A PAGEANT OF BURMESE HISTORY
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PREFACE

Burma is a large country with a comparatively small population, inhabited by races which have played no important part in the past in the march of world events and the development of civilization. Still, placed as the country is geographically and strategically, it has a future of no mean importance. The Burmans, forming about 58% of the population, have so far very largely played the rôle of leaders and rulers. Under British rule, and thus forming a part of the Indian Empire, Burma passed through a phase which culminated in the birth of the Burmese Republic in 1948. A new vision is unfolding before the Burmese people. It is possible that republican Burma will gradually consolidate itself into one nation, one people, one race. It is also possible that Burma will in time come to play an important rôle, if not in world affairs, at least in matters relating to Southern and South-Eastern Asia; and without controversy the peace and stability of these regions, as of any other part of this globe, cannot and will not be treated as of no concern to the mighty nations of the world.

The ensuing pages are meant to unravel before the gaze of the reader, in a pageant full of life and colour, the march of history in Burma and the strides of Burmese heroes over the mountains, valleys and rivers of their country. The book will be found of use not only to students of history but also to the general reader and those interested in international relations. The 'Pageant' is entirely a historical work based on facts admitted by historians to be history. A Glossary together with Notes is added which will be of particular use to those uninitiated in things Burmese.

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Chapter I

BURMA IN PRE-HISTORY

Burma consists of parallel river valleys and mountain ranges running north to south. Two thousand years ago, more or less, when the Tai-Chinese, Mon-Khmer, and Tibeto-Burmese races began entering the river valleys from the north, Burma in many respects was a very different country from what it is now. Most probably the deltaic regions south of modern Prome and Pegu did not exist, but that the sea held sway there, washing the southern spurs of the Burmese Yomas and embracing within its fold a number of small islands as on the Arakanese coast at the present time. It is possible, the Arakan and Tenasserim regions consisted merely of hills, rocks, and forests, while their present-day coastal plains were under Neptune’s rule.

The country was indeed very rich in mineral and other resources, but human skill was not present to turn these into real wealth. Oil, rubies, silver, lead, tin, wolfram, etc. were all there safely under lock and key, waiting for those who would have the key of knowledge to bring them to light. At the present time 57% of the face of Burma is covered with forests. Two thousand years ago the percentage was much higher. In the unplanned and unexplored dense forests of the country roamed not only the ancestors of the present-day elephants, tigers, and other wild beasts, but lions and other denizens of the jungle as well. The country belonged to beasts, birds, reptiles, and other creatures, not to man. They fought their own battles in the struggle for existence, not much hindered by man, and they rejoiced in the freedom imparted to them by nature, with more than enough sustenance for themselves and for coming generations.

As to climate, wetness and dampness must have been the order of the day except in mid-summer; but civilized man was not affected thereby since he had not yet come to make his abode in the land. There were a few scattered dwellings of the ancestors of the present-day aboriginal Andamanese,
and these made their living by hunting, fishing, and making use of the vegetation that was freely available in all its abundance. In time, no one can tell exactly when, Mongolian tribes from the north began coming down the river valleys. They are still coming. It is possible the ancestors of the Mons and the Karens were among the first to discover Burma which was still waiting for a name to be given to it. Then came the Tibeto-Burmans, whose numbers, it appears, were comparatively larger. Much later the Shans began their infiltration, and still later the Chins, Kachins, and others. For Burma's present size of 261,000 sq. miles, her population today, viz. 19 millions, is small. One thousand to fifteen hundred years ago her population was very sparse indeed. It must have been much less than one million souls. These animistic, illiterate spirit-worshippers fought among themselves and also fought other tribes for the possession of the best river banks of the country. They built huts for themselves and began settling on the land in kin groups which developed into scattered villages under chieftains of their own.

Much before the Mongolian tribes began their invasion of Burma, the Aryans had begun entering India from the north-western passes. By c. 750 B.C. they spread over the whole face of the land. In the struggle for the possession of fertile lands and regal power, leaders and followers began to push into Ceylon and Burma, by land as well as by sea, and founded kingdoms. By the early centuries A.D. they went even beyond and colonised the East Indies founding kingdoms and empires. These immigrant warriors, rulers, and their followers brought with them the arts of civilization in which were laid the foundations of the culture and political history of Burma.

Indians established colonies and kingdoms in Burma in localities now known as Tagaung, Pagan, Thaton, Prome, Pegu, Rangoon, etc. Burmese chronicles speak of the founding of Tagaung and Prome kingdoms in the 9th century B.C.; but this is an exaggeration. The 2nd or the 3rd century is more probable. Thamala is supposed to have founded Pegu in the 9th century A.D. It is possible, however, it was built in an earlier age. Arakanese chronicles trace the lineage of
the Rajas of Dinnyawadi as far back as 2666 B.C. which again is an exaggeration. One Sandathuriya (Chandrasurya) is supposed to have come to the throne in A.D. 146 Indians brought to Burma organised religion, first Brahmanism, later Buddhism. They also brought the arts of civilization: the alphabet, Pali literature, customary law, etc, which in process of time produced what is now known as Burmese civilization.

There is enough material in the earliest literature of India to picture the life and civilization of the Indo-Aryans, and of the Indians who colonised parts of Burma during this early age. The same picture of Mongolian tribes settled in Burma is not available. The Indian Rajas in Burma and their followers through inter-marriage with the women of the country and by permanent settlement in the land became Burmanized.

The Mongolian tribesmen, who settled early in Burma, were courageous warriors and cheerful by nature. They were not a tall people, but were of sturdy build. They had oblique Mongolian eyes as well as the tendency to high cheek-bones. They did not possess the prominent nose of the Aryans. As immigrants their dress must have been of a scanty nature like that of the Nagas of the present day.

The movement of races has played an important part in the history of countries and of nations. This movement is still going on, and is often directed on a planned scale. The Americas, Australia, New Zealand, and other parts of the world have been colonised during the modern age. The movements of the Indo-Aryans, namely, the Hindus, Persians, Hellenes, Latins, Celts, Gauls, Saxons, Slavs, etc. in the past profoundly influenced the march of human history. The coming of the so-called Mongolian tribes into Burma, and the influence of the Indians and the Chinese upon them, opened the first chapter in the history of civilization in Burma.

How they came, what they wore on their bodies, and other details of their social life, can only be guessed. Did they know the use of the wheel-cart, which is one of the greatest inventions of human ingenuity? Did they possess the domesticated horse? Did they use iron weapons? These and many such questions may be raised, but no definite reply is possible.
One thing is certain, the immigrants did not know the art of reading and writing, and possessed no literature. They came in small numbers, but, it is possible, in a steady stream. They hugged the banks of the great rivers of Burma, and as their population increased, they began to occupy more and more of the river valleys, and made free use of the forests around them for the construction of their huts, for food, and for fuel.

It would be interesting indeed if they could have left authentic records of their original homes, the vicissitudes of their lives, the storms and stress of their journeyings, their internal quarrels during the course of their movements, their wars with foreign tribes, and their settlement in the country which they ultimately named 'Myanma pyi', later corrupted into the term 'Burma'. The history of Burma in written records does not assume an acceptable measure of authenticity till we come to the 11th century A.D. Nevertheless, much anterior to it, the ancestors of the present-day Burmese peoples were in occupation of the country, and led a life which in their estimation was of the highest importance in the struggle for existence against the forces of nature and the opposition of rivals.

Chapter II

KINGS AND POLITICS IN BURMA IN THE FIRST MILLENNIUM A.D.

For a good part of this period and during the centuries B.C. the art of writing was unknown in Burma. Historical material therefore in documentary form or as records on wood, stone, etc. is not available. The Indian alphabet, it is possible, came to Burma in the 4th century A.D. Inscriptions began to make their appearance in Burma from this date onwards. These were in western Indian, south Indian, and north Indian scripts, fundamentally the Nagari or the Sanskritik lipi. Information, however, is very scanty; but combined with Chinese references to Burma, and taking into consideration
the conditions of the times, it is possible, though vaguely so, to draw a rough picture of Burma politics during the period under review.

As the ancestors of the Burmese peoples in that age began to settle on Burmese soil, they did so in kin groups or scattered villages. Communal land tenures and rigid clan customs governed them. They had leaders, who under more settled conditions of life, assumed importance as chieftains. In process of time kings also made their appearance. The country, in its habitable parts, came to be studded with little kingdoms. In the struggle for existence against nature, and in the endeavour to earn a living from the forest, the waters, and the valleys, the game of politics was confined to just a few ambitious men who as commanders of little armies aspired to local rulership. There was a complete absence of organized government; also the rule of one man over a large area was neither present nor practicable. There were no roads. The major part of the face of Burma was covered with dense forests. All government was local, and was confined largely to the village. Overlordship was claimed by certain chiefs and princes, but this was not of a permanent nature, and it was not possible to maintain it effectively for any length of time. Chieftains and princes were those who occupied large and best lands, received tribute and taxes in kind, could by force of personality raise little armies, and maintained some kind of order as supreme magistrates and judges. The kingdom consisted of one or more villages approximating at the most to a modern township or a small district. There were little wars among neighbouring princes for personal reasons, but also for the possession of better lands, for overlordship, for plunder, and for the capture of human beings to be sold or used as slaves.

In Upper Burma most probably there were Shan princes who owed allegiance to Nanchao, also a Shan kingdom, which in turn owed allegiance to the Emperor of China. In the rest of the country there were princes and rajas, Karen, Mon, Pyu, Indian, Burmese, etc. but not necessarily of pure descent. Racial admixture was the order of the day. The victorious prince often claimed as wife a daughter of the
vanquished opponent. Even the last dynasty of Burmese kings, right up to the 19th century A.D., maintained the tradition that the eldest daughter of the king must remain unmarried, so that in case of defeat in war, she could be offered as a matrimonial propitiation to the victorious foe. The range of politics was limited not only to a few individuals round the person and household of the prince, but also in its extent as bounded merely by their geographical knowledge which was strictly local.

The ancient sites of political Burma were at Thaton, Twante, Rangoon, and Pegu as belonging to the Mons, otherwise called Talaings. Other centres were: Sandoway and Vesali of the Arakanese; Tagaung belonging to the Shans; and Prome, Halin, Nyaunglun, Peikthano, and Powndaung of the Pyus. Many of these sites were originally the seats of Indian princes. They and their followers, it appears from traditions extant, as well as from inscriptions and local chronicles, were the founders of a number of these kingdoms in Burma. By marriage with wives from the local population, their dynasties and culture became Burmanized. Many of the names of these administrative seats of princes were originally Indian. Ussa, which was the old name of Pegu, is the same word as Orissa. Pegu was colonised from Orissa. Rangoon is old Dagon because of the great Hindu temple, which under later Buddhist influence developed into the Shwedagon pagoda. Dinnyawadi in Akyab district is supposed to have been founded in the 2nd century A.D. by King Sandathuriya (Chandrasurya). Vesali, also in Arakan, is named after an ancient Indian capital city in Bihar. Almost every city of any importance carried with it a classical name which was Indian. The people called Pyu in Burmese chronicles, who used the Indian alphabet, and of whom we scarcely know anything, may well have been Indian tribes. Were they the Indian Pandus (!) or were they Mongolian tribes who came to Burma via Bihar and Bengal? It is supposed that they were Tibeto-Burman tribes; but this is as much a guess as to affirm that they were Indian Pandus.

Burmese chronicles relate that King Abhiraja with his followers of the Sakya clan came from Kapilvastu in India,
and founded the city of Tagaung in Upper Burma in 850 B.C.; and that this city of Tagaung was overthrown by the Chinese in 600 B.C. The king and his people then migrated down the River Irrawaddy and founded the old or the first city of Pagan. Later they went further south, and in 443 B.C. founded the city of Prome. Duttapaung (443-373 B.C.) is said to have been this great king and founder of Prome. In A.D. 95, it is said, Prome was destroyed owing to a civil war. The Promites then migrated northwards, and in A.D. 105 founded the second city of Pagan. Here they produced a great king, Pyusawti (A.D. 168-243). The dates given are, it is certain, quite wrong: just the guess-work of later writers. The details may also be quite muddled. The modern view is that the Pyu migrated from Prome and founded the city of Pagan, rather than that they came down from Pagan and established the kingdom of Prome. Indications, however, are not lacking that Indian Rajas ruled at various centres in Burma, that they gave Indian names to their towns, and that they handed down royal dynastic traditions and customs which were in practice at Burmese courts right up to the age of the last Burmese dynasty of the 18th and 19th centuries A.D.

Politics and administration, under the circumstances indicated, were in the hands of princes and their royal households in this age. Burma was not one country, there was no demarcation of its boundaries, and it was not known by the name it now bears or by any other name. It was just a congeries of petty princedoms, Indian, Shan, Mon, Burmese, Karen, etc.

Chinese sources speak of Burma in the 9th century A.D. as a country of eighteen states and nine walled towns, all acknowledging the suzerainty of the Pyu who had Prome as their capital. Pyu inscriptions show that a Vikrama dynasty, who most probably were Indian or Indo-Pyu princes, ruled at Prome. The Burmese have preserved the legend of Duttapaung, a Pyu chief. There are strong traces of Sivaism in it. It is possible, the Pyu kings claimed lordship over states situated in what we now call central Burma. In A.D. 802 a Pyu prince is said to have visited the court of China and
paid homage to the Emperor. The prince’s followers sang songs which contained Sanskrit words. When the Pyu kingdom of Prome fell early in the 9th century A.D., Prince Pyinbya shifted northwards and established himself at Pagan which he fortified with a wall. Here in course of time arose the great Anawrahta who founded the power and empire of Pagan in the 11th century A.D.

Thaton in Lower Burma was the centre of a Mon kingdom under kings who perhaps were as much Mon as Indian. Thamala was king of Pegu (A.D. 825-837). It appears that he had made himself king after defeating and driving out a rival. He sent his brother Wimala, heir-apparent to the throne, to be educated at the University of Taxila in India. Meanwhile Thamala married a Karen wife, and a daughter was born to them. After completing his education Wimala returned to Pegu, but not being welcomed by his brother, he rebelled, slew his brother, and usurped the throne. At that very time the Karen queen gave birth to a son. Wimala sought to slay him too, but the infant’s protectors managed to save him. He was brought up by some loyal herdsmen, and grew into a valiant youth of great physical strength. After Wimala had reigned for sixteen years, he was challenged by the old rival of Thamala who came with a large army in ships, wherefrom is not known, may be from a neighbouring Indian state or from India. The general of the invading force was a man of gigantic stature. Wimala was unable to stand up against this formidable foe, and shut himself up in Pegu. Ultimately his valiant nephew, Thamala’s son, came to the rescue, raised the siege and saved Pegu. In gratitude, Wimala created his nephew heir-apparent.

As civilization began to spread and develop in the country, Burma was bound to produce more ambitious rulers who would seek to unify the whole country politically. From the 11th century A.D. onwards several attempts were made in this direction; but it was not till the 18th century that the Konebaung Empire was established as a permanent feature, covering the whole country geographically as we know Burma at present.
CHAPTER III

BUDDHISM IN BURMA:
THE FIRST MILLENNIUM A.D.

The history of Buddhism in Burma is closely interlinked with the development of Burmese culture and civilization. The immigrant ancestors of the Burmese peoples were Animists who believed in good spirits and evil spirits. Their religious life centred round the attempts to conciliate these spirits. Even up to the present time, the typical Burmese family practises not only Buddhism, but for certain purposes Animism too. In all parts of the world organized religion has come to have very close links with the commercial instincts of man. It is one of the great avenues for a lucrative profession. The development of Buddhism in India and in Burma has not been an exception to this feature. Religion has also its moral side; and it is this influence which has given character to Burmese civilization.

The Indian Gautam Buddha (563-483 B.C.) was not the founder of any organized religion. He was a great reformer, moralist, and philosopher. He sought to show the path to freedom from existence and misery without the help of forms, ritual, priesthood, or anything material. He founded a new order of monks. After his death this order began to develop on religious lines. During the Buddha’s life-time, his teachings were known only in the districts of Magadha and Kosala. During the period between his death and Asoka, that is 483-259 B.C., the movement did not gain much ground. The First Buddhist Council was held in 477 B.C. at Rajagriha. It was merely a local council, and it was not possible for it to be anything more than local. Commonly Buddhists hold that the canon, the Tripitaka, was settled at this Council. This is very doubtful. A part of the canon may have been settled; but it was over 200 years later, in Asoka’s reign, that the canon was finally settled. Meanwhile new schools of Buddhism had begun to appear; but Buddhism was still one of the many Brahmanic sects or orders.
The Second Buddhist Council was held in 380 B.C. at Vaisali. It was also a local council. It passed stern decrees against the demands of groups which desired relaxations in the rules of discipline for monks. Buddhism being still a local sect, up to 259 B.C., it could not have found entrance into Burma as an organized religion. Buddhistic ideas may, however, have filtered through as Indian colonists began to enter Burma. It was during the reign of Asoka in the 3rd century B.C. that Buddhism came to be known all over India. Asoka adopted the moral principles of the Buddha’s teachings and gave a new character to them. He appealed to young and old to be truthful and courteous, to eschew violence, and to honour father and mother, teachers and elders. He was the second maker of Buddhism. He developed Buddhism on these lines, and taught his principles zealously through his officers as well as in schools, on rocks and on pillars. Under his patronage the number of monks greatly increased, and throughout India a large number of monasteries came to be established. He also sent missionaries to foreign countries, and thus laid the foundation of the Buddhist religion outside India also. It was in this age that stupas or dagobas or pagodas began to be erected to the memory of the Buddha; but there was as yet no worship of the Buddha and no images. The principle of pilgrimages also developed in this age, and certain places associated with the Buddha’s life and activities came into prominence, such as, the Lumbini gardens his birth-place, Kapilvastu where he renounced, the world, Buddha Gaya where he attained enlightenment, etc. The Third Buddhist Council (250 B.C.) was held in Asoka’s reign, and it was here that the first serious attempt was made to enumerate the sacred books and to preserve the canon, the Tripitaka.

Burmese chronicles say that Thaton in Lower Burma received Buddhism from Sona and Uttara, the two missionaries of Asoka sent forth from Pataliputra, the imperial capital. Asoka sent his missionaries to other neighbouring countries too, and even to distant Egypt and Macedonia. That the history of Buddhism in Burma began with Sona and Uttara is, however, an overstatement. It is quite possible
they and other missionaries, too, came. The entrance, spread
and development of Buddhism in Burma was a gradual
process through multifarious contacts with India, and Ceylon
particularly, and with Tibet and China as well. Meanwhile,
during the period from 100 B.C. to A.D. 500 the northern
school of Mahayana Buddhism began to develop in India
as well as in China, in Tibet, and in Central Asia, assuming
various forms as influenced by local traditions, practices,
and tastes. This great change in Buddhism, gradually intro-
duced, included a joyous paradise, an idolatrous polytheism,
belief in supernatural powers, Tantric and other cults, priest-
hood and priestcraft, rites and ceremonies, holidays and feast-
days, etc. The Mahayana Bodhisatvas were really the Hindu
gods and goddesses of old under new names.

Hinayana, the other school of Buddhism, claimed to be
the original form of Buddhism. Actually, however, it was
neither the Buddha’s Buddhism nor Asoka’s Buddhism: it
was a milder form of Mahayana Buddhism. It did not take
the full Mahayana path towards traditionalism; but it too
developed on lines of ritual, priestcraft, feastdays, images,
prayers, etc. It, however, clung on to the scriptures in Pali,
while Mahayana preferred the canon in Sanskrit. During
the period from A.D. 500 to 700, Buddhism in India came
to be almost completely absorbed into Brahmanism. Indeed
the process had been going on from the very century of its
inception. Its last vestiges in Bihar were wiped out in the
12th century by Mohammedan invaders. Kanchi, that is
Conjeveram on the Madras coast, however, continued to
hold out for some time as an important centre of Hinayana
Buddhism, which also found a home in Ceylon.

The Hinayana Buddhism of modern Burma is akin to
that found in Siam, Cambodia, and Ceylon. The ancestors
of the Burmese peoples were originally Animists. With the
coming of the Indians, Brahmanic principles and practices
were introduced into the country. These Indian colonists
built shrines in public places. Later came Buddhist ideas
and practices, and as Buddhism began to gain ground, these
shrines developed into pagodas. Some of these temples are
now famous centres of Buddhist pilgrimage and worship,
such as the Shwedagon at Rangoon, the Shwemawdaw at Pegu, the Shwezayan at Thaton, etc.

It is possible Upper Burma received Mahayana Buddhism from northern India and Tibet, while Lower Burma began to absorb the Hinayana cult from Conjeveram and Ceylon. Largely under the human instinct of commercialism, votaries and monks began to establish religious centres in various parts of the country; or as the Hebrew prophet would say, 'on every high hill, and under every green tree'. Worshippers and offerers of sacrifices and alms were under the religious instinct drawn to these places. Monuments and images set up in remembrance and honour of the Buddha became a great attraction. The Mahamuni shrine at Dinnyawadi in Arakan is perhaps the oldest Buddhist temple in Burma. Tradition ascribes it to King Sandathuriya, the period of whose reign, according to local chronicles, was A.D. 146-198. Lower Burma boasted of Hinayana traditions; but old landmarks and relics in this region show that religious beliefs and practices were really a mixture of both Brahmanism and Buddhism. Burmese chronicles relate that in A.D. 403 the great Buddhaghosa brought the scriptures in Pali from Ceylon to Thaton. In the 11th century A.D. Thaton certainly had the Tripitaka in Pali. It was to acquire these scriptures that in 1057 Anawrahta of Pagan overthrew the kingdom of Thaton. It may be pretty safely concluded that in Lower Burma, that is in the Talaing country, a form of Hinayana Buddhism prevailed during the later centuries of the first millennium A.D.

The Talaings have preserved the interesting story of their heroine Bhadradevi. King Tissa (1043-1057) of Pegu did not believe in the Buddha and his law; he favoured the Brahmans. He ordered his subjects not to worship the image of the Buddha; but Bhadradevi was a devout Buddhist and fearlessly worshipped his images. The king ordered her to be trampled by an elephant: but no elephant would do so although many were brought. They would simply trumpet and stand still. Then the king ordered her to be burnt; but the fire refused to burn the wood pile. When the message reached the king, he ordered her to be brought before him.
The king said he would give her one test, namely, that if she caused eight images of the Buddha to fly up into the sky she would live, otherwise she would be cut to pieces. The maiden prayed earnestly, and lo and behold, eight images of the Buddha flew up to heaven, and the king saw it. Tissa then discarded the Brahmans, became a Buddhist, and made Bhadradevi his chief queen.

The Mahayana Buddhism of Upper Burma developed on very corrupt lines and prevailed right up to the 11th century A.D. The leaders of this cult are shown to have been thirty Ari lords who had some sixty thousand pupils. Their centre was Thamahti near Pagan. They were bearded men, wore robes dyed blue-black, rode on horses, drank wine, worshipped Naga the snake god, and practised magic. They had the Mahayana canon in Sanskrit. They knew the art of writing and used it in various ways to deceive their ignorant followers. They taught that even if serious sins were committed, the course of karma could be evaded by reciting certain formulas prescribed by them. Burmese chronicles brand them as cheats who in addition practised immorality in a most ingenious manner. It is claimed that Anawrahta wiped out Arism from Upper Burma and established Hinayana Buddhism throughout the land. It is scarcely possible, however, that the modern type of Burmese Buddhism prevailed all over the country during the first millennium A.D. Animism was largely the order of the day. From the days of Anawrahta, it is certain the history of Buddhism began to take a new turn.

Chapter IV

ANAWRAHTA: THE FIRST MAKER OF BURMA

ANAWRAHTA (1044-1077) was the first great unifier of Burma. In the legendary chronicles of Burma there are several names of early rulers to whom greatness is assigned. Such were Abhiraja, the Sakya prince who is said to have established the kingdom of Pagan; Duttapaung, the founder of Prome; Pyusawti, king of Pagan and a valiant soldier; and Pyinbya,
who fortified the city of Pagan. The truth concerning these figures is however lost in the mist of pre-history, no authentic records concerning them being available. With Anawrahta, on the other hand, the student of history enters a field which is less conjectural.

So far no one has been able to prove definitely what Anawrahta was by race: an Indian or a half-Indian prince, a Burman or a Pyu-Burman. His name may well have been a form of the Indian Anuruddha. There is no doubt, however, that in the Burmese mind he is one of their greatest heroes. Indeed his achievement was of no mean character, considering particularly the times in which he lived and that in a country covered with forests with no roads to help him towards the fulfilment of a unified Burma. He was a man of untiring energy and strong personality. He had the knack of choosing the right type of helpers and subordinates who remained faithful to him. He could command the obedience of many thousands of his subjects in peacetime and during war, when at home and while abroad.

To the Burmese mind the greatness of Anawrahta lies first and foremost in his religious achievement. When he came to the throne, Upper Burma was under the religious heel of the detestable Ari priests who were corrupt themselves and who corrupted the land. Anawrahta had high moral standards. He decided to purge the kingdom of the Ari octopus and establish instead the true religion of the Buddha. His personality is evident in his firm resolve to root out Arism. He punished the Ari priests, he scattered them, he exiled them: he broke their power. But his religious rôle was not merely of a negative nature. The extirpation of Arism was with a view to the establishment of Hinayana Buddhism in the land. Anawrahta found a providential helper in Arhan, a Talaing monk who was a Hinayanist. He advised Anawrahta to spread this form of Buddhism in the country. The Ari lords, it is possible, were not merely religious leaders, but some kind of ruling chiefs, or at least great landlords as well and like the kings of ancient Sumeria they combined in their person both priesthood and magisterial power. Anawrahta must not have any rivals, and, of course, not
the votaries of an immoral system of religion presided over by these deceitful lords. Anawrahta came forward as the champion of the true Buddhist religion. He patronised Hinayana monks, he built monasteries and pagodas, and thus laid the foundation for an enduring moral, social, religious, and so a national unity for his kingdom and people, a unity which remains unshaken up to the present time. In doing so, Anawrahta also firmly founded his own dynasty. The Pagan monarchy was popularised as being the protector of religion, of monks, of what is good. The king was proclaimed as the defender of the faith. This tradition became a permanent feature in Burmese history, strengthening monarchical authority and drawing the minds of the people in subjection and faithfulness to the king as the supreme and rightful autocrat. He made full use of the religious sentiment in man to the establishment and maintenance of royal and imperial authority.

Anawrahta was an ambitious imperialist. It is impossible to say definitely if he was imbued with the desire of national unification territorially, looking upon Burma as meant to be one country and under one national government. It is quite possible such a view would be anachronistic in character. There is, however, no doubt that he laid the foundations of a dynastic empire for a united Burma, and established the tradition that all Burma should be under one ruler as overlord. In 1057 he conquered the Mon kingdom of Thaton in Lower Burma. Later he subdued northern Arakan. He also marched his army into Nanchao, but failed to accomplish anything substantial there, except that some of the Shan princes paid homage to him. It is possible he also visited Chittagong. When he came to the throne of Pagan, his kingdom was only about 16,000 sq. miles in area. At his death it included all Burma west of 97° longitude, and in addition almost the whole of the Tenasserim region, but not including southern Arakan. This would mean an area of about 160,000 sq. miles. If it may be called an empire, it was of a loose unorganized nature. It could not have been anything more than this because of the difficulty of maintaining communications. All government was local, perhaps confined to the
village. For the safety of his dominions, Anawrahta established a number of outposts along the eastern border running from north to south. These outposts also consisted of villages.

Anawrahta was not a mere raider. He took measures to develop his kingdom economically. He repaired the Meiktila Lake. He constructed the irrigation system of Kyaukse, building weirs and canals on the Panlaung and Zawgyi rivers. Villages sprang up in this area, which came to be called the Rice Country. Indeed it became the granary of Upper Burma and its economic key. It became the ambition of later contesting rivals for the hegemony of Upper Burma to possess this fertile tract, the bowl of northern Burma. Anawrahta was truly a ruler possessing foresight, not merely a roving plunderer.

Anawrahta has undoubtedly left a deep impress of his personality upon the history of his country as one of the makers of Burma and the promoter of civilization. As a result of the conquest of the kingdom of Thaton, he directly stimulated the spread of civilization in Upper Burma. Not only was the Tripitaka in Pali brought to Pagan, but also learned monks, craftsmen, and such others were transferred in large numbers from the Talaing country to Pagan and Upper Burma. Before the days of Anawrahta Lower Burma under the Mons was the most advanced part of Burma. Anawrahta's conquest of Thaton spread the civilization of the south into northern Burma as well. Anawrahta is recognized as a great national figure. His rôle was that of the earliest pioneer in the unification of Burma: the First Maker of Burma.

Chapter V

Kyanzittha: The Beloved Monarch

Kyanzittha is one of the most romantic figures in Burmese history. From birth to death this feature in his life and activities is maintained. He was not one of the makers of Burma, but he is a dazzling figure, marked by chivalry, and one
who attracts attention and commands sympathy and respect. He is one of the great heroes of Burma.

His mother, Panchkalyani, was most probably an Indian princess from some petty state in Arakan. Some would have Anawrahta for his father; others would have it differently. His parentage is shrouded in mystery. At his birth, Anawrahta out of superstitious fear sought to slay him, and like Herod of old did to death hundreds of little boys, but he failed to lay hold on Panchkalyani’s son. Hence he was named Kyanzittha, that is ‘he who survived the search’. Anawrahta feared in Kyanzittha a rival to the Pagan throne. But ultimately he relented, and recognizing the youth’s fine bearing and martial possibilities, employed him in his army.

Kyanzittha distinguished himself as a soldier in the king’s service. When in 1057 Anawrahta invaded Thaton, Kyanzittha was only a youth, but like the Black Prince of Plantagenet England, he played a notable part in the war and won his spurs. Anawrahta recognized the talents of the rising star, and later even entrusted him with an army to deal with the Shans who were periodically threatening Pegu and the king’s southern dominions. Kyanzittha marched down with his Indian troops and carried out his task with great dispatch. He dazzled the Talaings with his brilliance and they recognized him as their deliverer from Shan eruptions.

Kyanzittha, however, soon got into trouble. His mother had been banished, since as Anawrahta’s bride she was suspected of welcoming the attentions of one of the king’s courtiers. Anawrahta now also banished Kyanzittha, since the latter had won the affections of Lady Khin U, another bride-to-be of Anawrahta. Anawrahta really meant to kill his rival, but Kyanzittha escaped. For years he remained in exile, fleeing from place to place to hide from the king’s wrath. He remained in obscurity with his wife Thambula right up to 1077, the date of Anawrahta’s death.

Kyanzittha now entered the third phase of his chequered career. Anawrahta was succeeded by his son Sawlu. Now Sawlu did not possess kingly talents and soon got into trouble through his own foolishness. A formidable rebellion was raised against him by one of his great officers Yamankan.
(Rahmankhan), a Mohammedan. Yamankan won over the Talaings, and promised to punish and overthrow the hated Paganites who had destroyed the ancient kingdom of Thaton a quarter of a century earlier. Yamankan took advantage of the Talaing discontent, made himself their leader, and aspired to royalty himself. Sawlu was no soldier. He did not understand the tactics of war; but recognizing the military talents of Kyanzittha summoned him at this hour of crisis. Kyanzittha immediately responded, and was created commander-in-chief. All would have gone well had Kyanzittha been left in full charge; but Sawlu was rash, and ordered battle without manoeuvring his troops into a favourable position. The result was that he suffered a disastrous defeat (1084), and was captured by Yamankan. Kyanzittha fled from the field. When he arrived in Pagan, he was offered the throne, but refused it, and in faithfulness declared that the king was alive, and he would try his best to rescue him. Kyanzittha now disguised himself and entered Yamankan's camp with the object of helping Sawlu to escape. It was a bold attempt, undertaken at the risk of his own life. Kyanzittha reached his quarry at dead of night, placed the king on his shoulders, and would have succeeded in his brave enterprise but for the ungratefulness of Sawlu. Sawlu foolishly suspected Kyanzittha of ill-will towards him and gave the alarm. Perforce Kyanzittha had to drop his royal burden and flee for his life. Yamankan had Sawlu executed.

The rebel army, flushed with success, now appeared before Pagan, and threatened to overthrow the kingdom founded by Anawrahta. But Pagan was a walled town, and Yamankan did not possess the wherewithal to level its walls to the ground. The leaders of Pagan knew of only one who could save the city and the kingdom. They offered the crown to Kyanzittha. This time he accepted it (1084), and made preparations to meet the challenge of the Talaings under Yamankan. The rebel army was completely routed and Yamankan fled by boat down the river. He was pursued, however, and a well-directed arrow from one of his pursuers put an end to his life. The rebellion now fizzled out, and the first great attempt of the Talaings to overthrow Pagan, in spite of its
near success, was thwarted by the heroic Kyanzittha, the people’s man.

There was great rejoicing in Pagan at the coronation of the new king. The ritual was Brahmancial, and was conducted with much solemnity, monks and maidens taking part in it. He was handed the five regalia, namely, the white umbrella, the yak-tail fan, the crown, the sword, and sandals. That Kyanzittha was popular with the masses and was now king by the people’s choice is evident from his Talaing inscription in the Shwezigon pagoda at Pagan: ‘With loving kindness...shall king Kyanzittha wipe away the tears of those who are parted from their trusty friends...his people shall be unto him as a child to its mother’s bosom...he shall soften the hearts of those who intend evil...he shall exhort to speak good those who speak evil. With wisdom, which is even as a hand, shall king Kyanzittha draw open the bar of the Gate of Heaven, which is made of gold and wrought with gems. Kings’ daughters, fragrant with the fragrance of jasmine flowers, splendid with the splendour of Alambusa, spouse of king In, shall wait upon him....’

Kyanzittha, like Anawrahta, was the overlord of the Pagan dominions. It appears that he maintained the boundaries of the empire of Anawrahta, and continued to control northern Arakan. During his reign many monks from India were welcomed by Kyanzittha and granted asylum in Pagan. In imitation of the Ananta temple in Orissa, the king built the Ananda temple in Pagan proclaiming aloud his interest in Buddhism. Inside the temple, in front of a gigantic statue of the Buddha, there kneel two life-size statues, one of Kyanzittha and the other of a monk. They have been kneeling there for over eight centuries now. Kyanzittha’s posture is that of a devotee with folded hands in adoration of the Buddha. His features are that of an Indian prince depicting a powerful personality, marked by dignity and simplicity. He made Pagan one of the important religious centres of Buddhism.

Kyanzittha established a link with India too. Pilgrims from Burma were in the habit of visiting Buddhist religious centres in that country, particularly the Buddhagaya temple. Kyanzittha contributed towards the repairs of this shrine.
He sent by boat divers kinds of gems for the temple, and lights, which a Talaing inscription in Prome says, 'should burn for ever there'. This interesting record in Prome further says: 'Thereafter, king Kyanzittha builded anew, making them finer than before, the great buildings of king Asoka, for they were old and in ruins. In this respect no other king is like king Kyanzittha.'

Kyanzittha died in 1112, being about seventy years of age. He maintained his dominions in peace and earned the love and respect of his grateful subjects. His son by Thambula set up the famous Myazedi Pillar south of Pagan. It has four faces with an identical inscription on each face, in Pali, Talaing, Pyu, and Burmese respectively. The inscription is of chronological and linguistic importance. It fixes the dates of the reigns of the early kings of Pagan including Kyanzittha. It mentions the death of Kyanzittha and that he 'fell sick unto death'. Thus passed from the scene this romantic figure, a good king and a fine soldier.

CHAPTER VI

ALAUNGSITHU: THE KING WHO LEARNT HUMILITY

ALAUNGSITHU ascended the Pagan throne in 1112, an offshoot of two famous stocks. On his father's side Anawrahta was his great grandfather, while Kyanzittha was his maternal grandfather. So great was King Kyanzittha's joy when his grandchild was born that he crowned the infant and presented him to his subjects in open court as the new king. Brought up as a pampered royal grandson, superseding his uncle Yazakumar, son of Thambula, Alaungdaw Katha seems to have grown up as a spoilt child. His mother and his attendants filled his little heart with self-greatness as the coming king, yea, one who was hailed as king from very birth by the reigning monarch himself. The waiting period, till he was twenty-five years of age, he must have found quite galling; but at last the opportunity came.
At Kyanzittha’s death, on coming to the throne, Alaungdawuddu showed tremendous vigour both as an administrator and as a soldier. He tried to introduce uniform weights and measures in his kingdom. He fixed the tical and the basket with their sub-divisions. A number of rebellions broke out in various parts of his dominions, but he crushed them all with a firm hand. The subject state of northern Arakan had passed into the hands of a usurper while Kyanzittha was still living. Alaungdawuddu overthrew the intruder and restored the rightful heir (1118). His successes filled him with inordinate pride. He looked upon himself as the greatest king and glorified himself above his forebears. Finding his position safe in his capital and in the kingdom, he undertook journeys by land and by sea: to Bassein, thence to the Malayan coast; after that the coast of Arakan, and even explored a part of the coast of Bengal. As an overseas traveller, it is possible Alaungdawuddu stands alone among all the kings of the Pagan, Toungoo, and Konebaung dynasties. Perhaps he was inquisitive; may be he loved the sea. It is possible he undertook this long voyage under the advice of his doctors.

Alaungdawuddu contracted a serious disease of the eyes, and even lost his sight for some time. This experience went home: he repented of his pride and turned over a new leaf. He took to religion in all earnestness and built a large number of pagodas in various parts of his dominions: in Minbu, Thayetmyo, Mogok, Shwebo, Monywa, Mandalay, etc, and worshipped in them. The greatest and most splendid of his pagodas was completed in 1144 at Pagan, the Thatpinnyu temple. It is a noble edifice, and stands out majestically occupying pride of place among the numerous pagodas of that temple-city. Also at Pagan he built the Shwegu temple, and on its walls he inscribed his prayer in Pali verse. The prayer shows the changed man that Alaungdawuddu had become. He asks not for earthly nor for angelic greatness, nor even for the splendour of a monarch or of a mighty conqueror. In humility he desires that he may be enabled to show to mankind the right path to eternal happiness: the path of good works, good doctrines, hating the evil ways of greed, anger, and delusion. He prays that he might himself walk
in this path. He would have only that wealth which is legiti-
mately won; but he would forsake even this wealth in pre-
ference to Dhamma. He would become a true disciple of the
Master. He would make a deep study of the Tripitaka. He
would do good to all men. He would acquire merit and virtue.
Yea, his great aspiration and prayer was to become a Buddha:

“But I would build a causeway sheer athwart
The river of Samsara, and all folk
Would speed across thereby until they reach
The Blessed City.”

“Beholding man’s distress
I would put forth mine energies and save
Men, spirits, worlds, from seas of endless change.
By merit of this act I would behold
Mettaya, Captain of the world, endued
With two and thirty emblems, where he walks
Enhaloed on the rainbow pathway fair
Like Meru, King of mountains, and sets free
Samsara’s captives by his holy words.
There might I hear good Law, and bending low
Offer the four things needful to the Lord
And all his monks, till clad in virtue eight,
Informed by such a Teacher, I become
A Buddha in the eyes of spirits and men.”

As age crept upon Alaungsithu, his character became
more mellowed. He rebuked his eldest son Minshinzaw for
his pride and ill-treatment of others, and would have kept
him in confinement but for the intercession of the queen and
the ministers. ‘If he is like this while I am alive,’ said the
king, ‘what will he be when I am dead? He will be like a
cat among the chickens.’

Alaungsithu died a tragic death. When almost 81 years
of age, he fell sick unto death. When he fell into coma, his
second son Narathu, anxious to take the throne, removed
the aged monarch to the Shwegu temple to die there (1167).
Alaungsithu, however, regained consciousness, and on learn-
ing of his son's trickery his old anger returned to him. But soon he controlled himself. It is possible, he was reminded of his Pali prayer on the walls of the very temple he was dying in. He could not have lived more than a few days more. But Narathu was in a hurry. He would lay hold on the Crown as a wretched patricide. He feared, he hesitated, but just for a moment. He laid hold on the royal bed-clothes. He covered the wrinkled royal face with them. He smothered his father to death!

