Office Collections (Burmese manuscript no. 3449). Further examination of the text this has revealed the first portions of the Rajadirit Ayedawbon. So it cannot be designated as a separate one.⁴⁸

The text begins with Magadu also known as King Wareru (CE 1284-1296) and ends

(distributor); Lawka Sarpay (publisher), 2002. p. 97.

⁴⁸ Thaw Kaung, Ayedawbon Kyan, an Important Myanmar Literary Genre Recording Historical Events, *Aspects of Myanmar History and Culture*, P.29

with the death of King Rajadirit in 1423. In the history of Myanmar, King Anawrahta crushed Mon power and throughout the Bagan period, Myanmar dominated Thaton, then the seat of power of the Mons until the fall of Bagan to the Mongols in the thirteenth century.

About that time, young Magadu, who had eloped with the daughter of Phra Ruang, the king of Sukhothai, rose to power and exercised his authority over Mottama and Hathawadi. Later, the Sukhothai king conferred him the title 'Wareru' (in Thai, Fa rua) and sent a white elephant to Mottama as a royal gift. This king is well known in Myanmar for his achievement in the compilation of law books called 'Wareru Dhamathat'; actually a digest of the laws of Manu.

Rajadirt succeeded his father, King Banya U in 1383 CE. This king was well versed in the art of war. After suppressing all the Mon rebels, he waged war with the Myanmar king of Innwa. The Mon/Myanmar war lasted 40 years without victory to either side. To learn old Myanmar military strategies and tactics, a Mon Chronicle which perhaps is a source of the Rajadirit Ayedawbon Treatise was translated into Siamese during the reign of King Rama I. There are several versions of this Ayedawbon but the most influential one was to the order of King Rama I. Another version was translated by Chao Phraya Phra Khlang. Later, this classic piece of literature found its way into Thai school texts, plays and television series under the name 'Rachathirat'.

Banya Dala's writing has been praised as a model of good Myanmar prose of the early Toungoo period and the text was prescribed for Myanmar literature students at one time.⁴⁹

Although the text focuses on King Rajadirit's wars against King Min Gaung in the First Innwa period, there is mention of many interactions between Myanmar and the early kingdoms of Siam in this Ayedawbon.

Hanthawadi Sinphyumyashin Ayedawbon

This treatise describes the life and the military campaigns of King Bayintnaung (1551-1581). The main reference source for Myanmar classical literature, viz, the Pitakat-taw Thamaing⁵⁰ by U Yan says that it was written by a Saya⁵¹ whose name is not known. Different scholars at different times have attributed authorship to Letwe Nawrahta and to U Tun Nyo⁵². However, thanks to the efforts of Myanmar historians, we can now solve this problem. The authorship has been attributed to Yazataman (Oke-tha-raw), the commander of a cavalry troop division and later minister at the court of Hanthawadi, and the date of compilation is ME 926 (1564 CE).

⁴⁹ 'Zaw Gyi, pen-name of famous Myanmar author U Thein Han, 'Mon Wungyi hnint Myanmar zagapye,' reprinted in *Rajadirit Ayedawbon 3rd ed.* Yangon: Zwe sarpay Yeik Myon, 1974. p. nsa to pna.

⁵⁰ bibliography

⁵¹ teacher

⁵² Twin-thin Taik Wun Maha Sithu

This Ayedawbon can be divided into two parts.

The first part concerns the conquest of King Bayintnaung over various tribes and small kingdoms in Myanmar. The king first reunified the country and later founded the largest empire in mainland Southeast Asia. He conquered Hanthawadi in 1551, Innwa in 1555, and Mongmit, Hsipaw, Mohnyin, Mogaung, Mongnai, Yawnghwe in 1557.

The second part deals with his foreign wars. He fought wars with Manipur, Chiang Mai, Ayutthaya, Lin Zin, Sipsaungpana⁵³ and northern Vietnam. He also sent five shiploads of soldiers to help the Sri Lankan king fight against his enemies.

Myanmar literary works abound in descriptions of great marches by his armies and the beautiful scenery of Chiangmai and Ayutthaya. Interestingly, a controversial and legendary figure, Princess Supankalyar, elder sister of the Black and White Princes, was said to have lived at that time.

This energetic king was variously named as 'a king without a kingdom,' 'the conqueror of ten directions,' etc. He spent most of his reign on military campaigns. His forces were about to invade Rakhine when he died at the age of 66.

⁵³ presentday Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan

Nyaung Yan Mintaya Ayedawbon

The Nyaung Yan Mintaya Ayedawbon covers the reigns of two kings, Nyaung Yan and his son, Anaukphetlun. This Ayedawbon has some problems: it is not listed by U Yan and the author's name is also not given in the text.

