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Introduction

Surveying the historiography of Siam-Myanmar relations, one finds that Myanmar literature has been used profusely by native as well as foreign scholars, including Thai historians. For instance, parts of the *Hmanan Yazawindawgyi* (Glass Palace Chronicle) were translated by the Thai Prince Naradhip as *Pra Ratcha Phongsawadan Bhama* (The Burmese Chronicles) in 1913. *Phra Phraison Salaruk* (a.k.a. U Aung Thein) translated some sections involving Siam-Myanmar warfare from the *Hmanan Yazawindawgyi* into English, publishing some of his work in the *Journal of the Siam Society* (1908–1919).¹ Similarly, in constructing Thai history, Prince Damrong, a highly respected historian, consulted the *Hmanan Yazawindawgyi* while compiling his influential book *Thai Rop Phama* (Our wars with the Burmese).

Major-General Chanya Prachitromrau wrote a six volume semi-popular history mainly concerned with warfare between the two countries.² With regard to recent developments in

1 Sunait Chutintaranond and Than Tun, *On Both Sides of the Tenasserim Range: History of Siamese Burmese Relations*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1995, p. 34.

2 The translated titles of each of the six volumes are: The First Fall of Ayutthaya in 1569; The Second Fall of Ayutthaya in 1767; Warfare during the reigns of Naresuan and Ekathosarot; Phra Maha Thammaracha, Naresuan

Siam-Myanmar relations, Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond has published several research works. In his book, *On Both Sides of the Tenasserim Range*, he pointed out that *Mawgun*, *Eigyin*, *Yazawin* (Chronicles) and *Ayedawbon kyans* are all invaluable sources for understanding Myanmar-Siam warfare; they provide details not found in Thai documents.³

Within the many genres of Myanmar literature, in both prose and poetic forms, the Royal Orders have tremendous scholarly value. They offer an important record of historical events, second in significance to the chronicles themselves. Royal Orders, as the name implies, are written commands and instructions given by the king regarding what should be done and how one should go about doing it.⁴ Royal Orders deal with matters such as the appointment of central and provincial officials, taxation law, salaries, trade, coinage, customs duties, continuation of land titles, mobilization for war and religious reforms, among others.⁵ Thus the Royal Orders are important source materials for the study of the systems of governance of successive Myanmar dynasties. There are almost 5,850 Orders in extant now. These Orders date from the ancient times to the fall of the Konbaung dynasty in 1885, and cover administrative, social and cultural aspects of the country. Although there are many works by Myanmar scholars on the Royal Orders, they rarely highlight issues of Siam-Myanmar relations.

Some important events which are not mentioned in chronicles come to light in the Royal Orders. For example, although the *Hmanan Yazawindawgyi* (Glass Palace Chronicle) only describes the advances against Lampang and Pa Sang,⁶ a

and Eka-thorarat; Taksin; and Rama I. Chalong Soontravanich. *Comparative Studies on the literature and history of Thailand and Myanmar*, Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, p. 99.

3 Sunait Chutintaranond and Than Tun, *supra* 1, p. 54.

4 Than Tun ed. *Royal Orders of Burma, Vol. I*. Kyoto: The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1983, p. vii.

5 Myo Myint. "Problems in Myanmar Historiography," *Comparative Studies on Literature and History of Thailand and Myanmar*. Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, 1997, p. 107.

6 Pa Sang was situated only a few kilometers away from Chiang Mai. Because of the scarcity of people, Chiang Mai could not be resettled at that

Royal edict dated 21 July 1787 and many other Orders relating to the campaign make it clear that an advance on Bangkok formed the main part of the campaign.⁷

Programme submitted by Wungyi (Ministers), Atwin Wuns (Officers of the Interior) and Wun su yas (Leaders of groups in the service of king), on campaign against Yodaya⁸ city, is approved.

Min Hla Kyaw Htin shall be entrusted with the Royal order and march to Mottama⁹ immediately. He shall take with him all necessary instructions both ordinary as well as secret.

Taungbet-Taik Wun¹⁰ and Lamaing Wun¹¹ accompanied by their followers shall come to the Royal foot. They shall entrust the charge of their places to members of horse and gun groups.¹²

We also find that there are many other Royal Orders which support this important historical fact. For example, a Royal Order dated 19 August 1787 clearly stated that Naymyo Thin Hkaya, with a force of 31,275, was to advance on Bangkok by the Bi Lauk Da Yaik (Three Pagodas Pass) route while Letya Thingyan, with 15,743 men, was to march on Chiang Mai via Yun Zalin and Zin Me (Chiang Mai). Thus, by studying the Royal Orders, scholars of Myanmar and Thai studies can access richer source materials.

time. Kawila, governor of Lampang, fortified Pa Sang to defend the Myanmar attack at the behest of King Rama I.

7 Tun Aung Chain. "The Chiang Mai campaign of 1787–1788: Beyond the Chronicle Account," in *Broken Glass: Pieces of Myanmar History*. Yangon: SEAMEO Regional Centre for History and Tradition, 2004, p. 80.

8 The word Yodaya is derived from Ayutthaya (unconquerable). Myanmar people have in the past called Thai people Yodaya, not Siamese.

9 Mottama is the rallying point for the campaign in the south.

10 Minister for southern division.

11 Minister for Royal lands.

12 Translations from Myanmar to English by the author, also cross-checking and drawing upon those by Than Tun, Dr Yi Yi, and Tun Aung Chain.

Following a brief introduction about the *Ameintdaw* (Royal Orders of Kings), I will describe the work of three influential Myanmar scholars. After that, I will provide a brief background of Siam-Myanmar relations. I shall then turn to discuss selected Royal Orders of Myanmar Kings, namely Bayintnaung, Alaungpaya, Bodawpaya, and Bagyidaw. I shall conclude with a summary of the utility of Royal Orders in dealing with the histories of both countries and relations between them.

1. Royal Orders or *Ameintdaw*

The root word *Ameint* means order, command or decree, and *daw* is a suffix denoting power, sacredness, reverence or Royalty.¹³ Thus the literal meaning of *Ameintdaw* is royal order or decree. Royal Orders of Burma are day-to-day commands by a king that are noted and carried forward by a *Nahkan-daw* (liaison officer) to the *Hluttaw* (Parliament).

In the administration of Myanmar, the king exercised power through certain councils, namely the *Hluttaw* and the *Bye'daik*. The word *Hluttaw* denotes the office responsible for executing the King's Orders and authority. Its main function was to watch over the affairs of the state. *Hluttaw* also operated as a supreme court of law. Royal edicts invariably bore the formal stamp of the *Hluttaw*, and they were officially issued in its name rather than the king's. This management of the country's affairs was entrusted to four *Wungyis* (Senior Ministers). They were assisted by four *Wundauks* (assistant ministers), *Sayedawgyis* (chief clerks) and *Nahkan-daws* (liaison officers).

Another important organ is the *Bye'daik*. The word *Bye'daik* is not Myanmar but Mon in origin. Its literal meaning is "the building where the young men lived." It can also be translated as Privy Council or palace secretariat. It functioned as a gateway between the king and the *Hluttaw*, and between the king

13 Myanmar Language Commission. *Myanmar-English dictionary*, 2nd ed. Yangon: The Commission, 1993, p. 170.

and all other royal agencies.¹⁴ The four heads of the Bye'daik were called *Atwinwun* (Interior Minister or Privy Councilor). Like *Hluttaw Wungyis*, each *Atwinwun* was assisted by a *Wundauk* (assistant minister).