CHAPTER VII

THE THREE 'NARAS' OF PAGAN: 1167-1210

These were the three kings who came after Alaungsithu: Narathu 1167-70, Naratheinhka 1170-73, and Narapatisithu 1173-1210. The dynasty was now on the road to decline. After Alaungsithu it produced no remarkable ruler. It is very doubtful if Pagan overlordship was now as effective as in days of yore. Respect for the dynasty was also on the wane, owing not only to decline in the royal power, but above all because of moral deterioration in the royal family. Multiplicity of wives and pagodas became a regular hobby with kings. In an empire which was largely an overlordship, the problem of rebellions would keep the king on the alert, provided he had the desire to hold fast to his supremacy. Levies would have to be raised from time to time. The strength or weakness of the king would be known under these tests. The great object of the overlord is not to administer territory, but to collect tribute in human beings, in cash, and in kind. Under the three 'Naras', it appears that failure to render tribute by subordinate princes was connived at. This was the line of safety.

Narathu, after murdering his dying father, ascended the throne, but was challenged by Minshinzaw his elder brother. Narathu, however, made short shrift of his brother by killing him treacherously. To sentence people to death became a game with him. His subjects learnt to hate him, and this
further goaded him into oppression of his people. He laid his hands on the monks, too, and forced some of them into the army. It is possible he disapproved of monasteries becoming a kind of a refuge for those who wished to escape the arm of justice or preferred a life of idleness. Narathu killed his own queen to satisfy a passing whim. But he repented, and tried to expiate his sin by building the Dammayan temple in Pagan. His heart, however, had not changed. He treated the builders of the temple cruelly. In return they produced an edifice, not of beauty, but expressive of the hardness of an impenitent and a cruel heart.

Nemesis soon overtook Narathu. His father-in-law in Arakan burnt to revenge the loss of his daughter. He sent eight of his trusted servants who volunteered to lay down their lives in an attempt to slay the tyrant. They arrived dressed as Brahman to bless Narathu. The king was highly pleased and received them with pleasure. The eight visitors drew towards him with hands upraised in an attitude of blessing and surrounded him. Suddenly from under the folds of their garments they produced deadly gleaming daggers. In a moment, eight daggers were plunged into Narathu’s body, and he fell dead. The erstwhile Brahman then turned their daggers on themselves and nine corpses lay bleeding on the royal floor. The people breathed a sign of relief.

Narathu’s son Naratheinhka now ascended the Lion throne. Neither did he possess the talents of a king. He coveted his brother Narapatisithu’s beautiful wife Veluvat and obtained her by trickery. Narapatisithu remembered how his father had been killed by an enraged father-in-law bereaved of his daughter. To be sure of his quarry, he hired not eight but eighty men to do the deed. They rushed uninvited into the palace enclosure, and rudely disturbed the royal privacy of Naratheinhka. They came openly as angels of death displaying their swords, and surrounded the king. Naratheinhka asked the leader of the assassin gang, ‘Who art thou?’ He replied, ‘Thy servant, Nga Aungswa-nge. O King, thy brother sent me.’ When the wretched Naratheinhka saw white gleaming blades all round him, terror filled his heart. He craved for mercy, and said, ‘Slay me not! Let me only serve my
brother as his watcher of crows, his scarer of fowls! Aungswange was however not to be moved. Pagan royal blood had lost its value. As the sword did its work, a royal ruby earring fell to the ground. The assassins fled.

Narapatisithu, another regicide, now occupied the coveted throne of Pagan and reigned for 37 years. His first act was to kill Aungswange, the leader of the assassin gang. He slew him for his discourtesy to the new king. He also ordered the execution of Anantathuriya, tutor to the late king. Perhaps he suspected him of complicity in the seduction of Veluvati. The learned professor, on being taken to execution, composed a poem and sent it to the king. He warned the monarch in this composition of the transitoriness of wealth and splendour; he craved for pity, and offered free pardon to the king for the treatment meted out to him:

Yes, he is one who, wealth attained  
Shall pass away and disappear;  
'Tis Nature's Law.
Within his golden palace hall,  
Surrounded by his lords in state,  
He sits serene.
But Kings' delights, like eddies small  
On ocean's face a moment seen,  
Are but for life.

Should he show pity and not slay,  
But set me free, my liberty  
'Tis Karma's work.
Of mortals here the elements  
Last not, but change and fall away;  
It is the Law.
The sure result of suppliant acts  
Or prayers, I wish not to transfer  
To future lives:  
T'escape this fate, past sins' result,  
Is my desire. Calmly I'll wait.  
My heart is firm.

Thee, gentle lord, I blameless hold,  
Freely to thee I pardon give,  
'Tis not thy deed.
Danger and death are constant foes
And in this world must ever be:
It is the Law.

When the poem was read to the king, the monarch relented, and commanded that the Saya be set free. But it was too late. The deed had already been done. Narapatisithu now slew the executioners, because they had not presented the poem to him before the execution, but after. The Burmese chronicle says, 'Now when he heard the writing the king had great remorse. Again and yet again he gasped and swooned away. Ever afterwards he refrained and checked his anger; and he commanded the chief executioner, kinsman of the king, saying, 'Henceforth when I am wroth, though I give thee the order to slay a man, keep him alive for a month or weeks and look to the matter. Let him die only when he ought to die. If he ought not to die, release him.'

To neutralise his evil deeds, and to win merit, Narapatisithu built a number of pagodas in Pagan, Thayetmyo, Monywa, Kyaukse, Shwebo, Mergui, Yaunghwe, and Myingyan. When death approached him, he exhorted his five sons to conduct themselves with mercy and justice, and to love one another as brothers should.

Chapter VIII

The Battle of Ngasaunggyan: 1277

The Battle of Ngasaunggyan was fought in the reign of Narathihapte (1254-87), the last ruling king of the Pagan empire. It was in the 13th century that the Tartars came into prominence under Jenghis Khan, Othman, and Kublai Khan. They created a vast empire to control a good part of Asia as well as Europe. While Narathihapte was king at Pagan, the great Kublai Khan ruled over all China and the far flung Tartar empire. In 1253 the Tartars annexed Yunnan. Burma now became their next-door neighbour. Their policy was to extend the empire further south, not so much by annexa-
tion as by inducing monarchs around to acknowledge the overlordship of Peking, and to render at least a nominal tribute to the Great Emperor. In the past, presents occasionally sent to Nanchao and to the Emperor by Prome and Pagan were, according to custom, looked upon as tribute.

In 1271 the Governor of Yunnan, in the name of Kublai Khan, demanded tribute from Pagan. At first Narathihapte ignored the Tartar envoys. Later, however, he sent them back honourably, one of his own courtiers accompanying them with a friendly message to the Emperor. Two years later Kublai Khan himself sent a high officer of state together with followers, and in a letter to Narathihapte, he called upon the Pagan king in duty to enter into a perpetual alliance with Peking, and to send a royal brother or senior minister 'to show men that all the world is linked with US.' 'This will add to your reputation,' the message declared, 'and be in your own interests; for if it comes to war, who will be victor? Ponder well, O King, upon OUR words.'

Narathihapte did not seem to know the power of Kublai Khan. Since the envoys refused to remove their shoes every time the demand was made, they were arrested, and the king ordered their execution. Anantapyissi, one of the Pagan ministers, advised the king not to slay them, but to report their discourtesy to Peking. The king rejected this sound advice and the ambassadors were executed. The grave news was reported to Kublai Khan by the Governor of Yunnan. While the matter was still under consideration at the imperial capital, Narathihapte attacked the prince of Kannagai on the Taping river, for having paid tribute to Peking. The prince appealed to Kublai Khan, and the Emperor ordered immediate action.

The Governor of Yunnan was entrusted with the duty of expelling the Burmese intruders from Kannagai. To China it was just a frontier affair of not much importance, and not more than 15,000 troops could have been employed for the purpose. The Chinese army, however, consisted of first class veteran Tartar cavalry. They carried the bow which they were trained to use while at full gallop. On the Burmese side, the most powerful arm was an Elephant Corps of 2,000 tuskers
with about eight soldiers in each howdah. The elephants were protected with armour. Large hollow bamboo cases, containing lances as reserve weapons for the soldiers, were slung to the sides of these animals. Besides these the Burmans had cavalry and infantry. According to Marco Polo, the Burmese troops were some 85,000 strong, while the Tartars were only 12,000. According to the Burmese version the Chinese numbered six millions, and the Burmans 400,000. The idea of the Burmese chroniclers was that all the might of Kublai Khan's empire was pitted against Burma in this tremendous struggle. It is possible the correct figures range round about 15,000 and 40,000, Tartars and Burmans respectively. The Burmese troops were led by Anantapyissi, the king's wise minister.

When the Tartars realized that the enemy troops outnumbered them, they felt uneasy. Nevertheless they did not retreat, but stationed themselves on a plain with a thick forest as their background. In the meantime the Burmese army advanced with the object of overwhelming the foe by their heavy weight. When a distance of only about a mile separated the two armies, orders were issued for the Elephant Corps to be fully ready to act as the vanguard.

The Tartar cavalry also advanced to meet the oncoming army. But when the horses observed the Burmese elephants, they took fright and refused to face them. They turned back. The Burmans continued to advance, but they were not quick enough to take advantage of the confusion in the Tartar ranks. Kublai Khan's general was a man of experience. He ordered his men to dismount and tie their horses to trees. The dismounted archers then began a fearful discharge, of arrows upon the elephants. The Paganites also replied with their arrows; but they were no match for the Tartars. The wounded beasts turned tail and fled. They became uncontrollable and plunged into the forest dashing their howdahs against trees and causing numerous casualties in the Burmese ranks.

The elephants having been thus disposed of, the Tartars mounted their horses and charged the Burmese cavalry and infantry. A fierce battle now ensued. Marco Polo describes
it in the following words: 'And then the battle began to rage furiously with sword and mace. Right fiercely did the two hosts rush together and deadly were the blows exchanged. The king's troops were far more in number than the Tartars, but they were not of such mettle, nor so inured to war; otherwise the Tartars who were so few in number could never have stood against them. Then might you see slashing blows dealt and taken from sword and mace; then might you see knights and horses and men-at-arms go down; then might you see arms and hands and legs and heads hewn off; and besides the dead that fell, many a wounded man, that never rose again, for the sore press there was. ...Great was the medley, and dire and parlous was the fight on both sides; but the Tartars had the best of it.'

The battle went on till past mid-day, and finally the Burmese army turned and fled. The Tartars pursued them and mercilessly slew large numbers of them. With the help of the Burmese mahouts taken prisoner, the Tartars captured some 200 of the elephants and carried them away as trophies of war. Thus ended the Battle of Ngasaunggyan, fought between two brave armies, one large and unwieldy following old methods, the other small but consisting of seasoned troops and led by more experienced officers.

The Battle of Ngasaunggyan did not destroy the kingdom of Pagan. It was meant simply to solve for China a frontier question that had cropped up. The Chinese had no desire at this time to attempt a conquest of Burma. A small body of their troops after the battle entered Bhamo district and destroyed some stockades which the Paganites had abandoned. After this they withdrew. The battle, however, was a severe blow to the Pagan monarchy, and must have come as a great shock to the royal family. The battle pointed the way to the capture and sack of Pagan eight years later.
CHAPTER IX

HOW PAGAN PERISHED: 1287

The Battle of Ngasaunggyan (1277) was won by the Tartars and the Burmans were driven from Kannagai. Narathihapte, however, failed to learn a lesson from this dreadful defeat. He again raided territory claimed by China to be under her protection. In 1283, therefore, the Emperor sent another army from Yunnan. This time Narathihapte felt convinced that the enemy would attempt to take Pagan. He, therefore, began to fortify his capital. A number of temples had to be demolished for the purpose. In the meantime news arrived that his army on the frontier had suffered a severe defeat at the Battle of Kaungsin (1283), and that casualties numbered about 10,000. This was a fatal blow for he had no further military resources at his command. He thought it hopeless to defend the capital, and so he, his queens, and his ministers fled by boat to Dalla near Rangoon. Thence he proceeded to Bassein where his son Uzana was Governor. Burmese chronicles, therefore, call Narathihapte, ‘Tarokpyimin’, that is, ‘the king who fled from the Chinese’.

The imperial troops, however, had strict orders not to proceed further. The Emperor had no desire to undertake a conquest of Burma. Narathihapte realizing his error, now sought to return to Pagan. When he reached Prome, his son Thihathu, the Governor of the place, forced his father to eat poisoned food which speedily put an end to his life.

Narathihapte’s flight and later his death plunged the valley of the Irrawaddy into disorder. This was the opportunity for the victorious Tartar army, whose soldiers and their officers were longing for the plunder of the famous city of Pagan. There must indeed have been a good quantity of gold and silver and precious stones in the city. So, ignoring imperial orders, they decided to advance. They entered the city and sacked it to their hearts’ content. Tartar troops appeared right up to Prome and carried away whatever valuables they could lay their hands on.
Thus perished Pagan, the city of temples. The Tartars, like their later brethren under Timur in the next century, could have showed no pity to the sons and daughters of Pagan. The inhabitants fled as their huts of bamboo, timber, and thatch went up in flames. Only the great temples built in brick remained standing.

The sack and destruction of the city of Pagan spelled also the disappearance of what remained of the empire of Pagan. The empire was largely an overlordship, local princes and governors being responsible for paying homage and tribute to the king. The king was now no more. The city with a great name, as the political and particularly the religious metropolis of Burma, lay in ruins. Local rulers automatically became independent. Shans from the frontiers began to pour into the country and establish numerous little states of their own.

The Battles of Ngasaunggyan and Kaungsin did not directly destroy the kingdom of Pagan. The decline had been going on since the death of Alaungdawathu. The maintenance of such an overlordship depended largely upon the personality of the monarch. For a hundred years the dynasty had failed to produce a masterful personality with imperialistic ambition and possessing the ability to infuse new life into the fast drying bones of a declining royal house. Murders and quarrels for the possession of the throne and of wives had become the outstanding characteristics of ruling heads, and, it is possible, of their governors too. Kings, princes, governors, and lords, together with the common people came to suffer from the mania of temple and pagoda construction: pagodas small and great, temples quickly built, and temples which took years to raise. Inscriptions by the hundred may be seen all over the city proclaiming in no uncertain terms merits gained and merits desired by the donors or proprietors of the pagodas, shrines, and monasteries. Bricks by the million had to be made. The forests around Pagan had to be cut down for fuel. Thousands of monks living in the temples and the monasteries had to be fed. They thrived on idleness. No one cared to think what the end would be. The Paganites had imprisoned themselves within the coils of traditionalism. Feastings and fastings, new moons and full moons, holidays and puja held
the mastery over their minds. The sky, the river, and the forests were all propitious. But things could not go on forever thus. Decline visible and invisible was making rapid inroads into the vitals of Pagan. The surrounding country began to be denuded of trees. The climate of the region began to change for the worse. Pagan could not live on the waters of the Irrawaddy alone. The slow destruction of the city of Pagan had been going on for more than a hundred years before the Tartar scourge burst upon her. In an earlier age, the territory of the Roman Empire, was slowly but surely occupied by the Barbarians. They founded kingdoms and chieftainships of their own. In like manner was the Pagan Empire also territorially occupied by the immigrant Shans who founded their own little states in the country. This process had been going on much before the two fatal battles with China.

After the destruction of Pagan, Burma politically consisted of a large number of petty princedoms and chieftainships throughout its length and breadth. For the next three centuries the land produced no personality great enough to give political and administrative unity to the country. The Pagan Era, however, had not been a mere passing show. It had laid the foundations for a Burmese nationality. It had firmly established religious uniformity in the country. It had helped to develop a distinctive Burmese civilization. It had pointed the way to what the political map of Burma should be. Pagan perished after more than a century of decline; but its overlordship, in spite of its many shortcomings, had not been exercised in vain.

Chapter X

THE KING WHO FLED FROM THE CHINESE

This was Narathihapte (1254-87), king of Pagan. His mother was not a queen but a concubine. His half-brother Thingathu was the real heir to the throne. The chief minister, Yazathinkyan, however, disliked Thingathu and managed
to set him aside. It happened thus. One day while Yazathinkyan was going along, Thingathu began walking behind him; but Yazathinkyan was unaware of the prince’s presence. It appeared to Thingathu that the minister did not care to take notice of him. Feeling offended he spat betel upon Yazathinkyan, who felt highly insulted, but controlled himself. He went home and laid by his jacket safely in its soiled state. When the prince’s father, King Uzana died in 1254, the lords and ministers came together to consider the question of succession. Thingathu, of course, was the right man in the minds of most of the elders and counsellors. Dramatically, however, Yazathinkyan produced his soiled jacket, recounted the history of the same, and enquired of the amazed courtiers if such a prince would do for them as king. Thingathu was therefore voted down, and Narathihapte ascended the Lion Throne.

Yazathinkyan had his own axe to grind in this manipulation. Narathihapte was only 16 years of age, so that with him as king, all power would fall into the hands of the chief minister. On the other hand, Thingathu was a man of personality, and would certainly have preferred a new chief minister. Yazathinkyan’s authority, however, did not last for long. Narathihapte as king showed a will of his own, and came into conflict with the minister. Yazathinkyan reproached the king, reminded him that he was a concubine’s son, and could never have been king but for his favour. Narathihapte did not take this insult lying down. He acted instantly. “Grandfather,” he addressed Yazathinkyan, “when they crown a pagoda with a spire, wherewith do they raise it?” He replied, “Son of my Lord, they raise the spire by first making a scaffold.” Said the king once more, “When the spire is set on the top of the pagoda what do they do with the scaffold?” Yazathinkyan replied, “Son of my Lord, when the spire is set on the top of the pagoda, it is not graceful until the scaffold is destroyed.” Then said the king, “I am as the spire, Yazathinkyan as the scaffold. As the spire reaches the top of the pagoda, so have I reached kingship. And the spire will not appear graceful until the scaffold, that is to say Yazathinkyan be destroyed. Ho! ministers, seize his office, his elephants and
horses, his minions and retinue, and off with him to Dalla Town.’ And they did as the king had ordered and sent him away.

But Narathihapte was not equal to the responsibilities of his high office. Rebellions broke out towards the west and the south, which he failed to crush. Now his wise queen Saw advised him to recall Yazathinkyan and restore him to office. This he readily did. The old minister crushed the rebellions, set matters right, but never returned to the capital. Worn out with the strenuous campaigns against the rebels, he died at Dalla.

Narathihapte was interested most in his very extensive harem and in his food. He has left an inscription to say that he was ‘the swallower of three hundred dishes of curry daily’. The number of his dishes, however, is just as fictitious as his claim in the same inscription that he had an army of 36 million soldiers. In the 18th century A.D. the population of Burma was not more than 5 million souls all told. In the 13th century A.D. it must have been somewhat less, not more than this figure. Narathihapte was highly suspicious of his sons, and though they were appointed governors of provinces, they had to remain with the king in his palace, so that they might have no opportunity to rebel. He had one of his queens burnt at the stake. The charge was that she had tried to poison him. He often suffered from nightmares after this. Narathihapte was a hard master. He squeezed the rich, and freely practised the principle of escheat in respect of their property. He was often angry with his ministers, captains and officers, and treated them severely. He showed no respect to teachers, monks, and hermits. He could not dwell in peace with the members of his household. He was selfishness incarnate. Whosoever’s sons or daughters he desired, he tore them from their parents. He assumed high sounding titles. His subjects hated him. He kept a large army and was in a position to crush rebellions. But he was totally ignorant of conditions in the outer world. He provoked China to attack him, and this ultimately terminated in the destruction of Pagan.

His army lost to the Chinese the two fiercely fought Battles
of Ngasaunggyan and Kaungsin, 1277 and 1283 respectively. He safely absented himself from the field of battle; and when news of the defeat at Kaungsin reached Pagan, he fled to Bassein. His people, therefore, gave him the title of ‘Tarok-pyimin,’ that is ‘the king who fled from the Chinese.’ He, however, managed to make his peace with the Emperor of China and decided to return to his capital. His wise queen Saw warned him that his son Thihathu, the governor of Prome, would come in his way and there would be no one to help him. He refused to listen and said, ‘I will get me to Prome and gather mine army, and thence will I go up to the royal city of Pagan.’ What the sequel was is well described by the Burmese chronicler in the following words:

‘So they went upstream in disarray, without union or order. And when they reached the port of Prome, Thihathu stopped the royal raft, and putting poison in food he offered it and said, ‘O king, eat.’ But the king wist that there was death in the dish, and he would not eat. When Thihathu heard it he caused three thousand soldiers to go and stand around the royal raft with gleaming swords unsheathed within their hands. And Saw the Queen spake into his ear ‘O king, all this hath befallen because thou wouldest not hearken to my words of old. And now it is nobler for thee to eat of the poisoned dish and die than to meet a fearful death with thy blood gushing red at point of sword and lance and weapon.’ Then he took the ring from off his finger, and poured libation of water over it, and gave it to Queen Saw. And he made a solemn vow saying, ‘In all the lives wherein I wander through eternity until I reach Nirvana, may I never have man child born to me again!’ And he took the food and ate; and even as he ate, swift death seized him and he passed beyond.’
Chapter XI

The Shan Inundation: 1287-1531

Lying between two great countries, India and China, Burma received migrants from both directions. The overflow from China gradually prevailed over that from India. Burma has indeed been the melting-pot of races and tribes. The process is still going on. The Burmanisation of the various tribes is a present reality, and it is possible that ultimately a united nation will be produced.

The Shans belong to the Tai-Chinese family which also includes the Karens, Siamese, Hkuns, Lus, Laos, Shan-Tayoks, Shan-Bamas, Taungthus, Lems, and the Ahoms. The Shans began coming into Burma very early in the history of the country. Before the 13th century A.D., however, their movements were largely confined to the region now called the Shan hills. In the 7th century A.D. the Tai-Chinese founded the kingdom of Nanchao in Yunnan. In 1229 these Shans established the kingdom of Ahom (Assam: Shan). In the 13th century they also began entering the plains of Burma. The Pagan dynasty was on the wane, and as the Shans began to establish their little states, the king’s control over those parts continued to decline. When the Tartars destroyed the city of Pagan, it gave an opportunity for the Shans and their princes to assert themselves in Upper Burma.

After the death of Narathihapte (1254-1287), the Shans for the next three centuries or so penetrated almost all parts of Burma: southwards into Tenasserim and Lower Burma, also central Burma, Upper Burma, and northern Arakan. Perhaps the only part of Burma not seriously touched by them was southern Arakan. The Burmese and the Mons were overwhelmed by this racial movement of the Shans. In 1350 they also founded the kingdom of Siam.

The Shans at the present time are the most numerous race in Indo-China, numbering over 20 million, and are found in all the three political regions of the peninsula: in Burma, Siam and Indo-China. They are an ancient people with a
civilization of their own, but they failed to produce one compact national Shan state which could have included a good part of the peninsula together with portions of Yunnan and Assam. The Shans could not develop political unity because they were lacking in racial solidarity. Individualism was their dominant characteristic. They did not produce any leader mighty and ambitious enough to forge them into one great nation. The result was that throughout their history they have remained scattered under local rulers, Siam being the greatest Shan state. At the present time, the Shans may be seen in Burma from Singkaling Hkamti in the upper reaches of the Chindwin right up to the border of Siam. Further north they are to be found in the plains of Hkamti Long. Small numbers of them may also be seen in central and Lower Burma. There are 46 Shan states in Burma covering an area of about 58,000 sq. miles.

After the destruction of Pagan (1287), Burma’s politics took an altogether different turn. For the next 250 years it was the day of the Shan princes who established themselves all over, their most important centres being Hsenwi, Mohnyin, Myinsaing, Pinya, Sagaing, Ava, Pegu, and Martaban: all according to convenience acknowledging or not acknowledging the suzerainty of the Emperor of China. Racially they swamped both the Burmans and the Mons. Politically, however, they failed to give unity to Burma.

Before the close of the 13th century, the three Shan brothers, Athinhkaya, Yazathinkyan, and Thihathu, asserted themselves at Myinsaing, Mekkaya, and Pinle respectively. They and their descendants married into the Pagan royal family; but in spite of this new acquisition of royal blood, they were unable to develop a kingdom or empire of Burma. In 1364, Thadominbya, a descendant of Thihathu, the third Shan brother, asserted himself. He murdered the chiefs of Pinya and Sagaing, and established himself on the Irrawaddy, founding a Shan dynasty which held Ava as the capital for nearly 200 years. Even so, the dynasty was unable to create a kingdom of any particular importance.

Under the new conditions created by the Shan inundation, many belonging to the Burmese race retired towards Toungoo
where in the 16th century they developed a leadership which brought them again into all-Burma prominence. The Shans are not pushing and dashing like the Burmans, but they are good at commerce. In spite of their political eclipse, the Burmans produced a literature during this period. The Shans had a script of their own, but no literary talent made itself felt in this age.

The failure of the Shans may be ascribed to their want of a proper historical background. In migrating into the Indo-Chinese peninsula, they had not imbibed sufficiently of Chinese political principles. On the other hand, the Burmans had for their background Indian political and cultural institutions. This explains in some degree the politically, and also otherwise, barren character of the period of Shan domination (1287-1531) in the history of Burma. Harvey speaks of it in the following words: 'Instead of a great dynasty with the refining influence of the palace, we have half a dozen squabbling little courts, all of them, even when not positively barbarous, busily engaged in degrading the country with civil war. Sacred literature languishes, and if pagodas continue to be built, most of them are of a sort which might just as well remain unbuilt, while even the best cannot be mentioned in the same breath as the temples of Pagan.'

Chapter XII

The Strategy of War: 1364-1543

Burma being a congeries of states during this period, there was constant conflict among the princes. There were wars because of racial movements, the desire to possess fertile fields, to control important historical sites, to capture human beings to be used as slaves and to increase the population of one's own state, and above all to obtain whatever plunder available. There was also personal rivalry between ruler and ruler, and dynastic rivalry as well. There were hostilities to deal with, rebels to crush and to punish such who might have gone over to neighbouring chiefs. To secure
possession of an antagonist's or rival's queens, wives and elephants was an added incentive.

Conditions in the country were primitive, the government in states was on the same level, and men's minds were primitive too. Wars conducted by rulers were of the same character. Treachery, assassinations, and resorting to any methods, fair or foul, to reach one's end was the order of the day. King Thadominbya killed a Toungoo rival, and in order to show his prowess and to produce an effect upon primitive minds, he ate a meal on the chest of the rebel's corpse.

Wars were irregular, and during the wet season it was impossible to carry on hostilities on any large scale. Even during the dry season the troops used could not have been more than a few thousands. Population was small, and the country was thickly forested. Soldiers, of course, were not paid any regular salaries, so that the great incentive with them was plunder, though the principle of tribal, racial, and personal attachment might also be present with some. Desertions of soldiers together with their commanders were common. Pretended peace negotiations, with treachery in view, were often resorted to. The forging of letters to deceive the enemy was a common device. Challenges for personal combat were often sent out to decide an issue. Treachery was often camouflaged with fair words and friendly invitations. There were also souls who disapproved of treachery, and either for moral or other reasons gave out the secret.

In 1377, Minkyiswasawke of Ava asked his brother, governor of Prome, to kill Pyanchi, chief of Toungoo, by any means, because of the latter's friendliness towards the ruler of Pegu. The royal brother carried out the orders most cleverly. He offered his daughter in marriage to Pyanchi's son. This was a high honour, so that Pyanchi immediately agreed, and came to Prome with his son. During the night the governor with his troops fell on him and his followers massacring them all. The king heartily applauded this strategy and sent rich presents to his brother. Some of these devices are not uncommon, however, among civilized nations of the modern age. With the exception of treacherously luring princes, rulers, and commanders to their death, depriving the vanquished of
their wives, and fighting single combats, the other methods are still in use in some form or the other.

In 1406, during the war between Minhkaung, king of Ava, and Razadarit, king of Pegu, the former entered Lower Burma without bringing sufficient supplies for his troops. Razadarit cleverly cut his communications and forced him to accept peace. In 1407, Minhkaung even gave his sister in marriage to Razadarit. A firm friendship was thus cemented. The very next year, however, Minhkaung wrote a secret letter to the prince of Chiengmai desiring an alliance with him with a view to a combined attack upon Razadarit. The messengers together with the letter fell into the hands of Razadarit, and soon after war broke out again between the two kings.

In 1408, Razadarit sent Lagunein, one of his trusted officers, to assassinate Minhkaung. He proceeded on his enterprise with twelve followers, and at dead of night, alone with sword in hand entered the hut where Minhkaung was sleeping. He took the royal betel-box and handed it to his assistants outside. Next he took the king’s ruby sword, and as he was about to smite the sleeping Minhkaung with it, he was observed by one of the concubines. She gave the alarm and the king and attendants awoke. Lagunein and his companions fled and made good their escape. ‘And when Lagunein and his men were come,’ says the Chronicle, ‘Razadarit asked, “Is it done?” And Lagunein answered saying, “My father and mother taught me that he who taketh the life of a consecrated king, his life is not long, neither hath he honour among the children of men. Therefore I slew him not, that my days may be long to serve thee.”’ Lagunein showed Razadarit the betel-box and the ruby sword which were identified as possessions of the king of Ava. The king was pleased and granted the hero a reward in the following words: ‘I give thee thy life.’

There are cases of exploits performed which produced heroworship. In 1415, Minrekyawswa, the crown prince of Ava, while fighting Pegu, besieged Dalla which was defended by a Talaing prince. Razadarit, king of Pegu, the Talaing ruler, however, managed to keep the town replenished with supplies.
The hero of the action was Emuntaya, a Talaing officer. He pretended to desert to the besieging force, and managed to slip into the town with gold on his person with which to buy supplies for the defenders. Minrekyawswa was greatly chagrined, charged Emuntaya with untruth and treachery, and challenged him to escape from the besieged town. He offered to give him great gifts if he succeeded in the enterprise. Emuntaya declared that the very next day he would escape from Dalla to Pegu; and he accomplished his exploit as promised. The chronicler describes it in the following words:

'And Minrekyawswa charged his captains saying, "Tomorrow Emuntaya will come forth", saith he. "Keep ye watch to take him." And they kept double watch by land and water... Before dawn he (Emuntaya) caused men to make a raft of plaintain trees, and he thrust his sword inside one of the trees. And he made himself appear like a corpse, smearing his cheeks and ears with turmeric, and wrapping his body round with old matting. And four or five women let down their hair and beat their breasts and wept as they wailed, "Other husbands cleave to wife and child through good and ill, and forsake them not in war and famine. But thou hast forsaken us and gone away. What shall we do, thy wife and orphans, in this cruel war, this cruel famine?" Thus wailing they lifted up the corpse, while the Burmese soldiers, who were near the Shan-Death gate of the town looked on. Gently the women laid the body on the plaintain raft, with an earthen dish and a cup of rice and a chicken; and they lit oil lights and placed them at the head, and pushed forth the raft in the middle of the stream. And the women followed it beating their breasts and weeping and crying aloud, "Shalt thou forsake us thus?" But the raft floated along and came near to a Burmese boat, and the Burmese said, "See! It is a corpse", and they pushed it away with a bamboo. And the raft was carried upstream by a strong flood tide, and when it was come to Ta-Paw-ta-ngauk (in Pegu district), because it was now far from the Burmese boats, Emuntaya took his sword from out the plaintain log and went up to Pegu... And prince Minrekyawswa sent a messenger to Pegu... and the messenger asked king Razadarit saying, "My master asks if it be true that
Emuntaya hath returned to thee, as men say." And king Razadarit called Emuntaya and he came before the messenger. And when the messenger saw him, he gave him a horse with golden trappings and a velvet robe from prince Minrekyawswa.'

Chapter XIII

Razadarit the Lion King: 1385-1423

Razadarit was the Shan-Talaing king of Lower Burma with Pegu as his capital. The Talaing chronicle composed by Binnya Dala speaks of him as 'This Lion King, so wise, so generous, so mighty in word and deed, could overcome all his enemies, but he too at the last must bow before King Death.' He does not shine as husband or father; but as king, administrator and warrior he certainly occupies a place of honour. From 1390 to 1417, during the dry season, he was almost completely engaged in repelling the attacks of his enemies and rivals. In spite of many reverses he never gave up heart and finally came out triumphant.

He had to resist the rulers of Ayuthia, Kampengpet and Chiengmai who tried to dislodge him. He had also to repel Shan inroads into his territory. His greatest antagonist, however, was the ruler of Ava, first Minkyiswasawke (1368-1401), and, after his death, his son Minhkaung (1401-1422). He challenged both these rulers to single combat, but neither of them had the courage to face him. Though placed in a half-savage age, Razadarit commands respect from both friend and foe alike because of the chivalry that shone in him.

The long war with Ava was really a continuation of the Burmese-Mon struggle which began officially with Anawrahta in the 11th century, and did not quite end even with Alaungpaya in the 18th century. In Razadarit's reign, in keeping with the times, it was a desultory predatory warfare. It centred round certain towns of Lower Burma, such as, Pankyaw, Hmawbi, Dalla, Dagon, Hlaing, Myaungmya,
Myanaung, etc. Prome was the chief base of operations for the northern invaders, while Razadarit on the whole was on the defensive. In 1391, he defeated Minkyiswasawke and captured his royal barge, but chivalrously returned it to him.

In 1401, Minhkaung became king of Ava. Razadarit desired peace, but the Bama-Shans of Ava were for war. They had established a tradition of being the aggressors: they could easily sail down the River. In 1406, however, Razadarit boldly went up the Irrawaddy, encamped at Sagaing, and challenged Minhkaung to battle. Minhkaung was in no position to fight because of domestic troubles. On the other hand, Razadarit did not possess the equipment to take the walled town of Ava. Had Minhkaung resisted, Razadarit could have devastated the villages and the surrounding country. The Ava ruler, therefore, sent a peace mission to Razadarit, consisting of 600 elders in white, headed by a renowned monk, together with loads of presents for the Talaing monarch. The monk made a moving speech expatiating on the evils of bloodshed. Razadarit was touched and agreed to retire peacefully. He built a zayat at the Sagaing pagoda and sailed down the river. The Bama-Shans, however, again provoked him to hostilities. They burnt his zayat. They abducted his daughter from Prome and sent her to the royal harem at Ava.

Razadarit besieged Prome (1406). Minhkaung came down in all haste with a large army, captured a couple of Mon stockades near Prome, but he could do no more. Razadarit cut his communications and the Ava army was faced with starvation. Minhkaung sued for peace, and in return offered to set free a Mon general whom he had captured. Now this general’s two daughters were the favourite queens of Razadarit. They tearfully besought their husband in favour of their father. Bya Za, his commander, however, was not willing. He looked upon the situation as the right one to break once and for all the power of the northern antagonist. The queens sent him rich presents, but he refused them. Razadarit also again referred the matter to him for favourable consideration, but he made the following reply: ‘I am concerned with my
king’s victories, not with women’s feelings.’ Finally, however, the entreaties and tears of the queens prevailed, and Razadarit granted peace. The two kings exchanged rich presents and swore eternal friendship. In 1407, Razadarit even married Minhkaung’s sister. Thus did the Ava ruler escape annihilation through the chivalry of Razadarit.

Soon after, however, Minhkaung made an attempt to rouse the king of Chiengmai against Razadarit. Other differences also arose, and Minhkaung in great rage, but without forethought, invaded Lower Burma and encamped with his army not far from Pegu. But he had counted without his host. The rains set in and his army got bogged down. It was with difficulty that he escaped, but his troops melted away. Minhkaung now had neither the courage nor the zest to fight Razadarit. He entrusted the war to his son Minrekyawswa.

Minrekyawswa was a great soldier and had distinguished himself in many campaigns. He declared that he would destroy the Talaings. The ding-dong struggle kept going, Razadarit getting the worst of it. By 1415 only Pegu and Martaban remained to him, the rest of the country being raved by the enemy. Razadarit was in despair. In 1417, however, he had his revenge. Minrekyawswa rashly dashed out to attack Razadarit with just a few men. This was a chance Razadarit was looking for. Minrekyawswa’s elephant was so badly wounded that he became uncontrollable. He threw the prince and crushed his thigh. Minrekyawswa was captured. Razadarit treated him most honourably, but he died the same day. The victor gave him a right royal funeral.

Minhkaung died in 1422, and it was thought by some that Razadarit would invade Upper Burma; but he said, ‘My sweet enemy is dead. I will fight no more, but spend my declining years in piety.’ Razadarit was not destined to die peacefully, however, nor in battle. While snaring elephants in the Pegu Yomas, he was caught in the ropes and was so badly injured that he died on the way to his capital, being only 54 years of age (1423). He was certainly a strong character. He steered clear through a host of enemies. He organized the administration of his kingdom, dividing it into thirty-two
units or village circles. He is one of the greatest heroes produced by the Talaings. He preserved the honour of the Mon race and gave them a new lease of life.

CHAPTER XIV

TWO GREAT MONARCHS: SON AND MOTHER

They belonged to the Shan-Talaing dynasty (1287-1539) of Pegu. Binnyawaru reigned from 1446 to 1450, while his mother Shinsawbu was the ruling queen of Pegu from 1453 to 1472. In that age of blood and strife, Lower Burma produced these two monarchs who are known for their justice and equity. They were lovers of peace, and were in turn respected and loved by their subjects. Fortunately there was no serious trouble with Ava during this period, for that northern ruler had enough to do at home to prevent him from interfering with the southern kingdom.

Binnyawaru’s was a short reign, but his personality shone out even during the four years of his authority. He understood the psychology of his people, and gave character to his rule accordingly. The kingdom, after the prolonged and devastating struggle of his grandfather Razadarit with Ava, needed peace, order and recuperation. Though there were no longer Avan troops plundering the fertile delta, the war had thrown up thieves and dacoits in abundance. Binnyawaru, like Sher Shah of Hindustan a hundred years later, believed in a strong hand: ‘In Razadarit’s time,’ he said, ‘the realm was happy because he was strict. While I reign the realm shall likewise be happy, for everyone who steals or does violence shall be hewn asunder by my sword.’ He meant what he said, and he put his policy into practice to the letter.

When a thief or a dacoit was caught and found guilty, his body was cut in two and publicly exposed so that others might see and fear. Once when a servant was found guilty of theft, his employer, an officer of the king, tried to secure his freedom by offering gold to the king. Binnyawaru would not look at the present, but had both master and servant
hewn asunder. Their bodies were exposed at a crossroad. Even a cat that ate a mouse was treated in the same manner; not that every cat was dealt with accordingly, but it was meant to show the people that small or great, rich or poor would be punished without respect of persons if they disturbed the peace of the land.

Besides, like the great Akbar, Binnyawaru made it a practice to go about his kingdom in disguise, so as to learn at first hand the conditions around. One day while on the street he accidentally knocked into an old woman and broke her earthen pot. She threatened to report him to the king, who, she said, was a true king and would grant her justice. Binnyawaru was highly pleased, revealed his identity, and compensated the old lady for her loss.

The strictness of Binnyawaru and his strong government produced a salutary effect upon his subjects. They came to realize that in order to escape the just punishment of the king they should be marked by a greater sense of discipline. Parents became more mindful of their sons, and teachers of their pupils. Men feared to commit crimes, and the land rejoiced.

Three years after Binnyawaru's death, the kingdom passed to his mother Shinsawbu in 1453. This is the only instance in Burmese history of a woman ruling a kingdom. Born in 1394, she had passed through a chequered matrimonial life, having had to marry four times either willingly or unwillingly. Indeed the matrimonial lot of a princess in Burma was far from pleasant. At times she was passed on from the dead ruler-husband to his successor, or from the vanquished king to the victor. A small woman, Shinsawbu was a strong but a gentle personality. In 1430, she contrived to escape from her husband Mohnyinthado, king of Ava, and arrived safely in Pegu. She maintained peace and order in the kingdom, and good humour marked her dealings with her subjects.

After a successful reign of seven years she decided to retire from active official life. She had great respect for her two teachers who were monks and who had helped her to escape from Ava in 1430. She was, however, unable to make the choice herself as to succession to the throne. She had equal
respect for both the teachers. To escape the difficulty she cast lots, and fortune smiled on Dhammazedi. He threw off the yellow robe, married the queen’s daughter, and took charge of the administration. The other monk was so filled with jealousy that he was suspected of intrigue, and to keep the Crown safe he was executed.