After careful scrutiny of the text, Dr. Yi Yi, a famous historian, stated that it is a composite work with the text having been either directly copied or adapted from U Kala's *Maha Yazawin-gyi*, (Great Chronicle), vols. 3 to 17 and 18 and from *Min Ye Dibba Eigyin*, written around 1608 CE by Shin Than Kho (1518-1638).⁵⁴

Earlier, in 1920, the editors of the five volumes of Ayedawbon treatises had attributed authorship to Maha Atula Dammika Yazar, the Judge who was the eater of Myin-khon-taing town in the introduction of the Thudhamawadi edition.

The text says that the interregnum that followed the fall of First Taungoo was short-lived. One of Bayintnaung's sons, the ruler of Naungyan province, immediately began the reunification effort, restoring central authority over Upper Myanmar and Shan states in 1606. However, he died before he could subjugate the smaller kingdoms in the lower part of Myanmar.

⁵⁴ Yi Yi, Dr. 'Ayedawbon kyan mya pyat-thana,' [The problems of Ayedawbon kyan], in Kantha Sein Lei sardanmya. Yangon: Minhla Sarpay, 1969. p. 30-62. See also Thaw Kaung, 'Aspects of Myanmar History and Culture, p. 22.

King Anaukphetlon completed the task left unfinished by his father. He defeated the Portugese at Cyrim (Thanlynn) in 1613; recovered the upper Tenasserim coast to Tavoy and Lan Na from the Siamese by 1614; and the trans-Salween Shan states in 1622-1626.

Both these kings tried to rebuild the Myanmar Empire to its former glory. Lan Na was then split into two regions; Chiang Saen and Chiang Mai.

Although this Ayedawbon does not reveal much about Myanmar-Siam relations, we can deduce them from other sources since a great deal of interaction between the countries took place during that period.

Alaung Mintayagyi Ayedawbon

This Ayedawbon (which exists in three different texts) covers Alaungpaya's struggle for the reunification of the country after crushing the Mons. According to U Yan, there are two versions. One is by Letwe Nawrahta which is a contemporary record written during King Alaungpaya's reign. The other version is by Twin-thin Taik Wun Mingyi Maha Sithu, i.e. U Tun Nyo, a native of Maung Htaung village of Alon Myo. U Yan does not give any further details.

Myanmar historians later attributed the authorship of two different texts to Letwe Nawrahta and the other to Twin Thin Taik Wun Mahasithu. Both of them were ministers at the court of the early Konboun kings.

Alaungpaya was king of Myanmar from 1752 to 1760, and the founder of the Konboun Dynasty. By his death in the 1760, this former chief of a small village had unified Myanmar, crushed the Mon's authority, subdued Manipur, and recovered Lan Na. He also changed the name of Dagon city to Yangon which means the end of enemy in 1755. He was a charismatic military leader of the first quality; lavish in praising and rewarding his subjects – and merciless to them in failure.

In 1758, Alaungpaya dispatched an expedition to the northern Shan states including Xishuagbanna in Yunan which had been annexed by the Qing Dynasty of China in the mid-1730s. By early 1759, Myanmar had successfully reestablished its authority. (The Chinese attempt to reconquer the region would lead to the Sino–Myanmar War (1765-1769).

He is considered one of the three greatest kings of Myanmar, alongside Anawrahta and Bayintnaung, for unifying the country for the third time in Myanmar history. He had reigned only eight years, and was a few months short of reaching 46 when he died. Then again, G.E. Harvey writes that 'men are remembered by the years they use, not by the years they last'.

This Ayedawbon ends with Alaungpaya's death on his return journey after the failed campaign against Ayutthaya in 1760.

Majjhimadesa Ayedawbon

Majjhimadesa Ayedawbon is written by Nay Myo Zaya Kyaw Htin, Governor of

Sandoway (Than Dwe) town. There were four administrative regions in Rakhine during King Bodawpaya's reign: Dhanyawadi (Myrauk U), Ramawadi (Ramree Island), Dwarawadi (Than Dwe), and Mawghawadi (Man Aung Island). According to Myanmar historian U Thaw Kaung, a manuscript form of this Ayedawbon was discovered in the 1950's in the British Library in London and at the Universities Central Library in Yangon.

'Majjhima' is a Pali word for the middle place including the sixteen countries of India, famous in Buddhist history. 'Desa' is region so its meaning implies 'middle country' in central India. It gives accounts of rebellions against Myanmar rule in the Rakhine region from 1794 to 1811 and one Myanmar mission led by the author Zaya Kyaw Htin to India during the reign of King Bodawpaya. The problem with this Ayedawbon is that the author does not call it an Ayedawbon but only a Sadan or Treatise. Dr. Yi Yi, who specialized in problems of Ayedawbon treatises, rejected it from the Ayedawbon list.