The *Nahkan-daw* held a special position in both the *Hluttaw* and the *Bye'daik*. Their duties consisted essentially of coordinating the *Bye'daik* with the *Hluttaw*. Papers sent from the *Bye'daik* to the *Hluttaw* were always handed over by the King's or the *Bye'daik's* herald to a *Nahkan-daw*. They were never entrusted to anyone but a *Nahkan-daw* for transmission. The *Nahkan-daw* who brought the Orders communicated them respectfully to the *Hluttaw*.¹⁵

In addition to this post, they might hold other posts such as *Sahmyaung-hmu*, *Waw-gyi-hmu* or *Pyaw-gyi-hmu* at the same time. A *Nahkan-daw* who was a *pyaw-gyi-hmu* was responsible for supervising the dress and lifestyle of the other officials, while a *Nahkan-daw* who was *sahmyaung-hmu* arranged the loyalty oaths at the appointment of other officials, *Saw-bwas* (Shan Chiefs) and *Myosas* (Eaters of towns).¹⁶ Another important function of them was to spy on the other officers and report any misconduct to the king.¹⁷ There were also the provincial *Nahkan-daws*. They transmitted Royal Orders to their respective *Myowun* (governor) and acted as a kind of Royal censor or spy. During the Myanmar occupation of Lan Na, each *Myowun* had two positions of *Nakhan* (investigator) that were under the direct jurisdiction of the Myanmar court.¹⁸

Needless to say, the Orders issued by monarchs could affect the whole kingdom. In jurisdiction, some Royal Orders were to be taken into consideration before a final decision was

14 Thant Myint U. *The Making of Modern Burma*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 66.

15 Tin, U. *The Royal Administration of Burma, Vol. IV*. Bangkok: Ava Publishing House, 2001, p. 395.

16 Tin, U, *supra* 15, p. 394–395.

17 Mya Sein, Daw. *The administration of Burma*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 37.

18 Sarasawadee Ongsakul. *History of Lan Na*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2005, p. 123.

made. In old times, a Royal order and a formal law had equal status in laying down rules that must be followed. Thus, a Royal order that established a law was just one sort of Royal order.¹⁹ These notable Royal Orders were issued during the reigns of King Mingyi Swa Sawke' (r.1368–1401) of the Innwa period, King Thalun (r.1629–48) of the Nyaung Yan period, and King Alaung-mintaya (r.1752–60), King Bodawpaya (r.1782–1819) and King Mindon (r.1853–78) of the Konbaung period.

Another important type of Royal Order concerning decisions in civil and criminal cases is the *Yazathat* (King's decision), previously called the *Amunan* (criminal code) of kings. If any matters were not clearly covered by a *Dhammathat* or if the *Dhammathats* were at variance,²⁰ after checking *Pyat-htons* (precedents in the records), a *Yazathat* would be issued, laying down how the matter should be dealt with.²¹ In other words, Royal Orders (*Yazathats*) override *Dhammathat* and a private agreement (contract) overrides Royal Orders.²²

In Myanmar literature, Royal Orders or *Ameintdaw* are an important source for Myanmar historical writing. In compiling the *Myanmar Min Ok Chok Pon Sardan* (Royal Administration of Burma), the author, U Tin, used *Hluttaw* records, *Sittans* (revenue inquests) and *Ameintdaws* (Royal Orders). Myanmar's well-known historian Tun Aung Chain writes that Royal Orders enable historians to go beyond the chronicles in the study of Myanmar history.²³

19 Tin, U, *Supra* 15, p. 397.

20 The term *Dhammathat* is derived from the Hindu *Dharmashastra* which meant "treatise on law." Myanmar law is based on these treatises, which were also used in court.

21 Tin, U, *The Royal Administration of Burma*, V. III. Bangkok: Ava Publishing House, 2001, p. 314.

22 The laws of Myanmar may be said to be composed of three great elements: *Dhammathat*, *Yazathat* and *Pyat-hton*. *Pyat-hton* means selected decisions of a particular judge.

23 Tun Aung Chain, "Examining the Royal Orders of Bayintnaung," *Myanmar Studies Journal* No. 2. Yangon: Naing Htet Aung Press, Yangon, June 2014, p. 71.

The earliest known Royal edict inscription is dated 6 May 1249, during the reign of King Kyaswa²⁴ of the Pagan period. Unlike other inscriptions in Pagan, it has nothing to do with a religious donation. In it, the King matched the crime committed with the provision in the *Amunun* (criminal code) and made a pronouncement for punishment appropriate to that crime.

It is interesting to note that the punishments mentioned in the inscription are derived from the relevant portions on punishments of the *Majjhima Nikaya*, the *Anguttara Nikaya* and the *Milanda Panna*.²⁵ The inscription shows royal authority extending to the village level. It also provides insight into Pagan kingship and the working of Pagan administration.

Because successive kings from various dynasties sent Royal Orders, Royal Orders and *sittans* (revenue inquest) are more voluminous than other Myanmar historical sources, numbering about twenty thousand. They were written on materials such as *Pe*²⁶ and *Parabaik*²⁷ or black Chinese paper. They were kept in the Kings' personal treasuries up to the end of 19th century.

After the British conquered Mandalay, many books of literary merit including Royal Orders were vandalized, looted or lost. However, historian Than Tun notes that ministers or assistant ministers would have had copies of these Orders, so many of them survive. A considerable number of these copies

24 The word "Kyaswa" means "well accomplished in skill."

25 Than Tun, *Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma*, Kiscadale Publications, 1988, p. 71.

26 Ordinary palm-leaf manuscripts normally measure 49 x 5 cm. Half-length leaves are commonly used for horoscopes (*zata*) and large manuscripts are used for writing Kammavaca (*kamawasa*), collected extracts from Pali texts used at the ordination of Buddhist monks and other ceremonies. The text was written in ink or incised with a metal stylus. Twelve folios made one set or *angar*. Palm-leaf bundles are counted by these sets.

27 Folding books are made of paper in two types, black parabaiik and white parabaiik. Black parabaiik were used as note books or drafts as the text can easily be wiped off, while white parabaiik was of a more permanent nature. They are classified according to the number of folds which range from one to sixty-four. The term *yesi* is used for counting the leaves (or folds) of a parabaiik.

are now in libraries. Some are also in the hands of private collectors. However, very few surviving Royal Orders could be found before the Nyaung Yan period.

2. The works of three influential Myanmar scholars

In learning about the Royal Orders of Burma, students should refer to the work of three prominent Myanmar scholars: Dr. Yi Yi, Dr. Than Tun, and U Tun Aung Chain.

Dr. Yi Yi wrote many articles on Royal Orders. Her works include *Additional Burmese (Myanmar) historical sources (1752-1776)*, *A bibliographical essay on the Burmese sources*, and *Preliminary survey on Myanmar historical sources*.

Dr. Than Tun collected and edited Royal Orders with an introduction, notes and summary of each order in English. This book was published under the auspices of the Center for South-east Asian Studies, Kyoto University. His massive ten-volume work on Royal Orders is a mine of information for the study of pre-colonial Myanmar administration. However, we should be careful not to rely too heavily on these texts as they are summaries, not word-for-word translations of the originals. Dr. Than Tun mentions that though the Royal Orders are arranged in chronological order, the earlier ones, including Royal Orders of King Bayintnaung, are placed in part II of the ROB series. In fact, they should have been published in part I. He further expounds that at first, they were left out because they were anachronous. However, on second reflection, he decides to include them in part II and leave the decision to the scholars.

After careful examination, U Tun Aung Chain discloses that some of the Royal Orders that allude to King Bayintnaung in fact belong to other periods and other reigns. Others were made up or altered so as to increase the number of Royal Orders by Bayintnaung.²⁸ In so doing, he uses not

28 Tun Aung Chain, "Examining the Royal Orders of Bayintnaung (3): The Novices from Sri Lanka," *Myanmar Studies Journal* No.2. Naing Htet Aung Press, Yangon June, 2014, p. 94.

only Than Tun's ten volumes of Royal Orders of Burma, but also Myanmar's standard chronicles *Hmanan Yazawindawgyi* and *Konbounset Maha Yazawindawgyi*.²⁹ He gives examples of seven Orders in this regard: two Chiang Mai campaigns, four early campaigns and one about the coming of the novices from Sri Lanka to Hanthawadi. U Tun Aung Chain's other works on Royal Orders include "The Chiang Mai campaign of 1787–1788: Beyond the chronicle account;" "The Kyazwa Edict Inscription;" and "Brave New Era: Bodawpaya's reform of the calendar." They reveal many aspects of history ignored by the chroniclers.