While Dhammazedi held the reins of administration, the queen made her abode at Dagon (later called Rangoon). She did not, however, abandon interest in the welfare of her people, but gave herself up largely to religious devotion. Her grandfather Binnya U had, about a hundred years earlier, repaired the Shwedagon pagoda and raised its height to 66 ft. Her nephew Binnyakyan had in 1452 increased the height to 302 ft. Shinsawbu did not raise the height further. She strengthened and beautified the pagoda, and endowed the temple with 500 slaves and gold 91 lb. in weight, being her weight in this precious metal. Shah Jahan the Indian Emperor died nearly 200 years later, his eyes scanning the Taj, the mausoleum erected, to the memory of the loving and faithful wife of his youth; Shinsawbu died in 1472, at the age of 78, her eyes resting on the Shwedagon pagoda and its spire, thinking perhaps of the mystery of eternity and how eternal refuge for the soul may be attained.

Shinsawbu left behind her a pleasing memory. Nearly five hundred years of water have flowed down the Irrawaddy, but the people of the land still remember her as a ruler to be desired, and as a pattern for those who would like to win the hearts of their subjects.

**Chapter XV**

**THOHBANBWA THE ANTI-CLERIC: 1527-43**

He was king of Ava belonging to the Shan-Bama dynasty of the post-Pagan period. These Ava kings were of the same character as the Shan Sawbwas or princes of the Shan Hills; but there were two great differences. In the first place, they rightly claimed Pagan royal blood; and secondly, being
successors to the Pagan tradition together with its religious association, they maintained some of the old forms of civilization and of the Pagan royalty. The king was still the champion and defender of Buddhism. Monasteries continued to be inhabited by monks, and pagodas also were built; but these structures were in every respect of an inferior order. The age, however, produced some Burmese literature. This was indeed a remarkable development, considering that it was an age of Burmese political eclipse. It is possible that talent which might have otherwise shone publicly found a refuge for itself in the yellow robe and in the monastery. The writers were monks. Thilawuntha wrote a grammatical work, some poems, and the Yazawingyaw chronicle. The chronicle, however, is not of any appreciable historical value. Uttamagyaw wrote his famous poem Tawla. Maharattathara also wrote poetry. Another scholar, Aggathamahdi, versified the Jataka stories of Buddha. A woman poet also produced during this period a work on women’s hair-dressing fashions.

The kings of Ava patronised these monk-writers, built monasteries for them, and championed the cause of religion in general, thus maintaining the Pagan tradition. Monks were also at times made use of as mediators in order to assuage the horrors of war. Thohanbwa, however, had no use for monks. He has been dubbed ‘a savage’ for his attitude towards them. Like Henry VIII of England, he plundered monasteries of their valuables and treasures. It is possible he looked upon the monastic order as a dangerous community of parasites. He feared perhaps that the monks with their immense influence upon the people might become a political danger to the Crown: they might make common cause with rebels either openly or through subterranean channels.

Thohanbwa, however, went too far in his anti-clerical policy, and paid the price for it with his own life. He decided to exterminate the clergy. In 1540, he lured the monks of Ava, Sagaing, and Pinya to a great banquet. He slaughtered cows, buffaloes, pigs, and fowls, and invited them for a feast. When the unsuspecting yellow robes sat down to enjoy the hospitality of the king, Thohanbwa with his warriors fell on them and slew 360 of them including 30 eminent
men of letters. He made bonfires of the monastic libraries. Some 1,000 of the monks escaped, and many of these retired to Toungoo where a Burmese kingship was developing. This massacre produced a feeling of horror among the people. Many tears were shed. A conspiracy was hatched for revenge by a number of Burmese officers with Minkyiyanuang as the leader. There was a strong racial feeling also evident in court circles, the Burman as opposed to the Shan, a feeling stronger perhaps than between the English and the French under the Norman kings of England. Burmese officers complained of bad treatment at the hands of the Shan attendants of the king.

Minkyiyanuang persuaded the king to enter his summer camp without any weapons, on the pretence that it was an old tradition. The royal Shan attendants were also therefore disarmed. On the other hand, Minkyiyanuang so contrived that the swords of the Burmese officers were kept hidden ready at hand. When the time for action arrived, Minkyiyanuang began a conversation with the king on swords. Thohanbwa said, 'They say my predecessor, king Shwenankyawsaw, had a fine blade. Once he cut a man down with it and the blade went through the man, through the howdah, and into the elephant even. Did you know that sword?' Minkyiyanuang replied, 'And who should know it but I, seeing that I was His Majesty's swordbearer? I could tell it at a glance.' The king was deeply interested, and at once sent for the bundle of old swords. Minkyiyanuang drew out the supposed blade, pretended to present it to the king, but suddenly waved it in the air and smote the king severing his body in two. When the Shan attendants rushed in, the Burmese officers produced their swords and cut them down.

The throne was now offered to Minkyiyanuang, but he refused it. It was then offered to the Sawbwa of Hsipaw who readily accepted it. After serving the new king for a year, Minkyiyanuang retired to a monastery, and tried to expiate his sin of regicide by telling his beads the rest of his life.

Minkyiyanuang was a young man and belonged to the royal house of Ava. He could have safely ascended the throne, but he preferred not to. He killed the king not out of personal
motive, but because he represented in his person Burmese racial antagonism for the Shans who had taken the place of the kings of Pagan in Upper Burma. The day of the Shans, however, was fast approaching its end both in Upper as well as in Lower Burma. The Burmese dynasty of Toungoo was on the rise, and under Tabinshweti and his successor Bayinnaung Burmese supremacy was re-established over the whole of Burma much before the close of the 16th century.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GOLDEN AGE OF PEGU: 1423-1539

When in A.D. 1057 Anawrahta of Pagan conquered the southern Talaing kingdom of Thaton, civilization in Lower Burma was on a higher level than in any other part of the country. After the fall of Pagan, the Shans racially dominated Lower Burma. They founded a Mon-Shan dynasty at Pegu. In spite of these upheavals and set-backs, the ancient Indo-Mon civilization reasserted itself and produced this Golden Age.

Eight monarchs ruled over a good part of Lower Burma during this period with Pegu as the capital. These were Binnyadammayaza 1423-26; Binnyaran 1426-46; Binnyawaru 1446-50; Binnyakyan 1450-53; Shinsawbu 1453-72; Dhammazedi 1472-92; Binnyaran II 1492-1526; and Takayutpi 1526-39. The country enjoyed comparative peace after the prolonged war with Ava in the reign of Razadarit. The Upper Burma kingdom of Ava was in a state of chaos. It was in no position to disturb the southern kingdom. The result was prosperity for Pegu. Domestic as well as foreign trade grew. Many foreign merchants were attracted to Pegu which was a sea-port then, and the centre of the kingdom. Religious contacts with Ceylon were maintained. The Shwedagon pagoda was enlarged and beautified.

Of these eight monarchs, three were undoubtedly rulers of note. Binnyawaru believed in a strong government and ruled the kingdom with great success. Shinsawbu made
history, not only as being the only woman-ruler produced by Burma, but by maintaining law and order as well as by winning the affections of her people. Dhammazedi, the monk who became king, greatly advanced the cause of Buddhism in the country, and made the Shwedagon pagoda one of the great centres of religion and of pilgrimage. He endowed a large quantity of gold to this famous pagoda, namely, the weight of his queen in gold four times over. He also dedicated a great bell to the pagoda. He sent a mission to Buddhagaya in Bihar with offerings to the Buddha Tree and the temple. He also sent missions to Ceylon with rich presents for holy Buddhist places in that island and for the Singalese king. As a result of these relations, Ceylon gave to Burma the standard Kalyani ordination ceremony and order of monks. Visiting Talaing monks were ordained on the banks of the Kalyani river in Ceylon. On returning to Pegu, they set up a thein and called it the Kalyani thein where monks began to be ordained.

A number of European adventurers visited Burma during this period. They have left accounts of their impressions of the country. Nitikin, a Russian merchant, speaks of Pegu being a large port (1470), and of the foreign trade of the country being in the hands of Indian merchants, a large community of whom resided at the capital. Hieronimo de Santo Stephano, an Italian (1496), also visited Pegu. He wished to carry his merchandise up the river to Ava. But Upper Burma was in a disturbed state, so that he had to sell his goods in Pegu. The king bought his stock; but the Italian had to wait for a year and a half before he was paid for it. Stephano calls Pegu a great city, and says that the king owned 10,000 elephants. Another Italian merchant, Ludovico di Varthema, came to Pegu in 1505. ‘The city of Pegu’, he reports, ‘is on the mainland, and is near to the sea. Towards the east, there is a very beautiful river by which many ships go and come....The city is walled, and has good houses and palaces built of stone with lime. The king is extremely powerful in men, both foot and horse....In this country there is a great abundance of grain, of flesh of every kind, and of fruits....Timber grows here in great
quantities, long, and I think the thickest that can possibly be found. I do not know if there can be found in the whole world such thick canes as can be found here.'

Varthema had also a desire to visit Ava, but was unable to do so. He had an audience with King Binnyaran at Pegu. He speaks of the king in the following words: 'Do not imagine that the king of Pegu enjoys as great a reputation as the king of Calicut, although he is so humane and domestic that an infant might speak to him, and he wears more rubies on him than the value of a very large city, and he wears them all on his toes. And on his legs he wears certain great rings of gold, all full of the most beautiful rubies; also his arms and his fingers are full. His ears hang down like a palm, through the great weight of the many jewels he wears there, so that seeing the person of the king by a light at night, he shines so much that he appears to be a sun.'

Many more Europeans came to Burma in the 16th century. This was due to Vasco da Gama's discovery of the sea-route to India and the establishment of a maritime Portuguese empire in the Indian Ocean. Some of the accounts of these travellers are indeed highly exaggerated. Still the impression they give is correct that Pegu was flourishing during this age. Agents of Albuquerque, the Portuguese Governor-General, appeared at Tenasserim, Martaban and Pegu in 1511. In 1519 even a trade agreement was signed at Martaban with the Portuguese. By this compact the Portuguese established a trading centre at Martaban. Foreign trade brought further prosperity to the kingdom of Pegu. Articles exported from the country were lac, wax, ivory, horn, lead, tin, Pegu jars, long pepper, palm wine, etc. Rubies and other precious stones from Upper Burma also filtered down to Pegu and were exported. Pegu traders brought pepper and camphor from the East Indies, and scented woods and porcelain from China for export. Pegu received imports of textiles, velvets and opium from India.

In spite of Pegu's prosperity, her later kings were unable to protect the kingdom from the rising power of Toungoo under Tabinshweti and Bayinnaung. Pegu remained subject to Ava from 1539 to 1740; and though her power revived
THE RISE OF TOUNGOO

during the period from 1740 to 1757, it was ultimately con-
quered by Alaunpayya and became a part of the new Burmese
empire of the Konebaung dynasty.

CHAPTER XVII

THE RISE OF TOUNGOO

In the 13th century Toungoo was but a village on a hill-
spur. At the end of the century, when Pagan was fading
out of sight, and lawlessness was on the increase, Toungoo
came to be fortified with a stockade. Chieftains ruled over
it. The early history of the ruling family is very much like
the history of the old kings of Ireland: the assassination of
princes was a common occurrence. There were many other
petty centres like Toungoo where chieftains in the 13th
century established themselves and ruled independently. The
importance of Toungoo, however, lay in that it became a
great rallying centre for those belonging to the Burmese
race, and gradually developed into a Burmese kingdom of
note. As the Shans continued to crowd into Upper Burma
and establish kingdoms of their own, Burmans flocked towards
Toungoo. As the population increased the chieftains of Toungoo
came into greater prominence. In the 14th century they
took royal titles, built royal palaces, developed communica-
tions, and made all efforts to expand their territory. Toungoo
became the greatest centre of Burmese resurgence.

Pyanchi was Lord of Toungoo from 1368 to 1377. He
assumed the rôle of defender of the faith, built a pagoda
and a monastery, patronised Buddhist monks, sent royal
offerings to the shrines in Pagan, and thus drew the attention
of his people to a rising new royal dynasty. It appeared as
if at long last the mantle of Pagan had fallen upon Toungoo.
Pyanchi and his wife have left an inscription which speaks
of the refuge granted by them to Burmans who fled to Toungoo
from the Shan terror. The wife, the inscription also records,
cut off her hair and made a torch out of it to be used in a
Pagan shrine. They were a loving couple. Their prayer was
that in the next existence they might be husband and wife again, and be rulers for a second time over Toungoo and its people whom they loved so well. In 1377, Minkyiswasawke, king of Ava, had Pyanchi and his son treacherously assassinated.

Minkyinyo ruled over Toungoo from 1486 to 1531. Like Louis XI of France he was 'the universal spider' ever weaving webs to secure the discomfiture of his rivals and to advance his own kingdom and people. He enlarged his territory and his policy was to keep expanding his little kingdom. One of his Shan opponents he killed in single combat. He jumped from his own elephant on to the Shan's elephant and speedily dispatched him. In 1503, he married a royal princess of Ava and received as dowry the fertile Kyaukse area together with all the territory lying between Kyaukse and Toungoo. This marriage with the house of Ava was of importance not merely because of accession of territory but also because of the prestige associated with it. Minkyinyo founded the city of Dwayawadi, and built a new Toungoo where the present city stands. He often sallied out with his followers for plunder from the neighbouring parts. As the Shans continued to press into Upper Burma, Burmans high and low, rich and poor continued to trek down to settle in Minkyinyo's territory where they were welcomed and where they found safety.

The new rising kingdom of Toungoo was wedged between the upper and nether millstones of Ava and Pegu respectively. It was not merely political pressure but racial as well. That Toungoo survived in spite of both Shan and Mon rivalry redounds to the credit of Minkyinyo. The Burmese Chronicle reports that in 1492 the Mons of Pegu invaded the Toungoo kingdom with a large army and besieged the city of Dwayawadi. Minkyinyo, however, saved the situation by a strategem. He sent out a sortie through one gate to attack the besiegers, and while the Talaings were thus kept busy, he himself sallied out with a body of troops from another gate, took the invaders unawares and routed them.

After 45 years of rule, Minkyinyo died at the age of 72. He had laid a firm foundation for a kingdom upon which
his son Tabinshweti could have constructed an all-Burma empire by gradual stages. Minkyinyo represents in his person the Burmese national spirit which reasserted itself at a time when the race was in danger of being swamped politically as well as racially. Personal and dynastic ambition was present in him, but his great achievement was that in spite of his smallness, he provided a place of refuge for the stricken Burmese race, built up a wall of resistance against the Shan flood, and infused faith and hope in his people for the building up of an enduring structure. His son and immediate successor Tabinshweti sought to carry on the father's policy, but failed, because of his moral deficiency. The work of Minkyinyo, however, had not been in vain. Under Tabinshweti's successor, Bayinnaung (1551-81), an all-Burma empire was established, and though it did not outlast its founder, the dynasty of Minkyinyo maintained its position through thick and thin for 200 years after his death. Burmese ascendancy was again challenged by the Mons in the middle of the 18th century. Although all seemed lost, it was just for a time. The race reasserted itself under the leadership of Alaungpaya who carried on the Toungoo tradition, not on a hill-spur, however, but on the Irrawaddy as the connecting link between Upper Burma and Lower Burma.

Chapter XVIII

MINHTI: THE UPRIGHT OF ARAKAN

The Arakanese kingdom was annexed to Burma in 1785. Arakanese chronicles claim an antiquity for their royal house as far back as 2666 B.C. The earliest historical kings of any note were from India. The rajas from the 2nd century A.D. onwards belonged to the Chandrasuriya dynasty. Minhti ruled in the 14th century. He is said to have lived to a very old age, owing, it is reported, to his goodness and uprightness. He not only protected the kingdom from external dangers but distinguished himself as a just ruler who was loved by his subjects.
In Arakan as well as in Burma proper a curious tradition had established itself which Minhti disapproved of. Retainers of the royal and other ruling households, such as governors etc. were exempt from punishment for robbery. They could not be sued for debt. Even old debtors once they entered royal service claimed exemption from the legal process. Minhti sought to meet the tradition with firmness. He was a lawgiver and laid down simple rules of justice which were in keeping with the mentality of the people. Masters, he ordained, would be punished for offences committed by their servants. Husbands were to be held responsible for the faults of their wives and children, teachers for the lapses of their pupils. The idea was to locate responsibility so that those in charge may be fully alive to their duties. The punishment for cattle theft was death, and such cases Minhti tried personally. Like Binnyawaru of Pegu in the 15th century, he made it a practice to move among his subjects in disguise so as to acquaint himself with the real state of affairs in the realm. He discovered in the course of his enquiries that his minister Anandabaya, who was also his uncle, was following corrupt practices and receiving bribes. People complained that because of the dishonesty of such a high-placed official there was a failure of crops in the land.

It was no easy matter to bring the minister-uncle to justice; but the opportunity came. A cattle-lifting case was brought before the king. The crime had been committed by the servants of a rich man. The rich man knowing full well that he would have to pay the price with his own life, bribed Anandabaya. At the trial when questioned by the king, the rich man declared that the servants were Anandabaya’s. Anandabaya thinking that being the king’s uncle he was safe, and in consideration of the bribe received, confirmed the rich man’s statement. The king, however, took him at his word, and sentenced the thieves as well as Anandabaya to death. They were accordingly executed.

As is the habit with many up to the present time, in that age too there were people who wiped their soiled hands on walls and pillars. Some of those who attended the king’s durbar had even got into the habit of rubbing their pan-
stained hands on the pillars of the audience hall. Minhti built a new palace and a new hall the posts of which he covered with gilt. He made a law that any one soiling the pillars would be deprived of his index finger. Now it so happened that one day the king himself wiped his finger on a pillar. A minister made a note of it but said nothing. Some time later, while in full court, the king observed the stain and enquired whose work it was. His minister quietly said, ‘Sire, thou art the man.’ Immediately Minhti had his own index finger amputated. This produced a deep impression upon his subjects. The rumour went abroad that the king had deliberately soiled the pillar in order to suffer the punishment himself, so that it might become a true object lesson for others. In commemoration of the event, Minhti had a statue of Buddha made with one finger of the right hand missing.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PORTUGUESE IN BURMA

The century from 1450 to 1550 was a period of Portuguese overseas ascendancy under the aegis of the Roman Pope. Portugal created a large empire, annexing the vast seas encompassed by the coasts of India, Persia, Arabia, and a good part of Africa and Further India. As the 16th century began to close, however, the Protestant spirit, expressed through the Dutch and the English, asserted itself. The Hispanic monopoly was broken, and the Spanish empire began to decline rapidly.

Early in the 16th century the Portuguese established themselves at Goa and at certain other stations on the western coast of India. In 1510, they occupied Malacca which became their chief port in the farther East. In 1511, Albuquerque, their great leader, sent his agent from Malacca to Tenasserim, Martaban, and Pegu to make enquiries and to study the situation in those parts. Eight years later Anthony Correa made a trade agreement on behalf of the Portuguese with
the chief of Martaban. As a result, the Portuguese established a trading centre at Martaban which functioned for almost a century. They also founded a trading centre at Tenasserim. About the middle of the 16th century they settled in Chittagong and carried on a roaring trade there.

Portuguese overseas expansion influenced Burma profoundly. They brought fire-arms to Burma, and for some time played a leading rôle in the military history of the country. The Portuguese were looked upon as indifferent soldiers in Europe, but in Burma, possessing fire-arms as they did, they produced a tremendous effect upon the minds of the local princes and their subjects. Portuguese adventurers found in Burma a lucrative field as soldiers of fortune. In about 1540, King Tabinshweti of Pegu hired about seven hundred Portuguese together with their ships under the command of one Joano Cayeyro. Tabinshweti’s ambition was to create a large empire in Burma. In 1541, he attacked Martaban. The Lord of Martaban had also in his army a Portuguese unit under the command of Paulo Seixas. The assault on Martaban failed. Tabinshweti then blockaded the town. Being in great straits, the Prince of Martaban sought to win over Cayeyro to his side. He wrote to him secretly, expressing willingness to become a vassal of the king of Portugal. He offered one-half of his treasures to Cayeyro’s king on condition that he be allowed to recruit two thousand Portuguese soldiers, whom, he said, he would grant very liberal wages. Cayeyro, however, was not an agent of the king of Portugal. He was a free lance, so that money counted with him. With his eye on the treasures of Martaban, he proposed to permit the prince to escape secretly from the famished town. His officers, however, did not agree, and the scheme had to be dropped. Martaban fell.

Tabinshweti now hired more Portuguese under a new leader, Diogo Soarez de Mello. In 1546, he invaded Arakan; but not finding it an easy nut to crack, and Siam having launched an attack in the direction of Tavoy, Tabinshweti in 1547 hurried home. He advanced straight on Ayuthia, the capital of Siam. His bodyguard consisted of hundreds of Portuguese soldiers who also manned the artillery. Tabin-
shweti, however, failed to take the walled town of Ayuthia. The king of Siam also had Portuguese soldiers under the command of one Diogo Pereira. Tabinshweti tried to win over Pereira to his side but failed. The invaders withdrew.

Tabinshweti died in 1551 and his empire melted away. His successor Bayinnaung, who had distinguished himself in the field as Tabinshweti’s General, desired to win back the empire. He fully understood the value of the Portuguese sword and decided to make use of it. He sent for Diogo de Mello, and was so pleased to see him that he exclaimed, ‘Ah, brother Diogo, brother Diogo, we two, we happy two, I on my elephant and thou on thy horse, could we not conquer the world together?’

Bayinnaung now struck hard and recovered a good part of Lower Burma, but ‘brother Diogo’ died of mortal wounds received in the attack upon the town of Pegu. By 1559 Bayinnaung had even conquered the greater part of Upper Burma. In 1564, he besieged and took Ayuthia using artillery manned by the Portuguese. Siam became a tributary state, but in 1569 she revolted. A second siege became necessary and Ayuthia was again taken. It was not Portuguese artillery this time that gave Bayinnaung the victory but treachery.

The Portuguese established quite a reputation for themselves in Burma as fighters. Many settled in the country and married Burmese wives. In 1568, some Portuguese killed five royal runners in Martaban. The governor of the city tried to arrest them but failed. Other Portuguese inhabitants of the place came to their rescue. They even paraded the streets defiantly with their band playing. De Brito, an ambitious Portuguese adventurer, established a little kingdom for himself with Syriam as his capital, and ruled there as an independent monarch from 1600 to 1613. In 1613, Anaukpetlun, the Burmese king of Ava, defeated and slew him. The victor carried away some four hundred Portuguese to Upper Burma. They were settled in the villages between the Chindwin and the Mu rivers. The king provided them with agricultural lands as well as with a Roman Catholic priest. Their descendants, called Bayingyi (Feringhi), may still be seen in that area. They married among the local population and became Burma-
nized. Occasionally, when the Burmese kings captured any Europeans, these too were settled in the same colony. The martial tradition of these foreigners did not die out. They were recruited in the Burmese army particularly to man the artillery.

As the Dutch and the English began to come into prominence in Indian waters during the first quarter of the 17th century, the Portuguese began to lose their foothold. They were unable to control their far-flung settlements. Portugal herself was conquered by Spain in 1580 and remained a subject country for 60 years. Spain was not interested in Portuguese overseas possessions. The Portuguese, at their various settlements on the coast, having no support from their home government, turned pirate and sold their swords to the local princes as soldiers of fortune. In Chittagong they joined hands with the Maghs and engaged in piracy and abduction of the Indian Emperor's subjects whom they sold as slaves. The Emperor Shah Jahan, and later Aurangzeb, took strong measures to punish them. In 1666, Aurangzeb captured Chittagong in order to put an end to their piracies.

Echoes of Portuguese military activities in Burma did not cease for some time. In 1742, the resurgent Talaings, who almost founded an all-Burma empire, employed Portuguese Eurasians in their army. In 1785, when Bodawpaya invaded Siam, he made use of sailors who were of Portuguese extraction. The territorial possessions of the Portuguese in the Indian waters are at present very few, and these too must sooner or later return to their true folds; but the Portuguese, though a tiny nation, have left almost an indelible mark upon the countries in which they operated from the middle of the 15th century to the middle of the 17th century.
Chapter XX

SANDATHUDAMMA OF ARAKAN AND PRINCE SHAH SHUJA OF INDIA

Sandathudamma was king of Arakan from 1652 to 1684. He was deeply interested in the maintenance and furtherance of Buddhism in the country. He built a number of pagodas and maintained Buddhistic links with Ceylon. Unlike the kings of Burma, his attitude towards foreign traders was liberal and businesslike. He allowed them to have their own interpreters at royal audiences. He permitted foreigners to take away with them their children by Arakanese wives. He had no objection to the export of surplus rice from the country. A special officer was appointed to see to it, so that his people may not suffer from shortage in this staple article of the country’s food. Sandathudamma introduced coinage for trade purposes and established a royal mint. Burmese kings did not adopt this measure till 200 years later.

During Sandathudamma’s reign the four sons of the Indian Emperor Shah Jahan fought a war of succession and Aurangzeb came out successful. He killed his two brothers Dara and Murad, but Shah Shuja escaped from the country and arrived at Arakan with his family and about 200 faithful followers. His object was eventually to embark for Mecca. Sandathudamma granted him asylum at his capital Mrohaung, and in spite of tempting offers from Aurangzeb refused to hand him over to his pursuers. On the other hand he promised to help the fugitive prince to escape to Arabia. Soon, however, he discovered that his guest was in possession of vast treasures of gold and jewellery. This aroused Sandathudamma’s avarice. Eight months passed but the king showed no signs of providing the prince with the promised transport. Sandathudamma also cast his eyes upon Shah Shuja’s pretty daughters and asked for the hand of the eldest. This proved to be the last straw. For Shah Shuja of the imperial house of Hindustan to give his daughter to a ‘pagan’ would be the greatest shame. The problem now was how to get out of the clutches of the
new enemy. Shah Shuja ultimately hit upon a desperate plan.

Arakan was not shut off from Bengal in the same way as Burma. Indian influences, racial and cultural, were indeed very strong. From the beginning of the 13th century Bengal had been under Muslim rule. Large numbers of Hindus turned Mohammedan during this period. This influence penetrated the neighbouring country of Arakan, too, which was easy of access. From the 15th century onwards Arakanese kings even assumed Muslim titles. Shah Shuja found large numbers of his brother-Muslims in Mrohaung and in the neighbourhood who sympathised with him. A conspiracy was hatched. The plan was to fall suddenly upon the reigning monarch, overthrow him, and set up Shah Shuja in his place. The scheme was not impossible of realization; but unfortunately for the prince the secret leaked out. Shah Shuja’s supporters and followers began the attack on the appointed day, but the coup d’état failed. The king was ready for them and crushed the rising. Shah Shuja fled into the interior of the country but was captured and executed. His treasure chest was transferred to the palace, his daughters to the royal harem, and his sons taken into custody.

About a year later, it appears, another attempt was made to overthrow Sandathudamma, but this too failed. Not willing to take any further risks, the king had the princesses and their brothers executed. It is reported that the princesses were sentenced to die of hunger, while their brothers’ heads were chopped off with large knives. The followers brought by Shah Shuja from India were incorporated in the royal army as archers.

It is thought that because soon after the Emperor Aurangzeb ordered the capture of the port of Chittagong, it was to punish Arakan for the cruel treatment meted out to Shah Shuja and his family. It is very doubtful indeed. On the other hand Aurangzeb must have been quite pleased to hear that his rival, who was also his elder brother, was no more. Aurangzeb ordered Shahist Khan, the governor of Bengal, to take Chittagong in order to destroy the nests of pirates there who were disturbing the trade of the eastern
coast of India and were also carrying on slave-trade at the expense of the Emperor’s subjects. Shahist Khan first won over the Eurasian Portuguese residing in Chittagong. The siege of the town lasted for only thirty-six hours. A fierce assault brought Shahist Khan victory (1666). He also captured Ramu. Large numbers of Arakanese were taken and in turn were now sold into slavery. Sandathudamma suffered enormous losses in men and material.

Bengal rejoiced at the fall of Chittagong. The loss of this important port heralded the economic decline of Arakan. The king also lost his best fighters, namely, the Portuguese. Thus ended the reign of Sandathudamma in defeat and in the decline of Arakan. After his death the country passed through a century of anarchy. The Mohammedan archers made themselves king-makers, setting aside kings and creating new ones as they pleased, playing the part of the Praetorian Guard of Imperial Rome. Ultimately, however, they were mastered. Sandawizaya (1710-31), a usurper, deported some of them to Ramree; others were settled in the vicinity of Akyab where their descendants may still be seen professing the Muslim religion and bearing the Aryan physiognomy. The kingdom dragged on for three generations more at the end of which, in 1785, it was conquered by Bodawpaya, and thus incorporated into the empire of Burma.

**Chapter XXI**

**THE TRAGEDY OF TABINSHWETI**

Although he ended his career ingloriously, Tabinshweti is a great Burmese hero. He succeeded to the heritage of Minkyinyo who had laid the foundations for an all-Burma empire. The Shans were no longer the danger they once were. Toungoo, the capital, was a strong centre of the Burmese race which certainly desired to re-assert itself. Bayinnaung, Tabinshweti’s foster-brother, was the king’s faithful adviser and able general. Tabinshweti had large numbers of Portuguese soldiers in his army, and these not only possessed fire-
arms but were much better disciplined than their local colleagues. Tabinshweti himself possessed a strong personality and was popular with his people. The stage seemed to have been set for the revival of the Pagan tradition of Burmese overlordship over the whole country.

From 1535 to 1548 Tabinshweti was fully engaged in wars of expansion against his neighbours. He wanted no rival princes in the country: all must accept subordination to Toungoo. In 1535, he took Bassein and Myaungmya, and in 1539, he captured Pegu. Takayutpi, the last king of the Wareru dynasty, fled to Prome. The greater part of Lower Burma, that is the Talaing country, was thus acquired. Tabinshweti adopted a conciliatory policy towards the Talaings. His object was to fuse the Burmans and the Talaings into one people, and thus put an end to the age-long enmity and rivalry between the two races. He married Talaing wives, appointed Talaings as his ministers and advisers, crowned himself king according to the Talaing ritual, cut and dressed his hair after the Talaing fashion, and wore a Talaing crown. In the Talaing country he did not appoint Burmese governors; Talaing lords who submitted to him were permitted to administer their own estates according to Talaing customary law. He raised Talaing levies for his army and made himself quite popular with his Talaing subjects.

In 1541, Tabinshweti attacked Martaban which was a wealthy city where large numbers of foreign merchants did business. The chief of Martaban resisted magnificently, but the town was taken and sacked. In 1542, he advanced on Prome. Shans from Upper Burma, realizing the danger from a new rising star, joined hands with the Arakanese and hurried to the rescue of Prome. Tabinshweti broke the triple alliance by stratagem. After a siege of five months Prome fell.

In 1544, the northern Shan Sawbwas combined and challenged the new imperialist. They were signally defeated and Tabinshweti conquered all central Burma as far north as Minbu and Myingyan. He entered Pagan, the old Burmese capital, and crowned himself king of Upper Burma. Back in Pegu (1546) he crowned himself king of all Burma.
He now decided to bring Arakan within his empire. His invading force operated in that country during 1546-47. Wherever he went his Portuguese mercenaries accompanied him, and he depended upon them for his success. Penetrating the country, he encamped before Mrohaung, the Arakanese capital. It was a walled town, however, and he had not the means to storm it. In the meantime news arrived of Siamese irruptions into Lower Burma. Tabinshweti therefore made peace with Arakan and retired.

In the winter of 1547, Tabinshweti invaded Siam in order to punish its king for his audacious attack upon Burma, and, if possible, also to conquer that country. As he advanced up the Ataran river and down the Meklawng river with his Portuguese, Burmese, and Talaing soldiers, the Siamese king and queen retreated before him towards their capital, Ayuthia. In one of the skirmishes the queen, seeing her husband in danger, made a rush on her elephant to rescue him. One of the Burmese lords ungallantly attacked her, and she was slain, cleft with his sword from the shoulder to the heart. Her sons, however, made a dash for her body and carried it off. The siege of Ayuthia now began (1548), but Tabinshweti failed to take the city. Siam too had Portuguese defenders, and Tabinshweti tried in vain to bribe them off. The campaign failed, and Tabinshweti returned to Pegu.

Tabinshweti had now been fighting for over twelve years. Not much was done to consolidate his conquests. He understood the value of communications and maintained cart- tracks between Toungoo, Pegu, and Prome. In spite of his failure at walled towns, he had covered himself with glory by his long marches and spectacular successes. He was able to keep his men together; and though a Burman, his new subjects, the Talaings, were faithful to him. He was not yet 35, so that humanly speaking his prospects were bright. Fortune seemed to smile upon him. But suddenly the sun shining in his brightness began to darken. Tabinshweti fell into the evil company of a Portuguese adventurer from Malacca. This new friend taught the king to drink wine and to delight himself in multifarious tastes of the palate. Tabinshweti fell a victim to strong drink, forgot his royal
duties, began to misbehave himself openly, lost value for human life, and ceased to conduct himself with kingly dignity. When Bayinnaung tried to awaken him to duty and to virtue, he said, ‘I have made friends with drink. Brother, do thou manage the affairs of state. Bring me no petitions. Leave me to my jollity.’ Bayinnaung deported the Portuguese adventurer, but this did not improve matters. Tabinshweti stuck to his dissolute ways. A conspiracy was hatched by his Talaing attendants. They thought it a good opportunity to destroy him and restore their national kingship. They lured Tabinshweti into a forest in search of a supposed white elephant, and one evening slew him, cutting off his head.

Thus perished Tabinshweti the young warrior-king, dying a shameful death. The Burmese mind still lingers with gracious and kindly feelings over his memory, and would place his name among those of the heavenly beings, the good nats. At his birth in 1517, there was great rejoicing in his father Minkyinyo’s palace. Diviners promised a great future for him. The fond father fixed gold umbrellas over the infant’s cradle, and cherished high hopes for his dynasty and the kingdom. No Portuguese, however, drew Tabinshweti’s attention to the prophecy (1000 B.C.) that King Lemuel’s mother taught him: ‘Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.’

Chapter XXII

Bayinnaung: The Second Maker
Of Burma, 1551-81

Bayinnaung was the second maker of Burma in the sense that for the second time in its history the country was brought under the sway of one sovereign. Anawrahta had played the same rôle in the 11th century A.D.. An overlordship was again established. In the case of Bayinnaung it was a personal
achievement, and it did not outlast the lifetime of its creator. Local princes were to be found all over the country who exercised authority in their own regions, rendering tribute in kind and in men to the suzerain lord. Like Anawrahta, Bayinnaung also established a dynasty of kings, but his successors were unable to enjoy the same authority, and more often than not were themselves local rulers.

Bayinnaung did not belong to the royal house; but it was enough that he married Tabinshweti’s sister who was Minkyinyo’s daughter. During the reign of Tabinshweti he was the king’s right-hand man both as counsellor and as a general in the field. He was a bold, rash soldier and was always confident of victory. He did not depend so much upon the numerical strength of his troops as upon their spirit and their willingness to dare and do under his leadership. He saw active service in all the wars of Tabinshweti. In 1542, he overthrew the Arakanese, Shans and Talaings who had combined to check the rising power of Toungoo. Tabinshweti was so pleased with his foster-brother’s achievement that he made him rich presents and created him Yuvaraja or Crown Prince.

When Tabinshweti died in 1550, his empire melted away. The local princes and fief-holders broke away. Like Akbar in 1555, Bayinnaung found himself a king without a kingdom. The great Akbar created an empire and organized it; Bayinnaung speedily acquired an empire but failed to organize it. Akbar’s empire lasted for more than a century after his death; Bayinnaung’s empire collapsed with his death. Still Bayinnaung was a man of untiring energy. He went about his business of conquering an empire and marching his troops from one end of Burma to the other confident of victory wherever he went. His achievement in the end, however, was of an ephemeral nature. What may be said to his credit is that he carried forward the tradition established by Anawrahta that Burma politically was to be one country under a representative of the Burmese race. In this sense therefore he was a nation builder.

Bayinnaung’s career was a great military success. He created an empire which in area was larger than modern Burma,
although Arakan was not included in it. His spectacular success was not only due to his dashing personality, but also because of the Portuguese mercenaries in his army who used fire-arms with great effect. His contemporary Akbar, on the other hand, built an empire with the help of the brave Rajputs, sons of the soil.

As soon as he was able to raise a few hundred Portuguese soldiers, Bayinnaung, in 1551, attacked and easily took Toungoo. Many Talaings from Pegu now joined him. He was already known to them as a man of action. In the same year he took Prome and the neighbouring towns. He also tried to capture Ava but failed. After making sure of central Burma he attacked Pegu where Smim Htaw, the new Talaing king, had established himself. He fought a single combat with Smim Htaw, forced his elephant to give way, and drove him out. Pegu fell and suffered a fearful sack. Smim Htaw fled, and like Prince Charles Stuart went through a number of hair-breadth escapes. Unlike Bonnie Prince Charlie, however, he was ultimately betrayed by his father-in-law and executed.

Thus within less than two years Bayinnaung was able to recover the lost empire of Tabinshweti. He now raised large armies and took more Portuguese in his employ. It is possible he had at times under his command about 100,000 soldiers, Burmans, Talaings, Shans, and Portuguese. It is doubtful if any king of Burma, before or after him, ever controlled so large an army. In 1555, he advanced upon Ava by land and by river, and took the city with ease. He repaired the cart-track from Ava to Toungoo. By 1569 he had subdued the Shan princes as well as the Raja of Manipur, who all accepted his suzerainty. Rebellions broke out from time to time, and this running sore could not be healed.

Although he had still much to do in his own country, Bayinnaung rashly decided to conquer Siam. This was a fatal error. Ayuthia had Portuguese defenders, but in 1564 Bayinnaung took the city. He carried away the Siamese king to Pegu and placed the dethroned monarch’s son on the throne as a vassal prince. The plunder of Ayuthia enabled the victor to transfer a huge booty to Pegu. Bayinnaung
entered his capital in great triumph with 'many wagons going before loaded with idols of inestimable booty. He came at last in a chariot with the conquered queens loaden with jewels at his feet, and drawn by the captive princes and lords; before him marched two thousand elephants richly adorned, and after him his victorious troops.'

The dethroned king of Siam became a monk in Pegu, and soon after Bayinnaung granted him his liberty. As soon as he arrived in Ayuthia, however, the ex-king threw off his yellow robe and proclaimed himself king. This became the cause of the second invasion of Siam by Bayinnaung. Ayuthia was under siege during 1568-9, but could not be taken. Finally, Bayinnaung was helped by a high placed Siamese who turned traitor and opened the gates to the besieging army. The control over Ayuthia, however, did not last for long.

Bayinnaung now planned to conquer Arakan. He would certainly have overrun that kingdom, but he was now 66 years of age, and before the expedition could make much progress he died (1581). Harvey says that Bayinnaung's 'life was the greatest explosion of human energy ever seen in Burma. From his teens till his death he was constantly in the field, leading every campaign in person.'

Although as an administrator Bayinnaung was a failure, he did show some zeal for reform. When a Shan Sawbwa died, it was the practice to kill his slaves, horses, and elephants to be buried with him. Bayinnaung forbade this horrible custom. He discouraged animal sacrifice which was offered both by Mohammedans and Buddhists. He also tried to introduce legal uniformity in the kingdom, and sought to standardise weights and measures. These reforms, however, had very little chance of success. He failed to give to Burma an administrative system. Marching armies, fighting battles, and crushing rebellions engrossed his attention almost throughout his reign. His was a restless personality that only rested in the grave.
Chapter XXIII

A PORTUGUESE RULER IN BURMA

This was Felipe De Brito who rose from a very humble position to be the ruler of Syriam. Syriam was the greatest port of Burma in the 16th and 17th centuries. Harvey has ungenerously called De Brito ‘a sample of the heroic scoundrels who built up Portuguese dominion in the East’. If he was one such, he was not the only one. There were many such Europeans from Spain, the British Isles, Holland, etc. who operated in America, Asia, and Africa for self-gain and for dominion. The fault with De Brito was that from being a cabin-boy on a boat he became the leader of a group of free-lance Portuguese adventurers, and that though he rose to be the master of Syriam, he ended his career ingloriously, dying a shameful death at the hands of the king of Ava.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Portuguese soldiers, possessing as they did fire-arms and superior discipline, were in great demand in Burma. De Brito turned to soldiering, and in about 1598 entered the service of Minzayagy, king of Arakan. In 1599, Minzayagy led an expedition into Lower Burma and took Pegu and Syriam. De Brito having distinguished himself in this campaign, the victor placed him in charge of Syriam with some fifty Portuguese soldiers. De Brito soon realized that it was not difficult to establish himself as a ruler. His ambition was fired, and he made himself independent of his master in distant Arakan. Minzayagy sent a naval expedition under his son the Crown Prince to bring the European adventurer to his senses. De Brito, however, intercepted the ships near Negrais Island, destroyed them, and captured the prince. He treated his captive generously and granted him his liberty for a ransom.