The text can be divided into three parts:

Part.1 covers the period of rebellion against Myanmar rule by Nga Pawlon, Nga Khywe Pauk and Khywe Ta Koung Naing (crusher of one buffalo) from about CE 1794 to 1795.

The Rakhine people expected that the Myanmar conquest of Rakhine by King Bodawpaya in 1785 would bring peace to their country. The people exulted at the prospect of relief from the utterly chaotic situation in the country and frequent civil

wars; but their hopes were soon dissipated by the king's severe treatment, and they began to revolt.

From 1784 to 1816 CE, King Bodawpaya waged 6 major foreign wars to conquer neighbouring countries. Just one year after the occupation of Rakhine, the king launched a massive attack on Bangkok. He marched against Zinme' in the same year. In 1797, he invaded Zinme' for the second time. The king dispatched his army to occupy Manipur in 1806. In 1813, he marched again on Manipur. The king fought a war with Assam and occupied the town in 1816. Many people of Rakhine were conscripted to take part in these wars. They had to shoulder a heavy burden by paying a large amount of tax and supplying provisions. Another cause of discontent was that thousands of Rakhine people were forced to labour on the 'works of merit' undertaken by Bodawpaya to repair the Maithtila tank and build the Mingun stupa and bell.

The perpetrators of the insurrection Nga Pawlon, Nga Khywe Pauk and Khywe Ta Koung Naing⁵⁵, maintained a guerilla resistance for some years. Owing to suppression and heavy taxes, thousands of people abandoned their country, and took refuge in British territory, where they were permitted to settle on unoccupied land. The three instigators, after having maintained the struggle for independence, were compelled to cross the border.

⁵⁵ crusher of one buffalo.

In 1794, the Myanmar general, Nandakyoazo along with the author Nay Myo Zaya Kyaw Htin, with a force of five thousand men crossed the Naff River near its mouth, to demand the surrender of the three rebels, who were charged with insurgence, robbery, and murder. He established his force in British territory and was confronted by a detachment of troops under Major-General Erskine which was sent from Calcutta to oppose this aggression. Negotiations ensued and the Myanmar general consented to withdraw, on the assurance that an inquiry would be made into the charges brought.

The result was that the three insurrectionists were delivered up as fugitive criminals. On the way to Amarapura, Khywe Ta Koung Naing managed to escape at Hsin Phyu Island but the other two freedom fighters were executed. In the hope of preventing a recurrence of any such aggression, and of improving the trade existing between the two countries, Captain Symes was deputed by the Governor-general of India, to be envoy to Bodawpaya in 1795.

Part. 2 is on Nga Chin Byan's rebellion from about 1798 to 1814 CE.

In 1798, events similar to those of 1794 again occurred on the frontier of Rakhine. The combined forces of four governors of Rakhine suppressed the rebellion and as a result, thousands of Rakhine people emigrated into the district of Chittagong. Once more a Myanmar military force crossed into British territory to compel the rebels to return. Negotiation took place and the Myanmar army withdrew.

This time, the name of the rebel leader was Nga Chin Byan. He was so named because by the time he had been born, his father Nge Thandwe had arrived back from his tour to the Chin Hills. Nga Chin Byan's father was none other than the one who went to Amarapura beseeching aid to restore law and order in Rakhine due to the upheaval from 1782 to 1784. After the occupation of Rakhine, King Bodawpaya appointed him governor of Dhanyawadi but later he and his son revolted against the Myanmar rule.

Nga Chin Byan also fled into the district of Chittagong. There he gathered a number of his followers and, entering Rakhine, attacked Myanmar detachments and outposts. In 1811, he crossed the Naff River and overran the city of Maungtau. From there, he managed to liberate the large territories of Rakhine. The four governors of Rakhine could not resist the offensive launched by Nga Chin Byan and in the battle of 'Moe Thee Nat Taw' in Myepon township, Nga Khe', governor of Ramawadi and Thar Yan Paing, governor of Mawghawadi gave up the ghost. Governor Mingyi Kyaw Htin of Dwarawadi had to fortify the city by closing the main gate and defending from within the city wall.

Nga Chin Byan established the Zayawadi town, west of the Kissipanadi river and crowned himself King of Rakhine. Meanwhile, King Bodawpaya formed a huge army under General Min Hla Sithu. The army marched on Rakhine and successfully quelled the rebellion.

As Nga Chin Byan had again taken refuge in British territory, the governor of Rakhine marched with an army to the frontier and required the surrender of the rebels, threatening penalties if the demands were not complied with. This triggered another series of negotiations between the governor and the British magistrate of Chittagong, which ended in the Myanmar troops being withdrawn from the frontier.