3. Historical background of Siam-Myanmar relations

There are numerous descriptions in old chronicles of the conquests of King Aniruddha over Siam, Lan Xang, the Malay Peninsula, and part of Cambodia. There is also mention of confrontation between the Chiang Mai and the Pegu-Ava armies during the second campaign of King Mengrai in the Chiang Mai Chronicle. However, the relationship between Siam and Myanmar prior to 1548 A.D. is still unclear. Relations between the two countries became more frequent and eventful after "the war leading to the demise of Queen Suriyothai" and "the war of the white elephants" during the Taungoo period.

The 1548 war waged by King Tabinshwehti (r.1531–50) was one of the greatest military operations in the history of South-east Asia. It set precedence for the successive Myanmar kings of latter periods.³⁰ The successor of Tabinshwehti, King Bayintnaung (r.1551–81), attacked Chiang Mai in 1558 and again in 1564. As a result, Chiang Mai fell under Myanmar's rule for more than 200 years.

29 Chronicle of the kings of Konbaung dynasty.

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

King Bayintnaung conquered Ayutthaya in 1563 and again in 1569. These conquests resulted in the incorporation of many Thai elements into Myanmar culture. Siamese artists and musicians introduced into Myanmar the songs and dances called *Yodaya*. “Zinme Pannatha”³¹ probably made its way to Myanmar after Bayintnaung’s 1564 conquest of Chiang Mai. Similarly, Myanmar laws and institutions were introduced to Siam, two of which were adopted by the Siamese and used until the Bangkok period: the Myanmar *Dhammathat*³² and the Myanmar calendar system.³³

King Alaungpaya (r.1752–60), founder of the Konbaung dynasty, claimed overlordship of Ayutthaya in 1759. Soon after he reached Ayutthaya he fell ill and later died on his retreat to Shwebo. During the reign of King Hsin-phyu-shin (r.1763–1776), Myanmar conquered Chiang Mai (Lanna), Lan Xang (Laos) and Ayutthaya (Siam). As with Bayintnaung’s conquest of Ayutthaya, the Myanmar army took back to the capital dancers, musicians, artists, artisans, physicians, astrologers, scholars and poets. The result was a renaissance of Myanmar literature and art.

31 Pannasa Jatakas (Fifty stories originating in Chiang Mai).

32 It is learnt from a decree of King Rama I dated in the year 1794 that nine-tenths of the Siamese legal manuscripts were destroyed during the conquest of Ayutthaya in 1767. Thus, King Rama I appointed an 11-member committee to examine the whole law and codify it anew. The work which started in 1804 was completed in 1805. It was not intended to introduce a new system of law but to go back to the original laws. Only during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, a western judicial code was introduced into Siam. The king’s Belgian advisor, Rolin-Jacquermyns, played an important role in the development of modern Siamese law and its judicial system.

33 Rong Syamananda. *A History of Thailand*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, p. 53. After the conquest of Ayutthaya by King Bayintnaung in 1569, the Myanmar era which began in 638 A.D was introduced into Siam to replace the old Maha Sakaraj era. It was in use until 1887. The Maha Sakaraj era was used in Southern India by King Kanishka in A.D. 78. It was probably introduced into Siam and Cambodia by King Kanishka’s missionaries. The Myanmar era became known in Siam as the Chula Sakaraj or Little Era which displaced the Maha Sakaraj or Great Era starting in 78 A.D.

Another struggle between the two countries broke out during the reign of King Bodawpaya (1782–1819). His rival at that time in Siam was King Rama I who subsequently moved his capital from Thonburi to Bangkok. The massive campaign of King Bodawpaya took place in 1785. He led the main army in person but his attempt was all in vain due to lack of effective battlefield logistics. Another campaign the following year took only one route, and ended in the Myanmar armies' defeat. To retake Chiang Mai, King Bodawpaya staged two large scale offensives: one in 1787 and another in 1797, but both failed. He launched another four campaigns but they were all futile.

On the death of King Bodawpaya, his grandson King Bagyidaw (r.1819–37) was enthroned. This king, before the First Anglo-Burmese war, sent an embassy to Emperor Minh Mang of Vietnam to plan an attack on Bangkok from two directions. The mission was not successful.

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. The Siamese only suffered minor aggressions. In 1852–53, and again in 1854, King Mongkut (Rama IV) sent expeditions against Keng Tung, but neither expedition succeeded in taking the city.

It can be seen that Siam-Myanmar relations from the 16th to 19th centuries were long-dominated by political conflicts between the courts of Ayutthaya and those of Myanmar. However, the military campaigns carried out against Siam contributed to the development of Myanmar cultural heritage.

4. Selected *Ameintdaw* (Royal Orders) of Myanmar Kings

If we turn our attention to Royal Orders, we find that they encompass politics, economics, society and culture. Royals Orders deal with many subjects, namely: internal matters, military affairs, foreign relations, administrative matters, and

law. Due to the diversity of these subjects, it is not an easy task to learn all orders at once. Generally, one order deals with one episode but sometimes there are several things mentioned in a single order.³⁴

There are over seventy Royal Orders involving Siam-Myanmar relations. Out of these, most concern foreign relations, military affairs and administration. In this paper, I shall be dealing mainly with materials pertaining to the reigns of the Taungoo Kings Bayintnaung and Nandabayin, the Restored Taungoo King Nyaung, and the Konbaung Kings Alaungpaya, Bodawpaya and his grandson and successor King Bagyidaw. Multiple events in Siam-Myanmar relations and warfare took place during these reigns.

4a. *Ameintdaw* of Kings Bayintnaung, Nanda Bayin and Nyaung Yan

Apart from two ancient Orders and sixteen Royal Orders of King Bayintnaung, most of the Orders were issued during the Nyaung Yan and Konbaung periods. Out of the sixteen Royal Orders of King Bayintnaung, almost all them are erroneously dated, altered and counterfeited in order to create a corpus of Royal Orders.³⁵

Bayintnaung conducted two campaigns against Chiang Mai, as did King Bodawpaya. The latter's campaigns took place in 1787 and 1797. Tun Aung Chain explains that some of the Orders attributed to King Bayintnaung were not of the Taungoo period but of the early Konbaung period.

King Bayintnaung attacked Chiang Mai for the first time in 1558 and during the campaign, he referred to Chiang Mai as Suvannabhumi (Golden Earth), the place from where Buddhism first came to Myanmar. When Chiang Mai fell into his hands, the King ordered, "'Zinme' happens to be the center of

34 Than Tun, ed. *The Royal Orders of Burma*, vol. I, 1983, p. vii.

35 Tun Aung Chain, "Examining the Royal Orders of Bayinnaung: The Chiang Mai Campaign," p. 94.

Sasana. Do not capture anyone and release all the prisoners of war.”³⁶

Up to U Kala’s time, Chiang Mai was regarded as Suvannabhumi by the Myanmar people. When *Hmannan Maha Yazawindawgyi* was compiled in 1829, the compilers did not accept this view and considered the Thaton region as more likely to have been Suvannabhumi. They based their view on a passage in the commentary on the *Anguttara Nikaya* where it was said to be a place reachable by ship from Ceylon in seven days’ sail under favorable monsoon winds, and it was also said to be a place where there were more creatures living in the water than on land.³⁷ As Chiang Mai was not in a coastal region, they thought it was more appropriate to accept Thaton as Suvannabhumi, instead of Chiang Mai.

King Maha Chakkraphat (r.1549–1569), realizing the power of guns and large cannons, strengthened Ayutthaya’s 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 a vassal state of Myanmar, King Maha Thammaracha (r.1569–1590) built 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 twenty meters wide and six meters 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.)³⁸

From the 16th century onwards, Ayutthaya was a fully fortified city surrounded by rivers, dug canals and thick brick walls. It was probably constructed under the supervision of the Portuguese. Ayutthaya’s defense was so impressive that in 1591, King Nandabayin (r.1581–99) ordered all Hanthawadi

36 Kala, U. *Maha Yazawin gyi*, vol. II. ed. U Khin Soe. Yangon: Burma Research Society and Hanthawaddy Press, 1960–1961, p. 246.

37 Tet Htoot. U, ‘The Nature of the Burmese Chronicles,’ *Historian of South-East Asia*, ed. by D.G.E. Hall, Great Britain, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1961, p. 54.