De Brito now paid a visit to the Portuguese Governor-General at Goa to obtain recognition of his little principedom. He not only succeeded in his mission, but the Viceroy also gave him his niece Donna Luisa to wife. De Brito returned to Syriam with more Portuguese soldiers and war material.
During his absence the rulers of Prome and Toungoo had tried to take Syriam but had failed. After De Brito's return to Syriam, the Arakanese king also made several attempts to subdue him but to no purpose. Finally these Burmese princes recognized him. The prince of Martaban even gave his daughter in marriage to De Brito's son.

De Brito was now a prince among the many princes of Burma. He kept good order in his little kingdom, and his subjects liked him. He built a church. He encouraged conversions to Roman Catholicism, and it is possible he thus wanted to strengthen his position, being himself of the Catholic faith. He maintained well-armed troops consisting of Portuguese, Negro, and Indian followers. His chief source of revenue was from customs. In order to prevent smuggling he maintained a fleet of armed ships which kept a good watch on the coast. He might have greatly improved his position had he been more politic, and had he tried to expand his territory by gradual stages. He was, however, no statesman. Burmese sources say that he began to plunder Buddhist temples of their valuables. He took the pagoda bells and made cannon out of them. Even these acts might not have seriously shaken his position, but foolishly he came into conflict with his old enemies.

In 1612, he joined forces with Martaban and sacked Toungoo. Now Natshinnaung, the prince of Toungoo, was a vassal of Ava. Instead of appealing to his overlord for help, Natshinnaung joined hands with De Brito. This greatly infuriated Anaukpetlun, the king of Ava. He decided to punish all three confederates. De Brito was in an unfortunate position at this time. He had guns, but he was very short of powder. He tried to buy it in Bengal, but his agent absconded with the money. He sought to secure some from Madras but failed.

In the meantime Anaukpetlun appeared before Syriam with a large army and a formidable fleet of boats. De Brito and Natshinnaung had to retire within the walls of Syriam. The invader devastated the surrounding country and besieged Syriam. Although De Brito could not fire his guns, he put up a splendid fight. He poured boiling pitch and oil upon
the besiegers. He led sorties out of the gates and wrought tremendous damage in the enemy ranks; but numbers ultimately prevailed. After thirty-four days of siege De Brito agreed to surrender and begged for mercy, but was not heard. The besiegers made fearful attacks but were always repulsed with severe losses to themselves. The king of Arakan sent fifty ships to De Brito’s help, but they were all captured by the besiegers.

If De Brito could have held on a little longer it would have gone hard with Anaukpetlun; but treachery brought speedy victory to the king of Ava. De Brito was betrayed by Banna, one of his honoured followers. The brave defender was taken, carried to the king, and by him ordered to be impaled, and set up in an eminence above the fort, that he might the better look to it, as the king said. He lived two days in that misery.’ Anaukpetlun had Natshinnaung also executed.

Anaukpetlun was not only unmerciful to these two rulers, but also showed no chivalry towards De Brito’s wife Donna Luisa. He wanted her for his harem. When brought into his presence, ‘she turned on him with such scorn and courage that his desire for her beauty was turned to anger, and he ordered her leg to be bored, and sent her to Ava among the common slaves.’ When Banna the turncoat asked for a reward for his services, Anaukpetlun had him torn to pieces. He said that he who betrayed his own master, who trusted him, could never be a true man.

After perpetrating many cruelties upon the people of Syriam, Anaukpetlun entered Martaban. He forced the prince of the place to kill his son-in-law who was De Brito’s son. The Viceroy of Goa on hearing of De Brito’s predicament sent five ships together with men and material to his rescue, but it was too late. When the commander James Furtado reached Martaban, he found a fleet of twenty Ava boats which he easily defeated and scattered. The prisoners he took told him that it was all over with De Brito, so he did not proceed further but returned to Goa.

Anaukpetlun’s activities in Lower Burma were an affront to Siam, especially because he also tried to take the town of Tenasserim. An army was despatched from Ayuthia accom-
panied by a party of Portuguese soldiers who wished to avenge De Brito. A naval battle was fought in which Anaukpetlun was severely defeated and lost about 2,000 men. He retired from Tenasserim. The Portuguese at Goa, however, took no further steps against Anaukpetlun for his treatment of De Brito and his wife.

Chapter XXIV

A CHINESE EMPEROR IN BURMA

Yung-li was the last Ming Emperor of China. In 1644, the Manchus defeated and drove him into Yunnan. He ruled there for some years, and fought gallantly to maintain himself in southern China. He collected tribute from the neighbouring Shan States and thus was able to maintain his royal court. In 1658, however, Yung-li was severely defeated by the Manchus near Tengyuch. He retreated into Burmese territory and entered Bhamo. He then sent a message to Pindale, the king of Ava, together with a present of gold 365 lb. in weight, desiring refuge in Ava. Pindale granted the request, and Yung-li arrived at the Burmese capital with his family and 700 followers. He did homage to Pindale and entered his protection. He was provided with accommodation at Sagaing across the river. To be on the safe side, and to show that he did not any longer aspire to royalty, Yung-li and his family declared themselves to be Roman Catholics. He himself was never baptized, but his eldest son was and received the name of Constantine. The Empress at her baptism was named Anna.

Because of the change of dynasty in China, there was much disorder on the Sino-Burmese frontier. Freebooters in large numbers, organized as regular armies, entered Burma for plunder. They even defeated a Burmese army at Wetwin and came very close to Ava. The capital, however, was saved with the help of Portuguese gunners; but the king failed to drive the intruders out of Upper Burma. For three years, from 1658 to 1661, they ravaged Northern Burma and even
raided Pagan. They slew large numbers of men and carried away many women as captives. Yung-li had nothing to do with these lawless activities of his countrymen, and he made it clear that the bandits were not his followers.

Pindale of Ava, being unable to maintain order in the country, was in 1661 dethroned by his brother Pye who then became king with public support. Neither could Pye drive the Chinese freebooters out of the country. Yung-li came under suspicion, and Pye summoned his 700 followers to a pagoda and administered to them the oath of allegiance. Not considering this to be enough, he desired to scatter them in the villages. To this they were not willing to agree. An altercation took place, and at Pye's orders they were massacred to a man (1661). The king then sent a conciliatory message to Yung-li, who, in return agreed with the punishment meted out to his followers, and declared that he himself desired to live in peace.

Meanwhile the Manchus were consolidating their position in China. By 1662 they had made their position secure right up to the borders of Burma. But Yung-li was still at large, and it was decided to secure his person so as to make assurance doubly sure. The Viceroy of Yunnan, Sankuei, was ordered to fulfil this task. Sankuei with a large army of about 20,000 men entered Burma and encamped at Aungbinle in Mandalay district. He sent a message to Pye calling upon him to surrender the fugitive ex-Emperor and threatening to attack him if he failed to comply. Pye summoned a council and had the problem discussed. To surrender one who had been granted protection, and who had accepted the Burmese king as his suzerain lord, would be most shameful. On the other hand not to comply with the Manchu demand might result in a disastrous war. It was finally decided to hand over Yung-li to the Viceroy of Yunnan, on the ground that there was a precedent for it. In 1445, Thonganbwa, a Shan prince fleeing from the wrath of the Governor of Yunnan, had taken refuge in Ava. Narapati, the Ava king, had refused to hand him over to his pursuers. The very next year, however, Yunnan had sent a large army to enforce the demand, and Narapati had complied. Thonganbwa, however, killed himself, so that
only his body could be handed over to his enemies. In 1601, the Sawbwa of Bhamo took refuge in Chinese territory, and on this occasion it was China that on request had handed him over to his Burmese overlord.

Sankuei was an old officer of Yung-li and had enjoyed royal patronage. The ex-Emperor wrote to him, reminding him of past favours, and craved for pity. But Sankuei had no choice in the matter; he had to consider his own safety and the safety of his household. He had a new master now, to whom he was responsible. Yung-li was duly surrendered. It must have been a heart-rending scene when he was led away from Sagaing. Crowds must have turned out in sympathy and wept for him and for his family. He was taken to Yunnan-fu. After being exposed in the market place he was strangled with a bowstring. His son, 14 years of age, was also done to death in the same manner. His women were taken to Peking, and, it is reported, were well treated.

It has been remarked by some that Pye’s action in handing over to death a harmless ex-monarch, who had entered his protection, was dishonourable. Indeed, so it would be under modern international usage. But under conditions then prevalent it would have been foolhardy on the part of Pye to have resisted the Manchu demand. The new Mongolian power that had overthrown the last of the Mings would scarcely have hesitated to invade Burma had the summons been turned down. Indeed the Yunnan army was already on Burmese soil when the demand was made. At the most Pye could have permitted Yung-li to escape into southern Burma, and so, if possible, across the seas. It is doubtful if even such a report could have satisfied the pursuers.

CHAPTER XXV

EUROPEAN TRAVELLERS IN OLD BURMA

A NUMBER of European travellers visited Burma from the 15th century A.D. onwards. Some of these are known to history because of the accounts they wrote of their experiences. It
is certain that there were many other visitors of whom nothing is known simply because they have left no record of their travels. The accounts extant are not the products of chroniclers who believed in historical accuracy. They are the accounts of adventurers who were on the whole superficial observers, who often depended for their information on hearsay, and who specialised in exaggerations. Still there is historical material found woven into their accounts, so that what they have left behind must not be entirely ignored by the modern historian.

The younger Marco Polo of Venice saw service in China from 1275 to 1292 under the Emperor Kublai Khan. In his *Travels* Polo does not claim to have visited Burma, and it is almost certain that what he writes of the country is based on accounts related to him by his Chinese informers. He gives a very interesting account of the Battle of Ngassaunggyan (1287), fought between the last Pagan king and the Tartars of Kublai Khan. There are a number of inaccuracies in his account, but this does not detract from the historical value of his description. Polo also gives an account of Pagan, the capital of Burma, and calls it a large and a magnificent city. He speaks of two pyramidal towers of marble constructed by a great king of old: one was covered with gold and the other with silver. Each tower, he says, terminated on high in a ball. 'Around the balls were suspended small bells of gold and silver, which sounded when put in motion by the wind.' His informers seem to have told him that these were mausoleums; actually, however, they were pagodas or Buddhist temples, and the 'ball' was the *hti* or umbrella which until now surmounts every pagoda of any importance.

Nicolo di Conti was another Venetian who claimed to have travelled widely in Persia, India, Ceylon, Sumatra, and Burma. He was in Burma in 1435. He speaks of his experiences in Tenasserim. He visited Arakan, crossed the Arakan Yomas, reached the Irrawaddy, and arrived in Ava which he calls a noble city with a circumference of fifteen miles. He was particularly taken up with the elephant in Burma, an animal which must have been new to him. The king of Ava, he says, had 10,000 elephants and also a white
elephant which was used for ceremonial purposes. He men-
tions the tatooing practice which is still so alive in Burma.
The snakes of Burma, he says, are ‘as thick as a man, and
six cubits in length’. This undoubtedly refers to pythons.
From Ava di Conti went southwards and visited the towns
of Thaton and Pegu. The circumference of Pegu, he says,
was twenty miles.

Hieronimo de Santo Stefano, a Genoese merchant, visited
Burma in 1496. He sailed from a South Indian port to Pegu
in an Indian ship which was ‘fastened together with cords,
and the sails made of cotton’. It took twenty days to reach
Pegu. The king of Pegu, he reports, owned 10,000 elephants.
He also mentions Ava, the northern city, as being fifteen days’
journey from Pegu. Stefano desired to visit Ava, but was
unable to do so, because at that time the kings of Pegu and
Ava were at war with each other. He speaks of the famous
rubies of Upper Burma, which he must have seen in the
bazaars of Pegu. He also mentions a ruined Christian church
in Pegu. One of his companions died and was buried in this
church, which, he says, was in disuse. It is difficult to say
if it was really a Christian church. It may have been an old
Hindu temple, and Roman Catholic as he was, Stefano may
have taken the idols in stone to be the Trinity. When the
Portuguese landed on the Malabar coast in 1498, they mistook
one such temple for a Christian church. They paid homage
to the deities in it and felt highly satisfied with their achieve-
ment. It is not impossible, however, that Christianity entered
Burma much before the 15th century. There were Christians
in India as early as the 1st century. The first few centuries
of the Christian era was an epoch of Indian colonial expa-
sion on a large scale into Burma, Indo-China, and the East
Indies. Christian Indians may also have gone overseas for
the purpose of trade etc.

During 1505-06, Ludovico di Varthema, a native of Bologna
in Italy, was in Burma. His voyage from Pulicat, on the east
coast of India, to Tenasserim took fourteen days. He speaks
of the city of Tenasserim as a great port, the ruler of
Tenasserim as a powerful king with 100,000 troops at his
command, and 100 elephants: as much an exaggeration indeed
as to the army at least as the 10,000 elephants mentioned earlier by others! Weapons used by his soldiers were small swords, tortoise-shell shields, lances of cane and wood, and the bow. For armour they wore a thick cotton-wool dress. Houses had walls round them. Food and fruit, live-stock and birds were in great abundance, and the hens were of enormous size. From Tenasserim he proceeded to Pegu which he found protected with a wall. He speaks of beautiful houses and palaces of stone built with lime. The king of Pegu, he says, was a powerful monarch having at his command a large army and a contingent of Christian soldiers. Food was again there in plenty. Varthema had an audience with the king who was quite accessible to the humblest of his subjects. The monarch, he says, was loaded with jewellery and precious stones, his legs, toes, ears, arms, fingers, etc. being all thus covered ‘so that when the person of the king is seen by a light at night, he shines so much that he appears to be a sun’.

Ralph Fitch was the first Englishman known to history to visit Burma. He was in Pegu in 1586 during the reign of Nandabayin, the immediate successor of Bayinnaung. He gives an interesting description of his route from the mouth of the Ganges to Pegu. He was a passenger on a small ship which moving along the coast of Arakan entered the bar of Negrais, and thence came on to Bassein. According to the then standards of England he found Bassein a pretty town, with an abundance of provisions. The people, curiously enough, he says, were very tall and well disposed, the women fair, round-faced and small-eyed. From Bassein he moved on to Myaungmya in a small boat. This too he found to be a pretty town. He noticed whole families living in boats, going up and down about their business. From Myaungmya he proceeded to Dalla where he saw the royal elephant stables. He went on to Syriam, which, he says, was a great port, and indeed its importance lay largely in being a port of the capital of Pegu. From Syriam he went on to Mayet-kyi where he left his boat, and arrived in Pegu in a palanquin.

Fitch gives a great description of Pegu, and it is difficult to say if he actually saw what he describes; or, was it that he heard exaggerated accounts, which under his pen became
more exaggerated! Pegu, he says, consisted of two towns, the old and the new, with a stone wall all round, and a ditch encircling it containing many crocodiles as a further protection. The old town was the business area. Residential houses were made of bamboo, while ware-houses were of brick-work. In the new town lived the king, the nobility and the gentry. There were twenty gates to the city wall. The streets were broad, running straight from one gate to the gate opposite and these were the best streets, he says, he had seen in all his travels. There were houses on both sides of the streets and also trees for shade. Houses were made of timber covered with tiles. The king’s palace was in the middle of the city with a wall and a ditch. There was a royal pagoda with tiles of silver and gilded walls. Fitch speaks of the king having also four houses or temples very richly gilded and covered with lead. In the first there was the image of a king in gold adorned with all kinds of precious stones. In the second there was a huge image in silver in a sitting posture. In the third, there was a brass image bigger than the first two. In the fourth there was an image also in brass, but the biggest of all. On the head of each image was a crown studded with costly stones.

The king’s army was 300,000 strong with 5,000 elephants, but he had scarcely any navy. The weapons were of a very poor type: guns of a very inferior quality, darts and swords which were both short and without points. The king held court twice a day in a great courtyard. He heard the complaints of his subjects in person, but these must be handed to him in writing. Those whose suits were decided in their favour gave a present to the king. No presents were taken from those who lost their cases. The king possessed vast wealth. He had only one queen, but his seraglio consisted of 300 concubines. His children numbered anything between 80 and 90.

Pegu was a great centre of trade. Opium, cloth and dyes came from India. From China came sandal-wood and porcelain; camphor from Borneo; pepper from Sumatra; and from Arabia came woollens, scarlets, velvets and opium. The largest trade was with India. From Pegu the exports
were gold, silver, rubies, sapphires, musk, frankincense, chillies, tin, lead, copper, lac, rice, rice-wine, and sugar. Eight brokers of Pegu, it seems officially appointed, were responsible to sell goods which came from abroad, at 2% commission.

Fitch visited Dagon (modern Rangoon), and saw the Shwe Dagon Pagoda. He speaks of the gilt work on the temple, fruit trees all around it, and hosts of pilgrims that came to it.

Sebastian Manrique, a Portuguese monk of the Augustinian Order, came from India to Arakan in 1630 and spent five years in that country. At that time Arakan was an independent kingdom, not under the king of Burma. The ruler was Srithudamma (1622-38). The Pegu monarch at this time was Thalun (1629-48). Arakan was not finally incorporated into the Burmese empire until 1785 in the reign of Bodawpaya. Manrique gives a very interesting account of the royal city of Arakan, now called Mrohaung. It lay in a valley. Wherever possible, the surrounding hills served the purpose of a wall; and there were forts on the summits of these hills. A large swiftly flowing river (a tributary of the Kaladan) passed through the city. This river and its many branches were navigable, and so formed the principal means of traffic for traders and others. Houses in the city were of bamboo, the roofs being of palm-leaves. The walls of the houses were of bamboo matting bound together with strips of reeds, thus eliminating entirely the use of nails. The houses of princes and nobles were of the same material with timber added, but they were ornamented with carvings, gilt, and enamel work in various colours. The royal palace was also of the same material, but magnificently built and beautifully decorated. Manrique was amazed at the high and straight timber pillars in the palace, undoubtedly of teak. These were gilded over. Some of the rooms of the palace were made of sweet-smelling sandal-wood. Inside the palace was a temple, it appears, a royal chapel, known as the 'House of Gold', entirely covered with gold. It was decorated with a creeper of gold which ran along its ceiling, and about one hundred gourds of gold were attached to it. Each fruit, he
was told, weighed 10 viss, that is 35 lbs. There were seven large images of gold in this house, but they were all hollow, the plate being about one inch in thickness. The images were beautified with many precious stones. According to Manrique there was so much costly and magnificent material in this house, that his readers must need draw the conclusion that the petty king of Arakan was one of the richest rulers of all time!

The population of Mrohaung, as reported to Manrique, was 160,000, excluding foreign merchants. At the present time, with the exception of Rangoon and Mandalay, no city in all Burma has a population of more than 100,000. It is scarcely possible, that in those days, when the population of the country was very much smaller, Mrohaung could have been as populous as that. Manrique speaks of the presence of a great many foreign merchants in the city, from India, Tenasserim, Martaban, Achin, and Batavia. The king also entertained foreigners in his army, such as, Portuguese, Talaings, Indians, and Japanese, including Christians.

Manrique witnessed, he says, the coronation ceremonies of twelve vassal princes of Arakan and of the king of Arakan himself (1634-35). Srithudamma came to the throne in 1622, and it is indeed strange that twelve to thirteen years later he came to be crowned! The ceremonies Manrique describes in detail. They were of a very elaborate nature. First there was the proclamation made throughout the realm, then the crowning of the twelve vassal princes, at which the king himself officiated; next processions, banquets, shows, dances, etc. and finally the crowning of the monarch himself with great pomp and pageantry. Most probably it was not a coronation ceremony at all, but that the twelve princes had come to pay homage to their overlord. As for Srithudamma, he must have been crowned soon after coming to the throne. Manrique says that the king was crowned in a temple into which non-Buddhists were not admitted; he, therefore, did not witness the ceremony. After waiting for two hours outside the temple, he saw the king come out wearing a crown studded with diamonds, rubies, and pearls. Water from the Ganges was used at these ceremonies.
Manrique mentions various detachments of troops which took part in the processions. There was a cavalry escort of 600 swordsmen under a Mohammedan captain. These consisted of Indians, Talaings, and Burmans. They were followed by princes and nobles riding on 200 elephants. Next came musicians and dancing girls. Finally came the newly crowned vassal princes surrounded by about forty attendants on foot.

The banquet which followed the crowning, Manrique describes as follows: ‘First came in six ushers with silver staffs in their hands. They were followed by three sturdy servants bearing three silver trays with feet. After them came 100 serving-men with more trays of the same shape, but of different material. In these the food was brought. The Maghs dine, as all Asiatics do, seated on the ground, but at the same time they require the food to be put upon little tables raised about four inches off the ground. On these tables, some five or six porcelain dishes of food are placed. When persons of rank and position are being entertained it is essential, as a mark of courtesy and ceremonial, to give each guest his own table. The Maghs eat every kind of flesh, of both home-reared and wild animals, even impure flesh as that of rats, snakes, and bats. They also use many kinds of herbs and the relish Sidol enters into every dish. They also have sweets made after their own fashion, which, though not so good as those of India and Portugal, are yet quite tasty. This banquet ended just before sunrise, when all went home.’

The royal imperial procession, Manrique says, was led by ushers, macebearers, and nobles. Then came the twelve crowned vassal princes and eighty monks. ‘Right at the end of this magnificent and brilliant procession’, he says, ‘came the Magh Emperor seated in a rich palanquin...carried on the shoulders of eight handsome gallant youths. The palanquin was surrounded by one hundred pages of from fifteen to eighteen years of age. Accompanied by this procession and by the Chief Grandees and military commanders, who had been awaiting him in the hall, the king proceeded on his way in absolute silence along a path which had been specially prepared for this occasion.’ After the crowning, the king ‘mounted a specially chosen and very richly caparisoned
elephant...The streets were so thronged with masses of people that the cavalry had a hard task in clearing the route...By no means the least striking sight in this triumphal procession was the magnificent show made by the rich dresses and splendid jewels worn by the princesses and noble dames of the court. For, although of dusky hue, their beauty was not less than that of our own European ladies. In this way the procession went up to the Royal Palace. The moment the Emperor passed the first gate, the whole of the artillery in the city again fired a salute. The Emperor then passed on to a spacious hall, where his wife, the Empress, awaited him....The Emperor took the Queen by the hand and placing her upon his right went up with her to a window, from where both of them with their own hands threw a large quantity of silver money, that had been specially coined for this purpose, among the people. This was the final ceremony which marked the end of these long-drawn-out festivities.

Other European visitors who came to Burma were Nitikin in 1470 or thereabouts, Caesar Frederick in 1568, and Gasparo Balbi in 1583. Nandabayin ruled at Pegu when Balbi visited the country. The king was highly amused to hear from Balbi that Venice was a state without a king. It is possible he did not believe the report.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MON-BURMESE STRUGGLE

The kingdom of the Mons (Talaings) in Lower Burma possessed an ancient civilization. Racially and culturally, the Talaings were a product of the fusion of immigrants and influences from China and from the Telingana coast of eastern India. Some of the earliest centres of Mon or Talaing civilization were Thaton, Twante, Dalla and Pegu. In the 11th century A.D. Thaton was a flourishing Mon kingdom noted for a high standard of civilization. In the same century the kingdom of Pagan in Upper Burma came
into prominence under Anawrahta. In 1057, the first historical clash took place between the two peoples. Pagan was ambitious and warlike, while Thaton lived in the past and was totally unprepared for war. Anawrahta sacked Thaton, carried away King Manuha, together with an immense booty, and the Mons became the subjects of Pagan.

The Mons, however, did not readily acquiesce in their new and dishonourable situation. They longed for freedom, and Mon rebellions became the order of the day. These rebellions were ruthlessly crushed by the rulers. At long last, however, the empire of Pagan ceased to be, and the power of the Mons began to show signs of revival. Wayeru, a Shan adventurer, established himself at Martaban and founded a Shan-Talaing dynasty which ruled over Lower Burma from 1287 to 1539. In 1369, Pegu became the capital. This dynasty produced some remarkable rulers, such as Razadarit, Binnyawaru, Queen Shinsawbu, and Dammazedei. For more than 200 years the Mons kept the northern Burmans at bay. A new Shan-Burmese power was meanwhile developing in Ava, and the two Burmese kings Mingyiwasawke (1368-1401) and Minkhaung (1401-1432) sought to subdue Lower Burma, but Razadarit resisted them successfully.

Early in the 16th century a new Burmese power began to rise at Toungoo under Minkynyn (1486-1531). Tabinshwet, his son and successor, conquered Lower Burma, and crowned himself king in Pegu. He adopted a definite policy towards the Mons. He wanted to fuse the Mon and Burmese races into one nation, and create a united Burma. He appointed Mon governors. A large part of his army, including officers, consisted of Mons. He had Mon counsellors. He married Mon wives. He adopted some of the Mon manners and usages for private as well as public purposes. Had he lived long enough, and had his policy been faithfully pursued by some of his successors, there is no reason to doubt why a united nation could not have been produced. Tabinshwet, however, fell from morality, and his policy died with him.

Under Bayinnaung (1551-81) the Mons were conscripted for the numerous wars of the new imperialist. To escape from this scourge, many migrated into Siam. Hatred for
the Burmese naturally increased, rebellions broke out, and the rulers took severe measures against them. This further added fuel to the fire. Thalun (1629-48) failed to pacify them, and the Mons continued to migrate out of the country.

In the reign of Mahadhamayaza Dipati (1733-52) the capital was moved from Pegu to Ava. The object was to guard more effectively the northern frontiers from the eruptions of the Manipuris, Arakanese and Chinese. It was really, however, a sure sign of weakness. The Mons readily took advantage of it, and they had good reason to desire to be free. They were an oppressed race. Their looms were taxed. Even nursing mothers had to pay a tax for suckling their babies. In 1740, the Burmese governor of Pegu declared his independence of Ava and marched upon Syriam. Instead of winning over the local population, his hand fell heavily upon them. They rose up against him and slew him.

There now began a general rising of the Mons against the Burmese population settled in Lower Burma. They massacred the Burmese indiscriminately in Syriam, Martaban, and in other towns. They drove out the Burmese governors of Martaban and Tavoy. The Mons then set up (1740) an independent kingdom of their own at Pegu under Lord Htaw Buddhaketi. He was ably supported by Binnya Dala, Master of the Elephant Stables. But instead of first consolidating their position in the south, the Mon leaders decided to attack Ava and the north, with the object of at once destroying the Burmese kingdom. They speedily took Prome and Toungoo, and brought all the country towards the south under subjection. They drafted into their service Dutch and Portuguese adventurers, and with the help of fire-arms that these foreigners possessed, the Mons carried out annual seasonal raids up the Irrawaddy. The Burmese were caught between two fires, the Manipuris from the north and the Mons from the south. In 1743, the Burmese army in a tremendous effort bore down south and took Syriam. The Mon leader, however, was not to be outdone. He made a counter-attack and drove them out, inflicting heavy losses upon them. In 1745, the Burmese again came down in great force, and the Mons had to retreat from Minbu right down to Pegu.
In 1747, Lord Htaw Buddhaketi retired and Binnya Dala took his place. The new leader was a man of action, and had a clear policy in view, namely to revive the Mon power and make it an all-Burma power. He appointed Talaban as the commander-in-chief. Talaban was a great soldier and a respected leader. He was largely responsible for the triumph of the Mons over the Burmans. He was brave and resolute and possessed nobility of character.

A supreme effort was now made to destroy the northern power. It was a conflict between the two dominant races of the country. The issue was whether the Burmese race and things Burmese were to prevail in the country, or the Mon race and things Mon. There was very little difference, however, between the two, and it would have been far better if the policy of fusion tried by Tabinshweti had prevailed.

Talaban swept northwards and in 1751 occupied Kyaukse. The Burmese fought a pitched battle to save the situation, but they were utterly defeated and retired behind the walls of Ava. The Mons besieged Ava, and in 1752 took it and burnt it. It was now the day of the Mons. Crowds of captives were carried away south, and the royal family, too, including the king of Ava. It now appeared as if the Mons would unite all Burma under their sway and create a new empire. But it was not to be. Their triumph was only temporary. The Burmese royal family was played out indeed, but not the Burmese nation. It was still capable of producing a leader able enough to save the situation. Such a leader made his appearance at the right moment, and proved himself to be the saviour of the Burmese race. This was Alaungpaya.

The Mons committed a great blunder in quickly withdrawing their forces from Ava. Since the Burmese king was in their hands, they thought it was all over. Agents and detachments were sent to administer the water of allegiance; and indeed a Mon empire was taking shape. But when a Mon detachment arrived at the village of Moksobomyo, it was cut to pieces by Alaungpaya. The Mons decided to make an example of the village. They sent a larger detachment. Meanwhile forty-six neighbouring villages had joined Alaungpaya and were ready for resistance under his leader-
ship. The second Mon detachment was skilfully waylaid and massacred. A third detachment arrived, but without any cannon their assault on Moksobomyo failed. Alaungpaya counter-attacked and they fled down the river. The news of this victory spread like wildfire. Alaungpaya's followers increased, there was much enthusiasm, and he was hailed as the new national leader.

Even then the Mon leaders did not take Alaungpaya seriously. He was but a village chief, and not of royal blood. A new commander was sent northwards and Mon outposts reached as far up as Wuntho and Kawlin. Alaungpaya and his supporters were defeated in a number of actions; but they did not give in. They fought on spiritedly and the tide soon began to turn. By October 1752, the Mons had to withdraw most of their northern outposts. In December 1753, Alaungpaya encamped near Ava. The Mons tried to dislodge him but failed. Failing to receive reinforcements from the south, the Mons evacuated the town secretly and retreated towards the Delta. By January 1754, all Upper Burma had passed to Alaungpaya. He was proclaimed king with Shwebo (Moksobomyo) as his capital where he built his palace. He entered Ava in triumph and was proclaimed as the protector of the Dharma.

The Mons now opened their eyes, but it was too late. They sent their whole army up the Irrawaddy. They drove Alaungpaya's sons out of Myingyan district and pressed victoriously forward. They carried fire and sword into the country right up to Shwebo and laid siege to Ava. Alaungpaya rallied his men, issued out of Shwebo, and advanced upon the besieging Mons. At the same time Alaungpaya's son made a sortie from the gates of besieged Ava. The southerners suffered heavy losses in the conflict that ensued and retreated. The rainy season was approaching and they did not want to take any risks. Meanwhile the Burmans in the Delta rose in rebellion against their Mon masters. Burmese rebels also took Prome. In desperation the Mons drowned the captive Burmese king. But this foolish act only proved to be of help to Alaungpaya. It roused the Burmese to further action, and it removed an obstacle from the path of the new king. The
Mon army retreating from Ava appeared before Prome (April 1754). Alaungpaya followed in pursuit, but the Mons fought valiantly and kept him at bay for full ten months. In February 1755, he broke through and entered Prome. The capture of Prome meant the control of central Burma. At Myanaung (=speedy victory), the chiefs of Toungoo, Henzada, Myaungmya, Bassein, and Sandoway submitted to Alaungpaya and paid him homage. In May 1755, Alaungpaya took Dagon and called it Yangon (=end of strife: Rangoon). In 1756, he took Syriam and carried out a massacre. The next year he captured Pegu. He wreaked terrible vengeance upon the city with an indiscriminate massacre, sparing not even the monks. This was the end of the Mon power. They lay crushed. Under the Alaungpaya dynasty also they rebelled again and again, but they never rose to any appreciable height of success.

The Mons gave their civilization to the Burmese. We do not know much about the Mons, because during the great struggle with Alaungpaya and the sack of towns, their literature was largely destroyed. Much of what is known about them is from Burmese sources, and this would naturally be highly biased to the detriment of their vanquished rivals. In the struggle for supremacy between the two races, the dice were heavily loaded against the unfortunate Mons. Like the Sumerians of old, they were cut off from supplies of fresh blood. They were racially bottled up in Lower Burma. On the other hand, the Burmese continued to receive newcomers from the north. This not only helped them to maintain racial vitality, but also gave them the advantage of numbers over the Mons. In 1752, the Mons reached the zenith of their power, but they did not take full advantage of the situation. They rested on their laurels. They had almost acquired the sovereignty of Burma; but their leaders, in spite of all their brilliance, failed to measure up to the situation. Perhaps the greatest cause of their failure lay, not in a lack of able leaders, but because they did not possess the man-power that was at the command of Alaungpaya. Massacres and migrations had greatly depleted their numbers. Numerically the Mons were a small community. Even now they number
just about three lakhs, while the Burmans are a hundred lakhs.

A branch of the Mon-Khmer family of races, the Talaings (as the Burmese call them), were a gifted people. For 700 years and more they struggled for independence. When the British annexed Tenasserim, 1824-26, Mons in large numbers migrated from the Irrawaddy Delta into the new English possession. The great Shwe Dagon Pagoda was originally built by them. During the last two and a half centuries the process of their absorption into the Burmese race has been steadily going on. They can now scarcely be distinguished from the Burmans. Their language is dying out, and the vast majority of them speak the Burmese language.

CHAPTER XXVII

ALAUNGPAYA: THE THIRD MAKER OF BURMA

ALAUNGPAYA was a tall man, almost six feet in height, physically powerful, but slightly pockpitted and of a swarthy complexion. He was intensely proud of his achievements and boastful of his triumphs. When Capt. Baker, an English envoy from Negrais, had an interview with him (1755), Alaungpaya showed him his arms, legs and thighs, and said that he would not find his like one among a thousand. 'See this sword,' he said. 'It is now three years since it has been constantly exercised in chastising my enemies, it is indeed blunt with use.'

Alaungpaya was the hero that Burma produced at the right moment, 'the man for the hour'. He may safely be called the saviour of the Burmese race and a maker of Burma. The Burmese, who had for many centuries held a predominant position in the country, were, in the middle of the 18th century, in danger of passing under Mon control. The Toungoo dynasty was fast fading out. Mahadhamayaza Dipati (1733-1752), the last king, was helplessly looking on while the resurgent Mons under the dashing leadership of Binnya Dala were occupying Prome and Toungoo together
with all the country southwards. In 1752, the Mons broke into Upper Burma; right up to Ava they came carrying everything before them. To all appearances, it looked certain that a Mon empire would now be established. Among other causes, Burmese decline was due to misgovernment, decay of the royal house, and want of leadership. Under these circumstances of stress and danger, a mighty leader arose, not belonging to the blue blood, but of humble origin.

Alaungpaya made Shwebo, his birthplace, the centre of resistance. His father in despair was willing to pay homage to the victorious Mons, but Alaungpaya said 'No; when fighting for our country it matters little whether you are few or many. What does matter is that your comrades have true hearts and strong arms.' His resistance bore fruit, and it was noised abroad that even the Nats were fighting on his behalf. Burmans in various parts of the Mon dominion rose up in arms with the war-cry 'Shwebotha' (son of Shwebo) on their lips.

Alaungpaya was highly ambitious, but at the same time he was a staunch Burmese nationalist. He took the opportunity of uniting the scattered Burmese fleeing before the triumphant Mons. Like Shivaji, the great Indian, he prevailed upon rival leaders to join hands with him, and speedily overthrew those who resisted him. The torch that he lit for a time burnt dimly, but soon it flared up, and men near and far wondered at the conflagration. Once having achieved unity, he abandoned his defensive tactics, and from 1754 onwards began to pound the Mons with hammer blows which did not cease till all the country was recovered and Pegu taken (1757).

Alaungpaya's ancestors had for generations been petty Myothugyiis, and he himself was one such humble functionary. As is usual, when he came to the fore and aspired to kingship, he claimed royal descent, which of course was readily secured for him by astrologers and chroniclers. Kingship and royal blood have always appealed to the Burmese mind, so that such a position publicly established and recognized would easily make him the centre of attraction.

Alaungpaya's conquest of Lower Burma proved to be of the greatest significance in the history of Rangoon and
of Burma. At his command Rangoon began to develop as a major port of Burma. Its old name was Dagon. Alaungpaya was quite decided that Syriam, the centre of Mon resistance, must be destroyed. He carried out his resolve most thoroughly. His object was to have a great port which would be Burmese in character. For this purpose he chose Dagon and re-named it Yangoon. A riverside village soon developed into an important port of Burma.

Alaungpaya’s successes stimulated the national spirit of the Burmese race: it was life as if from the dead. A national dynasty was established which lasted for nearly a century and a half. At the beginning of his public career Alaungpaya found his people in danger of passing under Mon control; on his death, he left a Burma extending from Manipur in the north to Mergui towards the south.

It was the ambition of every great Burmese monarch to pose as a divine incarnation on the way to Buddhahood. This would entitle him to the proud position of promoter of truth and justice, with mercy for all. It was in principle nothing but the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings. The religious sentiment of the people was closely associated with the national mind. Alaungpaya fully exploited this sentiment towards the consolidation of his royal position. Buddhist tradition stands for a royal protector. Asoka, Kanishka and Harsha had been champions in India in the distant past. Anawrahta was the first champion of Buddhism in Burma. Alaungpaya lost no time in taking this much coveted place for himself; although at the capture of Pegu he had 3,000 Mon Buddhist monks trampled by elephants. He held a solemn investiture at Ava and worshipped at pagodas wherever he went. He prohibited the use of intoxicants and the slaughter of cattle.

The importance of the rise of Alaungpaya is also evident in Burma’s relations with European traders. As in India, so also in Burma there was a breakdown of central authority early in the 18th century. The result was that the French under Dupleix made an attempt to create an empire in South India. This produced a long drawn-out struggle for political supremacy between the English and the French trading companies,
ending in victory for the British. In 1757, the English also won the Battle of Plassey and made themselves the masters of Bengal. The English and French traders were operating in Lower Burma as well at the same time. In the absence of a strong ruler, it is quite possible European rivalries might have found fertile soil for the seeds of foreign imperialism in Burma too. The rise of Alaungpaya eliminated such a contingency at least for a century and more.

After the Mons had been subdued, other states, such as Martaban, Tavoy, Chiengmai, etc. readily submitted to Alaungpaya and rendered tribute. Early in 1760, Alaungpaya invaded Siam; but here he met with failure. He appeared before the walls of Ayuthia, but soon discovered that it was hopeless to attempt a siege. The city was well defended and the rainy season was at hand. He struck camp and began his retreat, but he was destined not to reach his capital. True, he re-entered his own kingdom, but he died at Kinyua in Thaton district, being only 46 years of age (1760). His body was taken up the River Irrawaddy. At Kyauk-Myaung all his ministers, officers, and a vast multitude came to receive the dead king. The body was solemnly carried into Shwebo, and he was buried, mourned and admired by a whole nation.

Although he reigned for only eight years, Alaungpaya succeeded in establishing a new national Burmese dynasty. Unfortunately, however, it was just a repetition of what had been in the past, namely, a round of despotism, wars, rebellions, decay, and disintegration. The New Age which was dawning upon the world required a new outlook. The new dynasty did not wake up to the requirements of the times. There was no development towards the rule of law. Nationalism failed to find an anchor of a permanent nature as expressed in representative institutions. An influential middle class failed to develop, a class which could express public opinion, a class which the king would learn to respect and trust, a class which would provide the needed leaders for the country and act as the backbone of the nation. An organized and a well-oiled machine of government did not grow up to function automatically irrespective of the death or presence or absence of the king. The people in general
did not show a desire for civil liberty which did not exist. No conscious attempts were made to keep in touch with world affairs. This was the soil which produced an Alaungpaya. The task of the new despot was in a sense accomplished. It was the responsibility of the people to see that national development did not begin and end with autocracy. In England it did not. The age of Tudor Despotism was followed by a constitutional struggle, ending ultimately in the establishment of a people’s Democracy.