Na Chin Byan continued raids intermittently on the frontier of Rakhine. Finally, in 1814, the British government allowed Myanmar troops to cross the British territory to attack the chief in his stronghold. Eventually, the chief rebel Nga Chin Byan died of illness and his rebellion was suppressed. The English administrator cum writer Arthur Phayre criticized the British authorities:

'their real crime was that they had led their fellow country men in resistance to the Burmese conqueror, and in their wild warfare had probably been as unscrupulous as their oppressors with the lives of their foes. The surrender of these patriots must be condemned as an act unworthy of a civilized power, having an armed force at command.'⁵⁶

Part. 3 is on the Myanmar missions sent by King Bodawpaya to India to collect manuscripts, and also to carry out intelligence work on the British expansion into India.

⁵⁶ Eastern Frontier, p 148

The author of this Ayedawbon, Zeya Kyaw Htin, led the official mission of 1812 to Majjhima desa. Around that time, the East India Company accused King Bodawpaya of designing a plot to drive the English out of the Bengal region by making alliances with the Maharajas of Preshwar, Lahore, Nepal, Maratha, etc. The Myanmar source also stated that after the conquest of Manipur and Assam, King Bodawpaya had become conceited and entertained thoughts of encroaching on 12 Bhanga cities (which in the past were the territories of Rakhine kings) such as Chittagaung, Panwar, Decca, Murshidabad, etc. He dispatched many spies to India under the cover of searching for and copying ancient manuscripts and treatises.⁵⁷

Moreover, he demanded that the Bhanga region be given to Myanmar. The following is the translation of a letter from the Governor of Ramawadi to the Governor General of India sent on 8th June, 1818:

'Our sovereign is an admirer of justice, and a strict observer of the laws and usages, as they existed in ancient times, and strongly disapproves of everything unjust and unreasonable. Ramoo, Chittagong, Moorshedabad, and Dacca are territories which do not belong to the English; they were originally subject to the government of Arracan, and now belong to our Sovereign. Neither

the English company nor their nation observe the ancient laws strictly. They ought not to have levied revenues, tributes, from their provinces, nor have disposed of such funds at their direction. The Governor-General, representing the English company, should surrender these dominions, and pay the collections realized there from to our sovereign. If this is refused, I shall present it to his Majesty and the General, with powerful forces, will be dispatched, both by sea and land, and I shall myself come for the purpose of storming, capturing, and destroying all of the English possessions, which I shall afterwards offer to my sovereign. However, I send this letter, in the first instance, to make the demand from the Governor-General.'⁵⁸

Thus, it could be assumed that the purpose of The Myanmar missions sent to India to collect manuscripts was also to carry out intelligence work on the British expansion into India. The following is a list of Myanmar missions sent to Bhanga, India and Nepal during the reign of King Bodawpaya:

- (1784 CE) Thiri Sanagup, Thiri Jaya and Jaya Dhama Guru,
- (1797 CE) Thar Nga The' (warden of a royal chamber),
- (1805 CE) Min Kyaw Tamut,
- (1806 CE) Nga Hlay,

⁵⁷ The administration of Myanmar kings, volume 111, p 62.

⁵⁸ Wilson's Documents, pp 5-6.

- (1806 CE) Shwe Taung Thargathu (Governor of Ramawadi),
- (1810 CE) Nga Pe Tu and Nga Khwe,
- (1812 CE) Ye Htin Gyi and Nawa Dipa,
- (1813 CE) Jaya Kyaw Htin (revenue officer),
- (1815 CE) Thiri Pyanchi Narah Jaya Kyaw (in charge of the glebe lands) and Pyanchi Jaya Nawrahta (tax officer),
- (1817 CE) Naymyo Min Hla Kyaw (Governor of Mergui), and
- (1817 CE) Min Kyaw Tamut, Thuwun Thabya, Pyinsa Oksu, learned Bhramin Paya Kyi mu and Pyinyar Htarwakar.⁵⁹

Near the end of the text are some Royal Orders of the Myanmar king in connection with the mission, including records about an Indian Princess and her retinue sent to King Bodawpaya in 1814-18 and a Royal Order to repair and widen the 'Royal Road' between Dwarawadi (Than Dwe) on the sea coast across the Rakhine Yoma mountains to the Ayarwady River near Prome.

Hsin Phyu Shin Ayedawbon

The Hsin Phyu Shin Ayedawbon is written by court minister Letwe Nawrahta. It is still in manuscript form and remains

unpublished. The Ayedawbon covers the first five years of Bodawpaya's reign to 1786 CE. for, as it so happens, the author himself died in 1791 though the king ruled from 1782 to 1816.

It includes Bodawpaya's campaigns crushing the rebellions by Phaungasa Maung Maung and Nga Phone, the records of the Rakhine campaign under the Crown Prince and the accounts of how the gargantuan Maha Muni image was brought to Amarapura.