38 <http://www.ayutthaya-history>.

gates, battlements, and towers demolished and rebuilt based on the model of those of Yodaya.³⁹

King Nandabayin sent his brother, Prince Minye Nandamate, to Nyaung Yan in 1582 when Innwa rebelled against him. This prince later became the Lord of Nyaung Yan who established the Nyaung Yan dynasty (1599–1752). When he was sent to Nyaung Yan, he was given 10 elephants and 1000 men so that he could withstand any possible attack by the troops of Innwa. Among them were several hundred Ayutthaya men.⁴⁰

Most of the Ayutthaya men in the service of Myanmar kings were found to be loyal. The King Nyaung Yan even entrusted them with guarding the palace gates of Innwa: “Post 100 guards each from among the men of Ayutthaya, Laung Shay, Taung Yoe and Yakhine to carry out sentinel duty at each of the four gates of the new palace.”

This order was proclaimed at the Hluttaw by the Chief of Heralds on 25 August 1598.

4b. *Ameintdaw* of King Alaungpaya

During King Alaungpaya’s campaign against Ayutthaya in 1760, Min Hla Yaza, Shwe-taik wun⁴¹ was elevated to the rank of commander in chief of both infantry and naval forces in Tavoy. In those days, Mergui and Tenasserim fell under the power of the Ayutthaya king. Thus, the armies were strictly forbidden to set out on any expedition on their own. They

39 Sunait Chutintaranond. *Cakravartin, the ideology of traditional warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548–1605*. Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1990, p. 195.

40 Sunait Chutintaranod and Than Tun, *On Both Sides of the Tenasserim Range*, 1995, p. 101.

41 Shwetaik wun was an important official because the Royal treasury had control of other treasuries such as the Ka-thaung-myaung taik (the Public Treasury) and the Let-saung-yu taik (presents treasury). The official documents such as the sittans and copies of Royal Orders were also kept in the Shwe-taik. The revenue was sent from the Bye’taik to the Shwe-taik, where accounts of the receipt and expenditure had to be kept. Daw Mya Sein, ‘The Administration of Burma,’ p. 26.

had to wait there for the king's arrival. It is probable that commanders of various units vied with one another to receive winning honors. While stationed in Tavoy, they were ordered to collect as many provisions as possible.

The king gave this instruction to Min Hla Ya Za (Shwe-taik wun), Sithu Nawrahta (Lord of Pakhan Gyi), Nanda Yawda (Sawbwa of Yaw province), and Aka Bohmu (Commanders),

All units of infantry and naval forces coming either by land or sea arrived Tavoy. The commanders of these units shall not be separated or independent of each other. As Min Hla Yaza was made the commander of all fighting units, he shall take the sole command of all the fighting forces. The commanders of various fighting units shall take Orders from Min Hla Yaza.

Mergui and Tenasserim belong to another kingdom. Thus, only if the king arrived and said that all of them must attack and capture these towns, should they have done so.

In the meanwhile, the army shall put efforts to procure provisions. Give provisions to Thingaset and others as much as their Talaing boat can carry.⁴²

An inscription dated 1196 A.D. stated that the extent of the Pagan Empire reached from the Thanlwin River in the East, to the mountains of Missaghiri (Rakhine Range) in the West, and Ngasaunggyan and Tagaung in the North and finally, Silin Kye in the South.⁴³ Silin Kye is identified with Cape Salang (Junk Ceylon) in the northern part of the Malay peninsula.⁴⁴ According to David Wyatt (1982, 86), Ayutthaya's seizure of control of Tenasserim was in the 1460s and Tavoy in 1488.

42 Royal order, 7 January 1760.

43 Myanmar inscription dated 1196 A.D. {PL. 19 (a)}.

44 D.G.E Hall, 1955, p. 398.

Unlike the Ayutthaya kings, the kings of Myanmar were less enthusiastic about incorporating Tenasserim and Mergui into their political domain. This is because the Myanmar chronicles reveal that in the 1548 war, Tabinshwehti asked King Maha Chakkraphat of Ayutthaya (1548–1569) to cede the customs revenue of Tenasserim in exchange for the life of captured Siamese princes by the Burmese army. Similarly in 1564, Bayinnaung ordered King Chakkraphat to send to his court thirty war elephants, three hundred ticals of silver, and the shipping revenues of Tenasserim on an annual basis. In the Nyaung Yan period, King Anaukpetlun (r.1605–1628) recovered Tavoy but failed to take Tenasserim as the governor successfully repelled his troops with the help of Ayutthaya forces. In the reign of King Narai (r.1656–1688), Chao Phya Phaulkon appointed two Englishmen, Richard Burnaby and Samuel White, to govern Mergui. Although King Alaungpaya could not overrun Ayutthaya and he himself died during his retreat, Myanmar was able to recapture the lost territories of Mergui and Tenasserim.

In former times, Myanmar kings invaded Siamese territories via Mae Lamaw and Chiang Mai or by way of the Three Pagodas Pass. During the Alaungpaya's campaign, the king marched along the Tavoy, Mergui and Tenasserim routes. The Myanmar army subdued the towns of Kui buri, Phetchaburi (Byatbi), Ratchaburi (Ratbi) and Suphanburi (Thaphanbon) before reaching Ayutthaya.

We have the instructions given to all commanders of the Myanmar forces regarding the disposition of troops and the battle plan. They were further ordered to attack and capture the Kui buri town.

The king gave this instruction to commanders. One would not know the color of the chick before it is hatched. Only when the chick is hatched, we can know the color of it. So is a battle. Acting as each individually in one's eagerness to outdo the others was tantamount to the event in which several men with 20 lances try to kill one enemy by spearing him. None of them could have

achieved his purpose because one's effort would nullify the efforts of others.

Min Gaung Nawrahta, Naymyo Nawrahta, Min Gyi Nawrahta and Shwe Daung Kyaw Htin shall keep the main force. Shwe Daung Letya Paw with 75 horsemen and Shwe Daung Letwe Kyaw with 75 horsemen, with the forces under Shwe Daung Letya Kyaw, Shwe Daung Kyaw Zwa Htin and Thiha Nanda shall charge the enemy.

U Dain Ponnya and U Dain Yanda-mate shall select 250 horsemen from Lu Byo Daw⁴⁵ and Thu Nge Daw⁴⁶ groups and make the supporting charge. Min Hla Nawrahta with a select group of 300 gunmen shall stay at a close range to help the charging men.

Fight and conquer Kui buri if it is garrisoned. If there is no resistance, they are to await the king's command there. Tain Gya Min Gyi with another select group of 300 gunmen from 2000 gunmen shall stay at a close range to help the charging men from the left flank.

Failures shall not be tolerated. All commanders shall pay obeisance with palm raised together on the forehead to the king on arrival at Kui.⁴⁷

Kui Buri was taken on 16 March 1760. Muang Kui was an ancient city of the Ayutthaya kingdom. In the reign of King Boromakot, it was a fourth class city. The British envoy John Crawfurd visited the area in 1822, and he described the mission in his book, *Journal of an embassy from the Governor General of India to the courts of Siam and Cochin-China: exhibiting a view of the actual state of those kingdoms*. He reported the name of the town as "Kwi."

45 *Musketeer regiment of youth.*

46 *Gunners of Royal page group.*

47 Royal order, 8 March 1760.

Phetchaburi is an old Royal city, dating back to the Mon of the 8th century and later settled by Khmers. In 1860, King Rama IV built a palace near the city. Next to the palace, the king built a tower for his astronomical observations. In King Alaungpaya's time, Phetburi is called Byatbi by the Myanmar people. Instructions were also dispatched to capture Phetburi and seize all available provisions:

The instructions were given to Min Hla Yaza, Shwe Taung Letya Paw, Shwe Taung Kyaw Swa, Shwe Taung Letwe' Kyaw and Naymyo Nawrahta and Taingya Mingyi who had been given command of the advance forces later, Thwe-thauk-gyis,⁴⁸ and petty officials of the army.

The commanders had failed to inform the king daily on enemy positions and the condition of provisions. Nothing was known of the affairs. They shall find out whether Byatbi was defended or not. If not, there should be no danger of fire. The main army shall encamp outside the city. The paddy stored in the granaries of Byatbi was intended for the consumption of the army. The army shall occupy towns and villages along the route of the march where the procurement of supplies could be made. Troops shall not be allowed to come and go freely in those newly occupied towns and villages.