**Chapter XXVIII**

**How Burma Repelled Chinese Invasions:**

1765-69

According to Burmese chronicles there were four Chinese invasions: the first two in 1765-6, the third in 1767-8, and the fourth in 1769, all during the reign of Hsinbyushin. The map of the Sino-Burmese frontier shows that there are two main natural thoroughfares from China into Burma. One route is along the Taiping river to Bhamo, then down the Irrawaddy to the Burmese capital. The second line of entrance is past Hshenwi, Lashio, Hsipaw, down the Namtu to Ava. The first ‘invasion’ was not meant to be an invasion by the Chinese, and their records scarcely mention it. The second and fourth invasions followed the Bhamo route, while the third invasion, which was the most dangerous, favoured the Lashio passage.

For centuries the boundary between Burma and China was fluid. The ‘gates’ of the two states moved backwards or forwards according as one side or the other advanced or retired. On the frontier in question there were many petty princedoms. The Sawbwas recognized Chinese or Burmese suzerainty according to their own convenience. They paid tribute to one or to the other or even to both as expediency required. The situation was further complicated by these princes not living at peace among themselves. There were family quarrels, raids, counter-raids, and commotions.
In 1763, the Sawbwa of Kengtung, in Burma, raided Kenghung which recognized Chinese suzerainty. The Governor of Yunnan sent troops to the help of Kenghung, but these were defeated by Kengtung. The king of Burma had nothing to do with these disturbances. It was just a frontier commotion. In 1765, however, Burmese troops appeared on the Salween, northwards of Kenghung, and demanded tribute from the Sawbwas in that region. The Sawbwas appealed to China. In the meantime, Yunnan forces had not only driven out the Kengtung raiders from Kenghung but even pursued them and laid siege to Kengtung (January 1766). At the very same time Burmese troops were besieging Ayuthia with a view to the conquest of Siam. The appearance of Chinese troops near Kengtung was looked upon by Ava as a danger to the Burmese army operating in Siam. Hsinbyushin, therefore, sent an army under Nemyosithu to the relief of Kengtung.

Burmese chronicles look upon the siege of Kengtung by the Chinese as the first invasion of Burma. To the Chinese, however, it was no invasion at all, but just the usual type of frontier riot. Nemyosithu advanced with infantry and an elephant corps and at once launched an attack upon the besiegers, while the Sawbwa from within made a simultaneous sortie. The Chinese cavalry failed to stand up to the Burmese elephantry, and the Yunnan troops were forced to cross the Talaw river. Thence they were pursued up to the Mekong, where, in an engagement, the Chinese general lost his life. The campaign was over, and if it may be called the first Chinese invasion of Burma, it was defeated (March 1766).

From the Chinese side, the Kengtung episode became the cause of the three subsequent invasions of Burma (1766-69). Burma must not only be punished, but also subdued. Because of his failure, the Yunnan Governor committed suicide, and his place was taken by Yang who was a man of ambition. He drew up a plan for the conquest of Burma and presented it to Ch'ieng-lung, the Chinese Emperor, for sanction. Ch'ieng-lung was a mighty monarch, and his armies had won successes towards the north and in Central Asia. He must have looked upon the conquest of Burma as a small
matter. He agreed to Yang's proposal, but warned him to be careful. Yang was ambitious and rash, but could by no means be called a man of ability. He issued an arrogant order calling upon Burma to submit, or she would be punished. When no reply was forthcoming, the Chinese invaded Burma.

In October 1766, the Chinese colonel Chao surprised and took Bhamo. Balamindin established himself at Kaungton on the river, eight miles below Bhamo, and decided to halt the Chinese there. Chao attacked him again and again in order to break through, but Balamindin conducted a stolid and magnificent defence. The Chinese surrounded Kaungton, but all their attacks were repulsed. Hsinbyushin now sent Nemyosithu by river to relieve Kaungton, and he managed to replenish the food supply of the besieged garrison. The Chinese could not prevent it since they had no fighting-boats. Nemyosithu taking advantage of this Chinese weakness, proceeded up river and recovered Bhamo. Chao was now caught in a trap. He, therefore, destroyed his stores and re-treated.

Meanwhile, a large Burmese army under the command of Mahasithu marched through Mohnyin and Mogauung, crossed the river south of Myitkyina, and advanced to Nammying Creek. A Chinese army stopped him here; but Mahasithu made a sudden attack and drove back the Chinese as far as Sanda. He failed, however, to proceed further: the Chinese counter-attacked successfully. A third Burmese army at the same time became active in the vicinity of Hsenwi, marched up the Salween, and entered Yunnan.

The Emperor finding that Yang had mismanaged the whole campaign, recalled him. In penance for his failure, Yang committed suicide. The chief cause of the Chinese defeat was that one-half of their troops died of malaria. The failure, however, spurred them on to a more formidable attack upon Burma.

Careful preparations were made for the next invasion of Burma to begin after the rains of 1767. Duke Ming Jui was appointed commander-in-chief. He was a good soldier, and had distinguished himself in Turkestan and beyond Kashgar. He decided to penetrate into Burma by the second
route via Hsenwi, and take Ava the capital. A small force under Oerhtengo was to take Bhamo, Kaungton and Mongmit, and then join hands with the Duke at Ava.

At the end of October 1767, Ming Jui with 20,000 Chinese and 3,000 crack Manchu troops started from Yung-ch’ang. Because of rain and his slow bullock transport, he took more than a month to reach Wan-ting which he established as his advance base. A week later he entered Hsenwi without any difficulty whatsoever. He turned Hsenwi into his supply depot, and garrisoned it with 5,000 troops. With a picked force of 12,000, the Duke now advanced on Hsipaw. All the petty principdoms he came across submitted to him readily. Hsinbyushin and his advisers were meanwhile planning resistance. Early in 1768, three Burmese armies were sent out from Ava. One under Mahasithu advanced by way of Maymyo to meet Ming Jui at Hsipaw, another army under Mahathihathura proceeded along the Myitnge with the object of harassing the invader from his rear, while the third army under Nemyosithu was ordered to proceed northwards and stop the enemy at Mongmit.

Mahasithu constructed sixteen stockades south of Goketik and encamped there with 20,000 troops. A smaller body of his troops he moved forward to prevent the Chinese from occupying Hsipaw; but it was defeated, and Ming Jui occupied that town. Thence the Duke advanced to Gokteik. He crossed over and found the main body of Burmese troops under Mahasithu ready to meet him (February 1768). The Chinese immediately attacked and carried four stockades. The Burmese then abandoned the other twelve stockades and retreated. It was a fierce engagement, and some 3,000 Burmans were killed. The Duke was wounded, but he decided to advance and take Ava. The Burmese version of the battle is short and expressive: ‘The whole army sank. The troops fled topsy turvy, helter skelter.’ The road to Ava was open! Ming Jui passed Maymyo and advanced eight miles beyond. Ava was within his reach. But ‘There’s many a slip ’twixt the cup and the lip.’

When Hsinbyushin heard of the defeat of his army and the approach of the enemy, he said, ‘All my generals are a joke.
Let no one stop the Chinese. Let them come, even to my palace.' He threatened that if they did so, he and his four brothers would throw them into the Irrawaddy.

Meanwhile, however, the other Burmese forces began their operations, and met with great success. Mahathihathura forced the Chinese at Hsipaw to retreat to Hsenwi. Nemyosithu advanced from Mongmit, and, joining forces with Mahathihathura, forced the Chinese out of Hsenwi. This turn of events prevented Ming Jui from capturing Ava. His communications were cut; his supply depots were lost. There was now neither sufficient food for his troops nor forage for his horses. He expected Oerhtengo from Mongmit to join him near Ava, but there was no sign of him. The Duke had no boats to cross the Myitnge for an attack upon the Burmese capital. He decided to retreat. Had Oerhtengo broken through Bhamo and Kaungton, Ming Jui would have taken Ava; but Balamindin successfully withstood the Chinese commander and saved the situation.

Ming Jui carried out a successful retreat. He captured the Burmese food depot at Monglong, and by way of Meng-yu headed towards Wan-ting. The Burmese pursued him, but relief columns from Yunnan came to the Duke's rescue, and his army escaped. Ming Jui felt the failure of his campaign so keenly that he committed suicide.

The Chinese launched their last invasion in 1769. It came by way of Bhamo. They tried hard to take Kaungton, but failed. They retreated and sued for peace. The Burmese commander-in-chief, Mahathihathura, was well aware of the power and resources of the Chinese Emperor, and that more dangerous invasions would follow, unless peace was made. He, therefore, accepted the following terms: The Chinese agreed peacefully to retire. The status quo as before the war would be recognized. Letters of friendship between the two states would be exchanged as before, if not, friendly decennial missions would be sent by both the monarchs. The two countries were never to fight each other again.

The ungrateful Hsinbyushin was displeased with the peace made. He wanted the Chinese to be annihilated. He ill-treated the families of his victorious generals who had saved
him and his kingdom. The Burmese armies, afraid to return home, attacked Manipur in January 1770, and plundered that country. The Raja fled to Assam and a Burmese nominee was placed on the vacant throne. Hsinbyushin sent a woman’s longyi to Mahathihathura and banished him.

The defeat of the Chinese invasions was a great Burmese feat, the credit for which must go to the military leaders, not to their king. Mahathihathura, Mahasithu, Nemyosithu, and Balamindin had served their king and country with patriotic loyalty. They had forced the armies of one of the greatest powers of Asia to acknowledge defeat again and again. Their guerilla tactics had met with unqualified success. Actually, however, it was not much more than a pin-prick to gigantic China. The Emperor, had he so desired, could have overpowered Burma. Victory filled the Burmese royal family and the people generally with false pride. It created a tradition, firmly held since, that Burma was the strongest power on earth. Neither the Siamese and the Chinese, nor the Arakanese and the Indians of Manipur could stand against them. It was this belief that led Burma, half a century later, into a disastrous war with the British, ending as it did in terrific losses, and ultimately destroying the independence of the country.

CHAPTER XXIX

BODAWPAYA, THE GRAND MONARCH

Bodawpaya (1782-1819) was a son of Alaungpaya. His subjects looked upon him as a powerful and a successful ruler. To all outward appearances he did look impressive. The boundaries of the empire were extended to their utmost limit. In 1785, Arakan was conquered and annexed. Arakan was invaded from four different directions. One army went through the pass from Pa-aing in Minbu district; a second army by the pass from Padaung in Prome district; the third army by the pass from Kyangin in Henza district; and the fourth went by ship round Negrais. The four divisions
joined forces on the western coast, and easily took Ramree. The Arakanese were heavily outnumbered. They fought hard, but were overpowered. The Burmese carried away the royal family, the lords, and about 20,000 other captives. They also took away a huge cannon, 30 feet long, and many images, including the celebrated Mahamuni. It was a huge statue. It was brought down the Lemro river, then up the Sandoway river, next up the Taungup Creek. It was then sawn into a few convenient pieces, and brought to Padaung through the Taungup Pass. Twelve thousand men had to be pressed into service for this work. Finally, it was taken up the Irrawaddy, and placed in the Arakan pagoda at Amarapura.

The conquest of Arakan established the reputation of Bodawpaya. It was looked upon as a great feat of arms. The Burmans were indeed impressed with the mighty march of armies by land and river and sea, while the acquisition of the Mahamuni image was looked upon as a wonderful triumph which would bring to the dynasty and to the country unfailing good luck. It certainly appeared that the new seacoast would be an asset to the empire; but the Burmans did not care to take advantage of it. They left foreign and oceanic trade largely in the hands of foreigners. The conquest of Arakan, on the other hand, became one of the leading causes of the downfall of the Konebaung dynasty. In the past Burmese kings had clashed with petty princes towards the east. Now, Bodawpaya, by moving westwards, destroyed the buffer state of Arakan that lay between Burma and the powerful state of the East India Company in India. Disputes arose, and these finally led to the First Burmese War (1824-26).

Bodawpaya also dazzled his subjects with numerous invasions in an attempt to conquer Siam. What if they all failed: his might was expressed, and his harassed subjects were impressed with his power. Any way, he succeeded in retaining possession of Tenasserim and Tavoy, and up to now they are a part of Burma. These Siamese invasions proved to be a serious drain upon the resources of Burma. Under economic stress, many of Bodawpaya’s soldiers took to dacoity. The hard-pressed Mons rebelled in 1783 and again in 1814.
These and other rebellions were crushed with a firm hand, proving to his subjects that Bodawpaya was a powerful prince. But government revenues declined, and there was a tremendous drain upon Burma’s man-power. Wherever his conscripts marched they ate up villages and towns, thus causing untold economic and moral loss to the country. Above all, the failure in Siam tempted Bodawpaya to attempt an extension of his empire northwards. This policy was thoughtlessly pursued by his grandson and immediate successor Bagyidaw, and it led to the disastrous war with the British.

Bodawpaya’s name is also associated with certain reform measures. He collected, for example, 600 inscriptions. His object, however, was not to promote historical study and research. He wished to scrutinize these inscriptions in order to check the boundaries of ecclesiastical landed estates in the country, so as to prevent the clergy from owning more property than gifted to them by pious donors of old. Still, it must be admitted, his activities in this direction have proved to be of help to modern research students. His collections and copies of inscriptions are now an important mine of information for the archaeologist. They are located near the Amarapura pagoda.

Bodawpaya also carried out revenue inquests in 1784 and in 1803. The information collected consisted of statistics as to the area of land farmed, crops yielded, taxes paid, the population enumerated, etc. based on depositions of headmen all over the country. It was meant to get an idea of the resources of the country. The inquests were unpopular among the people, who rightly looked upon them as instruments for further exactions.

Bodawpaya’s reign is also noted for a few public works. He repaired the embankments of the Nanda, Aungbinle, and Maungmagan lakes in the district of Mandalay. The Meiktila lake was also attended to in like manner. The work, however, was carried out with forced labour. Shans, Arakanese, and Mons were brought from their homes for the purpose.

Bodawpaya paid some attention to social reform too, but his measures were of a very drastic nature. He prescribed capital punishment for wine-drinking, opium-smoking, and
the killing of large animals such as cows and buffaloes. It is doubtful, however, if many were executed for these offences.

As the hereditary champion of Buddhism, Bodawpaya did not fail to pay attention to things religious. Self-glory can also be manifested in this direction. In 1790, he began building the Mingun pagoda. For some time he superintended it himself. He, however, did not complete the work. The economic oppression of the people and their discontent was voiced in a saying which became current, namely, ‘The pagoda is finished, and the country is ruined.’ The pagoda, however, remained unfinished. If completed, it would have equalled the Pyramids. It is at present the biggest pile of brick in the world. Bodawpaya stopped building it, since the astrologers had predicted his death as soon as it would be finished. It was rumoured that this astrological decision was obtained at his behest. The pagoda bell is the second biggest bell in the world, the one in Moscow being the largest.

Bodawpaya disapproved of the strong influence of Buddhist monks and priests upon the people. He wished to reduce the number of monks. He certainly was not wrong in seeking to control this branch of Burmese society. The yellow robe was, and still is, often a refuge for undesirables. Monasteries have been, and still are, if not properly controlled by their heads, centres for criminals and seditionists. He proclaimed the monks to be ignorant, idle and pleasure-loving. He drove out large numbers of them from the monasteries, and forced them to take to manual labour. He issued orders laying down the minimum qualifications for heads of monasteries. He also commanded that clergymen should not be called ‘Pongyis’, which term literally means ‘Great Glory’. He wanted no rivals to himself: all glory belonged to the monarch, and to none else. This law, however, could not be enforced. Monks are still called ‘Pongyis’ in Burma. At one time Bodawpaya even claimed that he was a Buddha: donning the hermit’s robe, he led a retired life, but soon returned to his palace and its luxuries. It is possible he was trying his hand at being both king and high priest, for thus his position as an autocrat would be unchallengeable.

Be it said to Bodawpaya’s credit that he was a patron of
learning. Twinthintaikwun, his old tutor, was a great scholar. He wrote both prose and verse. Other writers were also patronised: Aung Hpyo, Nawdange, Awbatha, and Lewethondara.

It must be conceded that to all outward appearances, Burmese power rose to its height in Bodawpaya's reign. Under Bagyidaw (1819-37) there was a decline. Tharrawaddy (1837-45) as king often used to say that his great object was to revive the glory and splendour of his grandfather Bodawpaya's empire. Burma under Bodawpaya was, however, a great power only according to local or Indo-Chinese standards, not according to world standards, nor even Asian standards of the age. There was no regular army of any account, no proper equipment or discipline for the troops, and no navy to guard the coast. The territory was indeed large, larger than modern Burma; but the population was very small, perhaps not more than 5 million. The extent and geography of the country were not sufficiently known to the rulers, nor were the frontiers adequately protected. The greater part of the country was covered with forests. The Crown enjoyed numerous monopolies, such as teak and rubies. Rice, silk, gold and timber, with the exception of teak, were not allowed to be exported. Trade suffered; but it is certain that a tremendous lot of smuggling was practised. Government officers were not paid any salaries; they took what they could by various devices, either permitted by regulations or not permitted. Bribery and corruption was the established and recognized practice of the age.

Bodawpaya died after a reign of nearly 38 years, being 75 years of age. When the news of his death was received in Rangoon, the town was plunged into the utmost anxiety and alarm. The people feared a complete breakdown of administration. They were afraid to say plainly that he was dead, for the king had taken the title of being immortal. Finally, on 22 June 1819 at about 10 a.m. a royal dispatch-boat arrived. The messengers proceeded to the High Court followed by a crowd. In the presence of the great officers, they produced an imperial mandate which read as follows: 'Listen ye. The immortal king, wearied it would seem, with
the fatigue of royalty, has gone up to amuse himself in the celestial regions. His grandson, the heir-apparent, is seated on the throne. The young monarch enjoins all to remain quiet and wait his imperial orders.'

CHAPTER XXX

BURMESE INVASIONS OF SIAM

During the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, that is from Tabinshweti to Bodawpaya, Burma invaded Siam a great many times, and laid siege to Ayuthia, the capital of Siam, no fewer than six times. The Siamese also, according to opportunity, did not fail to raid Burmese territory. Tenasserim was a bone of contention between the two states, also Martaban. Ultimately, however, Burma was able to retain possession of both. Ambitious Burmese imperialists sought glory and an extension of territory in Siam. Ayuthia, an important port, was supposed to be very rich, so that there was the ever-present temptation to plunder it. Slave raids were the order of the day. Frontier troubles and clashes were a running sore oppressing both countries. Burma at times claimed the white elephant from the Siamese king. The albino-elephant, a rare specimen, was looked upon as an emblem of sovereignty and imperial supremacy. Thus a monarch who considered himself to be stronger was encouraged to take the field for this precious possession. In spite of all the efforts of Burmese kings, their numerous invasions of Siam, and their capture and plunder of Ayuthia, Burma failed to subdue the land of the Thais. It was an impossible task. The Burmese kings had the greatest difficulty in keeping their own people together; how then could they be expected to retain possession of a neighbouring country inhabited by a turbulent race?

The first invasion (1547-8) of any note was undertaken by Tabinshweti. He collected his troops at Martaban, consisting of infantry, cavalry, and an elephant corps, including hundreds of Portuguese adventurers. From Martaban he crossed over to Moulmein. From Moulmein he marched up
the Ataran river, went through the Three Pagoda Pass, and reached Kanburi down the Meklawng river. From Kanburi he advanced towards Ayuthia. The Thai army retreated before him, and when it made a firm stand at Yazathein, it was defeated. In the battle, when the Siamese queen found her husband the king in danger, she made a brave rush on her elephant to rescue him. The chief of Prome, however, unchivalrously fell upon her and slew her with his sword. Her valiant sons made a counter-attack and carried off her body. The Siamese king and his army retreated and took refuge within the walls of Ayuthia (1548). Tabinshwetë besieged the city, but in spite of all his attempts failed to take it. He even tried to bribe the defenders, but met with no response. His Portuguese soldiers were unable to produce any effect; the Thais, too, had Portuguese defenders stationed all along the walls of the capital. Tabinshwetë withdrew, for he must not permit the rains to overcome him. He got out, and saved himself from being bogged in a hostile country.

Bayinnaung was the next king to try his hand at Siam. From Moulmein he advanced (1563) 140 miles eastwards and took Kempengpet. Thence he struck 60 miles northwards and took Sukhotai. From Sukhotai he came down the River Menam, 200 miles to Ayuthia. Terrible scenes of plunder, devastation and outrage bore witness to his triumphant march. Siamese and Portuguese soldiers of the Thai monarch sought to intercept him, and inflicted heavy casualties upon him, but to no purpose. Bayinnaung surrounded Ayuthia (1564), and forced the stricken city to capitulate. Severe terms were imposed upon the vanquished Thais. Siam had to deliver four white elephants to the victor, a princess for the Burmese royal harem, and a yearly tribute of thirty-two war-elephants. The Siamese king was carried away captive to Pegu together with a number of princes as hostages. Bayinnaung returned to Burma in great triumph and with vast booty. As he entered Pegu, his chariot was drawn by the captive princes and lords, while at his feet sat the conquered queens of Siam.

In Pegu the Siamese ex-king entered a monastery, while his son ruled in Siam as a vassal of Bayinnaung. Generously the Burmese king permitted the royal monk to proceed to
Siam on pilgrimage. The temptation, however, proved to be too strong for the ex-king. He threw off the saffron robe and resumed the kingdom. Bayinnaung, therefore, again surrounded Ayuthia (1568-69), and the siege lasted ten months. The Burmese built earthworks higher than the walls of Ayuthia in order to fire into the town, but the strategem failed. The besiegers suffered heavy losses. Bayinnaung spurred them on under pain of severe punishment, executed his officers right and left, but this time Ayuthia could not be taken. The Siamese king died during the siege, but the defenders refused to give in. Valour failed, but treachery was crowned with success. A Siamese officer turned traitor and one night opened the gates to Bayinnaung. The usual ugly scenes followed, and the new king was taken captive to Pegu. The traitor was rewarded, and to save his skin he made his home in Burma.

It was not possible, however, for Burma to retain possession of Siam. The king had far too many problems at home, while the Thais produced a vigorous ruler in the person of Pra Naret. He proclaimed his independence, and after Bayinnaung’s death, he even penetrated Burma and plundered the country right up to the walls of Pegu. Nandabayin, Bayinnaung’s successor, led five expeditions into Siam, and in 1587 even besieged Ayuthia, this being the fourth siege of the Thai capital by Burmese troops; but every time he was forced to retire with heavy losses. The campaign of 1593 was the most disastrous. The Burmese Crown Prince met Pra Naret in single combat and was slain on his elephant. Burma was now on the decline; the country was exhausted; her man-power was depleted. For over 160 years Burmese kings were unable to attack Siam. It was now for Ayuthia to take revenge. In 1595, the Siamese besieged Pegu, and in 1599 Toungoo. Time and again they made inroads into Burma, till the Toungoo dynasty ceased to be, and the country passed to a new hero, Alaungpaya, the founder of the last royal dynasty of Burma.

Alaungpaya was a mighty monarch. In keeping with Burmese tradition he must needs attack Siam, and so he did. He had overthrown the Mons; he must have Siam too.
Many of the Mons had migrated into Thailand. The conquered Irrawaddy Delta was in desolation. He decided to populate it with prisoners from Siam. The Toungoo kings had found in Siam a death-trap during the 16th century. Alaungpaya failed to learn from history. Instead of consolidating his gains, he entered upon this disastrous venture. Early in 1760, he advanced through Martaban and Tavoy, captured a few coastal towns of Siam, and appeared before the walls of Ayuthia. The Siamese army tried to bar his progress, but these were only meant to be delaying actions. Alaungpaya sent a message to the Thai king to say that he had come as an incarnation, that is as a Buddhissattva, to spread the true religion, and called upon him to submit. The ruse, however, failed: the Siamese decided to resist. They had Portuguese and other foreign gunners on the walls, and they gave a good account of themselves. Alaungpaya soon realised the futility of the venture and decided to retreat. The rains were close at hand, half of his troops were down with dysentery, and he himself began to show all the signs of a really sick man. This, the fifth siege (1760) of Ayuthia by Burmese troops, did not last even a week. Alaungpaya abandoned forty guns and began his disastrous retreat. The Siamese pursuers kept up a relentless pressure upon the stricken Burmese army. Alaungpaya escaped from Thailand, but died at Bilin in Thaton district on 11 May 1760. The invasion had been a total failure.

Hsinbyushin, Alaungpaya's son, seven years later sought to follow in his father's footsteps. He sent two armies into Siam. One army under Thihapte started from Kengtung, went down the Menam, captured Zimme, and from thence descended upon Ayuthia. The second army under Mahanawrahta advanced from Tavoy south-east to Pechaburi, and marched northwards upon Ayuthia. Overcoming all resistance, the two armies joined forces under the walls of Ayuthia. The siege lasted fourteen months, and in April 1767 the city fell. The Siamese fought well, but it was a question of endurance, and ultimately the Burmans prevailed. The Thai king died fighting at one of the gates. There was an indiscriminate slaughter, and the invaders
burnt the city with its houses, temples, and palaces. They razed the walls to the ground. This was the end of Ayuthia. Remember Carthage! Ayuthia was the victim of an enmity which was centuries old. The Burmese invaders returned home with a vast booty in slaves, gold, and other precious things.

While Burmese armies were operating in Siam, the Chinese invaded Burma. The victorious invading troops had therefore to be withdrawn from Siam for home defence. A Burmese garrison was left behind, but it found it impossible to hold the country. Phaya Tak, a nationalist Thai leader, attacked the Burmese troops, and by 1768 had cleared the country of them. He now established himself as king and built a new capital, namely Bangkok.

In spite of Burmese successes, Siam remained an unconquered country. Ayuthia lay in ruins, but this was poor consolation for the invader. Burmese man-power received a crippling blow in Siam, and although under Bodawpaya the empire began to expand northwards and westwards, it was really the beginning of the end. In 1785, Bodawpaya conquered Arakan. This achievement convinced him that he was the most powerful monarch on earth. He turned his eyes towards Siam which had defied so many Burmese monarchs. She must now be conquered and incorporated into his empire. But the invasion of Siam was a capital error. It was decided to enter the country from four different directions. One army consisting of Shan levies under Shan chiefs was to advance by way of Zimme. A second army was to move from Martaban, up the Ataran river, through the Three Pagoda Pass. The third army from Tavoy was led by Bodawpaya himself. The island of Junkceylon, near the isthmus of Kra, belonging to Siam, was to be occupied by a fourth body of troops, so as to prevent fire-arms reaching the Thais.

The invasion, however, proved to be a complete failure. Phaya Tak was dead, but not his spirit of resistance. The Thais fought with a will. The Shan army was the only one to meet with some measure of success; the Martaban and Tavoy armies failed completely. Eurasian troops of Bodawpaya
landed in Junkceylon. The governor of the place had just died; but his widow and daughter gallantly led the defence, and forced the invaders to withdraw. Bodawpaya threw the blame on his officers and executed some of them. Leaving his army behind, he hurried to Rangoon. The invasion was a disastrous failure. For the next decade Bodawpaya continued to send armies into Siam, and almost throughout the rest of his reign there was desultory fighting along the common frontier much to the loss of both the countries.

With the close of Bodawpaya’s reign in 1819, the long tradition of Burmese inroads into Siam ceased. Bodawpaya, and so Burma, retained possession of Tavoy and Tenasserim. But the Siamese wars proved to be a serious drain upon the resources of both Upper and Lower Burma. Administration becoming neglected, dacoities increased. The Mons rebelled in 1814. Government revenues declined. Oppressed humanity, consisting of unpaid poor conscripts, forced levies and foreign mercenaries, ate up the villages and plundered the towns of both friend and foe while on the march. Besides the moral and economic loss to Burma, large portions of Siam were devastated. The Siamese in retaliation made extensive slave- raids into Burma. Finally, the failure in Siam tempted Bodawpaya and his immediate successor Bagyidaw to turn northwards for expansion. This policy brought the dynasty into conflict with the British power in India. In the first war with the British, Burma lost Arakan and Tenasserim. In the second war (1852) Lower Burma was wrested from her. In the third war (1885) the royal dynasty was wiped out, and all Burma became British Burma.

CHAPTER XXXI

BURMA AND MANIPUR:
RAIDS AND COUNTER-RAIDS

Manipur, it appears, was an ancient Hindu kingdom. At present it is an Indian district about 8,500 sq. miles in area with a population of just over a quarter of a million souls.
There was an influx of Shans into the territory in the 14th century; but these were Hinduised in time, so that the culture and civilization of the Manipuris continued to be Indian. The Manipuris were highly skilled in handicrafts and were good boatmen. They worked in silk and in silver; but above all they were excellent cavalrymen and delighted in the game of polo. Their Brahmans were famous as astrologers.

Information as to the early relations between the Burmans and the Manipuris is lost in the mist of pre-history. Later information, as to the period from the 17th to the 19th century, reveals, however, a terrible relationship of plunder and devastation operating from both sides, to the damage of both peoples. There is nothing strange, however, in this drama of blood and fire. To plunder a neighbouring state was almost a department of government, from which high profits could be made. It did not matter if by so doing counter-raids were invited. That was the way of life.

In about 1559, Bayinnaung subdued Manipur and made it tributary; but on his death it broke away. In the 17th century, when the Toungoo Dynasty and Empire began to decline, the eruptions of the Manipuris into Burma began. At first they were of a desultory nature. Nothing succeeds like success, however. So when they found penetration not difficult, their visitations became much more frequent during the first half of the 18th century.

In 1638, while Thalun was king, the Manipuris entered Thaungdut on the Chindwin, and retired with booty. In 1647 and in 1692, they repeated their exploit. In 1704, the Raja of Manipur presented a daughter to Sane the Burmese king, but this did not put an end to Manipuri depredations. Garib Nawaz was Raja from 1714 to 1754. He was a brilliant leader marked by much intrepidity. Under him Manipur assumed an out-and-out aggressive rôle towards Burma and its declining dynasty of rulers.

The Manipuris entered Burma in 1724, and informed the king that they were bringing another princess for the Burmese monarch so that the princess of 1704 might have a companion. The king sent three hundred lords and ladies to receive the new princess and to escort her to the royal palace. The
reception committee proceeded in all good faith to the appoint-
ed place on the Yu river. They found no princess there, however. Instead, Garib Nawaz with his intrepid horsemen bore down on them, captured them all, and carried them away captive to Manipur. This was a shameful blow, and it was decided to punish the Manipuris. An army was ordered to enter Manipur. It could accomplish nothing however: the Manipuris ambushed it, slew the greater part of the invaders, and forced the rest to retire.

In 1735, the Manipuris entered Myedu in Shwebo district and carried away cattle and slaves. In 1737, the king again sent an army into Manipur, but Garib Nawaz routed it in a pitched battle and slew its commander. The Manipuris again entered Shwebo district, ravaged it with fire and sword, and carried away much loot. In 1738, they came again and boldly encamped near Sagaing. They burnt houses and monas-
terious right up to Ava, the Burmese capital across the Irrawaddy river. The king, in order to protect the Kaungh-
mudaw pagoda, constructed a stockade round it. The Manipuris stormed it, however, and put the entire garrison to the sword. Garib Nawaz, while entering the pagoda, slashed at a door with his sword, and the gash may still be seen.

Other raids followed, but in 1741 an envoy arrived from Imphal, the Manipur capital, with a dress for the princess presented to Ava in 1704. He also brought presents for the Burmese king. This, however, was a passing show. In 1749, Garib Nawaz came raiding again. This was his last fling at Burma. Finding the Burmans ready for him, he present-
ed a young daughter to the king and retired.

The Manipuri raids greatly embittered the feelings of Upper Burmans against that state. But Burma was weak and unable to take immediate action. Manipur, however, was only a petty state, with a very small population as com-
pared to Burma. Under a strong Burmese king, therefore, Manipur would be made to pay more than the full price for her depredations. A new Burmese dynasty was in the offing, and before long it was established under the leader-
ship of Alaungpaya.
In 1755, Alaungpaya sent a raiding expedition into Manipur. The troops carried fire-arms, and Manipur received her first taste of these weapons. During 1758-59 Alaungpaya himself led an army into Manipur and defeated the Manipuris in the Battle of Pulel. He entered Imphal, but found it deserted: the inhabitants had fled. Alaungpaya massacred thousands of Manipuri captives during his two-week stay in Imphal. He set up a stone inscription, left garrisons at Tamu and Thaungsut, and returned home with his booty.

In 1764, Hsinbyushin also raided Manipur, and brought captives to populate his capital Ava. In 1770, during the same reign, an unofficial raid was undertaken into Manipur by the Burmese army. The Manipuris fought gallantly in a three-day battle, but were finally overwhelmed by superior numbers. The Raja fled to Assam, and the Burmese Commander set up a new Raja tributary to Burma. Now began a war between the fugitive Raja and the Burmese nominee. Burmese armies entered Manipur in 1775 and again in 1782 in support of their vassal prince. In 1813, finally, Marjit Singh was placed on the throne by the Burmese, and in return the new Raja gave the Kabaw Valley to Burma.

In 1818, Marjit Singh broke away from Burma, hence in 1819 Bagyidaw sent an army which overran Manipur. Marjit Sing fled to Cachar, and from that base harassed the Burmese in Manipur. Burmese interest in these petty states on the Indian frontier brought the East India Company into the picture. The British supported Manipur and Cachar, and the First Anglo-Burmese War broke out in 1824. Burma lost the war, and with it her control and influence over Assam, Cachar, Manipur, and other neighbouring Hill States, all of which passed under British protection and became a part of British India. During the war, Gumbheer Singh, Marjit Singh’s successor, as an ally of the British, re-entered Manipur. He even pressed forward and conquered the Kabaw Valley. At the termination of the war, the British permitted him to retain possession of the Valley as a part of ancient Manipur. They failed, however, to make a provision to this effect in the Treaty of Yandabo, which did not mention the Valley at all. It simply said that Burma shall not molest Manipur. A few years later,
Bagyidaw claimed the Valley; and after much hesitation the Governor-General returned it to Burma under the advice of Major Burney, the British Resident at Ava.

Burma’s contact with Manipur, together with her incursions into that petty state, was bound to influence the Burmese culturally. Captured Manipuris were settled in the districts of Amarapura and Sagaing. They brought with them their handicrafts and thus enriched Burma. They introduced the acheik pattern in silk into Burma. The Burmese monarch enrolled Manipuris into his army in the cavalry corps. When Alaungpaya invaded Siam, he had 500 Manipuri horsemen with him. Manipur Brahmans served as astrologers and priests at royal state functions. The Burmese called the Manipuris Kathe or Cassay. Large numbers of them were employed to man the king’s warships.

CHAPTER XXXII

BAGYIDAW BEFORE THE WAR: 1819-24

Bagyidaw was a grandson of Bodawpaya. Bagyidaw’s father was Minderagyi the Crown Prince who was loved by the people. He died in 1808 before the throne fell vacant. Bodawpaya immediately proclaimed Bagyidaw as the heir-apparent, to the exclusion of his own sons. Bagyidaw’s name was Nem-Sun, the literal meaning of which is ‘he enjoys a palace’. When Bodawpaya died, Bagyidaw feared a war of succession. To be prepared for all eventualities, he kept his supporters ready, but nothing serious happened. One of his uncles, the prince of Toungoo, was executed together with all his family. There is no evidence to show that the prince contemplated rebellion, but he was under suspicion. Another uncle, the prince of Prome, it appears, was later poisoned under the orders of the new queen. Many other princes were deprived of their estates, so that some of them had to work as labourers for a livelihood. On 6 July 1819, all the ministers of the king went to the great pagoda at Amarapura and swore allegiance to the new king. Bagyidaw
was crowned on 2 November 1819, it being his birth anniversary.

Bagyidaw’s character was a peculiar mixture of many opposites. Missionary Adoniram Judson, who as resident in Ava had a good opportunity of studying the king, gives the following picture of the monarch’s personality: ‘...mild, amiable, good natured and obliging; active, restless, impatient of restraint or close application; playful in his manners, addicted to favouritism, fickle in his attachments except to the queen...; fond of shows, theatrical exhibitions, elephant catching and boat racing; not devoted to his religion, not avaricious nor irritable, but sometimes carried away by a violent gust of passion, which though transient, is generally fatal to the offending party; possessed of very moderate talents, yet quick in catching an idea, forming an opinion, and making a decision; partial to white foreigners, desirous of encouraging intercourse with them and of improving his country by the introduction of foreign arts; has a high regard for Brahmans, but rather averse to Muselmans, and not much under the influence of Buddhist priests; inordinately devoted to technical researches and experiments, and particularly desirous of discovering the secret of rendering himself invisible at will...’

In spite of all his ignorance, both of his own country and of the world in general, Bagyidaw was well-meaning and gracious. He was indeed rash at times, but was on the whole averse to shedding blood, and possessed the traits of a gentleman. He was foolish in many ways, still he was marked by kingly dignity. Brought up within the environs of the palace and knowing scarcely anything of the wide world, he lived in the past glories of Burma and the exploits of his ancestors.

Bagyidaw was a palace-king. He was not interested in administration, and left all such duties to his brother-in-law Maung O. The king had no appreciation of talent in his ministers. He just neglected them, and considered it his highest duty to hold royal levies, and thus show himself day in and day out to his courtiers. He delighted in observing games, particularly boat-racing, and for this reason alone he was popular with his subjects at the capital.
Bagyidaw, before he became king, was married to a daughter of his scholarly uncle the prince of Mekhara. One of his inferior wives, Mae Nu, of humble origin, came to acquire such an ascendency over his mind, that she too was publicly crowned as queen together with her husband, while the first wife was driven out of the palace. Mae Nu, it was reported, made the king believe that she was his first queen in a previous birth, when he himself was king. She was about one year older than Bagyidaw and not exactly pretty, but she was tall, well-formed, and dignified.

In 1821, Bagyidaw decided to transfer his capital to old Ava. The argument in favour of Ava was its more convenient location. Actually, however, it was because Amarapura was looked upon as unlucky because of a great fire which had devastated the city. Bagyidaw also desired to build a splendid palace at Ava. It took two years to complete this structure which was twice the size of the palace at Amarapura. After the completion of the new palace (February 1824), the king moved from the old capital to the new in great pomp, attended by his governors, sawbwas, and other great officers of state. It was a grand procession, in which the white elephant, too, gaudily decorated, took part. The king and queen were seated in a coach drawn by six white horses. There was a display of royal household goods carried in front of the procession. Besides, every article of state consequence was displayed on this important occasion. About 40,000 men, excluding carriers, took part in the procession.

Somewhere midway between the old and the new capitals was a beautiful royal garden. Here the king’s eyes fell upon Mrs. Anne Judson, the renowned American missionary’s wife. This was the first time that Bagyidaw had come across the novel sight of a European lady. He viewed her attentively, but in royal dignity took no notice of her. Mrs. Judson, who was an eye-witness to this great function, gives the following description of the procession: ‘I dare not attempt a description of that splendid day, when Majesty, with all its attendant glory, entered the gates of the golden city, and amid the acclamation of millions, I may say, took possession of the palace. The saupwars (sawbwas) of the provinces bordering
on China, all the viceroys and high officers of the kingdom, were assembled on the occasion, dressed in their robes of state, and ornamented with the insignia of their office. The white elephant, richly adorned with gold and jewels, was one of the most beautiful objects in the procession. The king and queen alone were unadorned, dressed in the simple garb of the country; they hand in hand entered the garden in which we had taken our seats, and where a banquet was prepared for their refreshment. All the riches and glory of the empire were on this day exhibited to view. The number and immense size of the elephants, the numerous horses, and great variety of vehicles of all descriptions, far surpassed anything I have ever seen or imagined.'

Nga Min, the royal bard, wrote an account of this state entry into Ava and earned a reward. But the tragedy was that a few weeks after these festivities, war broke out with the British, and soon news arrived of the capture of Rangoon by the foreigner. Instead of consolidating his empire, Bagyidaw, under the advice of his brother-in-law and the commander-in-chief, Maha Bandula, decided to extend his dominions. The policy of expansion towards the north was pursued in ignorance, and it met with severe retribution.