Although the author himself call it an Ayedawbon, the palm-leaf manuscript has as the main heading *Min Khan Daw Sardan*⁶⁰.

The eminent Myanmar historian, Daw Kyan, writes that though Bodawpaya, or King Badon, is not popularly known as Hsinbyu shin⁶¹, he did possess several white elephants including the female white elephant found in the Maha Hlega Forest named *Thiri Marlar Maha Thubattar* and also *Nibbarna Pyitsaya Naga Yazar*, male white elephant, together with other white and red royal fully grown elephants, altogether 120 in number.⁶²

Dr. Than Tun also states that from 1784 to 1806 Bodawpaya conducted several celebrations to receive new white elephants and great names were invented for them, such as *Upopron mwan*, *Ratanapronmwan*, *Nagawara*, *Ratanakumud*, *Upothwat khon*, *Warasetagiri*, *Bhattawati*,

⁵⁹ Political situation during the reign of King Badon, p. 154. See also Than Tun, *The Royal Orders of Burma*, VII, Kyoto, the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1988, p. 365

⁶⁰ Treatise on Royal Ceremonies

⁶¹ possessor of the white elephant

⁶² Daw Kyan, 'Maung Laut, Maung Ywa, Maung Waing do a-kyaung', Padauk New, no.6 (June 2006), p. 24

Siri mallamahashubhatta and *Nibbana paccaya nagaraja*. Furthermore, the English scholar and administrator Arthur Phayre mentions in his 'History of Burma' that Bodawpaya probably considered the possession of a perfect white male elephant the greatest glory of his reign. This animal, caught in the forests of Pegu, was received at court with honours worthy of an object of worship.⁶³

After gaining possession of the throne, King Bodawpaya assumed various titles especially that of Hsin Phyu Shin. Considering these facts, it is no wonder that the author Letwe Nawrahta gave his treatise the title Hsin Phyu Shin Ayedawbon.

There is a note at the end of the manuscript stating that it was compiled by Letwe Nawrahta, and that it covers the years Myanmar Era 1143 (1781/1782) to M.E. 1148 (1787). The text gives, in some detail, the following important historical records compiled by a contemporary minister, Letwe Nawrahta:

Crushing of rebellions at the beginning of the king's reign

The great founder of the Konboun dynasty King Alaungpaya, on his deathbed, enjoined all of his six sons by the chief queen to succeed to the throne in the order of their seniority. This declaration later engendered succession problems and instability in the country. However, we have not found any evidence as yet.

The eldest son, King Naungdawgyi succeeded to the throne and had one son named Maung Maung. The king ruled the country for only 3 years and died suddenly in 1763. Maung Maung was a child at the time of his father's death. Myaydu min (Hsin Phyu Shin), the second son of King Alaungpaya, ascended the throne. This king did not follow the rule of succession laid down by his father and gave the throne to his son, Singu min. When Maung Maung came of age, he ventured to gain the possession of the palace, one night and dethroned Singu min

When Maung Maung restricted the movement of his uncles, Badon prince⁶⁴, the fifth son of King Alaungpaya, seized the throne with his twelve trusted servants and put Maung Maung to death (after six days' reign). King Bodawpaya also executed the fun loving Singu min and put all of his followers, including his queens to death.

About that time, plots began to be hatched against him. One, said to have been supported by General Maha Thihathura, had for its objective to place prince Sitha on the throne. The old general, who had long led the Myanmar armies to victory, was executed.

Another conspiracy was headed by Nga Shon, a native of Maung Khaing town in Shan state. He named himself Min Ye Myat Phone and pretended to be the son of the last king of Innwa, who had been carried away as prisoner to Hanthawadi by

⁶³ Arthur Purves Phayre, 'History of Burma,' Orchid Press, Bangkok, Thailand, p. 230.

⁶⁴ king Bodawpaya

the Talaing king. He found a few followers of Maung Maung and a band of Shans ready to support him. They boldly scaled the wall of the palace in the dead of night. The palace guards were panic-stricken by the suddenness of the attack. The conspirators gained possession of the guns and powder in the palace-yard and opened fire at the palace. King Badon defended from within the palace and as soon as daylight came, they were seized and put to death. Nga Phone for the time being escaped, but was speedily taken. Hundreds of people, who had been privy to the conspiracy, were executed.

Detailed account of the first founding of the new capital, Amarapura, the 'Immortal City'.

Saddened by the scene of slaughter within the palace and the bloodshed caused by Nga Phone's rebellion, the king planned to move his capital from Innwa to Amarapura (immortal city). Letwe Nawrahta had to search for a site and managed to establish a new city. All the following details are described by the author in his Ayedawbon:

- indicating the propitious time for establishing a city,
- finding brick and wood,
- driving in a stake to mark off the ground plan,
- reciting *Sutta* to ward off evil,
- burying stone box inside of which was a cabalistic diagram together with 4 big earthen pots full of oil,
- using 30,000,000 bricks,
- demarcating the boundary of the city,

- the breadth and length of the moat,
- the 12 main city gates,
- the 34 letters inscribed on the Mawgun post at the gate,
- the style of writing of these Mawguns, etc.