The army shall make a list of food provisions with great care and store them at one single place only so that proper care could be taken against loss or destruction through theft or negligence. The current route differs from other routes in the remote areas. We are at war and thus, shall make efforts to collect provision.

48 It was the practice of each new Myanmar king to form a *thwe-thauk* group which literally means "brotherhood of drinking blood." The Thwe-thauk-gyi in command of fifty men played an important role in the ancient Myanmar army. When the Burma Independence Army was formed in Bangkok in 1941, Myanmar leaders drank the blood drawn from their arms in the old Myanmar traditional way of pledging loyalty and brotherhood. Ba Than, *Roots of Revolution*, p. 25.

This order was sent with Shwe Daung Thiri Kyaw Htin on 13 March 1760. In retrospect, Prince Damrong thought that King Alaungpaya's march from Tenasserim by way of Kui Buri was a roundabout way and very far. There were hills on the left and the sea on the right. If the Siamese with a strong force had been stationed at Mueang Phetchaburi to oppose the enemy, with a boat force to attack them at the back from the sea, Myanmar armies could be surrounded easily. At the lowest estimate it could not have proceeded farther than Muang Phetchaburi.⁴⁹ However, Myanmar armies occupied the town with ease and Phetburi fell on about 22 March 1760.

We have a letter from King Alaungpaya to King Somdet Phra Chao Akatat that describes in detail the reason for his invasion vis-à-vis the capture of the Royal vessel and the repatriation of political refugees:

King of Dvaravati, there is a mentioning in Pali preached by the Lord Buddha that in seven characteristics of a city the necessity of the king is to be a good one. The reason for Alaungmintaya's coming to the periphery of Dvaravati is not to wage an offensive war.

The king together with queens, sons, brothers and ministers went downstream to do meritorious deeds on the Thein Gottaya Hill. When the inquiry was made to Nakans at the port about the king's ships, the king was told that during his march to Manipur, Talaings revolted in Yangon and a great conflagration broke out at night. The ship loaded with a huge amount of cotton was carried away by kala⁵⁰ and now the ship was at the Myeik port in Tenasserim.

49 Damrong, *Our Wars With The Burmese*, White Lotus, Co. Ltd, 2001, Bangkok, pp. 305- 306.

50 Foreigners who manned the Royal vessel. The word "kala" in Myanmar meant an overseas person, a person from South Asia, West Asia or Europe. It included the English, the French, the Armenians, the Jews, and all the various people of the sub-continent with whom the Myanmar were familiar. Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma*, p. 89.

Upon hearing the news, the king ordered to send men to ask for the return of the ship. Officials at Myeik port said that they would not return without the specific order of the Ayutthaya king. Meanwhile, as the town-eater of Tavoy revolted, the king marched on Tavoy, suppressed the rebellion and executed him. From there, the king sent men to demand authorities from Tenasserim to give back the ship and to extradite the rebels who fled to Myeik and Tenasserim. Both demands were not met. Thus, the king marched to Myeik but the stolen ship was not found there. Keepers of the ship did not stay loyal and made off with it to cause disunity and injuries between the two countries.

As the king of Dvaravati and Alaungmintayagyi had carried out the interest of the people both in matters of lawki and lawkuotetaya, they became heads of states. When the king of Dvaravati heard the arrival of Myanmar king, he was expected to meet cordially with Alaungmintayagyi before reaching Dvaravati.⁵¹

Controversy arises among scholars regarding the reasons why Alaungpaya attacked Siam in 1759. According to Konbaung-set chronicle, there were three incidents—the depredations of Siamese subjects on the borders of Tavoy; the Siamese seizure of the sampan sent to Tavoy; and the detention by Siamese port authorities of three ships bound for the port of Yangon which strained friendly relations between Siam and Myanmar.⁵² A different version is stated in the letter of King Alaungpaya to the Siamese King Somdet Phra Chao Akatat.

The following intimation was written on paper in Myanmar as well as in Thai and given to a young monk called Nga Mun and seven others of Phetburi and they were sent to Ayutthaya on 25 March 1760:

Alaungmintaya, the Most Excellent King, Possessor of
Arindama, Master of White Elephant, Defender of the

51 Royal Order, 20 February 1760.

52 Maung Maung Tin, *Konbaung-set Maha Yazawin-daw-gyi*, vol. 1, p. 311.

Buddhist Religion, Liege Lord of Various Kings, Terror to Kings who have the audacity to refuse his suzerainty, Descendant of the Race of Sun, Lord of Sunaparanta, Tambadipa, Kampoca, Ramanya, Manipura, Sarekhet-tara and several others, made this intimation to King of Dvaravati, members of his family and all his subjects.

In accordance with the prophesy that Alaungmintayagyi will become the embryo-Buddha, and whose final aim is Buddhahood, there is no evidence needed to prove how glorious is he who suppressed the defiant white umbrella bearing kings, and treated the interest of Sasana and the people with 528 Metta (loving kindness).

He is like the king of kings who stands on the heads of rival kings and sucks the blood and brains. This is quite evident as the sun, moon and stars over the sky cannot be hidden from sight.

It is natural that kings rule the countries in Jumbudipa Island. However, there is a universal saying that when a man of hpon⁵³ comes, the man without hpon disappears. When Alaungpaya with prowess attacked 101 umbrella bearing kings, they submitted themselves to him and did not suffer loss of position, life and property. If one judiciously took this to heart and submitted, he would not suffer.

If confronted, it will be like Garuda and swallow, dragon and worm, sun and firefly, dathtarahta brahminy duck and cow dung. The same thing applies to sand-flies, mosquitos, and flies which thought red iron was a piece of flesh due to the heat it produces.

They do not know that their position is temporary before Alaungmintaya's arrival and if they behave like a frog sitting on cowdung, they will be ruined. While taking Mingalar gahta to heart, Alaungmintaya will avoid men

53 Merit or glory.

without knowledge and consult men of wisdom. I give this instruction with 528 Metta so that all the people and living creatures will be peaceful in body and mind.

The letters were put in two white bags, which were then put into a casket. The casket was put in a gunny bag. On closer examination of the Royal Orders, we found some important historical facts and literary works such as the attitudes and temperament of the Myanmar kings who styled themselves as rulers of 101 kings and the embryo Buddha or semi-Buddha. One Royal order dated 2 July 1812 stated that when King Bodawpaya made offerings at the shrine of Kapila Muni which housed the sculpture of Hindu Rishi brought from the Varanasi, men in the costumes of 100 kings humbly requested him to accept them as his vassals.

The notion that kings were Cakravartins and Bodhisattvas had been well established since the time of King Aniruddha in the Pagan period. The idea of a Cakravartin emerged in Vedic literature, especially the Rigveda.⁵⁴ In Myanmar, they are known as Setkya-wade Min whereas Chakkraphat was the Siamese rendering of Cakravartin. Myanmar and Siamese kings emulated the model of these kings through various literary works of Ceylon.

Another concept of Hpaya-laung meaning “embryo Buddha” was widely held by the Myanmar kings since the founding of the Pagan period. Myanmar kings took the names of Alaungpaya or Alaung Sithu to suggest that they were avatars of future Buddhas who they would become at death.⁵⁵ As Aung Thwin writes,

When kings shared their abundant store of merit with their subjects, the latter’s chance for salvation by a better rebirth was significantly enhanced. In effect then, the

54 Janice Stargardt, *The Ancient Pyu of Burma*, PACSEA Cambridge in association with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Vol. I, p. 106.