In Bagyidaw’s reign no conscious attempts seem to have been made to improve the administration of the country. The country declined in almost every direction. The warlike policy and the war itself made matters from bad to worse. The king possessed no real army for such an undertaking, and neither the king nor his advisers understood the implications of a war with the East India Company. It was a leap in the dark without knowing it to be so.

**Chapter XXXIII**

**EARLY ENGLISH CONTACT WITH BURMA**

Burma was known to the ancient Greek geographers, as also to Roman commercial agents who visited China. But Burma was not known to Western Europeans up to 1435,
when Nicolo di Conti visited Tenasserim, Ayuthia, and Arakan. The Portuguese established their imperialism over the Indian Ocean in the 16th century. They imported firearms into Burma and were employed as mercenaries by Burmese and other Indo-Chinese monarchs. Ralph Fitche was the first known Englishman to visit Burma (1587-8). He wrote an account of his adventures, but it appears that he borrowed largely from Caesar Frederick who was in Burma in 1569 during the reign of Bayinnaung (1551-81). The information supplied by these two writers came to be known in England before the East India Company was founded in 1600. Interest in the countries of the Indian Ocean was naturally stimulated. Adventurous souls looked forward to making large fortunes by trade and by other means in these far off countries.

The East India Company was not interested in Burma during the first half century of its existence (1600-47). There were reasons for this attitude. The European demand at that time was for spices, and Burma did not produce them. Again, Burma was looked upon as being under Portuguese influence, hence, according to the ideas of the times, the English outlook was to avoid clashing unnecessarily with those who were her enemies in Europe. Some Englishmen, however, including the employees of the Company in India, traded privately with Burma on a small scale.

The East India Company had some trade with Siam. In 1613, her agents, including one Samuel, were in Chiengmai. Anaukpetlun, the Burmese king, opened hostilities with Siam at this time. He captured Samuel together with his goods and carried him away to Pegu. Samuel set up trade in Pegu, but soon after died a natural death and his goods were taken over by the king. The greatest part of the goods, however, belonged to the Company, and the factors at Masulipatam claimed possession of it. In 1617, the factory at Masulipatam sent Forrest and Stavelly to Pegu for the purpose. Anaukpetlun detained them for three years, and tried to persuade the Company to open trade with his country. In one of the letters of these agents there is an interesting expression of their feelings in respect of their detention: 'The
country is far from your worships expectations, for what men soever come into his country, he holds them but as his slaves, neyther can any man goe out of his country without his leave....and he himself is a Tyrant & cannot eat before he hath drawne bloud from some of his people with death or otherwise...the money we brought with us, it is all spent, and we are here in a most miserable estate, and knowe no way to help ourselves...we are like lost sheep, and still in fear of being brought to the slaughter. Therefore we beseech you and the rest of our countrymen and Friends to pittie our poore distressed estate, and not to let us be left in a Heathen Country, slaves to a tyrannous king....We intreat you for God's sake to be mindful of us, and to pity the poore estate wee are here in, and send some ship to release us, and we shall be bound to pray for your Worships good health and prosperity.'

Ultimately, in 1620, Anaukpetlun released the Company's goods as well as the two agents, and hoped that their masters would open trade with Burma. But the Company showed no interest in Burma, although private English merchants and interlopers continued to come to the country.

Thirty-five years later, however, the Company began to pay some attention to Burma. This was because of the failure of her trade with Persia in 1646. In 1647, a factory was established at Syriam. The Burmese king, with his capital now at Ava, granted permission to the Company to build a house and a dock at Syriam. At first this new venture proved to be of some profit, but ultimately it failed. Dutch opposition and the competition of interlopers proved too strong for the Company. The factory was withdrawn, but private English merchants continued to trade at Syriam, making use of the factory site, and often posed as the official agents of the Company.

Between 1670 and 1690 the Company's trade with Siam prospered. The Dutch having retired in 1676 from the Burmese trade, the English Company again considered the question of re-opening trade with Burma, but finally decided against it. Private trade, however, between the Madras coast and Burma continued to develop. The Company's factors made good profits from this trade.
In 1692, Rodriguez, an Armenian merchant of Madras and an agent of the Company’s servants, put into Martaban port for water. He and certain others, together with their goods, were seized by the Burmese authorities and detained. The Fort St. George Council, therefore, in 1695-6 sent Fleetwood and Lesley to Ava to secure their release, discuss privileges of trade available in Burma, and to preserve for the English the site in Syria for their private trade. The two agents, on arrival in Burma, gave out that the Syrian settlement belonged to the Company, and asked for more privileges. They made presents to the king, and in return received presents from him. On calculation they found the value of the royal presents to be less than that given to the king; they complained, but were not heard. It was common practice in those days for visitors to present gifts to princes, in the hope of getting in return more valuable presents. It was a business proposition.

Between 1723 and 1739 the Company built ships in Syria, but later retired because of the high cost. The Mons fought the Burmans for the empire of Burma from 1740 to 1757. During these commotions the Syria factory was burnt by the Mons. In 1753, the Company set up a factory at Negrais. At this time, Alaunghpaya, the national champion of the Burmans, was fighting the Mons. The English at Negrais supplied him with arms and ammunition and asked the Syrian agent to do likewise. As business-men, however, the English also supplied the Mons with weapons. This so greatly irritated Alaunghpaya, that he ordered his men to wipe out the English settlement at Negrais. A treacherous attack was made which resulted in the death of ten Englishmen and one hundred Indians. This is known as the Massacre of Negrais (1759).

In 1761, the Company sent Capt. Alves to demand compensation for the Negrais Massacre. Naundawgyi was king now, Alaunghpaya having died in 1760. He refused to pay anything whatever. Alves reported that the king ‘said he was surprised to think how the Governor of Madras... could have the face to demand any satisfaction, which he would not give, for...he looked on all that were killed at
Negrais, whether guilty or innocent, as born to die there... he would never give himself any trouble to enquire farther about the affair...’ Naungdawgyi, however, granted the Company permission to reopen trade, on the condition that they did not go to Negrais, but came to the mainland. The Company then opened a factory at Rangoon.

For over thirty years, right up to 1795, the Company’s envoys continued to come to Burma to obtain trade concessions, and for the Negrais compensation. The losses sustained by the Company at Negrais were, however, never made good by the Burmese king.

CHAPTER XXXIV

ANGLO-BURMESE RELATIONS: 1795-1811

From 1795 onwards the nature of Anglo-Burmese relations underwent a complete change. Previously, English agents who came to Burma were traders and mere concession-seekers. Now regular embassies were sent out on a superior scale with costly presents and retinues, and led by officials of importance. There were reasons for this departure. England during this period was engaged in mortal combat at first with Revolutionary France and later with Napoleon. Suffren, a great French admiral, who, between 1781 and 1784, had served with great success in Eastern waters, had suggested to his government an attack on the British possessions in India by way of Burma. It was therefore necessary to take steps to counteract any French designs in Burma. Earlier, in 1769, the French had obtained the privilege of flying their flag in Rangoon, and they built ships in that port.

Great Britain was interested in Burmese teak which was both cheap and reliable, and could be used for ship-building in place of English oak. Hence it was important to have trade relations with Burma. Burmese precious stones could also be profitably exported. The immediate cause of these embassies, however, was the annexation of the kingdom of Arakan by Bodawpaya in 1785. Burma was now an immediate
neighbour of British India. There were extradition complaints and boundary disputes which had to be adjusted. The British government in India was deeply interested in the defence of the north-eastern frontier of Bengal. There were rumours of Bodawpaya having claimed eastern Bengal. The king, from 1807 onwards, sent religious missions to India to collect sacred books and relics. It was suspected that there was an attempt, through these missions, to contact the Marathas, who at this time were the only rivals of the British for the empire of India. No wonder then that for these various reasons combined, Anglo-Burmese relations should now assume a political complexion. These relations, developed as they did in hostilities, ultimately resulted in the conquest of the country by the British and its incorporation into British India.

In 1795, Capt. Symes arrived at Amarapura as an envoy of Sir John Shore, the British Governor-General at Calcutta. He tried to bind the Burmese king by a treaty of friendship, and asked for commercial privileges, the opening of diplomatic relations between the two governments, and the acceptance of an English political agent in Rangoon. Bodawpaya approved of all these requests, and granted them in a royal order. Symes looked upon this as a regular treaty, while to the Burmese king and court it was nothing more than a firman which could be revoked at any time. Symes had no audience with the king. He only had a look at the king on the throne from a distance. He made a long report to his government, from which it is clear that he was completely mistaken in his conclusions as to the resources, greatness, and power of the Burmese monarch. The mighty Irrawaddy river, the settlements on both sides of it, the Pagan monuments, and the pagodas must have produced an impression upon Symes very much in favour of the king and the country. The population of the country could not have been more than 5 million, but Symes reported it to be 17 million, a mere guess. The optimistic envoy also thought that his mission had been completely successful in its objective.

The Governor-General, in keeping with Syme's report, appointed Capt. Hiram Cox as British Resident at Rangoon
(1796). Whose duties were to maintain diplomatic relations between the two states, encourage British trade with Burma, and above all to counteract French influence in the country. He was also to request the Burmese king to send an embassy to Calcutta. Cox arrived in Rangoon, and thence proceeded to the capital; but he found things very different from what he had expected. He was kept waiting for nine months. Finally, he was given an audience by the king, but obtained nothing tangible from him. All Cox’s attempts to be officially recognized as the Governor-General’s Resident Agent proved fruitless. He found himself doing nothing except residing in the country as anybody else. He returned to Calcutta, complained of having been neglected by the Burmese authorities, and made a report to his government almost entirely opposed to that of Symes.

The Governor-General thought Cox was certainly mistaken in his conclusions. He even apologised to the Burmese Court for Cox’s behaviour in Amarapura. No steps were taken, however, to send another envoy immediately to Burma.

From 1797 to 1802 a number of extradition and other disputes arose on the Arakan-Bengal frontier. This was due to Chin Byan’s (Kingberring) rebellion in Arakan. When he was defeated, he and thousands of Arakanese refugees poured into East Bengal. The Burmese governor of Arakan demanded their return, and even threatened war upon the Company. Wellesley was at this time the Governor-General. In 1799, he overthrew Tipu of Mysore; but soon after he became engaged in a war with the Marathas. This was not the time, therefore, to show the mailed fist to Burma.

In 1802, Wellesley sent Symes to persuade the Burmese king to enter into a subsidiary alliance with the British. It is clear from this move that the Calcutta authorities did not understand the Burma situation. Symes arrived in Amarapura with a grand entourage of bodyguards and followers; but the Burmese remained unimpressed. Symes’ proposal that the king enter British protection was treated with the greatest disdain. The British envoy felt disillusioned, and even warned the Burmese court that war might ensue. Wellesley’s hands, however, were at this time full, because of the clash with
the Marathas. Symes returned to Calcutta with a very different story from his earlier report. For three and a half months he had been kept waiting on an island on the Irrawaddy where corpses were burnt and criminals executed. He had failed completely in his endeavour to establish diplomatic relations between Amarapura and Calcutta.

Following upon Symes' visit, the Governor-General sent three more missions to Burma all led by Capt. Canning in 1803, 1809, and 1811 respectively; but they all failed in their object to establish diplomatic relations with the government of Burma. The Burmese king was unwilling to receive the agent of one who was not a king but a mere governor or Bengla-myosa, as they called him. A salaried officer could not be on par with His Burman Majesty. The British agents also greatly disliked submitting to rules of Burmese etiquette. Indeed, at times these were imposed upon them with studied contempt, for example, the oft removal of shoes and bowing to palace and temple spires from time to time. The chief complaint of the Burmese government against Calcutta was that Chin Byan and his followers were finding refuge in East Bengal, from where they were carrying fire and sword into Arakan. The Governor-General's stand was that he would not surrender the refugees, but that he would do all he could to prevent them from raiding Burmese territory. On the other hand, the Burmese authorities concluded that the raids were instigated by the British, and so Burmese troops at times entered British territory in pursuit of the raiders, and even threatened war. The differences were discussed by the two parties on the frontier as well as at Calcutta, but no amicable settlement could be reached. Relations between the two governments were embittered, and ultimately Amarapura claimed East Bengal for the king. Herein lay the seeds of the Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-26.

By 1811 the government at Calcutta discovered that no headway in the least had been made in establishing diplomatic relations with Amarapura. Hence no more embassies were sent. Whenever it was felt necessary to communicate with the Burmese government, the Governor-General addressed a letter to the Governor of Rangoon.
One great result of the relations between the two governments during the period under review was that the English envoys noticed the weakness of Burma and of the Burmese government, and discovered that the king’s army and river defence were not of much account. It was also correctly concluded that it would not be difficult to create disaffection among the subject peoples of Burma because of the oppressive despotism present in the country, and that the country could be conquered without any great difficulty. Minto, the Governor-General, wrote to the Directors of the Company on 4 March 1812, ‘Capt. Canning also relates... that should it enter into the views of Government to obtain a preponderating influence in the Burmese dominions, the present was certainly the most favourable moment, as the weakness of the government and general discontent of the people would put the whole country at the disposal of a very small British force.’

He again wrote on 1 August 1812, ‘The observations stated by Capt. Canning... regarding the advantages with which the British government would enter upon a contest with the power of Ava, were unquestionably well founded. The coasts and provinces of that country are certainly exposed to our attack without the means of defence, and the only part of our territory accessible to the Burmese forces might with ease be effectually protected. Of our complete and speedy success in the war, therefore, little doubt could be entertained.’ However, at that particular time it was not convenient for the Company’s government to embark on a war with Burma. Trouble was brewing with Nepal, the Pindharees, and the Marathas. Also there were the Sikh and Afghan problems. Above all, the Napoleonic contest was not yet over.
Chapter XXXV

Anglo-Burmese Friction: 1811-24

This was a period void of diplomatic relations between Burma and British India. The disputes and difficulties connected with the common frontier were, however, still present. Even if by some means diplomatic relations had been maintained, there was really no escape from the fast approaching clash between the two states. The reasons for this are not far to seek. The Burmese empire, under the Konebaung dynasty of Alaungpaya, had grown rapidly during the past century. In 1770, Manipur had been subdued. At about the same time the Chinese invasions of Burma had been defeated. Arakan was conquered in 1785. Assam was made tributary in 1816. In the same year the Burmese governor of Ramree claimed East Bengal for Bodawpaya. He wrote a letter to the Governor-General of India in the following strain:

‘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 everything unjust and unreasonable. Ramoo, Chittagong, Moorshedabad, and Dacca, are countries which do not belong to the English, they are provinces distant from the Arracanese capital, but 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, etc, from these provinces, nor have disposed of such funds at their discretion. The Governor-General, representing the English Company, should surrender these dominions, and pay the collection realised therefrom to our sovereign. If this is refused, I shall represent it to His Majesty. Generals with powerful forces will be dispatched, both by sea and land, and I shall myself come for the purpose of storming, capturing and destroying the whole of the English possessions, which I shall afterwards offer to my sovereign; but I send this letter in the first place, to make the demand from the Governor-General.’
Most probably, the governor’s letter was nothing but an empty boast, and it is quite possible the Burmese king knew nothing about it. The Governor-General was shocked at the contents of the letter. He made his reply in the following words to the Viceroy of Pegu:

'A letter having been addressed to me by the Raja of Ramree containing a demand for the cession of certain provinces belonging to the British Government, I deem it incumbent on me, in consideration of the friendship subsisting between His Burmese Majesty and the British Government, to transmit to you a copy of that extraordinary document.

'If that letter be written by order of the King of Ava, I must lament that persons utterly incompetent to form a just notion of the state of the British power in India, have ventured to practise on the judgment of so dignified a sovereign. Any hopes those individuals may have held out to His Majesty that the British Government would be embarrassed by contests in other quarters are altogether vain, and this Government must be indifferent to attack, further than as it would regard with concern the waste of lives in an unmeaning quarrel.

'My respect for His Majesty, however, induces me rather to adopt the belief, that the Raja of Ramree has, for some unworthy purpose of his own, assumed the tone of insolence and menace exhibited in his letter, without authority from the King, and that a procedure so calculated to produce dissension between two friendly states will experience His Majesty's just displeasure.

'If I could suppose that letter to have been dictated by the King of Ava, the British Government would be justified in considering war as already declared, and in, consequently, destroying the trade of His Majesty's empire. Even in this supposition, however, the British Government would have no disposition to take up the matter captiously, but, trusting that the wisdom of the King of Ava would enable him to see the folly of the counsellors who would plunge him into a calamitous war and that His Majesty would thence refrain from entailing ruin on the commerce of his dominions, the British Government would forbear (unless forced by actual
hostilities) from any procedure which can interrupt those existing relations so beneficial to both countries.'

There was no reply to this letter, nor did the governor of Ramree make any attempt to storm the British possessions in India. It is possible the king knew nothing about the whole affair. In 1819, the Burmese conquered Assam. Burma’s attitude towards all her neighbours, with the exception of China, was one of supreme contempt. Their victories over the Siamese, Chins, Manipuris, Arakanese, and Assamese, had given the Burmese and their leaders the idea that they were invincible. At the same time they were profoundly ignorant of the power and resources of the East India Company.

While the Burmese empire was developing on some scale of its own, the British in India were going from strength to strength after winning the Battle of Plassey in 1757. By 1820 they had brought under their control the whole of India south of the River Sutlej. In spite of occasional reverses, their superior discipline, arms, diplomacy, and organization had triumphed over the Indian princes. They had, therefore, obviously come to look with contempt upon the rulers of the countries of Asia. From 1807 onwards, the defence of the north-west frontier of India loomed large in the counsels of the Company’s government. When the Burmese conquered Arakan in 1785, the defence of the north-east frontier became a live problem. But when the Burmese overran Assam (1816-19), there was alarm in the Calcutta Secretariat. The approach of an ambitious neighbour, who treated diplomatic and friendly overtures with contempt, was enough cause for alarm.

The petty princes of Cachar and of the Jantia Hills had been under Assamese protection. Now that Assam was a Burmese possession, the king claimed the dependencies as well. The British Company offered to support these dependencies and took the princes under her wings. The situation was indeed tense. The two expanding empires were bound to reach a point of intersection which in all probability would result in war.

During the months of August and September 1823, there occurred what is called the Shahpuri Dispute. It was really
a part of the frontier question. The Naaf Estuary was the line of demarcation between Arakan and British territory. Burmese frontier guards at times fired upon British subjects proceeding down the estuary in their boats. In February 1823, the British stationed an outpost of twelve Indian soldiers on Shahpuri Island. The Burmese claimed the island to be within their empire. In September 1823, they suddenly swooped down on the island with a large force and wiped out the Company's garrison to a man. The British took countermeasures, expelled the Burmese troops from the island, and the Governor-General protested to the king, who, however, did not vouchsafe to reply.

Diplomatic relations between the two states were at a stand-still. Serious frontier clashes were at the same time going on in various directions. How were the differences to be resolved? During January-February 1824, Burmese troops under Maha Bandula entered Cachar, and actual conflict broke out between Burmese and British troops. The fugitive Raja of Cachar accepted British protection, and on 5 March 1824, the Governor-General officially declared war which had actually already broken out earlier in the year.

**Chapter XXXVI**

**CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES IN BURMA:**

**1807-22**

As early as 1807 English Baptists had established a Mission in Rangoon under Chater and Mardon. Mardon did not stay in the country for long, but Chater built a mission house about a mile and a half from the town. He was joined by Felix Carey, the eldest son of Dr. William Carey, the famous Orientalist of Calcutta, who published twenty-four different translations of the Bible. The son, however, did not follow in the footsteps of his devout and learned father. Later, Prichett and Brain of the London Missionary Society came to Rangoon. Brain, however, soon died, and Prichett shifted to Vizagapatam.
Chater learned the Burmese language and spent four years in Burma. He produced an indifferent translation of the Gospel of St. Matthew which was published at Serampore after Carey had revised it. Soon after Chater shifted to Ceylon, Carey decided to stay in the country, and married a Burmese wife. He was summoned to Amarapura by Bodawpaya who offered him state service which Carey accepted. He thus ceased to be a missionary. The king promoted him and even conferred on him a title. Later, however, he incurred the king's displeasure and lost his high position. When in 1813 Adoniram Judson and his wife Anne arrived in Rangoon, they occupied Chater's Mission House, but there was no other missionary to help them. They had to start from scratch.

The secret of this chequered history of the early Christian missionaries lies in the fact that the propagation of Christianity among the native inhabitants of the country was contrary to the law of the land; while for a Burman to embrace another faith might cost him his life at the instance of the Burmese government. These early missionaries therefore lost heart in their enterprise. The case of Judson, ably supported as he was by his faithful wife Anne, was, however, different. They had dedicated their lives to evangelistic work, and were determined not to be defeated by circumstances. In 1824, they shifted from the old Mission House into the town proper. In the new spot they were more safe from robbers, also there was far greater opportunity of coming into contact with the people of the country. Besides, within the town they were able to learn the Burmese language with greater ease, and in time came to master it.

The Judsons were soon joined by Hough and Coleman. In 1816, the Serampore missionaries made a present of a printing-press, together with Burmese types, to their co-workers in Rangoon. Tracts written by Judson now began to be turned out, and this created much interest among the Burmese people. To see their own language in print was altogether a new experience for them. Having once acquired a working knowledge of Burmese, Judson preached and read portions of the Bible aloud from his verandah so that passers-by could listen. Those who were attracted came in from time
to time and conversed with him. Conversions and baptisms also took place. But knowing what the settled policy of the authorities was as to conversions, missionary activities suffered from a strong restraint, while both the missionaries and their converts lived in almost continuous dread of being discovered and punished. Judson and Coleman, therefore, decided to proceed to Amarapura to interview King Bagyidaw, and secure from him his royal permission to preach and to teach among his subjects, so that no Burman might be molested for listening to them or for embracing the new faith.

The two missionaries arrived in Amarapura in 1820. They brought with them as presents for the king, the Bible in six volumes, bound in Burmese style with gold leaf, each volume enclosed in an attractive wrapper. There were many other presents besides. Maung Yo, a favourite officer of the Governor of Rangoon, accompanied them to the capital, and introduced them to Maung Za the Atwinwun, who readily agreed to present them to the king. Judson describes his experience at the presentation in the following words:

"The scene to which we were now introduced really surpassed our expectations. The spacious extent of the hall, the number and magnitude of the pillars, the height of the dome, the whole completely covered with gold; presented a most grand and imposing spectacle.... He (Bagyidaw) came forward unattended—in solitary grandeur—exhibiting the proud gait and majesty of an eastern monarch. His dress was rich but not distinctive, and he carried in his hand the gold-sheathed sword, which seems to have taken the place of the sceptre of ancient times. But it was his high aspect and commanding eye that chiefly rivetted our attention. He strided on. Every head excepting ours, was now in the dust. We remained kneeling, our hands folded, our eyes fixed on the monarch. When he drew near, we caught his attention. He stopped, partly turned towards us—'Who are these.' 'The teachers, great King,' I replied. 'What, you speak Burman—the priests that I heard of last night? When did you arrive? Are you teachers of religion? Are you married? Why do you dress so?'

The king seated himself and the petition of the missionaries
was read out by Maung Za. After hearing it, Bagyidaw asked for the petition, and himself read it through. He also took a tract entitled *Summary of Christian Doctrine*. He read the first two sentences which declared that there is one Eternal God, immortal and invisible, and that besides Him there is no God. He did not read any further. He showed an attitude of indifference and disdain, and contumeliously threw the tract on the ground. The king then made the following reply through the Atwinwun: ‘In regard to the objects of your petition, His Majesty gives no order. In regard to your sacred books, His Majesty has no use for them—take them away.’ Maung Za further explained that throughout the empire foreigners were free to worship in their own way, hence the petition was not in order. Their petition was certainly not in keeping with the Christian position, however well-intentioned and sincerely expressed it was. The servant of God is to preach the gospel of Christ wherever his Master directs him to do so. He is to remember that when the Master opens the door no one can shut it.

In 1821, Dr Price, the medical missionary, arrived in Rangoon. His fame as a surgeon soon reached the Royal ear, and Bagyidaw desired to see him. In 1822, Price was summoned to the capital. Judson decided to accompany him, and make, if possible, the new capital of Ava, then under construction, his headquarters.

The two missionaries arrived in Amarapura in October 1822. At an interview with Prince Mekkhara, the latter assured Judson that the king had a good heart, and would permit all to believe and worship as they pleased. Bagyidaw received them graciously. When he took note of Judson, he said, ‘And you, in black, what are you? A medical man too?’ ‘Not a medical man, but a teacher of religion, Your Majesty,’ Judson replied. The king put Judson a few questions about Christianity, and then directly enquired if any Burmans had embraced it. Judson became uncomfortable, and tried to evade the question by saying ‘Not here.’ But the king persisted, ‘Are there any in Rangoon?’ Then said Judson ‘There are a few.’ The king further enquired, ‘Are these foreigners?’ ‘There are some foreigners and some Burmans’,
replied Judson. The king remained silent for some time, and then made a few enquiries on religion, geography and astronomy.

When Bagyidaw heard that Judson preached every Sunday, he said, 'What! in Burmese? Let us hear how you preach.' Judson at first hesitated, but when the order was repeated, he very solemnly uttered a few words in praise of God, and then announced the principles of the Gospel of Christ. The whole court was marked by a profound silence during his speech. The king then asked him what he had to say about Gautam Buddha. Judson replied that he was a wise man and a great teacher, but he was not God. Atwinwun Maung Za then said, 'Nearly all the world, Your Majesty, believes in an eternal God, all except Burma and Siam, these little spots!' The king remained silent, then made a few enquiries, and abruptly left the hall.

Judson was encouraged by this interview with the king, and decided to settle in Ava permanently. At another interview with the king, Bagyidaw with great interest enquired when he would return to the capital, and was happy to hear that the missionary would establish his headquarters in Ava. He issued an order granting him a piece of land for a Kyoung.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE WAR IN ARAKAN: 1824-25

From the time that Bodawpaya conquered Arakan (1785), the northern frontier of which touched British Bengal, there had been almost continuous friction between the two local authorities. In 1823, a number of incidents took place over elephant hunting on the British side of the frontier. Some elephant trappers in British employ were arrested by Burmese officers at the head of the Naaf as trespassers. In September of the same year, Burmese troops suddenly attacked Shin-mapyugyun (Shahpuri) Island, and killed twelve policemen stationed there by Robertson, the Collector of Chittagong.
The Governor-General protested to the Burmese king, but got no reply. Robertson summoned a conference at the village of Tek Naaf, opposite Maungdaw across the Naaf. The Burmese Governor of Arakan deputed his officers to discuss with Robertson frontier disputes and the ownership of the island. At the first conference in January 1824, according to British reports, when offered brandy by their European hosts, the Burmese envoys overdrank it, so that instead of discussing the questions at issue, they created much noisy excitement. With some difficulty they were persuaded to return to Maungdaw.

At the second conference, both sides were willing to agree that the island in dispute be occupied by neither government. However, when Robertson suggested that the boundary line between the two territories be fixed, the Burmese refused, and said, ‘Our king knows the extent of his own dominion, and no one can set limits to it but himself.’ These agents had certainly no right to fix any such boundaries. Had they done so, they would have been in danger of losing their lives. A few days later, however, the Burmese flag was hoisted on the island.

In February 1824, Burmese officers treacherously seized two British officers, Chew and Ross, belonging to a pilot brig stationed on the Naaf, and sent them as captives into the interior. Robertson immediately protested to the Governor of Arakan and demanded their release. His messengers returned with the report that the two officers had been released, but they also brought the startling intelligence that the Governor had been superseded by Maha Bandula.

These were serious incidents, but graver developments were at the same time going on in the direction of Assam. It was a clash caused by the expansion of two neighbouring empires, British and Burmese. Bagyidaw and the war-party in Ava had made up their minds to wait no longer, but to begin major operations across the Naaf, and advance in the direction of Calcutta. Hence Bandula, fresh from his victories in Assam and Cachar, was placed in command of the Arakan Army. Bandula was a man of honour. He strongly disapproved of the capture of Chew and Ross, and
liberated them. He even offered to behead the Maungdaw officers who had treacherously arrested them, but Robertson’s messengers declined the offer.

When Robertson heard of Bandula’s new appointment he scented danger, and reported the matter to Calcutta. However, the authorities there made light of the warning, and took no measures to strengthen the frontier. At that time there was only one battalion of Indian infantry and some Magh levies in this area, stationed at Ramu, under the command of Capt. Norton. Another battalion was expected from Calcutta.

On 5 March 1824, war was officially declared. It is difficult to understand why Bandula did not advance till the middle of May. He and his lieutenant Maung Za (later created Myawadi Wungyi by Bagyidaw) commanded 10,000 troops, the flower of the Burmese army. It is possible that in order to make a frontal attack towards Dacca, Bandula had to make special preparations. Trant, Snodgrass, Delamere, Laurie, and Bentley report that Bandula carried with him a pair of golden fetters for the Governor-General, Lord Amherst, and was determined to produce him thus as captive before his king. Harvey has repeated the story in his *History of Burma*. One wonders where they got their information from; not that it is untrue, but Burmese sources would surely have mentioned it, which, however, they do not. It is possible Bandula’s *Tsalway* with which the king had honoured him was mistaken to be fetters meant for Amherst.

In the middle of May 1824, Bandula crossed the Naaf and entered Chittagong district. He advanced to Ratna Pulleng, about fifteen miles south of Ramu. He then ordered Maung Za to attack Norton. The gallant captain put up a stiff fight, but his small force of about 500 was overwhelmed and totally defeated, he and most of his men being killed. When Burney was in Ava (1830), Maung Za told him that his own force did not exceed 6,500 men, at the same time estimating Capt. Norton’s party at 7,000. ‘He assured me’, says Burney, ‘that he had not directed nor authorized any cruelties to be committed towards our European officers, who, he said, were fairly killed in the action.’ Maung Za’s estimate of
Norton's army being 7,000 strong is clearly wrong. A captain would not be in charge of such a large body of troops. Again, according to Snodgrass, a good number of Indian soldiers and British officers who fell into Burmese hands were barbarously put to death.

Meanwhile, Bandula received news of Campbell having occupied Rangoon, and McCreagh the island of Cheduba. But for these diversions Bandula could have easily taken Chittagong which was very indifferently protected. Bagyidaw ordered him to proceed against Campbell who had occupied Burmese soil. Bandula himself was anxious to undertake this new enterprise. Had he gone boldly forward from Ramu, he could have even threatened Dacca, while Burmese troops in Assam coming down the Brahmaputra could have joined forces with him. At this time there was only one battalion of troops in Dacca. Bandula could not have gone much beyond Dacca, however. Troops from Calcutta would have forced him to withdraw either back into Arakan, or through Cachar and Manipur into Upper Burma.

Burmese troops did not advance beyond Ramu. Bandula took away with him to Rangoon the best of his soldiers; the remainder stockaded themselves in Ramu. Robertson says that they treated the people of the locality kindly. At the end of the rains, when British troops arrived in force at Chittagong, the Burmese army retired into Arakan.

When Maung Za destroyed Norton and his force at Ramu, Calcutta was in no real danger from Bandula's advance. The defeat, however, created a great scare. The inhabitants of Chittagong evacuated the town with the exception of one Hindu family, the Chowdhrys. The British women fled to Dacca. The small detachment of troops that was in Chittagong stood on guard, but the Burmese never came. There was alarm in Calcutta too. The Europeans of the city formed themselves into a militia. Sailors from the Company's ships in the harbour were landed to protect the city. Calcutta bazaars hummed with idle and magnified rumours of the impending collapse of the British in India. Peasants from the frontier fled from their villages. Many merchants left Calcutta with their valuables. Metcalfe, senior member of
the Governor-General's Council, wrote to Lord Amherst, then in Simla, on 8 June 1824, as follows:

'Our Indian Empire is owing solely to our superiority in arms. It rests entirely on that foundation. It is undermined by every reverse however trifling, and would not long withstand any serious indication of weakness. All India is at times looking out for our downfall. The people everywhere would rejoice at our destruction: and numbers are not wanting who would promote it by all means in their power. Our ruin, if it be ever commenced, will probably be rapid and sudden.... From the pinnacle to the abyss might be but one step. The fidelity of our native army, on which our existence depends, depends itself upon our continued success. The Burmans have commenced the war with us in a manner which perhaps was little expected. They have the advantage of first success, and we have the disadvantage of disaster, which is likely, in however small a degree it may have taken place, to be of worse consequence to us than it would be to any other power in the world, because unremitting success is almost necessary for our existence.... It is evident that we have an insufficiency of troops within any moderate distance of the scene of invasion, and that the progress of the enemy has carried alarm to Dacca and even to Calcutta, where alarm has not been felt from an external enemy since the time of Sirajah Doula and the Black Hole. We are engaged in a contest with the Burmans on the whole length of the Eastern frontier of our Bengal possessions. Our enemies appear not to be deficient in either spirit or numbers: and we must bring numbers as well as spirit to oppose them... there is real danger to our whole Empire in India from the slightest reverse at any point whatever, if it be not speedily and effectually repaired. The intelligence spreads like wild fire, and immediately excites the hopes and speculations of the millions whom we hold in subjugation.... Let us put forth our strength to prevent further misfortune, and crush the evil before it be fraught with more extensive injury and greater peril.'

But it soon became clear that the alarm was false. Neither Bandula nor his successor in Arakan advanced beyond Ramu.
In July, Col. Morrison arrived in Chittagong to command troops for the invasion of Arakan. In August, Burmese troops evacuated the Ramu stockade. By January 1825, the Chittagong Army was ready to advance. When it moved to Tek Naaf, Burmese troops retired from Maungdaw which Morrison occupied. Ava was now completely neglecting the Arakan and Assam fronts. Rangoon rightly loomed large before king, court, and people. All the resources of the kingdom were now being used with the object of driving Campbell into the sea, or at least to prevent him from reaching the royal capital.

From Maungdaw, Morrison advanced on Tek Mayu by land and sea. Thence he took his troops by boat twenty miles up the Arakan river, while Burmese troops continued to retire before him. On 28 March, Morrison encamped three miles from Mrohaung, the capital of Arakan. Here the defenders accepted battle, but on the 30th they were forced to withdraw. On 1 April, Morrison entered Mrohaung. The soldiers plundered the town, and a fire also broke out in the bazaar.

One of the leading inhabitants of Mrohaung, Kazi Shuja, warned the British officers that the climate of the place was so bad that the troops would soon die of disease. Grant, the Army doctor, a Scotsman, also held the same view. But these warnings produced very little effect upon the soldiers. Noticing the misbehaviour of British soldiers, the doctor admonished them with these words: ‘I tell you what it is,—you have, in my opinion, but little time to live, and I think it right to warn you, that you may live like good Christians while you can.’

Had the army not wasted time on the march, it would have arrived at Mrohaung a month earlier. This would have enabled the commander to reach the healthy plains of the Irrawaddy before the outbreak of the rains. It is possible Morrison could have brought the war to an end earlier by his thrust towards the Irrawaddy. Now it was too late to depart from Mrohaung. Barracks and houses were constructed for winter quarters. The rains came, followed quickly by pestilence. Hundreds of men contracted fever, and before
the season was over, more than one-half of the British army had perished. There was, however, no Burmese army near by to take advantage of the situation.

The Burmese acknowledged the bravery of the British troops but when they saw them dying of disease, they thought they would soon quit Arakan. At the close of the rainy season, however, reinforcements arrived and Morrison speedily occupied the whole of Arakan without any difficulty. Robertson reports that the Arakanese did not seem to be at all disaffected towards the Burmese king. They conducted themselves acceptably towards the invading army, yielding passive obedience; but they would not co-operate. When pressed, they retired into the jungles. Even among the well-to-do Arakanese none spoke disloyally or disrespectfully of the Burmese king.

Chapter XXXVIII

The Battle of Rangoon: 1824

The Burmans were used to land warfare. When the First Anglo-Burmese War broke out, Bagyidaw’s government as well as his people thought that all the fighting would be confined to the northern frontiers, and that British Bengal would be the scene of operations. Burma, in any case, was utterly unprepared for this war. Neither her rulers nor her soldiers had the slightest idea of what it meant to fight a well-equipped European power. They looked upon the sea-board to be a natural defence, and did not think that an attack could come from that direction. When British and Indian troops, 11,000 strong, under the command of Sir Archibald Campbell, entered the Rangoon river accompanied by warships, and easily occupied the port on 12 May 1824, the news was received everywhere, and particularly at the capital, with the greatest surprise. It was a shock to the king, the court, and the people. It angered them; but there were feelings of alarm too. However, they were fully resolved to drive the audacious invader into the river.
Rangoon did not have any effective defence. There were a few out-of-date guns on both sides of the river, and about 1,000 ill-disciplined troops in the town itself. The defenders announced the arrival of the enemy fleet by numerous beacons at the different custom-houses at the mouth of the river and by blazing fires in various parts of the country. Burmese soldiers at the river batteries at first remained inactive at their guns. A foreign fleet of many ships majestically sailing in uninvited was a sight to see. Urged on by their captains, however, the Mibya watch-post, consisting of a two-gun battery, opened fire. But it was no match for the British guns, and was soon silenced. Other Burmese batteries also opened up, but in a short time every gun was put out of action. The Governor of Rangoon soon realised that it was not possible to defend the city against the invader. He ordered the inhabitants to quit the town. Accordingly, most of the people fled, and the Shwedagon Pagoda, which was then also a fortress, was evacuated. The Governor began to lay waste the surrounding country with the object of starving out the invading force.

The Burmese defenders now in traditional style sounded the war *toskin* in all parts of the kingdom—‘to arms, to arms’—and began to make preparations to punish the intruder. Every town and village within 200 miles of the capital sent its quota of fighters. The great river was soon covered with fleets of warriors. The Kyi Wungyi arrived south with 12,000 men and began to build stockades around Rangoon—at Kemmendine, Kamayut, and Kokine. His plan was to close in upon the enemy with an ever-advancing line of stockades, hem him in, and thus drive him into the river.

On 28 May, the first serious encounter took place. With about 600 troops Campbell penetrated six miles towards Gyogon, north of Rangoon. The defenders retreated, entered their two stockades near Gyogon, and decided to accept battle, with confident shouts of ‘La, la’—‘Come, come’. The invaders immediately rushed towards the stockades, scaled them with ladders which they had brought with them, and a hand-to-hand fight ensued. The Burmese soldiers were soon thrown into confusion, their large numbers depriving
them of all mobility. It was a short, fierce, and bloody conflict. The stockades ‘having only one or two narrow ways of egress, the defenders driven from the ramparts, soon became an unmanageable mass, and rendered desperate by the discharges of musketry that were now poured in among them, they, with spear and musket couched, and their heads lowered to a butting position, blindly charged upon the soldiers’ bayonets.’ (Snodgrass). The Burmese soldiers gave no quarter and expected none. Four hundred Burmans lay dead on the field.

On 10 June, Campbell attacked the Kemmendine stockades and captured them in a few minutes. The Burmese commander and 200 of his men were killed. Shell-fire was a new experience altogether for Burmese soldiers. Shells created such a panic in their ranks, that when a bayonet attack was later launched, it was a walk-over for the Indo-British troops. This defeat at Kemmendine was a great disaster. Kemmendine was a royal war-ship station. However, the boats escaped and took shelter up the river near Kamayut.

At the end of June, large Burmese reinforcements arrived. The king ordered the Kyi Wungyi ‘to cover the face of the earth with an innumerable host, and to drive back the wild foreigners into the sea from whence they came.’ On 1 July, the Wungyi made a furious attack from the Pazundaung side. The British replied with grape and shrapnel which created much confusion in the Burmese ranks, which retreated precipitately. The Wungyi was now recalled. He had failed to recover Rangoon.