Accounts of the two beiktheik coronation ceremonies of 1783 and 1784, which Letwe Nawrahta had to plan and organize according to traditional practice.

Letwe Nawrahta organized the Raja bhiseka coronation ceremony and recorded all the details of the ceremony. First, a mandarin couple prepared the offerings on a Manaw tray for the king to donate at the pagoda. After that, the king entered the raja-bhiseka hall of the palace and was welcome by the Brahmins. On entering the hall, the king had to lift his right foot first and walk. While the Brahmins were chanting the Zaya Mingalar gahta, the king recited the Buddha's eight glorious victories gahta and ascended the water fig plank gilded with gold. Brahmins then open the umbrella and offered five pieces of regalia to the king. Finally, Bhiseka water was poured on the king's head.

On the 2nd full-moon day of Nayon month in ME 1145 (1783), the king took the Muddha bhiseka. In fact, King Bodawpaya undertook the Muddha bhiseka twice, firstly in ME 1145 (1783) and secondly ME 1146 (1784). The reason for undertaking the second Muddha bhiseka was that the year 1146 which coincided with the Gautama kein (number or predestined event) came to pass once in a thousand year. After the second bhiseka,

the work of merit performed by the king was to build 1000 hollow stupas each enshrining relics.

There were fourteen different bhiseka or abhiseka⁶⁵ and that the Muddha beiktheik is the most important of all. There is a general belief that if a king did not attempt it, he should not be named as king, nor

⁶⁵ "Myanmar had more than one kind of bhiseka. For instance there were the

- a) muddha-bhiseka
anointing of the head
- b) mahesi-bhiseka
the coronation of the Chief Queen
- c) uparaja-bhiseka
the installation of the Crown Prince
- d) jeyya-bhiseka
in order to win victories
- e) mangala bhiseka
held to celebrate the possession of white elephants
- f) siriya-bhiseka
to renew one's glory
- g) ayudigha-bhiseka
consecration to gain long life
- h) maha-bhiseka
celebrated to increase prosperity
- i) sakala-bhiseka
held to ensure peace in the Empire

Of these, the raja-bhiseka, which may be synonymous with muddha-bhiseka, was to be held 5 years after accession, maha-bhiseka 7 years after accession, jeyya-bhiseka 9 years after accession, sakala-bhiseka 12 years after accession, while siriya-bhiseka and ayudigha-bhiseka were to be celebrated from time to time." Sunait Chutintaranond, 'Cakravartin, p.207.

assume titles and acquire the term 'Maha Raja'. His power and glory will surely be dwindled. Only if he had undertaken it, he could take care of the religion, consecrate ground for an ordination hall and attend Hluttaw to make judgments. And the country will prosper.

Letwe Nawrahta made active preparations for the coronation of the king. At the conclusion of all these elaborate preparations, the king and queen, clad in the splendid robes of celestial beings, proceeded on a jeweled palanquin towards the Mingalar pandal. On arriving, the Primate and twelve pundits brought the pitakat preached by the lord Buddha while 108 venerable monks recited *sutta* to ward off evil. The king bathed himself and sat on the water fig plank gilded with gold. Eight princesses, Brahmins and wealthy people each poured from the clockwise circulating conch studded with nine gems the 5 kinds of water including one from the Ganges River over his head. Thus, it was named the Muddha Bhiseka.

The princesses then administered the oath: 'Oh king, in order to guard and protect all the people in accord once with the Raja Dhama rule, this bhiseka water is poured. May you keep the ten virtues of the king well. Treat the people as if they were your own sons and may the karuna flower blossom. Love and defend all the people in accord once with the rules of Yaikarwarana, Guti, etc. By virtue of the water pouring ceremony, which we have just performed, may the power and glory of the king be increased and may he enjoy a long and happy life.

Likewise, Brahmins and wealthy people took turn administering the oaths in the same manner. Afterwards, the king took hold of the gold beaker studded with nine jewels and made this vow:

'Owing to the innumerable accumulated merits equivalent to 24000 layers of earth, I happen to be a great king dwelling in the golden palace which is equally marvelous as the palatial mansion of celestial beings. I shall observe raja-wimala, the ten virtues of a king. I shall protect the property and possessions of my subjects. May I myself be rich and enjoy a long life. May aggressors from all ten directions be defeated. May many different princesses and white elephants arrive and may the king's power, glory and grace be greatly enhanced day by day.'

There are also detailed accounts of royal appurtenances which were displayed according to custom both to the left and to the right of the main throne, and about the court dress, crowns and so on.