55 Michael Aung Thwin and Maitrii Aung Thwin, *A History of Myanmar since Ancient Times*, London: Reaktion Books Ltd, p. 84.

king was like a personal savior, resembling the compassionate Mahayanist bohisattva, filling the void left by the Theravadan pacceka Buddha who sought salvation only for himself.⁵⁶

During his campaign in Siam, King Alaungpaya resorted to stratagem to persuade the Siamese king to surrender in the name of religion. His officers sent a message to the Thai nobles to the following effect:

That as the religion of Buddha was not prospering in Siam, their sovereign had come, as was the wont of Embryo Buddhas, to promote the welfare and prosperity of Buddha's religion; that the Ayutthaya king had neither showed his submission by offers of elephants, horses and Royal children, nor issued a challenge to fight in open battle; and that their lord, having Buddhahood as his final aim, had released the Thai nobles captured at Thapanbon without doing them any harm.⁵⁷

His strategy did not work with the Siamese. The Siamese replied: during the present cycle of the world, only five Buddhas were to appear and only Maitreya Buddha was left to appear, but he was still in Tusita heaven; why was the Embryo Buddha the lord of the Myanmars; and never was there any precedent in which a sixth Buddha appeared.⁵⁸

Myanmar probably held the view that the Siamese monks were not strictly orthodox in certain beliefs; they always ascribed origin of any story not found in the canonical books or their commentaries to Zinme.⁵⁹ The best example is *Zimme Pannatha* (fifty stories originating in Chiang Mai). It can be

56 Michael Aung Thwin, *Divinity, Spirit, and Human*, pp. 56–7.

57 Aung Thein, "Intercourse Between Burma (Myanmar) and Siam as Recorded in Hmannan Yazawindawgyi," *Journal of the Siam Society*, 11.3. Thailand, 1914–15, p. 9.

58 Ibid.

59 M. Charles Duroiselle, "Wathundaye, the Earth-Goddess of Burma," *Myanmar Studies Journal* No.1, December 2013, p. 199.

assumed that *Zinme Pannatha* came into existence in Myanmar during the reign of King Bayintnaung. According to Prince Damrong, one Myanmar king considered the work to be apocryphal and had all copies burnt.⁶⁰ In the reign of King Mindon, when the fifth great council (Sangayana) was convened, some monks proposed that *Zinme Pannatha*, being a non-canonical text, be burnt. The Primate Second Maung Daung Sayadaw requested the monks not to burn *Zinme Pannatha* only for the reason that it was non-canonical.⁶¹

When an entourage of women importuned King Alaungpaya to accompany him on the Ayutthaya campaign, the Royal Order dated 16 December 1759 was thus:

Alaungmintayagyi, the most excellent king, possessor of wonder weapons and master of white elephants, Lord of life, gave this instruction.

All of you queens do not live as perfect women in the golden palace even though you depend on the power and glory of the king. You live comfortably and donate pleasantly without any despondency and anxiety. Your disturbing my endeavor, as head of state, for the country and the interest of Sasana and the people, bars completion of business which should have come to an end.

In the future, if women exceed men and any one of the women says anything against the king's decision, cut both ends of the mouth well into the cheeks.

Clearly King Alaungpaya did not allow himself to be dominated by his queens.⁶² From a study of this order, we can

60 Peter Skilling, 2002, f.n. 140.

61 Kyi Aye, *Zinme Pannatha (Pannasa Jataka) and Myanmar Literature*, Traditions of Knowledge in Southeast Asia, Part II, Myanmar Historical Commission, Yangon, 2004, pp. 110–111.

62 Alaungpaya had one Chief Queen, one North Palace and two other queens, along with two Ko-lok-taws, making a total of seven. *The Royal administration of Burma*, Vol. 4, p. 444.

predict the attitude or temperament of the king. We cannot find this kind of information in chronicles.

4c. *Ameintdaw* of Kings Bodawpaya and Bagyidaw

Before the start of King Bodawpaya's campaign of 1787, a problem emerged regarding the command of the campaign in the south. Therefore an order was issued on 9 August 1787. This order clearly stated that in 1787, Bodawpaya intended to attack both Chiang Mai and Ayutthaya.

The generals and commanders in Mottama and Dawei who have been appointed to subjugate Ayutthaya will not perform their duties honestly. The Crown Prince is appointed to the command of the troops in Mottama and Dawei and to the subjugation of Ayutthaya.

We don't know for sure whether the Crown Prince took the command of the southern campaign. It is most unlikely because other Orders indicate that Mingyi Kyawhtin was in command of the southern campaign.⁶³

A Myothugyi,⁶⁴ the chief of the *myo* (town), was the hereditary ruler of his town and its hinterland, the *myo-ne* (township). He was given titles, umbrellas, and official regalia according to the *Ameintdaws*. On failure to perform his duties connected with revenue and the army, a Myothugyi in King Bodawpaya's reign had to serve in the vanguard of the army. Criminals were also assigned to the Chiang Mai campaign. It was taken as a form of punishment.

As Maha Thihathuya had pleaded on their behalf, those Myothugyis who failed to suppress armed men and

63 Royal Orders, 24 August 1787, 28 August 1787, 23 November 1787, 2 October 1787.

64 The Myothugyi is similar to the *kalan* of the Pagan days; (the 'than-byin' being equivalent to the Ywa-thugyi) and as such, was one of the minor Amats or ministers. See Daw Mya Sein, *The Administration of Burma*, p. 70.

those who failed to perform their duties towards the state shall be pardoned but they must join the expedition in the vanguard marching to Chiang Mai.

This order proclaimed by Kyaw Zwa Nawrahta, liaison officer, was passed on the evening of 9 September 1787.

There are wide discrepancies on Bodawpaya's campaign of 1787. The official Myanmar chronicle *Hmannan Maha Yazawindawgyi* (the Glass Palace Chronicle) mentions that Wungyi Maha Zayathura, in command of 66 contingents, a total of 4000 horses and 45,000 men, set out on 29 August 1787 to advance on Chiang Mai and the region east of Thanlwin (Salween) which was disturbed. At the same time, Khin-u Bo (Commander of Khin-u) Letya Thiha Thingyan, in command of 46 contingents, a total of 35,000 men, went downriver to Mottama and from there advanced on Pa Sang.

On the contrary, the Royal Order dated 19 August 1787 stated that Nemyo Thin Hkaya was the commander of an army of 31,275 to advance on Bangkok by the Three Pagodas route, Letya Thingyan was the commander of an army of 15,743 to advance on Chiang Mai by the Yunzalin (Mueang Thalang) route, and Mingyi Maha Mingaung and Mingyi Nanda Kyawhtin were recalled to the capital. We find that the *Hmannan Maha Yazawindawgyi* chronicle tallies with the Siamese sources. The details are unclear because campaign history of the southern campaign is missing from the official chronicle.

King Bodawpaya attacked Siam many times during his reign. Unfortunately he failed badly in his endeavors. After the defeat of the Chiang Mai campaign in 1787–1788, the king had to prepare for the defense against a possible Thai invasion in 1788. Defenses at Mottama, Tavoy, Yun Salin and Myeik⁶⁵ as well as at Yangon, Pyi and Mong Nai were strengthened.⁶⁶ All blacksmiths in the kingdom were gathered in the capital

65 Mergui.

66 Royal Order, 21 March 1788, 1 April 1788, 7 April 1788.

to produce guns.⁶⁷ There is nothing written about this in the chronicles.

The king made more elaborate plans for the 1808 invasion. The King himself marched up to Hsipaw but failed. This is one of the reasons why the chronicles do not mention them. The Royal Orders on the other hand were passed to have the whole campaign organized. In this way we can piece them together to get a fairly complete story of these activities.

The Crown Prince shall lead the troops via Mong Nai on the waxing day of Nattaw month (2 December 1808). Taungoo Min,⁶⁸ Mong Mit Min, Thanlyn⁶⁹ Min, Ka Naung Min, Prince Kalay, Prince Wuntho, Prince Kyauk Ba Daung, Prince Pandain and Prince In Dauk shall march with The Crown Prince.

Pyay⁷⁰ Min shall guard the golden city. Min Kyaw Thiha, Myin Su Gyi Wun,⁷¹ shall lead the troops via Hsenwi on the waxing day of Tasaungmon month (2 November 1808). Bhamo Sawbwa shall march with Min Kyaw Thiha, Myin Zu Gyi Wun; Ye Gaung Kyaw Swa, Kin Tat Mu,⁷² Tha Dun Palace site and Letya Kyaw Htin, Myo Wun,⁷³ Dabayin shall also march with Min Kyaw Thiha, Myin Zu Gyi Wun.