On 8 July, the British launched an attack both by land and river on the Burmese fortified camp at Kamayut along the river-bank. A Wungyi, a Wundauk, and several army chiefs were killed, together with 800 of their men. Ten stockades were captured in quick succession. Burmese soldiers were surprised that the enemy could so easily scale the stockades and capture them. This disastrous defeat resulted in many desertions from the Burmese ranks, and villages began to be crowded with wounded and unhappy soldiers. The monsoon was now at its height, and this added to their miseries. Sickness broke out in the British camp also.
Bagyidaw was surprised that the enemy was still in occupation of his great port. He sent down his two brothers, the prince of Tharrawaddy and the prince of Toungoo. The Toungoo prince established his headquarters at Pegu, and Tharrawaddy at Danubyu which he fortified. They brought with them renowned astrologers to fix propitious times for the attack. Tharrawaddy decided to launch a direct assault upon the Shwedagon fortress with the king’s Invulnerables, several thousands strong, whom he had brought with him. This was a special force on par with the ‘suicide-squads’ of modern times. Their hair was cut short. Their bodies were tattooed with figures of wild animals to show that they were as brave and fierce as the tigers, lions, and elephants portrayed on their persons. Bits of gold, silver, and precious stones were embedded in their arms to express their superiority as fighters. One or two of these heroes were always associated in each of the stockades. They openly danced a war-dance exposing themselves to the enemy. The idea was to defy the enemy, and thus infuse courage into the hearts of their troops. It is possible they were also doped with opium or wine for the purpose.

Before using his Invulnerables, Tharrawaddy tried to block the river channel by means of chains stretching from Syriam to Dalla, so as to prevent the enemy from escaping in their boats, and from receiving reinforcements too. The attempt failed. The British were ready for his men on both banks, and drove them out.

On 30 August, at dead of night, about 5,000 Invulnerables, armed with swords and muskets, rushed the northern face of the great Pagoda in a compact body. The defenders allowed them to come up to the lower stairs of the gate-way. Then, at the opportune moment, they opened up with showers of grape and gun-fire which wrought terrible destruction. Hundreds of Invulnerables were mowed down in no time. Those who could fled into the jungles. Tharrawaddy was humiliated and disappointed. His high hopes of victory had vanished. He realised the futility of making direct attacks upon an enemy so well armed and trained.

Bagyidaw at his capital now came to the conclusion that
the invading enemy was a special case, and needed special treatment. Bandula, his great soldier, would surely make short shrift of them. Bandula was at this time operating against the British in Chittagong district. He was recalled to the Golden Foot and appointed to command the southern army of Hanthawaddy, with royal orders not to allow even one of the 'rebel' invaders to escape.

CHAPTER XXXIX

BANDULA FIGHTS THE BRITISH

Bandula or Maha Bandula (Bandula the Great), as he is called, was, according to local standards, a brilliant soldier, a great leader of men, and a superb strategist. He was born in Upper Burma in about 1780. Bodawpaya took notice of his talents and employed him in the army. His soldiers had great faith in him and followed him unquestioningly. He did not believe in astrological prognostications, but in energetic action in the field. He saw service in Assam, and there his military talents first came to be recognized.

When the First Anglo-Burmese War broke out (1824), the Ava government decided to invade Bengal from Arakan, with a view to advancing upon Calcutta. Bandula, fresh from his victories in Assam and Cachar, was placed in command of the Arakan army.

In the middle of May 1824, Bandula crossed the Naaf and entered Chittagong district. His lieutenant Maung Za destroyed Capt. Norton's little force of 500. British troops had in the meantime occupied Rangoon and could not be dislodged. Bandula was therefore recalled to take charge of the southern army. He promised his king that he would expel the enemy from Rangoon in eight days. He collected 60,000 troops, consisting of 6,000 picked men, 700 Cassay Horse, 35,000 musketeers, many jingals, artillery on elephant back, and auxiliaries armed with swords, spears, and stockading tools. He also took with him the royal Invulnerables who were amply provided with charms, spells, and opium,
to dance the dance of defiance. Bagyidaw and his people had
great confidence in Bandula, and hoped for the best results.

Before the close of November 1824, Bandula approached
Rangoon, and with consummate skill assembled his men in
the jungle north of the Shwedagon Pagoda. He prepared
his battle-line extending from a point on the great river just
north of Kemmendine, in a semi-circle, up to the Pazundaung
Creek close to the town. His object was, if possible, to capture
the British army, or at least to drive it into the river. His
left wing stretched from the creek up to the front of the
Pagoda. His centre extended from the Pagoda to Kemmendine.
He sent columns across the river to Dalla, opposite Rangoon,
to fix batteries there for an attack upon enemy ships: this
was his right wing. Bandula was so confident of victory
that he did not deem it necessary to adopt guerilla tactics.
The enemy was to be smashed by a direct blow.

On 1 December, Bandula attacked at Kemmendine with
musketry and cannon fire. British warships replied with
broadsides from the river. It was a long and spirited onslaught
from the Burmese side, but it was beaten back. The same
night Bandula launched a clever attack on the British ships.
He sent down fire-rafs from the Kamayut shore. These
rafs were followed by war-ships to take advantage of the
expected confusion. The British sailors, however, intercepted
the rafts, and either ran them ashore or diverted their course.
The rafts were ‘ingeniously contrived, and formidable-ly con-
structed, made wholly of bamboos, firmly wrought together,
between every two or three rows of which a line of earthen
jars of considerable size, filled with petroleum or earth-oil
and cotton were secured. Other inflammable ingredients
were also distributed in different parts of the rafts, and the
almost unextinguishable fierceness of the flames proceeding
from them can scarcely be imagined!’ Many of these rafts
were more than 100 ft. in length and with hinges. The idea
was to envelop the enemy ships with the flames. Had they
been launched from Kemmendine, they might have proved
dangerous. But that naval station had been captured by
Campbell, so that the rafts, coming as they did from Kamayut,
were observed in time and dealt with.
On 2 December, Bandula began a general assault from all directions, and kept it up for a whole week. His troops, firing incessantly, approached the tank (now the Royal Lakes) opposite the Pagoda. On the Pazundaung and Dalla sides too they fired on enemy shipping. The Pazundaung column advanced towards the town, and appeared quite threatening. On the fourth day Campbell counter-attacked and broke Bandula’s left wing. It was a complete rout with much slaughter. Bandula, however, rallied his troops and was determined to attack again.

On 7 December, Campbell went on a general offensive. It began with a fierce bombardment. The Burmese troops at first stood firm and returned the fire, but it was an unequal combat. Next came the bayonet charge of the Indian and British soldiers. This broke the Burmese centre, and the defenders fled from their trenches into the jungles. The same night Bandula’s right wing was liquidated. Many of his men realised the futility of further resistance. More than one-half of them deserted him, while he lost more than 5,000 in dead and wounded. Campbell captured 240 of Bandula’s 300 guns, and a great many of his muskets. But Bandula refused to accept defeat. The indefatigable leader rallied his troops the best he could, but they now numbered only 25,000. He fortified the village of Kokine. Campbell says that Bandula entrenched and stockaded his men here ‘with a judgment in point of position such as would do credit to the best instructed engineers of the most civilized and warlike nations.’

Bandula now tried a ruse. He sent out feelers for peace, and on the night of 12 December his emissaries set fire to Rangoon. He meant to attack during the confusion, but the fire was put out and the plan failed. On 15 December, Campbell attacked the Kokine stockades where Bandula was not in personal command. The Burmese defenders were surprised to see a small force trying to take their defensive works. As the Company’s troops advanced, the defenders for some time stamped their feet and beat time together with their hands upon their breasts and their muskets resting on their shoulders. They had so much confidence in their stockades that they did not open fire till it was too late. Campbell’s
soldiers, in perfect formation, advanced with scaling ladders, and in a quarter of an hour cleared the stockades after a tremendous slaughter. As the Burmese retreated towards the jungle, they were intercepted by the Governor-General’s Bodyguard Cavalry who sabred them. Bandula lost a large quantity of baggage, much ammunition, and many weapons. Campbell also attacked Burmese war-boats on the river and captured thirty of them. Their crews threw themselves into the river and many were drowned.

The second battle of Rangoon was now over. Bandula retreated to Danubyu and fortified it. It appears that he realised the futility of fighting an enemy whose weapons, discipline, and resources were incomparably superior to what he could command. He now assumed a defensive rôle. He had done his best with the material in hand, and had failed. His conqueror chivalrously recognized in him the marks of a soldier, leader, and organizer.

Bandula now entrenched himself at Danubyu, 106 miles up the river. His stockade was nearly a mile long along the sloping bank of the river, the breadth of the fort varying from 500 to 800 yards. Solid teak beams about 17 ft. high were fixed close together as the ultimate line of defence. Behind this structure there was an old brick rampart. He mounted more than 150 guns on the works. His garrison consisted of about 15,000 men, chiefly the victorious veterans of his Chittagong campaign. On the land side the stockade was surrounded by a ditch which was protected with holes, nails, spikes, and other obstacles. Beyond the ditch several rows of strong railing were fixed. Beyond this line of defence there was an abatis nearly 100 ft. broad as a further obstruction to an assault. On the river-face of the stockade the sloping bank and the river itself formed the defence. Bandula constructed an observatory for himself on a tree. From this place of vantage he issued his orders to his lieutenants.

To advance up the river, the invader must take Danubyu, for no boat could pass without coming under a destructive fire from the stockade. The river was the life-line, and no supplies could be taken up the river unless Danubyu was first captured. It appears that Bandula’s strategy was to
detain the invader at Danubyu and thus wear him out. Campbell marched up the river with his army, by-passed Danubyu, and on 10 March reached a village forty miles north of Bandula. It was left to Cotton to capture Danubyu and open up the river route. Cotton’s troops, however, failed to carry the outworks of Danubyu fort, and the flotilla could not get through. When Campbell heard of this reverse, he retraced his steps, and on 18 March reached Henzada which he made his headquarters. On 25 March, he approached Danubyu and encamped on a plain at long-shot distance from the stockade. The same night Bandula made a sudden and determined attack, but it was beaten off with ease.

The battle for Danubyu lasted for a whole week. On 26 March, about fifteen Burmese war-boats fired on Campbell’s camp, but the fleet was easily scattered by rockets. The most serious fighting took place on 27 March. Burmese troops made a sortie in considerable force with infantry, cavalry, and seventeen war-elephants on whose backs guns had been mounted. The gallant attempt, however, failed completely. The British shot down most of the mahouts, and the huge creatures walked back into the fort with the greatest composure.

It is possible Bandula now thought of peace. But he knew full well that his king, who understood little or nothing of the then European weapons of war, would never agree. Again, the great captain had made a promise of speedy victory. How in honour could he return to Ava to advise the king to surrender? He would rather die at Danubyu than argue with an ignorant despot. On 31 March, Bandula sent the following cryptic message to Campbell, written on a piece of white canvas: ‘In war we meet each other’s force; the two countries are at war for nothing, and we know not each other’s minds.’ Did he mean to surrender? Or was it a suggestion for peace parleys? Campbell took no notice of it. Perhaps he thought it was a mere ruse.

On the morning of 1 April, at about 9 o’clock, Bandula went on his usual inspection round, after which, since there was no firing, he climbed his observatory tower and sat down on his couch. While he was giving orders to his chiefs,
the British batteries and rockets opened fire. One of the missiles found its target to where Bandula was and killed him on the spot. His body was immediately cremated. The soldiers now refused to fight under any other commander. Their officers failed to control them. It now became a question of personal safety. The same night the Burmese garrison deserted the fort almost to a man, without the British camp knowing it or even suspecting it. The soldiers departed from the camp in such silence and caution 'as would have been an object lesson to the best disciplined army in Europe'. It was indeed a great feat.

On the morning of 2 April, two Indian prisoners came running out of the stockade and informed Campbell of Bandula’s death, and that the whole garrison had melted away. The General immediately occupied the fort. Guns and a large quantity of grain, arms, ammunition, etc. were found intact. The Burmese had not set fire to anything in order not to be detected by the enemy.

Bandula’s death was a terrible blow to the king who had pinned all his hopes on him. A great Burman had fallen. There was no one competent enough to take his place. Burmese soil, under the then prevailing conditions, was unable to produce more than one Bandula. He possessed talents of no mean order. His soldiers held him in high honour. To them his word was law. With him departed the regularity, order, and method that he had instilled into his troops. The way to Prome now lay open before Campbell.

The defeat at Rangoon, and later at Danubyu, has by no means lowered Bandula’s reputation as a commander. It was not just a personal defeat for Bandula. It was the defeat of a dynasty and of a people who were still living in the past, who were unwilling to learn that the world was much larger and very different from what they conjectured it to be, and who considered themselves to be competent enough to beat back the British invading force with one blow. Bandula was amazed at the British shot, shell, and bayonets, to which he could make no effective reply. He had not seen warfare of this nature before: the odds were against him. Had he adopted Fabian tactics, avoiding pitched battles,
the invading force might have remained hemmed in at Rangoon. To the East India Company it would have proved to be a very harassing, prolonged and expensive war. Burma could not have won but, it is possible, the war would not have ended as disastrously as it did. But to Bagyidaw and to Bandula himself, the adoption of guerilla tactics was out of the question. They considered themselves to be a powerful state, and in honour they stuck to fighting pitched battles, till they could fight no more and surrendered at Yandabo.

CHAPTER XL

THE BATTLE OF PROME

The death of Bandula was a great blow, but there was no question of accepting defeat so far as Bagyidaw was concerned. Prince Tharrawaddy was placed in charge of a new army with orders to stop the invader. The prince began constructing a large stockade at Monyo, 84 miles north of Danubyu. But when it was almost completed he retreated to Prome on hearing of Campbell’s approach. Campbell reached Monyo on 16 April. On the 19th he encamped at Nga-pi-zeik, thirteen miles north of Monyo. Having had experience in Rangoon, Tharrawaddy was cognizant of the danger of the situation. He sent a pacific message to Campbell, but the latter replied to say that he would consider peace only after occupying Prome. He wanted to be in an important town before the rains broke.

As Campbell was approaching Prome, Tharrawaddy asked him not to occupy the town and warned him that two Burmese armies were in the neighbourhood and he would be completely surrounded. The prince also demanded an interview. Campbell refused to accede to his request since he suspected treachery, and continued his advance. Burmese troops then abandoned Prome and Campbell occupied the town on 25 April. Tharrawaddy’s intention was to give battle for the protection of Prome, but he had to give up the idea, since reinforcements failed to reach him in time. While British
troops were occupying the town, fires broke out in various parts of the city, but the flames were brought under control after much exertion. The Burmese army encamped at Myede awaiting reinforcements.

The Burmese and British armies entered winter quarters at Myede and Prome respectively. During this period Ava made frantic attempts to raise a large army. Men were levied from every part of the country, and liberal bounties were granted to recruits. Old weapons were repaired and new arms were feverishly manufactured. A contingent of 15,000 Shans was summoned. By September 1825 about 70,000 men were collected, according to British sources, and placed under the command of the Kyi Wungyi and Prince Tharrawaddy.

With the beginning of the dry season in October, Campbell sent a message to the Burmese commander to say that if the war was prolonged, it would be ruinous to their king and country, and that he was prepared to grant lenient terms of peace. An armistice was subsequently agreed to, and a meeting took place between the Wungyi and Campbell at Nyaung-bin-zeik, half-way between the two camps. Each party was escorted by 600 men. Both parties left camp at the same moment and met in front of the conference house. As the two commanders approached, they shook hands most amicably and there was an expression of cordial feeling. It was an imposing sight indeed. The two sets of commissioners sat on chairs facing each other. Snodgrass says that the Wungyi was accompanied by fifteen officers ‘each bearing the chain (Tsalway) of nobility, and dressed in their splendid court dresses’. As to etiquette, ‘so observing and tenacious were they...that scarcely a movement could be made without a corresponding one on their side; and their great aim seemed to be to show the most perfect knowledge of our customs and manners.’ The Wungyi made enquiries as to the health of the English king and his family, but made no reference to the Governor-General or to the East India Company. As the agents of His Burmese Majesty, they must have dealings only with those who represent royalty, not with the agents of a salaried officer like the Governor-General, or of a commercial company. The Wungyi and his staff
dined with Campbell that night. It is reported that they ate well, were temperate with wine, and departed expressing sentiments of peace.

The next day a second conference took place. Campbell recounted British complaints against Burma, but declared that he would evacuate the country if his terms were accepted. The Wungyi said that the Chinese also had invaded the country in the 18th century, but that at the conclusion of the war mutual friendship was restored. He therefore proposed that the past be forgotten and friendship for the future be established between the two states. When Campbell told him that friendship could only be restored on the grant of money and territory to the British power, whose army occupied a commanding position after numerous victories, the Wungyi asked for an extension of the armistice by twenty days. This was readily granted. Campbell’s demand was referred to Ava and was rejected outright. The Wungyi sent the following answer to the British Commander: ‘If you wish for peace, you may go away; but if you ask either money or territory, no friendship can exist between us. This is Burman custom.’ Bagyidaw sent express orders to surround the ‘rebel strangers’ and to exterminate them.

The Burmese commanders began to prepare to obey their king. Under the command of a Wun 15,000 troops crossed over and occupied the west bank of the river, while the Kyi Wungyi with 20,000 men and his war-boats formed the centre of the battle array on the east bank. The left wing consisted of 15,000 men led by Maha Nemyo, while Prince Memyabu, the king’s half-brother, stationed himself at Melloon with 10,000 reserves. More than half of Maha Nemyo’s troops were Shans in whom much confidence was placed, but this was the first time they were facing a modern disciplined force. A number of Shan Sawbwas officered their men. They were also accompanied by three pretty young women of high rank, looked upon as prophetesses possessing miraculous powers, and claiming the ability to render enemy bullets impotent. They were dressed as soldiers, rode on horses, and moved about among the troops inspiring them to fight valiantly. Campbell’s army numbered all told 3,000 British and 2,000
Indian soldiers. This was inclusive of a considerable train of horse and foot artillery which served him in good stead.

On 10 November 1825, Maha Nemyo took up his position at Wettigan, sixteen miles north-east of Prome, thus threatening the British rear. Campbell sent a column under Col. M'Dowell to dislodge him, but the attempt failed. The Colonel lost his life, and his men retreated with heavy loss. This success greatly emboldened the Burmese troops. Maha Nemyo advanced and came within five miles of the British camp at Prome. When news of this victory reached Ava there was much rejoicing, not realizing that it was a minor engagement, not a regular battle. Bagyidaw issued the following order: 'In order that not one of the wild foreigners may escape from being destroyed and slain, they must be apprehended by covering the face of the earth with an innumerable host, to accomplish which effectual measures are now in progress.... Let no man say he is at liberty, or in the service of such and such a chief; he that can wield a sword let him take a sword; and he that can use a spear, let him take one.... Our royal army will march in several divisions to seize, kill and crush the rebel strangers who are in Prome. The victorious advance division, under the chief Nemyo, seized, killed and crushed the strangers at Wettigan; owing to the excellent power of the Golden Majesty, they could not resist or stand before us.... The strangers came with great confidence; as they have been beaten this first time, they cannot stand on another occasion; the royal army having conquered once, ten times it will be successful....'

The Kyi Wungyi decided to adopt the same tactics as attempted by him at Rangoon. He did not want to risk a direct attack, but to advance his stockading line, come as close to the town as possible, and finally to make a simultaneous rush upon the enemy. But he did not take into consideration British artillery fire.

The battle began on 1 December and lasted for full five days. The British opened fire from land and river on the Burmese right wing and forced the Wun to withdraw. Next, Maha Nemyo was attacked. His men fought bravely, encouraged by the Amazons. The Sawbwas resisted
courageously, refusing to surrender. But bravery alone was no answer to British artillery, bayonet charges, and discipline. Maha Nemyo and a number of Sawbwas were killed. One of the Amazons received a mortal wound in her breast. British soldiers tried to save her and carried her to a cottage, but she expired there. On 2 December the Burmese centre under the Wungyi came under fire. His stockades were speedily taken and his army melted away. British attention was now turned to the Burmese boats on the river and they were all captured. On 5 December, the Burmese right wing across the river was attacked. It failed to make a stand. The battle ended in a complete rout.

The Battle of Prome was over. There was no unity of command in the Burmese army. The two wings and the centre fought as separate armies. Mere numbers could not stand for long against disciplined troops, superior weapons, and sound leadership. The old Kyi Wungyi saw through the situation and courageously suggested peace to his king. Bagyidaw in derision sent him a present of a woman’s longyi!

Chapter XLI

MELLOON, PAGAN, YANDABO

After the defeat at the Battle of Prome, Melloon became the Burmese headquarters. Prince Memyabu was now in command. The invading army, flushed with its victories, marched forward from Prome, and on 27 December encamped four miles below Melloon. The prince sent a flag of truce, and two British officers visited Melloon, but they failed to come to an agreement. On both sides there was a desire for peace. The Company’s expenses were mounting up, and peace now or a little later would not have mattered much politically. The Governor-General had already come to the decision that Burma must be made to cede Tenasserim and Arakan and pay an indemnity as well. Bagyidaw, his ministers, and his generals were also now anxious for peace, but it must be an honourable peace. They had suffered numerous
defeats, while the enemy was brave and possessed superior and marvellous weapons. Peace concluded in time would save the royal family and the royal capital.

On 29 December, therefore, ultimately, a conference was held on the river, the Burmese plenipotentiaries being the Kyi Wungyi and the Kolein Wungyi. The saintly Adoniram Judson was fished out of his wretched Ava prison to act as their interpreter. Campbell demanded an indemnity, exchange of political agents, cession of territory, and Burmese withdrawal from Assam, Manipur, and Cachar. There were interesting discussions at four meetings. At the first meeting the Wungyis agreed to cede Arakan, but did not give a reply as to Assam. At the second discussion Campbell insisted on fixing the Yomadaung range of mountains as the boundary between British Arakan and Burma. The Wungyis yielded, but said, 'If you take Arakan, pray make no mention of money.'

Next the question of indemnity was taken up, and Campbell demanded two crores of rupees, but soon reduced it to one crore. The Kolein Wungyi said, 'In war the expense is not all one side; we also have expended immense sums, leaving our treasury at the present moment drained and exhausted. It is evident, indeed, that our expenses must have greatly exceeded yours, as we have had to raise and appoint four or five new armies one after another, and have had at all times, since you came to the country, an immense multitude eating the public debt, and receiving the king's money, a great part of whose revenues have been stopped: while you by means of discipline and good management have never required a large force, nor had more than a small body of men to pay and provide for.' Campbell in reply said that up to date every English soldier had cost his government £200, and for every ship brought to Rangoon an immense sum of money had to be paid. The Wungyi was amazed and said, 'I also have been a merchant, and have engaged in extensive mercantile transactions, but none of my vessels cost anything like the sum you mention; but whether or not, it is cruel to exact a sum which we cannot pay. Our forests contain fine trees: you may cut them down. We could
perhaps with economy, in one year, give you a million baskets of rice, but we do not grow rupees, and have in no way the means of procuring such a sum as you require. Finally, however, it was agreed that an indemnity of one crore of rupees be paid; but the Wungyis made it clear that immediately they were unable to pay more than four lakhs.

When the clause on the interchange of political agents at the two capitals came up, the Kolein Wungyi said, 'I like that well. Let the English send a quiet person, not ambitious or quarrelsome, one who will not make disputes; and let the English Resident learn the Burmese, and the Burmese Agent the English language, so that there may be no need of the interposition of an interpreter.'

At the third conference on 3 January 1826, the indemnity was discussed again. The Kolein Wungyi complained that the figure fixed was very high: 'This is silver that we are called upon to pay, not rice, and we cannot collect any very large quantity of the latter in so short a period as you talk of allowing us; how then can we pay such an enormous sum? The English must be generous and lighten the demand.... We dare not communicate it to the king. We must pay the money ourselves; for should the king hear of such a stipulation, he would probably put us to death: of that we must take our chance. We speak the truth, we have not the money to give.' The Kyi Wungyi supported his colleague and said, 'You must allow us time to pay this money, silver is not rice.'

At the fourth conference, the questions of Assam, Arakan, Manipur, etc. were reviewed. The Kolein Wungyi said, 'We are stingy of parting with Arakan, not for its value, but because the honour of the nation is, in some measure, concerned in its retention. The people still look back with pride and exultation to its conquest, and they would regard its cession as robbing their forefathers, who achieved the subjugation, of their fame and glory.' Campbell made it clear that he would in no way modify his territorial demand, and the Wungyis gave in.

The draft treaty was finally agreed to, and 18 January 1826 was fixed for its ratification at Ava. British writers of Burmese history say that these Wungyis were insincere, that
they were merely playing a delaying game and that since on the subsequent capture of Melloon by Campbell, the draft of the treaty in original was found at the Burmese headquarters, the document was never sent to Ava, nor its contents made known to the king. This view is totally incorrect. A Burmese rendering of the draft was presented to the king as well as to the Hlutdau. The Hlutdau, out of fear, came to no definite decision, while Bagyidaw refused to accept it and decided to continue the war.

The authority for this statement is a document (in Vol. 339 of the *Bengal Secret and Political Consultations*, No. 10, 5-5-1826) composed by a European gentleman resident in Ava during the course of the war. He did not affix his name to the document for reasons of safety, but he submitted it to Robertson, Civil Commissioner accompanying Campbell’s army and one of the signatories to the Treaty of Yandabo. Robertson forwarded the document to the Governor-General with the following remark: ‘I can...from my own acquaintance with the writer, venture to assure His Lordship-in-Council that his narrative may be safely received as a fair and faithful recital of events of which he was himself an observed witness.’ (Ibid. No. 9, Letter dated 28-4-1826). The European writer says in his document: ‘...the articles of treaty agreed to, and as I was well informed a fair copy in Burmese sent up in a case to His Majesty, not with the signatures, lest the heads or at least the hands of the unauthorized generals should be forfeited.’ The Wungyi-Generals really desired peace, but they were helpless before the king and the war-party at the capital led by the queen and her brother the Minthagy.

British writers also confidently affirm that Bagyidaw would have agreed to peace, but that his Hindu astrologer, the Raj Guru Maharaja Rajendra Mahadhamma, advised him to the contrary. Robertson in his letter to his government, quoted above, says that this view was formed on evidence that was merely hearsay. The Raj Guru could in no way be expected to urge the king to submit to humiliating terms. To continue the war was Bagyidaw’s royal decision. Early in 1824 the Raj Guru was in Calcutta. When Burmese officers arrested Chew and Ross at Maungdaw, in retaliation the
Raj Guru was taken into custody by the authorities in Calcutta and kept as a hostage. Later he was sent to Arakan, from where Robertson brought him to Rangoon. The idea was to make use of him as an instrument for peace. Thus he accompanied Campbell’s army as it advanced up the river towards the Burmese capital. It appears that it was at Melloon that he was released. He promised to proceed to Ava and work for peace. At his request British demands were delivered to him in writing in a summarised form as follows: that no overtures of peace would be received unless first of all English, European, and American prisoners were released together with all British subjects kept in confinement or taken as prisoners of war; that the British General would grant liberal terms of peace to the king in spite of the commanding position of the victorious army; and that the British General would receive letters with a flag of truce from the king at Paganmyo.

The Raj Guru carried out his terms of the promise, but Bagyidaw decided to continue the war. The Guru did present to Bagyidaw the document of British demands and the contents were explained to the king by a Persian at Ava. Robertson says that this was the first authenticated document of British demands the king had learnt of. It was written both in English as well as in Persian.

When Bagyidaw decided to continue the war, the Burmese generals at Melloon were in great straits. They earnestly desired peace, and well understood the foolishness of continuing the unequal and hopeless struggle. But they were helpless. They decided to use their own diplomacy to persuade Campbell to retire peacefully; but this they found just as ineffective as fighting him. They were between two fires, the British and the Konebaung.

On 17 January, four Burmese chiefs, including an Atwin-wun, arrived at the British camp and were received by Campbell. They offered him four lakhs of ticals and requested him to retire to Prome. They also declared that the prisoners would be released later. The British General said that he would not retire unless first all the prisoners were released, one-quarter of the indemnity paid, and the treaty duly ratified
The deputation then requested that the truce be extended by six days. Campbell offered them the following terms: (i) The Burmese were to pay down four lakhs of ticals by noon of 19 January, give hostages of the General’s choice, and evacuate Melloon by 20 January; (ii) the British army would march towards the capital with the hostages, but would not fire a shot provided the Burmese were peaceful; (iii) as soon as the ratified treaty arrived from the king, the British advance would cease.

No reply was sent to these demands, and both sides began to prepare for a renewal of hostilities. At midnight, 18 January, Campbell began his attack on the Melloon stockades which were defended by 10,000 troops under Prince Memyabu. The defenders failed to stand, and all the stockades were lost. On entering Melloon, the victors found in the prince’s hut some Rs. 40,000, a good many horses, and the draft of the original treaty both in English and in Burmese. The invaders naturally concluded that negotiations for peace on the Burmese side were a mere hoax, and that the terms of the treaty were never presented to the king. The Kyi Wunyi while retiring sent a message to Campbell ‘that in the hurry of abandoning the place, a large sum of money also had been left, which he was sure the British General would soon take an opportunity of returning’. It is not known if Campbell responded to this eminently friendly gesture!

The news of this defeat led Bagyidaw into a new experiment. He sent (31 January) to interview Campbell four British and American prisoners of war, including missionary Dr. Price and Surgeon Sandford of the British Army, with instructions to persuade the advancing General to modify his terms of peace. Describing these unfortunate agents of Bagyidaw, Snodgrass says, ‘such uncouth figures as these poor fellows were, have been seldom exhibited, with their hair uncut, and beards unshorn since the day when they were taken’. Campbell asked them to tell the king that all prisoners must at once be given up, and the first instalment of £250,000 must be paid before the army would withdraw. The General, however, promised not to go beyond Pagan, but wait for twelve days for a reply.
On hearing the message brought by Price, Bagyidaw was inclined to submit, but on further consideration decided to try the sword once more. He entrusted an army of about 16,000 to a new commander who promised to destroy the enemy at Pagan. With his title of ‘Prince of Darkness’, the new hero issued out of the capital to attempt the impossible. His army was honoured with the title of ‘Retrievers of the King’s Glory’.

Meanwhile Campbell approached Pagan and received intelligence of the king’s hostile intentions. With only fifty followers the General went to inspect the old temples of Pagan. While he was at one spot with only seven attendants a body of 300 Burmese cavalry suddenly appeared. The General’s life was in danger. If the Burmese unit had acted with courage and resolution, Campbell and his staff would either have been killed or captured. On the other hand the cavalrymen fled as soon as they caught sight of Campbell and his seven troopers. The military superiority of the British army was no longer a doubtful factor in the Burmese mind. It was the king who had failed to gauge the situation correctly, nor would he himself take the field against the oncoming foe.

The new Burmese commander arranged his battle-line in an inverted crescent. On 9 February, Campbell made a sudden attack on his centre and broke it up. The two wings were thus separated, and the defenders retreated in panic. Many jumped into the river and were drowned. The whole army was dispersed. The defeated general fled to Ava, presented himself before the king, and asked for another army. He was immediately apprehended and led out to execution.

After taking advice of his counsellors, Bagyidaw now decided to give in. On 13 February, Price and Sandford were released and sent to Campbell with Burmese Commissioners to say that the British commander’s terms were agreed to. But they did not bring with them the other prisoners of war, and they offered Campbell only six lakhs of ticals. The Burmese Commissioners also requested that the invading army make a halt of ten days. Campbell refused, and threatened that unless the first instalment was fully paid he would alter the terms of peace. The General continued his advance and
on 23 February encamped at Yandabo, 45 miles from Ava.

The king's plenipotentiaries arrived at Yandabo on the same day accompanied by Judson as interpreter. The terms of the treaty were explained, and on 24 February it was signed and sealed. The prisoners were delivered the same day, and the first instalment of the indemnity was fully paid. The king's orders were to concede every point so that he and his capital may be in no danger of being taken. The war had ended.

The Burmese had undoubtedly put up a determined resistance taking into consideration their old-fashioned ideas, want of discipline, and handicap in leadership, arms, and ammunition. Although the British, from the actual fighting done, had experienced no real difficulty, the campaign as a whole proved to be a strenuous one, because of their ignorance of the climate and geography of the country. Out of the total number of invading troops that entered Burma, only $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent were killed in action, while 45 per cent perished of disease. It was comparatively a small body of troops that had forced Bagyidaw to surrender. At Yandabo, Campbell had only 2,000 British and 4,500 Indian soldiers.

The British army had advanced 300 miles from Prome, and 600 miles from the sea. Communications along the river were maintained by means of a chain of posts at intervals of 50 miles; and at each post a battalion of Indian troops was stationed with an armed vessel for support. It is indeed strange that the defenders made no attempts to cut the communications of the enemy. The river life-line was kept intact for food, arms, and reinforcements throughout the war. What if Bagyidaw had refused to surrender and taken to guerilla warfare? A British writer gives the following reply: 'One thing reconciles us much to our proceeding no further;—it is the certainty that we should have found neither the king nor people. No, they would have evacuated the place (Ava), have led us a dance, from one stockade to another, till the rainy season had set in, and our little force, unsubdued in spirit, but worn out with toil and sickness, would have dropped on the soil they had conquered.' But Bagyidaw was no Alaungpaya, and Burmans who had had a taste of the war
knew that they were fighting not Mons but a foreign foe wonderfully organized, dreadfully armed, and marvellously disciplined.

Chapter XLII

Bagyidaw and His Capital during the War: 1824-26

Bagyidaw was a victim of tradition as well as of circumstances. A victim of tradition, because he believed in his own invincibility, and therefore reaped what his predecessors had sown. He was a victim of circumstances too, for he was supported in his policy of expansion not only by his favourite queen and her brother Maung O the Minthagy, but also by his advisers, ministers, and generals. Ignorant of the world beyond, they had naturally no conception of the reality of the British power. They held firm to the traditional belief that no king could be greater or mightier than His Burmese Majesty. His subjects at the capital shared the same belief, and the king’s life was almost entirely circumscribed by activities at the capital.

The Minthagy, the first officer of the state, once (1823) asked a European resident at the capital for his opinion on the comparative strength of the Burmese and British nations. When told that the British were definitely superior, the Minthagy agreed that they were superior in the open field, because of their disciplined troops. He, however, contended that Burmans were adept at stockade and bank fighting, and that the British army would fail to function in a forested country like Burma, while Burmese troops would use the forest both for defence and food. The Minthagy even went so far as to say that Burmese troops, if occasion offered, would easily conquer Bengal.

The prince of Tharrawaddy, a full brother of Bagyidaw, in his conversation with Gouger (a British merchant of Ava), expressed himself in the following words: ‘You know nothing of the bravery of our people in war. We have never yet found
any nation to withstand us. They say, your soldiers, when they fight, march up exposing their whole bodies. They use music to let us know when they are coming. They do not know our skill and cunning. They will all be killed if they attack us in this way. Besides, you have taken our territory. When we conquered Aracan we acquired a right to Bengal as far as Moorshedabad, which formerly belonged to Aracan. You will have to give it up again. We shall go to Calcutta and take it. There is plenty of gold and silver there. The English are rich but they are not so brave as we are. They pay sepoys to fight for them. They are now frightened lest we should make war upon them.... You are strong by sea, but not by land. We are skilled in making trenches and abbatis which the English do not understand.'

Maha Bandula was of the same view as the prince of Tharrawaddy. When British warships appeared at the mouth of the Tek Naaf to protect Shahpuri Island, Bandula was directed to proceed to the Arakan frontier. This redoubtable soldier levied a picked force of 6,000 men. On 1 January 1824, he crossed the Irrawaddy with them to Sagaing, in the presence of the king and his court. Gouger, who witnessed the crossing, gives the following account of the brilliant spectacle: 'A fleet of magnificent war-boats, many of them richly gilded, were in readiness to receive the troops at midday, who embarked in perfect order; each man was attired in a comfortable campaigning jacket of black cloth, thickly wadded and quilted with cotton, and was armed with a musket or spear and shield, as suited the corps to which he belonged. A profusion of flags, with gay devices, were unfurled to the breeze, martial music resounded, the chiefs took their seats at the prows of their boats (the post of honour, as the stern is with us), and in the middle of each boat, a soldier, selected for his skill, danced a kind of a hornpipe. When all was ready, the whole fleet, lining the bank for a considerable distance, dashed all at once across the river, nearly a mile wide; the loud song bursting from 6000 lusty throats, while the stroke from thousands of oars and paddles kept time to their music. It was an exciting spectacle, one which, but
for certain misgivings of its purport, I should have looked on with delight.'

In February 1824, a dispatch was received from Bandula, on the Arakan frontier, offering his services to the king for the conquest of Bengal. The king and ministers agreed, and an order was issued: 'Let them proceed to take the whole of Bengal.' On Sunday, 23 May, however, news arrived that British troops had landed in Rangoon and occupied the city. The Kyi Wunyi was at once ordered to proceed south with 12,000 men and deal with the 'rebel' invaders. The king feared the British troops might abscond before the Wunyi arrived to apprehend them. 'The whole city', says Gouger, 'was convulsed with rage, as may be supposed, at the loss of their great sea-port.' But there was 'a feeling of satisfaction and exultation that the white foreigners had entered into a trap from which they could not escape, and would inevitably be destroyed like vermin. Such a hold had this delusion taken, that the only fear now expressed was that their enemies would plunder the town and escape before the Royal army had time to arrive and give them battle. Their expressions of confidence were as unbounded as their indignation; indeed, this buoyancy of feeling gave the town the resemblance of a joyous festival, intermingled with fits of frantic rage. Many songs were extemporized, teeming with ridicule and defiance. The burden of one of them was singularly refined and elegant. It contemplated nothing less than hunting the British General for the sake of his hide; he was to be caught, flayed, and his skin tanned into leather to make shoes for the heir apparent! Little did the innocent poets know of the vigour Englishmen manifest in defence of their hides!'

Mrs. Judson was in Ava at this time. She says, 'No doubt was entertained of the defeat of the English; the only fear of the king was that the foreigners, hearing of the advance of the Burman troops, would be so alarmed as to flee on board their ships and depart, before there would be time to secure them as slaves. "Bring for me," said a wild young buck of the palace, "six kala-pyoos (white strangers) to row my boat." "And to me," said a lady of a Woongyee, "send
four white strangers to manage the affairs of my house, as I understand they are trusty servants." The war-boats in high glee passed our house, the soldiers singing and dancing, and exhibiting gestures of the most joyous kind. "Poor fellows," said we, "you will probably never dance again."

Soon after the army's departure for Rangoon, all the Europeans and Americans in Ava, with the exception of Mrs. Judson and Lanciago, a Spaniard, were arrested on 8 June, thrust into the common Let-ma-yun prison, and placed in fetters. They were, however, given the 'kind' assurance, that as soon as the enemy at Rangoon was beaten off, they would be tried. So confident were the authorities of victory, that guns were planted by the river-side to fire a salute on the arrival of the good news. Among the prisoners were Adoniram Judson and Price, his colleague, both Christian missionaries.

Contrary to expectations, however, Burmese troops failed to expel the British commander, Sir Archibald Campbell, from Rangoon. All their attempts were defeated with heavy loss. Bandula now offered to proceed south, and promised complete victory. Bagyidaw acceded to his request and recalled him to the capital. After raising an army of about 60,000, Bandula set off about the end of September 1824. The very name 'Bandula' was a guarantee of victory. The people were warned not to be alarmed as the guns might be fired at any time to announce the good news.

As to Bandula, Mrs. Judson says that the king began to think that none but he understood the art of fighting against foreigners. Bagyidaw showered him with the highest honours and favours. He was in fact, while at Ava, the right-hand man of the king. Poor Mrs. Judson petitioned him for the release of her husband. He heard her attentively, spoke to her courteously, but told her that all the prisoners would be released after he had expelled the English from Rangoon and returned to Ava. Her high hopes were dashed to the ground. She knew that Bandula would never be able to dislodge the British from the ground they had occupied.

Owing to the successive defeats of Burmese armies, Bagyidaw's ministers began to realise to some extent that
they had under-estimated the power of the enemy. No success had so far cheered their hearts; but now that Bandula had taken the matter in hand, it was hoped that victory would be theirs. Rumours and reports of deserters from the Burmese armies were, however, very alarming. Gouger says, 'Some of these men, who had fled from the war, were thrown into our prison, and gave us marvellous accounts of the skill and prowess of the English troops, exaggerated by their own superstitious fancies. They firmly believed in our using enchantments. One of these convicts affirmed, that even our missiles were charmed before they were fired off, and knew what they had to do. He was standing, he said, near his Tsek-kai, an officer of rank, when a huge ball of iron came singing, “tsek, tsek” which he distinctly heard in its flight, when true to its mission, it burst upon the very man it was calling out for, the unfortunate Tsek-kai!' The confidence of the king and the people was, however, far from being destroyed by these reports.