Despatching of scholars (including Hindu Brahmin Ponna, court astrologers) to India and other countries to search for secular texts on medicine, law, astrology and so on. (Many were later translated into Myanmar.)

King Bodawpaya's reign saw a great increase in secular knowledge with the acquisition of Sanskrit works from India and widespread contacts with neighbouring countries. Siamese romances, Pali Jatakas, Chinese histories, Siamese and Cambodian chronicles, a history of Portugal and a Sanskrit work on

sexual science were studied and translated into Myanmar.

Because King Bodawpaya was not satisfied with only worshipping the three gems (pitakats), he wished to learn various Loki kyans (treatises on secular affairs). So, he ordered Letwe Nawrahta to ask the Maung Htaung abbot. The venerable abbot said; 'the treatises on secular affairs do not exist in Myanmar these days. If desired, suitable Brahmins should be sent to Bengal, Calcutta and Naga Dipa for the purpose of copying these treatises. Only then, will the king's wish be fulfilled.'

On the 3rd waxing day of the Wah Gaung month in ME 1146 (1784), learned Brahmins were dispatched to the Bengal region to copy Loki kyans (treatises on secular affairs) written in Sanskrit. Letwe Nawrahta supervised matters relating to which treatises should be copied, who should be selected and who should be sent as scholars. It was the first Myanmar mission abroad sponsored by the State in the Konboun era. The mission arrived back in the month of Nayon in ME 1147 (1785). The treatises brought back by the mission were on grammar, Pali verses (Hsan kyan), astronomy and medicine. These treatises were translated into Myanmar by Maung Htaung abbot and they have been widely used up to the present day.

Collecting data and compiling a list of various officials, artisans, merchants, etc., and their descendants.

On the 3rd waxing day of Pyatho month in ME 1145 (1783), the process of registering

the kingdom (later known as *Bodaw sittan* or revenue inquest), showing the number of families in each territory, with their respective boundaries, started. It is similar to collecting census. The process begins with Depeyin Township. The data was recorded on a bud of toddy palm-leaf and parabaik (folding book). Regional offices were constructed to keep these records safe.

'*Tain*' in Myanmar means territory. In other words, *Tain* is the unit of measurement for distance (one thousand *Tar* or approximately two miles.) It includes the population dwelling in any particular territory, a number of households in a certain village or town, pristine forests and uninhabited lands. Data was collected in more than 5000 *Tain*.

The campaign to successfully to conquer Rakhine, giving the military routes, battles and so on.

Towards the end of the dynasty, Rakhine was in turmoil. The state of that kingdom was so terrible that even foreign interference was accepted as a promise of relief from a greater evil. Discontented nobles from Rakhine had flocked to Innwa, beseeching aid to restore order. As Singu min had no desire to send warlike expeditions anywhere, he simply ignored these applications.

Also, in Bodawpaya's reign, the king was invited to occupy the Rakhine throne. Thus, in 1784, Bodawpaya made ample preparations for the conquest of Rakhine. An army of twenty thousand men, two thousand five hundred horses and over two

hundred elephants, was assembled at and near Amarapura. It was composed of four divisions, three of which were to march on Rakhine by land. The fourth would proceed by sea.

The three divisions which formed the land columns were under the command of the king's three sons, the crown prince, who was also commander in chief, Thado Mengzoa and Kama Min. The flotilla of armed vessels was placed under Nemyo Kyohteng and Tarabya, a Talaing officer.

The army first advanced to Taungup and then marched on to Sandoway. After occupying these two towns, it proceeded against Ramri Island where it encountered the enemy led by a son of the Rakhine king. In the battle, the Rakhine army was totally routed. At Laungkrek, the Rakhine fleet was also defeated and there being no adequate means for the defence of the capital, the king fled to a place called 'Kon Chaung Kyun Thar Yar', south of Mrauk U. The Myanmar army entered the city and the Rakhine king was brought in a prisoner a month afterwards.

Records of the conveying of the much venerated Maha Muni Buddha Image from the Rakhine capital to Amarapura, giving in detail the dates, the different stages⁶⁶ and the veneration ceremonies at the capital and many more informative details.

The Myanmar army advanced on Rakhine on the 4th waxing day of Tazaungmon, ME 1146 (1784). Before the march, the king

⁶⁶ halting places

asked whether the king's sons should lead the army to invaded Rakhine. When the Brahmins and pundits counseled that they should not be sent to Rakhine, the king grew furious and ordered them to be punished but later, they were pardoned.

The king issued a royal edict to the army that any buffalo, cow, pig or chicken from towns and villages along the route to Rakhine should not be taken without consent from the people - not even a single fruit or vegetable.