67 Royal Order, 24 March 1788, 20 April 1788.

68 "Min" literally means "King." However any member of the ruling class was also given the high designation of "Min."

69 Syriam.

70 Prome.

71 "Myin Su Gyi Wun" can be translated as "Officer of Big Horse Group." He controlled the cavalry regiments. Under him served other *wuns* who were in charge of different regiments of the cavalry. The list of men had to be kept carefully to avoid the amalgamation or confusion of regiments. Daw Mya Sein, *The Administration of Burma*, p. 27.

72 Chief of guards.

73 Myo Wun was the governor of the whole province. He sat in the upper seat of the Myo Yon or Hall of Justice. He had the powers of life and death. His had to attend to the affairs of the state and religion and the defense of the town, the revenue, etc. He had to help and assist the Myosa (literally town eater; the person to whom half the revenues of the town have been given).

The king himself shall lead the troops via Hsipaw on the waxing day of Pyatho month (31 December 1808). Prince Sagaing shall march with His Majesty. Pagan min and Pakhan min shall guard the Min Gun palace; Badon Myothugyi shall stay with these two princes.

Get all the necessary preparations; Myothugyis and Ywathugyis (Town Headmen and Village Headmen) shall march with His Majesty; they shall bring with them followers, the number of which would be determined in accordance with the status; each of them shall have either his brother or son do the administration during his absence from his station.

Myowuns of Hanthawadi, Mottama and Pathein shall take all the forces under them and march ahead via Yun Za Lin, to meet the Royal route of march so that they may prepare a Royal reception at that junction. If possible, Crown Prince should come under the Royal foot.

The ever-victorious army shall start the march from the banks of the Nanda Lake, build a Royal Pavilion there.

Bring here Ye Kyaw Aka, officer attached to Pyi Min and Thiri Kyaw Gaung, officer of the West, attached to Pyay Min.

Make 30,000 to 40,000 Hta Gauk Hpa⁷⁴ to be used in the Royal campaign; get the palm leaves from the trees on the west of Min Gun and night watchmen shall make them into receptacles.

This order proclaimed by Baya Kyaw Htin, Liaison officer, was passed on 26 September 1808.

While marching to Yodaya (Ayutthaya), there were many army deserters. Severe punishment would be inflicted upon them.

74 Baskets with covers made of palm leaves.

Search and interrogate the deserters from Mone' army and burn them alive together with their parents and families. All Taikwuns (district governors), Taikseyas (clerks)⁷⁵ and Su Htein and Su Ok (Supervisors of the Asu⁷⁶ service group) are to find them and submit. If failed, they shall also be executed.⁷⁷

Despite these severe punishments, desertions persisted.

Bomu⁷⁸ Mingyi Maha Thet Taw Shay reported that a total of 2,207 people inclusive of 777 headmen of villages, 939 Athi (common folk) and 491 Asu (service men) deserted from the armies. Appoint new headmen in place of those headmen to serve in Mone' army. Headmen who deserted the army shall be searched and shall have fire put under them. If the husband cannot be found, his wife shall be burned. In accordance with the Royal order, district governors, clerks and heads of service groups are to arrest them and bring them under the Royal foot.⁷⁹

Execute two deserters called Nga Shun Nge and Nga Shun Gyi, who are not loyal to the king, in such a way that people would remember it for a long time. Cut open the chest of another deserter named Nga Pyay who also committed theft several times.⁸⁰

75 In the ancient administration of Myanmar, sometimes the group of myos was known as a "taik." King Thalun divided the country into seven taiks, namely the Anaukpet Taik, Myaukpet Taik, Taungpet Taik, Twinthin Taik, Mahadan Taik, Sinkye Taik and Kyawzin Taik. In many sittans, a taik wun and taik saye are mentioned. Daw Mya Sein, *The Administration of Burma*, p. 32.

76 Group or division.

77 Royal order, 22 April 1806.

78 "Bo-hmu" is the highest official in the hierarchy of the Myanmar army. In the king's absence, the Wungyi would be responsible for the Bo-hmu over whom he was set, the Bo-hmu for the Bo-gyok, the Bo-gyok for the Tat-bo, the Tat-bo for the Tat-hmu, the Tat-hmu for the Thwei-thauk-gyi, the Thwei-thauk-gyi for the Akyat, the Akyat for the O-za-gyi and the O-za-gyi for the men of his section. U Tin, *supra* 2, p. 535.

79 Royal Order, 22 April 1806.

80 Royal Order, 13 November 1787.

Studying the Royal Orders, we get a glimpse into the character and temperament of the king who issued them. For instance it can be inferred from King Bodawpaya's Orders that he was ruthless and imprudent.

In pre-colonial days, the king's subjects were divided into two divisions: Ahmudan and Athi. Ahmudan were the class of people who owed hereditary labor service to the king. Athi were those who paid taxes but were not liable for regular service. They might be mobilized in times of war and used as *corvée* labor.⁸¹

Ahmudan were further subdivided into two classes: those liable to military service and those liable to other services such as cooks, musicians, weavers and others. The class that rendered other services was known as *asu*, meaning a group or collection. They resembled their counterpart in Siam: *phrai som* (private retainers) and *phrai luang* (Royal servicemen). Under the *corvée* system, *phrai som* had to serve their lords and had no obligation to the throne, while *phrai luang* had to work six months a year for the crown.

These crown servicemen consisted not only of ethnic Bamar people, but many others, especially those who were taken as prisoners of war. They included Rakhine, Mons, Manipuris, Indians, Shans, Siamese, Portuguese and French.⁸² In 1810, the king ordered a list made of Yodaya men: "Make a list of Yodaya men, serving in Asu Angan,⁸³ as well as those living in towns and villages, etc.; also collect the list of Yodaya men working in Yadana Bon Taik."⁸⁴

Myanmar descendants from Chaing Mai were known as Kaung Han: they were formed into three groups of armed men called Yun Su Kaung Han, Win Kaung Han and Tat Kaung Han and they got land to cultivate, to live and to share along

81 Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma*, p. 33.

82 Myo Myint, *Collected Essays On Myanmar History and Culture*, Department for the Promotion and Propagation of the Sasana, Yangon, 2010 April, p. 280.

83 Groups and division.

84 Royal Order, 8 February 1810. Yadana Bon Taik is a building or place where some specialized activity is carried out.

the Mu Rivers. These groups formed part of seven guard regiments whose duty was to guard the four wins or quarters of the Royal city.⁸⁵ On occasion, they were required to go on military expeditions.

Guard regiments like Win Daw Lay Hmyet Hna Daing Ka—Bearers of Round Shield or Any Kind of Shield stationed in all four parts of Palace enclosure

Aso⁸⁶ Lay Hse Daing—Members of the group of 40 shield-bearing men with a figure of Sword and Shield Ogre tattooed on their necks

Tat Daing—Military Men carrying shields with a figure of Double-edged Sword and Shield Ogre tattooed on their necks

Yun Su Kaung Han—Corps of musketeers from Chaing Mai or Kengtung Origin with a figure of Double-edge Sword Deva tattooed on their necks

Tat Kaung Han—Military Men of Shan Origin living within Stockade around Palace to escort the King going outside Palace

Win Kaung Han—Corps of Shan musketeers holding the Palace stockade

Members of Thuye,⁸⁷ Shwe Pan (Golden Flower), Shwe Da (Golden Sword) Asu shall send one man from each

85 Seven guard regiments were She-win Ahmudan (Royal service men of eastern quarter), Nauk-win Ahmudan (Royal service men of western quarter), Letya-win Ahmudan (Royal service men of right quarter), Letwe'-win Ahmudan (Royal service men of left quarter), Solese-daing Ahmudan, Kaunghan Ahmudan and Yunsu Ahmudan. Myo Myint, *Collected Essays on Myanmar History and Culture*, p. 290.

86 Ahmudan groups of menial statues were called *aso*; nonmenials were *asu* or *athin*. J.F. Cady, "History of Modern Burma," p. 14.

87 The formation of Thuye ahmudan dated back to pre-Konbaung times. Four groups of Thuye gunners were Toke Ye, Win Si, Banya and Shwe pan pan. Shwe Nan Thon Wawhara Abidan, p. 217.

group of ten households to do Ait Hpan—Men on Duty to sleep outside a Palace Apartment.

This Order proclaimed by Nga Pa Thi, Liaison Officer, was passed on 8 February 1810. A system of tattooing is said to have been instituted by Nandabayin in the early 1590s. Maha Yazawingyi states,

At Hanthawaddi (Pegu), because all the Royal guard troops were so mixed together that easy identification was impossible, the king ordered them to be tattooed (or marked) with characters (indicating whether they belonged to units of) the left, the right, the front, or the rear.⁸⁸

The Sittan⁸⁹ of 1634 submitted to King Thalun (r.1633–1648) states that the Yuns of Chaing Mai and Shan Kaung Han of Kenghung settled at Amyint, Ba Don, Hsin In, Htan Da Bin, Kani, Kya Bwint, Lay Thoke, Lun Gya, Ma Hkwa, Ma U, Mauk Ka Lan, Min Don, Min Gaung, Mu Tha, Mye Du, Myo Hla, Ne Ta Mo, Nga Ta Yaw, Pa Hkan, Pa Rain Ma, Pyan Hle, Sagu, Salin, Tayaw, Taze, Tha Hpan Zeik, Thit Ya Bin, Thit Daw Mu and Ywa Pu.⁹⁰

There is some material on economic history. In Bodawpaya's time, each household was compelled to contribute three *kyat* toward the king's war fund when war was imminent.

88 U Kala, *Maha Yazawingyi*, p. 92.

89 "Sittan" means records of rural life and administration. It can also be translated as revenue inquest. The sittans are the result of the revenue inquests undertaken in the reigns of King Nyaung Yan, King Anaukpetlum, King Thalun, King Alaungpaya, King Hsin-phyu-shin, King Bodawpaya and King Thibaw. They deal with taxation, provisional administration, the organization of labor and land and the relationship between the center and periphery. Despite the publication of *Burmese sittans 1764–1826: Records of Rural Life and Administration* compiled by Trager and Koenig, many sittans remain unpublished. Myo Myint, 'Problems in Myanmar Historiography,' p. 106.

90 Sittan, 7 November 1637.

Submit the list in detail of commanders, Sitke's, Nakhans, Tatyais⁹¹ and troopers who march with Maha Zayya Thuya via the Chaing Mai route. In the list, how many of them came from which towns or villages and the names of commanders under whom they serve should be expressed.

Give the accounts as to how much was received from exacting Ks 3 from each household and how the expenditure including the cost for Royal stamp and missive has been spent.

This order proclaimed by Kyaw Zwa Nawrahta, Liaison Officer was passed on 28 August 1787.

Before the start of a foreign war, officers had to borrow large sums of money to get the recruits fully equipped. Money lenders were not allowed to sue for the return of the money before the war was over.

Maha Min Hla Min Gaung, who was the overlord of all the people in Nga So village tract, had incurred a debt while he was collecting food provision and recruiting men for the fighting forces of the crown. He had the money taken on loan from Princess Htandabin. People from Nga So village tract shall repay this debt.⁹²

Shwe Daung Kyaw Htin petitioned that he served under Governor Nay Myo Garmani of Chiang Mai as *Myo sayay* (township clerk) eleven years ago. He owed debt to money lenders who gave him money on loan which he used in recruiting the Chiang Mai troops to march on Sandapuri (Laos), as well as keeping law and order in that area. He could not repay the loan due to the chaotic

91 The company clerk (tat-yei) had the duty of writing out whatever Orders were needed with respect to the company. This appointment was usually made with the consideration that it called for both physical strength and administrative ability. U Tin, *The Royal Administration of Burma*, Vol. IV, p. 534.

92 Royal Order, 15 October 1787.

situation in Chiang Mai. Thus, if the statement that the loan was used for the benefit of the town is true, he shall repay the money only when law and order prevails in the region.⁹³

The country of Kyaw-pagan (in modern terms, Tonkin) was variously named Akyaw, Kyaw-pagan and Yun-gyi. This country is probably called by the Myanmar of King Bayint-naung's time "the country of the black-faced people." During the reign of King Bodawpaya, ambassadors were received from the Yun-gyi country. In 1822, King Bagyidaw sent an envoy to Cochin China⁹⁴ when the capital of Vietnam was Hué. His intention was to have an alliance with Vietnam. He wanted the Cochin China help him to destroy the power of Siam. Unfortunately, the mission was unproductive.

The envoy of Yun Gyi shall be granted audience by the king on the New Year Kowtow day;⁹⁵ on his return Nay Myo Thiri Thu Ya Nawrahta and some of the Atwin Daw Mye,⁹⁶ shall accompany him back to Yun Gyi; Hantha-wadi will have two ships, arms, ammunitions and provisions ready for the return trip of the envoy.⁹⁷

Conclusion

Royal decisions bore the force of law. Sometimes kings set aside the *Dhammathat* and issued their own legal rulings. Thus over time many Royal Orders became part of Myanmar law. As Myanmar customary rules, Royal Orders, and *Pyat-htons*

93 Royal Order, 19 June 1801.

94 Southern Vietnam.

95 Presents were customarily brought from distant parts of the Shan country and Myanmar, once a year, thrice a year, every other year, or once in three years, to the King's kadaw ceremonies at New Year and at the beginning and the end of Wa (Lent). U Tin, *supra* 2, p. 437

96 Palace Stewards.

97 Royal Order, 25 April 1822.

(previous judicial decisions)⁹⁸ were incorporated in the *Dhammathat* in the later period, Royal Orders played an important role in the judicial administration of the Myanmar kings.

Despite the existence of many Royal Orders, there were only four distinguished Ameidaw Tan Gyi (Great Royal Orders) issued during the reigns of King Mingyi Swa Saw Ke (r.1367–1400), King Nyaung Yan (r.1600–1606), King Thalun (r.1633–1648) and King Bodawpaya (r.1782–1819). They were used as regulations to be followed by the successive Myanmar kings.

Later, the Pali word *Upade* (instruction and direction) was attached to the *Ameintdaw* (Royal Order). The word *Ameidaw Upade* came to be used jointly for the special kind of edict that contained regulations to be passed on to later kings. King Mindon's Royal Edict of twenty conditions for Sanghas as well as two edicts on judicial procedure can be regarded as the forerunners of *Upade*.⁹⁹ Later, *Upade* and Royal Edicts came to exist separately. However, the promulgation of *Upade* was announced by the Royal Edicts. The word *Upade* continued to exist in the legal field and is still used to refer exactly to the legal instruments of Law and Act.¹⁰⁰

Royal Orders preceded the chronicles. U Kala's *Maha Yazawingyi* and *Hmanan Yazawindawgyi* used them almost exclusively as source material. Royal Orders gave far more detailed accounts of the events recorded. Moreover, Royal Orders enable historians to go beyond the chronicles in the study of Myanmar history, which is intertwined with Thai history. Royal Orders do not just include warfare between the two countries; they also discuss significant aspects such as

98 In Myanmar legal literature, there are 35 collections of Judgements, known as Pyat-htons. As a Pyat-hton was passed by a famous king or a renowned judge, all these Pyat-htons bore the names of kings or judges. Maung Htin Aung, *Burmese Law Tales*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 38.

99 Tun Yee, "Upade: Laws and Regulations of King Mindon and Thibaw (AD. 1853–1885)," *Myanmar Studies Journal*, no. 6, June 2016, Myanmar Knowledge Society, 2016, pp. 132, 144.

100 Ibid, p. 130.

art, literature, and trade. Moreover, these Myanmar literary works can benefit students researching Siam-Myanmar relations from the mid-16th to the 19th centuries.

Royal Orders contain a vast quantity of facts and figures and are full of fascinating details. Being contemporary, the authenticity of the statements made in the chronicles can be checked. Royal Orders also supplement the records in the main Myanmar chronicles.

The subjects covered in the Royal Orders—events during the reigns of some of the great kings of Myanmar—are important not only for Myanmar history but for Thai history as well. As Royal Orders reflect the shared history of Myanmar and Siam, a closer examination is needed of Myanmar and Thai literature that contains histories and their influence on the people of both countries.

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