The author, Letwe Nawrahta, accompanied Crown Prince Thado Minsaw on the campaign in Rakhine. On his return journey in 1785, he undertook the onerous task of bringing the Maha Muni Buddha image to Amarapura. It is said that this image was cast in Rakhine in the exact likeness of Lord Buddha during King Canda Thuriya's rule in 554 BCE.

According to San Shwe Bu, there are supposed to be five Munis altogether. They are: Sakya-Muni, Canda-Muni, Cula-Muni⁶⁷, Maha-Muni and Dussa-Muni. The first is to be found at Kapilavastu, now in Nepalese Tarai. The second is at Kosala, modern Oudh. The third is in the Tavatimsa region. The fourth is in Rakhine⁶⁸. The fifth is in the Brahma region

When carrying the sacred image of Maha Muni, a team of 5000 men advanced first to clear the path followed by the main labour force. The author vividly described

the difficult journey transporting the huge image through passes of known and unknown mountain ranges.

The stations along the water and land routes when in transporting the huge image of Maha Muni from Dhanyawadi by forest minister Thiri Dewa Kyaw Thu, commander Nga Po Gyi, Set-mi-kyaw group 1000 guns, Kala blacksmith Nga Tan Pu, White ship captain, Attwinwun Naymyo Zayathu and Bo Mu Taung Talonesar were thus:

On the 13th waxing day of Tapotwe month in ME 1146 (1784), the image was taken out from the cave and placed on a cart. It was then carried by boat. On the 15th day of that month, they reached the army stationed at the confluence of rivers. On the 6th day of the same month, they arrived at Taungup. From Taungup to Paung Taung, they crossed the passes of 138 mountains and a lot of unknown mountain ranges. On the 5th waxing day of Kason month in ME 1147 (1785), they reached the royal raft jetty in Amarapura.

In the Bagan period, an attempt by King Anawrahta to bring this ponderous image to Myanmar proper met with failure. The great national image of Rakhine was sent across the mountains through the Taungup pass, was received by the king with great honour and was set up in a 3 tiered building specially erected for it to the north of the city.

Crushing of rebellion by Nga Sat and Nga Kwe in Yangon

On the 8th waxing day of Wah Gaung month in ME 1145 (1783), Nga Sat and

⁶⁷ Sulamuni

⁶⁸ now in Myanmar

Nga Kwe revolted in Yangon and the army marched on that city. The rebels with a strength of over 200 followers and 50 boats raided the town and killed the governor Maha Kyaw Htin. Panic-stricken people ran amok and concealed themselves, so it took some time for the army to suppress the rebellion. This event, however, is not mentioned in Konbounset Maha Yazawindawgyi.

Conclusion

Ayedawbon treatises are the work of Myanmar literati who weaved the intricate but vivid events of their times into literary works which reflect the shared history of Siam and Myanmar, especially warfare between the two countries. Thus, to work out a detailed study on Ayedawbon treatises which provide contemporary accounts helpful in understanding the context of Siam-Myanmar relations from the mid-16th to the mid-19th century would be of use to Thai studies.

Previously, Ayedawbon was little known to outside scholars. In studying Siam-Myanmar relations, most scholars have paid much attention to chronicles and they have overlooked Ayedawbons. Some do not even notice that Ayedawbon treatises are a mine of information for scholars of Myanmar and Thai studies. In constructing Thai history, Prince Damrong, the much respected historian, took various sources into consideration and set up a hypotheses. He veered away from Phonsawadan tradition. He is said to be the person who bridged the old Thai world view to the

new one.⁶⁹ He consulted Hammnan Yazawindawgyi (Glass Palace Chronicle) before writing his influential book 'Thai Rop Phama' or 'Our war with the Burmese'. Phra Phraison Salaruk (U Aung Thein) also translated some parts involving Myanmar-Siam warfare in this chronicles. This version was published in the Journal of Siam Society (1908-1919).⁷⁰ Unfortunately, these pioneers did not work on Ayedawbon treatises.

Besides Ayedawbon, there are a variety of genres in Myanmar literature such as Eigyin, Mawgun, Pyo, etc. They have been little studied and there is no one who has tried to use these materials for wide-ranging research on Myanmar-Siam relations. Research work on these existing materials should yield valuable results. Finally, one may question why Myanmar literature is spoken of in a subject explicitly called 'Thai Studies'. The reason for this incongruity firstly that Myanmar history is a part of Thai history and literature and history being sister arts, therein make Myanmar literature a constituent of Thai Studies.

⁶⁹ Charnvit Kasetsiri, 'Thai Historiography', in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, Asian Studies Association of Australia, p. 165.

⁷⁰ Sunait Chutintaranond and Than Tun, 'On both sides of the Tenasserim Range: History of Siamese-Burmese Relations', *Asian Studies Monographs* No. 050, p. 34.

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