While they were waiting for the guns on the river-sides to fire, news arrived of the defeat and death of Bandula. The disappointment experienced by the king, his court and the people was most intense. Bagyidaw heard the news in silent amazement. The queen smote her breast and cried, ‘Ama! Ama!’ (Alas! Alas!). The exclamations constantly heard in the streets were ‘Who could be found to fill his place? Who would venture since the invincible Bandula had been cut off?’ Fear and alarm began to spread from house to house and street to street. Many of the royal family and the king himself began to talk of fleeing from Ava, for the victorious invader would certainly advance upon the capital.

Tradition dies hard, however. The British, while encamped at Prome (April 1825), had offered terms of peace. Old hopes returned: certainly the invaders were afraid and wished to return to their country. No peace was to be made with them. They must be punished. By September 1825, a new army of 50,000 was raised consisting of Burmans and Shans. Fresh hope was restored, not unmixed, however, with fears and doubts.

The Pakhan-Wun, who was in prison for suspected treason,
offered to lead the army. He assured the king that he would conquer the English and recover all the occupied territory. He was released, restored to his old position, and placed at the head of the new army. At his suggestion every soldier was to be given 100 ticals in advance. The king agreed, but it was soon discovered that a good part of the advance money was passing into the pockets of the new general. The king might have connived at this dishonesty, but the Wun became bolder. He placed two requests before Bagyidaw: (i) that he be allowed to take the royal bodyguard to the front; and (ii) that the king proceed to the Mingun pagoda to make offerings and prayers for victory. The king suspected foul play. 'Ha,' the monarch exclaimed, 'he would take away my Guard, and then have me leave the throne!' The Wun was instantly dragged out, beaten through the town to the place of execution, and then trampled to death by elephants. The people rejoiced; they hated him for his past cruelties and exactions.

In November 1825, the British advanced carrying everything before them. The prince of Tharrawaddy, who was leading the Burmese army, retreated, and suggested peace to his brother. Meanwhile, Prince Memyabu, the king's half-brother, was appointed commander-in-chief, and he stationed himself at Melloon awaiting the invader. All hopes of expelling the invaders had by now vanished. The thing now was to prevent them from taking the capital. In December 1825, the British force approached Melloon and again offered peace terms. False hopes were at once roused at the capital. The king and his people concluded that the British were courting friendship, and that the danger had passed. Tables, chairs, plates, knives, forks, fowls, beef, pork, and other articles thought necessary for the accommodation of European commissioners were sent down to the Burmese camp. The British General was indeed in favour of peace, but he demanded an indemnity of one crore of rupees and large slices of royal territory. This was a great shock both to the Burmese plenipotentiaries as well as to the king. The Hlutdau, the king's council, were afraid to come to any decision, and the king decided to continue the war.
In January 1826, the invading force launched another offensive, and defeated and drove out Prince Memyabu from Melloon. On hearing of this, Ava was plunged into the greatest alarm. Judson, Price, and other European prisoners were taken out of jail, and daily summoned to the palace and consulted. Their good offices were requested to persuade the British General to soften his hard terms.

Finally, Dr. Price was sent to interview Sir Archibald Campbell, and to tell him that the king sincerely desired peace. He was charged to bring back a statement of the mildest terms on which foreign troops would depart from the country. Mrs. Judson says: 'With the most anxious solicitude the court waited the arrival of the messengers, but did not in the least relax their exertions to fortify the city. Men and beasts were at work night and day, making new stockades and strengthening old ones...all articles of value were conveyed out of town, and safely deposited in some other place. At length the boat in which the ambassadors had been sent was seen approaching, a day earlier than was expected. As it advanced towards the city, the banks were lined by thousands anxiously inquiring their success. But no answer was given; the government must first hear the news. The palace gates were crowded, the officers at the lut-d’hau (Hlutdau) were seated, when Dr. Price made the following communication: 'The general and commissioners will make no alteration in their terms, except the hundred lacs (a lac is a hundred thousand) of rupees may be paid at four different times; the first 25 lacs to be paid within twelve days, or the army will continue its march.' In addition to this, all prisoners were to be given up, including Dr. and Mrs. Judson and their little daughter Maria. When the king heard that the American prisoners were also to be surrendered, he exclaimed, 'They are not English; they are my people, and shall not go.' The king, however, was really anxious to come to terms; but the queen was strenuously opposed to this and advised him to flee to Moksobomyo. The king accepted her plan, and boats and carts were kept in readiness to move. The prince of Tharrawaddy now intervened, and warned his brother 'that it would be derogatory
to his dignity, and contrary to the majesty of a king to fly from his capital; and his best plan was to make peace with the English.

Meanwhile, a new commander, Za-ya-thu-yah, offered his services to the king. He promised to destroy the invading force at Pagan, and thus retrieve the king’s glory. Like a drowning man, Bagyidaw clutched at this straw. Sixteen thousand fresh troops were raised, and a forced loan was realised to meet the expenses. The new commander took the title of ‘Prince of Darkness,’ marched to Pagan, and fortified it. But the English easily routed his army and advanced on the capital. The defeated general fled to Ava, appeared before the king, and asked for another army. He was immediately apprehended and led away to execution.

Dr. Price was now sent a second time, with instructions to persuade the English General to accept six lakhs of rupees as a first instalment instead of the twenty-five lakhs demanded. The fear expressed was that the enemy would take the twenty-five lakhs and still continue to march on Ava. Price soon returned with the appalling news that the English General was very annoyed, refused to negotiate, and was now only a few days’ march from the capital.

This evil news settled the matter. The queen gave in, and so did the king. Immediate action was taken to raise the twenty-five lakhs. Gold and silver vessels were melted. The king and the queen themselves superintended a part of the weighing. They must by all means save the city, and save themselves the shame of fleeing from it. Commissioners were now sent to Yandabo, forty-five miles south of Ava, where the British army was encamped. The king instructed them to concede to every demand of the British General. They paid down the twenty-five lakhs demanded, released all the British, Indian, American and European prisoners, and signed the Treaty of Yandabo, which was later ratified at Ava without argument or protest.

Thus did Bagyidaw come out of the war. Defeat, the payment of a fine, and the loss of territory deeply embittered his mind. He felt humiliated, and from that time onwards looked upon all Europeans with suspicion. He hated the
very thought that he had agreed to the shameful treaty; but his desire was to save his capital, and to preserve his dignity by not fleeing from it.

Chapter XLIII

Siam and the First Anglo-Burmese War

The Tenasserim Division of Lower Burma was for many centuries a bone of contention between the rulers of Ayuthia in Siam and the kings of Burma. The chieftainships of Martaban, Moulmein, Tavoy, Tenasserim, etc. paid homage to either Siamese or Burmese rulers, or to both, according as they were pressed to by one or the other of these two rivals. As early as the 3rd century A.D. the Khmer kingdom of Funan held the town of Tenasserim. When the Siamese kingdom was founded in 1350, it enrolled Tenasserim, Moulmein and Martaban as belonging to her. Throughout the 14th century this area was claimed by Siamese kings as well as by the kings of Pegu. During the 16th century Tabinshweti and Bayinnaung controlled these parts. But on the death of Bayinnaung, when his empire collapsed, the country south of Martaban paid homage to Ayuthia.

It was natural for the Siamese to desire control over the strip of territory roughly south and east of the Salween. Later, in the 19th century, Siam had to contend with the British to retain possession of the chieftainships of Malaya. Control over the western coast of Tenasserim would greatly improve Siam’s position commercially. In 1760, however, Alaungpaya conquered what we now call Tenasserim, and from that time it became definitely a part of Burma. The British conquered it in 1824 during the first war with Burma.

When hostilities broke out between Burma and the British, it gave Siam an opportunity to recover Tenasserim by joining hands with the British. Bagyidaw sent his agents to Bangkok to awaken Siamese fears against the English. The British also sent envoys to Siam and invited her to attack Burma. In case she joined the British, her reward was to be Martaban
and its district. The king of Siam, however, decided to pursue a safe course. He showed a friendly disposition towards both belligerents, expressed the desire to both that he would be their ally, but cautiously abstained from hostility towards either, and adopted a wait-and-see policy.

It was felt in Siam that the British would fail in Burma, just as the Burmese had failed so many times in Siam in the past. When the British occupied Tavoy and Mergui (October 1824), Siam grew alarmed. There was a desire to throw in her lot with Burma, at least to prevent any British settlement in Tenasserim, but Siam desisted. Bangkok was open to British naval attack, and this fear dissuaded the king from doing anything rash.

Siam, however, placed herself on a war footing; but the real object was strict neutrality till it became clear who the victor would be, so as to cast her lot in the right scale. If the British won, it might be possible to get from them Tavoy and Martaban. If the Burmese came out successful, the town of Tenasserim at least might be secured for Siam by just occupying it. As the rains of 1824 began to subside, a body of Siamese troops appeared on the Martaban frontier. Campbell, the British General, therefore occupied Martaban, and from that position kept a close watch on the Siamese, and also maintained communications with them.

It appears that after the defeat and death of Bandula, Siam declared herself to be an ally of the British, but again she carefully avoided taking part in the actual fighting. She helped the British with supplies. When the British army came close to the Burmese capital (February 1826), and there was no doubt remaining as to who the victor was, the Rown Rown, that is the commander of the Siamese army, sent a very friendly message to Campbell. He declared his readiness to advance with his army to help the British, provided a promise was given that in return the district of Martaban would be transferred to Siam. Campbell received the message after Burma had surrendered and the Treaty of Yandabo had been signed and ratified. A suitable reply was, therefore, sent to the Siamese commander informing him that the war was already over, and advising
him to remain on Siamese soil and not to enter Burma.

The 10th Article of the Treaty of Yandabo makes mention of Siam: ‘The good and faithful ally of the British Government, His Majesty the King of Siam, having taken part in the present war, will, to the fullest extent, as far as regards His Majesty and his subjects, be included in the above treaty.’ Siam herself was not a party to the treaty; no agent of hers was present at Yandabo; and she received no territorial or other gain from the war.

The British took from Burma that part of Tenasserim district which lay on the other side of the Salween; but the great difficulty with this new acquisition was its inability to meet its military expenses. Every year the Government of India had to bear an expense of over a lakh and a half of rupees for the upkeep of Tenasserim, because of the troops stationed there. In 1826, the Company’s Court of Directors even suggested returning Tenasserim to Burma, but the measure was not insisted upon, since it was expected that large numbers of Burmans, and particularly Mons from the other side of the Salween, would migrate into the new province. Indeed at first some 12,000 persons crossed over, but later none arrived, and some of the immigrants returned to Burmese territory.

In 1828, the Directors again recommended the retrocession of Tenasserim, but hesitated in taking action. There was a feeling that in time the province would prosper and stand on its own legs. Again, British prestige was involved in the matter of returning the territory to Burma off-hand. Public opinion in Tenasserim was also against such a measure. Two other expedients were suggested: either to sell the province to Siam, or to create an independent state in Tenasserim. Siam, however, showed no desire to buy the territory, while the establishment of an independent state would have created a new problem, namely, its security.

When Burney arrived in Ava as the British Resident, under instructions from his Government, he tried to tackle the Tenasserim problem. He asked the Hludtau to offer the island of Negrais and some other adjoining territory in exchange for Tenasserim, but met with a refusal. The Wungyis knew very well that the British were tired of Tenasserim
and hoped to secure it as a gift. Burney threatened that the British might transfer the province to Siam. The Wungyis expressed much dissatisfaction at this 'and asked why their ancient dominions should be given to their enemies the Siamese'. One of the Ministers opined that Burma might give fifty lakhs of rupees for Tenasserim provided Arakan was also returned to the king. He also threatened that if the British gave Tenasserim to Siam, the Burmese would recover it by force.

Nothing came out of all these negotiations with Burma and with Siam. The Governor-General as well as the Directors finally decided to retain Tenasserim; but it took them nearly seven years to come to this decision. All this time they waited for either Burma or Siam to offer something in compensation, which both refused to do.

Siam’s part in the first war, and the fact that she had been mentioned in the Treaty of Yandabo, produced an echo as late as 1839. A party of Siamese Shans from Zimme and Laboung made an irruption into Burmese Shan territory and carried away some inhabitants as slaves. The Burmese Wungyis now claimed that since by Article 10 of the treaty, the Siamese were associated with the British Government, it was the responsibility of the British to call upon the Siamese, their allies, to give satisfaction to His Burmese Majesty. When McLeod, the British Agent at Amarapura, denied the responsibility, King Tharrawaddy was quite annoyed and said, 'it was a good joke we (the British) should select the articles we wished, and reject those we found inconvenient ... The treaty was made with us not with the Siamese, what had he therefore to do with them? Their king or minister was not present at Yandabo, but the English by the step they took guaranteed their good conduct.' Under the direction of the Government of India, McLeod made the following reply to Tharrawaddy: "The Government of India cannot admit the 10th Article of the Treaty of Yandabo to bear the construction which the court of Ava seems desirous of putting upon it. The article in question was inserted for the benefit of the Siamese and not the Burmese monarch. The British Government, when withdrawing from the contest, could
not of course desert its ally, and therefore inserted that article to bind the king of Ava not to molest the king of Siam on account of the little aid which the latter had rendered towards the prosecution of the war.'

Chapter XLIV

The Burma War Indemnity: 1826-1833

The Treaty of Yandabo had provided for an indemnity of one crore of rupees to be paid in four equal instalments. It was agreed that on payment of the first instalment of twenty-five lakhs the British army would retire from Yandabo to Rangoon; and on payment of the second instalment, by 4 June 1826, Rangoon and the outlying parts would be restored to the king. Payment of the last two instalments was to be completed by 24 February 1828.

It was with the greatest difficulty that the first instalment was paid. Bagyidaw’s government could scrape together only five lakhs of rupees, while the queen lent twenty lakhs. Bodawpaya had left at his death a treasure of fifty million ticals of flowered silver; but Bagyidaw had wasted a good part of it in removing the capital to Ava, in building new palaces, etc. and what remained was swallowed up by the war. Again, Burma was a poor country, sparsely populated, and partially cultivated. Besides, the financial system of the government, as Crawfurd puts it, was ‘rude, barbarous and inefficient’. No regular land revenue was levied on the king’s behalf. The greater part of the land was assigned to members of the royal family, public officers, and favourites of the king. Of course, the king could resume these assignments any time he chose: there was no question of any hereditary grant. Public servants were not paid any salaries. Those servants of the government who had no lands lived on fees, bribes, extortion, and presents, as best as they could.

The government itself lived from hand to mouth. When a special item of expenditure cropped up, a special contribution was levied on the people for the purpose. The last
three instalments of the indemnity were also raised in the
same way. Payment of the second instalment could not be
made in time: it took more than six months extra, and was
not completed till 8 December 1826. The port of Rangoon
yielded a revenue to the king of three lakhs of ticals yearly,
hence with a desire to recover the town, the payment was
actually expedited. The very next day the British army
retired to Moulmein.

The last two instalments took over six years to pay. Suffi-
cient money could not be raised because of the poverty of
the country, and a good part of what was raised went into
the pockets of the collectors. Not being able to pay the third
and fourth instalments in time, and fearing the British might
occupy Rangoon again, Bagyidaw sent two envoys to Calcutta,
to request that the payment of the third instalment be delayed
by two or three years, and the fourth instalment by a year
longer.

The envoys arrived in Calcutta on 5 April 1827. The
Governor-General referred them to Sir Archibald Campbell,
Commissioner of Tenasserim, and at the same time issued
instructions to the Commissioner to grant them a respite of
just over a year and a half. These instructions, however,
did not reach Campbell in time, and he agreed to a delay
of eight months only. Opinion prevailed throughout the
country that the British would re-occupy Rangoon in case of
any defalcation. Great efforts were made to collect the money
from the people. Some of the chief and rich people were
arrested in order to enforce large contributions. In spite of
all these attempts, payment of the third instalment was not
completed till the middle of the year 1828. Payment of the
fourth instalment was begun in August 1828, and at the
end of the year only ten lakhs were paid. During the next
eight months only three lakhs could be paid. Calcutta made
a number of requests calling upon Ava to expedite payment;
but somehow it could not be done.

In December 1829, Major Henry Burney was appointed
Resident at Ava. He arrived at the Burmese capital in April
1830, and found that about twelve lakhs of rupees still remained
to be paid to complete the indemnity. He had been specially
instructed by his government to remonstrate with the Burmese authorities against the delay in the payment of the fourth instalment. Respectable Burmans thoroughly disapproved of the situation, and blamed the officers for embezzling a good part of what they were collecting. The king also issued orders that the balance be paid off; but mere orders could not effectuate much. The royal treasury was empty, and the people were poor. Only the queen and her brother the Minthagyí were supposed to be rich: but the former had already lent twenty lakhs to the government and was pressing the ministers to repay the debt, while it is extremely doubtful if her brother was as rich as he was reputed to be.

On 19 June 1830, Burney called upon the Wunyis to fix a date for the payment of the balance, and suggested October 1830. The Wunyis stuck to February 1831. ‘The truth is’, says Burney, ‘the Burmese Government are always obliged to watch for the proper time for squeezing the inhabitants. The two most favourable periods are just after the paddy is sown in May or June, and just when it is fit to cut in December and January. If contributions are demanded or exactions levied at any other season, the inhabitants escape into the woods or move to other parts of the country. It is an established Burmese custom that a family is exempt from taxation during the first year of their arrival at a new place.’ Burney threatened that Rangoon would be occupied, but this produced no effect upon the ministers. From June to October 1830, only 1,500 Viss of silver was paid. Maung Za, then an Atwinwun, complained to Burney ‘of the great difficulty which had been felt in raising it (the money). Every officer of Government had been made to contribute, and he and Maung Yeet, Atwinwun, had each had to pay 1800 ticals. He said the payment of this fourth instalment pressed very hard upon all the Burmese officers here.’ Burney’s Journal contains the following record: ‘The manner in which the money is being levied from the poor inhabitants of the country furnishes a rich harvest for peculation to all the village and subordinate Burmese officers, and the sooner all the money is paid the better will it be for the people.’

In November 1830, a dispute arose as to the quality of
the silver to be paid. In the British version of the treaty, just ‘One Crore of Rupees’ is mentioned. It does not even say if it was to be the Calcutta or the Madras Mint rupee. The Calcutta rupee contained more silver than the Madras rupee. In the Burmese version of the treaty, 75,000 Viss of ‘good silver’ is mentioned. Now there were at that time thirty-six different qualities of silver current in Burma, the two main types being Yowetni and Dain. The best Dain was considered to be 10% superior to Yowetni: 100 ticals of Yowetni silver was equal to Calcutta Sicca Rs. 126/8; 100 ticals of Dain silver was equal to Rs. 139/2. So far there was a tacit understanding that 75,000 Viss of Dain silver was to be paid, and the Burmese government had been paying the indemnity in Dain. Already 68,716 Viss of Dain silver had been paid, which at the rate of Rs. 139/2 per 100 ticals amounted to Rs. 95,60,113. The Wungyis now insisted that according to the treaty the British had no right to demand Dain silver, and that Yowetni was not only good silver, but was the standard of the country. They calculated that 68,716 Viss of Dain paid by them was equivalent to 75,588 Viss of Yowetni, and maintained that they had overpaid the amount, so the British should return to them the surplus of 588 Viss. Burney stood by the British version of the treaty and pointed to the words in it, ‘One Crore of Rupees’; but the Wungyis howled him down by repeating in a chorus, ‘Yowetni is good silver.’ It appears that their stand-point was correct. The principal currency in the British camp in Burma was the Madras rupee, so that one crore of Madras rupees was what the treaty really meant as to quality.

There was much dispute between Burney and the Wungyis, and finally on 20 June 1831, the British Resident was informed in writing that the indemnity of one crore of rupees had been fully paid by Burma. When Burney protested, the ministers requested him to return Rs. 3,36,116 which they claimed they had paid in excess of the stipulated ‘One Crore’. But Burney had a trump card up his sleeve, and he used it with decisive effect. Bagyidaw and his Wungyis were very anxious to recover the Kabaw Valley from Raja Gumbheer Singh of Manipur. This they found could not be done
without the services of the British Resident. In August 1831, Burney threatened to retire from Ava unless the ministers agreed in writing to pay up the balance of the indemnity. The ministers made no reply; so on 14 August Burney with his whole party took ship and left Ava.

The Wungyis were horrified at the turn matters had taken, and feared the king’s wrath if they failed to recover Kabaw. Within two hours of Burney’s departure they sent a fast boat to overtake him. He was persuaded to return to Ava, and was back in his quarters on 16 August. The ministers agreed that the question of the quality of silver paid be referred to the Mint and Assay Master of Calcutta. The Assay Master tested both Dain and Yowetni silver in his laboratory (4 October 1831) in the presence of Burmese agents, and declared that good Dain contained 93.7% of fine silver, and good Yowetni 90%, the difference between the two being 3.7%, and not 10% as previously assumed. On this basis the government of Burma had still to pay a balance of Rs. 6,54,232-3-4 to complete the last instalment.

The Governor-General now instructed Burney to call upon the Wungyis to pay up the balance. He was asked neither to discuss nor to admit the possibility of the Mint statement being wrong, but to demand payment. Accordingly, on 26 December 1831, Burney made his demand at the Hlutdau, and threatened that if the balance was not immediately paid, his government would charge interest. One of the ministers said that they would never pay interest. ‘I replied’, says Burney, ‘that there is a way of making people hear with big guns and muskets. This observation produced an uproar among the whole body of ministers who charged me of loss of temper, and with not talking like a man of sense.’ Finally, however, the Wungyis agreed that a balance was due, and promised to pay it. On 6 January 1832, they gave Burney a written agreement attested with the Royal Seal that they would pay Rs. 6,54,232 in Dain silver by 29 October 1832. Payment, however, was not completed till February 1833. On a final calculation it was found that Burma had paid Rs. 14,094 extra. This was returned to the king’s government.

The ‘One Crore of Rupees’ was paid, Rs. 68,04,305-14-10 in
gold, and Rs. 31,95,694-1-2 in silver. The collection of these funds was indeed a heavy burden upon the people of the land, and that over a prolonged period. It produced much bitterness. In April 1831, river pirates attacked an old Armenian merchant's boat near Pagan in broad daylight. On boarding his boat the robbers cried out, 'You Kalas have forced us to pay plenty of money, we will now retake some of it.' They killed the Armenian and plundered his boat.

Chapter XLV

Martaban in Flames: 1829

When Bodawpaya conquered Arakan in 1785 Burma became an immediate neighbour of British India on the Chittagong side. Endless frontier disputes arose between the two states, particularly as to outrages committed by the subjects of one or the other in the territory opposite. The British annexation of Assam, Arakan and Tenasserim in 1826, far from putting an end to this trouble, further intensified it. The Burmese and the British were now neighbours along a greatly extended frontier, and outrages in these areas became a normal feature. The most serious crimes, however, came to be committed on the Martaban-Moulmein frontier demarcated by the River Salween.

The Burmese government at Ava did not effectively control its officers in the provinces and districts, and least of all its frontier officers. All government, except at the capital and in the main towns, was of an extremely loose nature. The Hluttadaw was not particularly interested in the suppression of frontier outrages if it did not mean more than plunder and murder. A rebellion would be a different matter. Burmese officers were not paid any salaries by their government, so that they often made gain out of thieves, robbers and other criminals. They connived at outrages, or even privately went shares with lawbreakers. Meanwhile the British were introducing organized government both in Tenasserim and in
Arakan, with a gradation of centrally controlled officers paid for their work and held responsible for the proper discharge of the duties assigned to them. These new rulers therefore felt greatly concerned over the activities of freebooters from across the frontier.

Depredations of Burmese robbers into British territory across the Salween had been occurring from the first occupation of Moulmein by the English, but not much notice was taken of them. This seems to have emboldened the robbers. Early in 1829, Sir Archibald Campbell, Commissioner of Tenasserim, retired from service, and was succeeded by A. D. Maingy. Soon after the arrival of Maingy at Moulmein, two serious cases occurred. In February 1829, a party of men from Martaban, that is the Burmese side, came in two boats and attacked the station of Natman, killing one man and severely wounding four others. A month later four Burmans of Moulmein were murdered by a party which issued out of Martaban in a boat, and which after committing the crime was seen to retire into Martaban. Maingy complained to the Governor of Rangoon, but nothing came out of it.

Orders now arrived from Calcutta that British officers should in self-defence enter Burmese territory in sufficient force to seize the culprits and punish them immediately. In April 1829, Maingy had an interview with the Governor of Rangoon and communicated to him the Governor-General’s orders. The Governor heard Maingy with attention, and said that he would punish the offenders himself, and hoped that the British Commissioner would not be hasty in the matter.

Maingy’s visit to Rangoon did not put an end to the outrages. He then wrote a strong letter to the Hlutdau to put a stop to the activities of the robbers, and threatened to enter Burmese territory with a force to punish the marauders. He received no reply from Ava. In October 1829, the Martaban freebooters crossed the river and plundered three villages on the British side. Three British subjects were killed and four severely wounded. A number of more attacks followed, but the dacoits were driven out by the Moulmein
police. At one time sixty of the robbers came very close to the Commissioner's house, but were able to accomplish nothing.

Maingy now ascertained the names of seven of the ring-leaders, and the Governor of Rangoon agreed to help in arresting them. The Governor's secretary with forty-three followers arrived in Moulmein on 4 November 1829, and accompanied by some of the British government servants the whole party crossed over to Martaban. They succeeded in arresting only one man. The chief of Martaban showed no desire to help, neither was he respectful to the Governor's secretary. The secretary felt convinced that the Martaban officer himself was implicated in the outrages, and advised Maingy to apprehend him also. Maingy now decided to punish the Martaban chief and his town, and more so, since in the meanwhile there had been another case of robbery on the river.

Two companies of British troops were ordered to enter Martaban, seize the robbers as well as the chief of the town, and bring them to Moulmein. The troops were directed not to penetrate more than three or four miles inland from the river. On 8 November, therefore, Lt.-Col. H. T. Shaw landed his troops at Martaban at 6.30 A.M. and found the stockade abandoned. His troops immediately advanced through the stockade and came to the chief's house, but found it evacuated. A little exploration revealed that all the male inhabitants of the town had fled into the woods. The troops reached Kywegyan, three miles to the north of Martaban, but failed to apprehend any person of consequence. They even went three miles beyond that village, but the search proved fruitless. At 4.30 P.M. the troops recrossed the river.

A crowd of Moulmeinites had accompanied the troops to Martaban, since they were interested in the expedition and wished to identify their tormentors on the spot. These civilians set fire to the huts and houses of Martaban. In a short time Martaban went up in flames together with the three neighbouring villages of Kywegyan, Kudien and Maphee. The Military Report says that these places 'were destroyed by fire, and thus fell a sacrifice to the just indignation of our
incensed native subjects suffering under a long series of outrages committed on them by the depredatory bands who occupied those places.'

Maingy was disappointed that the robbers had not been apprehended, but he was satisfied that their quarters were destroyed, feeling sure, as he put it, 'that in doing so there is no chance of a rupture with Ava'. Neither Ava nor Rangoon took any serious notice of these occurrences, although when they heard of the episode they disapproved of British action, stigmatizing it to be unfriendly.

The destruction of Martaban did produce a salutary effect upon the nests of robbers there, but only for a season. New huts soon reappeared, Martaban came to life again, and the old game of attacks upon the villages of Tenasserim was resumed. In 1831, Maingy sent a list of complaints against the Martaban chief to Burney, the British Resident at Ava, who placed them before the Hloutdau. The Wungyis ordered the dismissal of the Martaban chief. Right up to 1852, when the province of Pegu was annexed by the British, Moulmein continued to complain of frontier outrages on the Salween. Blundell, the Commissioner in 1840, suggested drastic measures, but Calcutta did not agree with him. He was advised to strengthen the defences of Moulmein and the neighbouring villages.

Chapter XLVI

Henry Burney in Burma: 1830-38

Henry Burney was an attractive personality. He was born in India in 1792. He joined the army and rapidly rose to high office solely on merit. During 1823-25, he was on political missions to Kedah, Prince of Wales Island, and Siam, and acquitted himself well in all these undertakings. In 1829, he crushed a dangerous rebellion which broke out in Tavoy. From 1830 to 1838 he was British Resident at the Burmese court as provided for by the Treaty of Yandabo.

Burney was a plain-spoken, honest, conscientious, open-
hearted man. He was held in high respect by the authorities in Calcutta; but it cannot be said that they liked him. The Governor-General’s appreciation of his services is reflected in these words of Lord Bentinck: ‘The acknowledgement of His Lordship and of the British Government are due to this officer for the uncommon zeal with which he has discharged the arduous and responsible duties with which he was entrusted at the sacrifice of his health and personal comforts. His Lordship is led to believe that his conciliatory manners and disposition have made a favourable impression on the court, and have removed much of the jealousy and prejudice which before existed against the presence of a British representative at the Burmese capital. In the success which has attended Major Burney’s efforts to accomplish this object His Lordship recognizes a very high degree of merit and political skill.’

Although the Burmese king and his people hated the presence of a British Resident in the country, Burney personally was popular both with Bagyidaw and his ministers. It may be safely said that Burney was one of the greatest personalities of the times in British Indian service. Both as Resident and as a man, he was able to steer his way safely through stupendous difficulties and Burmese prejudices. He expressed in his person and in his dealings firmness and tact as well as sympathy and the milk of human kindness. British, Indian, and other foreign residents in Burma held him in high regard, and he was even popular with Burmans in general. Writers of Burmese history have for long neglected this great figure who played so important a part in British relations with Burma. In spite of the meritorious services rendered by him to the state, his own government did not reward him sufficiently. He died in 1845 as a Colonel, being only 53 years of age, physically worn out through strenuous service in the enervating heat of Upper Burma. During the closing years of his service, his government rejected his advice on the policy towards Burma; but in time, Burney’s views were vindicated by history, though he himself did not live long enough to see it.

The Resident’s duties were multifarious and complex.
Burma had not paid in full the fourth instalment of the war indemnity. There were disputes over the demarcation of the Indo-Burmese frontiers in several directions. British subjects resident in Burma had to be protected. Trade with Burma was to be encouraged. Political conditions in the country had to be studied and reported to Calcutta. The king and his court had to be conciliated, so that hostilities might not break out again between the two states.

Burney’s policy was to make friends with the king, the royal family, the ministers, and the grandees. It was clear to him that if the king was won over, all the others would follow suit. He gave presents to all important individuals from the king and queen downwards. He often invited the ministers to dinner and held friendly conversations with them on public as well as private affairs. The Governor-General, however, refused to reimburse the expenses incurred by Burney for these dinners. Burney often visited the king, and in order to humour and win him over, made it a point to accept royal invitations to *pves*, fétes, boat races, and even to pagoda festivals. At these functions Burney had to put up with much inconvenience. Umbrellas were not allowed to be used, even under the blazing sun, so long as the king was within view. He had often to walk bare-footed in difficult places, in order to conform to Burmese custom. Sitting in the presence of the king was a veritable ordeal for those not used to it. One had to sit on the floor on one’s hams in such a way that the royal eyes may not be able to detect the feet. The following extracts from Burney’s *Journal* are very revealing:

‘On our entrance the king came forward and met us and pointed out to us where to take our seats.... The king twice came forward and stood close to me as if about to address me, and twice appeared to check himself. I have observed him do this once or twice before. His natural inclination is to enter in familiar intercourse and which before the war he was always doing with English merchants here, but he now seems to think that such a proceeding is derogatory to his rank and dignity.’ Burney had to do a lot of unslippering at this Kyaung function, and was ‘obliged to walk a good
deal over hard mud and broken bricks barefoot'. 'Near the king's temporary shed I was met by the Woondouk Maung Khan Ye, who attempted as usual, to play off a Burmese trick upon me. He conducted me in the first instance to the wrong door, and just as I had removed my shoes, he pretended to discover his error, and proposed to me to walk round barefoot in the presence of an immense crowd to another entrance. I stepped however, called for my shoes, and having put them on followed the Woondouk to the other door.' 'When His Majesty had finished his breakfast we were requested to approach him, in doing which we found the walk without shoes on the top of the walls of the Elephant trap very uncomfortable, and Mr. Blundell, who had not before seen the extent to which the ceremony of uncovering the feet is exacted here before the king, owned that he felt himself degraded in submitting to it in this manner. I wished, all who questioned the propriety of my endeavouring to evade this ceremony on my first arrival here, could only come and try it in their own person.'

Burney did succeed in pleasing both the king and his favourite queen. The king at times even actually conversed with him, and called him unconventionally by his name 'Bhauranee', a Burmese corruption of Burney. But this was only a personal triumph; Burney failed to win the king's friendship for the British. The sting of the defeat in the war could not be healed. The thought that the British had taken a part of his territory troubled Bagyidaw. He looked upon the presence of a British Resident at his capital as a constant reminder of his humiliation in the war. Bagyidaw could never make up his mind to accept, what he considered to be, a place of inferiority in his relations with the British; and still he was well aware of the fact that he would not be able to cope with the British in case of a renewal of hostilities.

Another principle in Burney's policy was that his own government should always show high-handedness in official dealings with Ava; but as Resident he would step in and obtain for the king petty privileges and concessions. It was thus that the Kabaw Valley was returned to Bagyidaw. But for Burney it would never have been transferred from Manipur.
to Burma. This was no petty concession, however; but the economic value of the Valley at that time was considered to be nil. The king did not permit Burney to play the rôle of a permanent intermediary. Had he done so, he would soon have become a subordinate ruler in subsidiary alliance with the Company. Once Kabaw was returned, the British Resident's presence was no longer needed. When Tharrawaddy became king, the Resident was practically hounded out of the capital. Burney then advised his government that the only way to obtain redress from the king was by war. This advice was rejected by Calcutta. For fourteen years more the Governor-General stuck to a policy of peace, but finally, in 1852, declared war and took Rangoon and the rest of Lower Burma from the king.

When Burney arrived in Ava in April 1830, Rs. 12 lakhs of the indemnity were still due from Ava. It was under pressure from him that the ministers paid down the entire sum by February 1833. It is doubtful if it would have been paid otherwise. Rangoon would have had to be occupied for the purpose.

Burney had to tackle the very difficult frontier problem. In many places neither the Burmese officers nor Ava knew the frontier. Frontier officers were not paid any salaries. They were often in league with robbers who committed depredations in British territory. At times regular battles were fought owing to family feuds of persons living on both sides of the frontier. Whenever there was trouble, Burney demanded investigation and punishment of the culprits. But the Burmese government did not really control the tribes living on the frontiers, particularly towards Assam. It was felt more and more in Ava that the British Resident was ordering about the ministers and checking up on them. The frontiers could never be kept quiet under the type of government then prevailing in Burma. The problem was only solved in 1885 when all Burma was converted into British Burma.

Burney as Resident was the protector of British subjects resident in Burma. He was authorised by his government to receive complaints from them as to injuries sustained by them from the king's subjects or from his officers, and to
make representations thereon to the Burmese Government. The presence of the British Resident proved to be a great boon to British subjects. They forwarded their complaints, and these, if found reasonable, were placed directly before the ministers. On the whole, their person, property and trade came to be better safeguarded than ever before. Attempts were made to do justice to those who suffered at the hands of robbers, pirates, and others. Burney's name became a terror to rapacious Burmese officers. At times the mere threat that the matter would be reported to Burney was enough to save a British subject. It may be noted, however, that Burmese officers received no salaries. They somehow lived on what they were expected to take from traders and others, and also what they took unauthorised.

Burney attempted to open a commercial highway between Arakan and Burma. He also supported British commercial expeditions into Upper Burma and the Shan country. The result was that the import of British manufactured goods into Burma increased, especially textiles.

The ultimate result of the diplomatic contact which Burney was seeking to establish with Burma, would have been to turn the country into a subordinate state. It was a contact between two neighbouring powers, one much stronger than the other, much more advanced than the other, much better fitted to maintain order in the country and on the frontiers than the other; and this was the power that was anxious to protect its interests in Burma. In short, one was a modern state, while the other was a declining medieval monarchy. Under the circumstances, the one power was continually the complainer and the corrector, while the other was continually feeling humbled, unable to counteract reasonably the arguments of the stronger power. Under Burney's policy, the British Resident would in time have developed into an official adviser to the Burmese Government. Burma would have thus, diplomatically and without a war, become a British protectorate. But this was not to be. Bagyidaw's successor Tharrawaddy refused to be imposed upon, as he put it, by a British Bo. Ultimately, therefore, instead of a peaceful incorporation of Burma into the British Empire,
the country was conquered and annexed by military force.

The human side in Burney shone brightest during the Ava Revolution in 1837, when Tharrawaddy rose against his brother Bagyidaw, dethroned him, and reigned in his stead. Burney risked his own life playing the part of mediator in order to save the lives of the members of the royal family and the king’s ministers. Royal massacres were looked upon as a necessary accompaniment to a change in kingship. Burney’s influence acted as a moral brake on the new king, and thus many were saved from certain death.

Chapter XLVII

Why Tharrawaddy Rebell'd: 1837

Prince Tharrawaddy was Bagyidaw’s full brother. It is very doubtful that the rebellion had been planned by Tharrawaddy: most probably not. That it was planned was mere hearsay. In 1831, Bagyidaw, on account of ill-health, ceased to take part in the affairs of government. Administration passed into the hands of his brother-in-law Maung O and the chief queen Mae Nu, Maung O’s sister. These two were of humble origin, being originally fisherfolk. The brother, because of the queen’s influence, rose to the highest position in the realm. He was created Minthagyi. He presided over the Hlutdau, thus controlling the Wungyis. He was also appointed president of the Council of Regency created to act for the king during his illness. In effect he became the factotum of the empire, and ruled in the name of the king, his sister being associated with him. Maung O was not devoid of ability, but he lacked imagination. He and his sister very unwisely, and it must be said meanly too, neglected not only the king’s eldest son the Sakyamin, but also the monarch’s brothers and sisters. They also successfully prevented the king’s son from being declared publicly as the Einshèmin. They acted in a high-handed manner, and proceeded to fill all offices of state, at the capital and in the provinces, with their own favourites. This attitude of the Minthagyi was the true cause of Tharrawaddy’s rebellion.
All the princes were highly dissatisfied with the situation; but none dared say anything against the queen and her brother. Tharrawaddy also controlled his feelings, and for fear of losing his life tried not to come in the Minthagyí's way. He and the other princes, however, feared that the Minthagyí would set aside both the king and his son and usurp the throne. There is no direct evidence to show that the Minthagyí had any such ambition. Under the instinct of self-protection, Tharrawaddy began to collect arms and increase the number of his followers. Burney, the British Resident, who was an eye-witness to the rebellion, is definite that the prince at this time had no hostile intentions towards the king. He simply wanted to protect himself and the other princes, and, if possible, prevent the upstart Maung O from usurping the throne.

It soon came to the ears of the Minthagyí that Tharrawaddy was collecting arms and increasing the number of his retainers. He naturally suspected that the prince's intention was rebellion with a view to capturing the throne. If Maung O made himself king, it was feared the lives of the royal princes would be forfeit; on the other hand, if the prince rebelled and usurped the throne, then it was clear that the queen, her brother and their supporters would be cut off. Mutual fear, jealousy and suspicion soon provided a spark for the explosion.

On the night of 21 February 1837, royal troops suddenly surrounded the house of the princess of Pagan who was Tharrawaddy's own sister. The charge against her was that she and her Wun, Maung Ye, were secretly collecting arms. Fire-arms were found in her house; but the Wun escaped, while the princess fled to the house of her brother. Tharrawaddy, not wishing to add fuel to the fire, advised her to return to her house, which she did.

The Wun could not be found, and the Minthagyí suspected Tharrawaddy of harbouring him. Troops appeared at the prince's house and requested him to surrender Maung Ye. Tharrawaddy denied all knowledge of the fugitive's whereabouts. The Minthagyí now placed some of Tharrawaddy's principal followers in irons, and not satisfied with this, had
some of the princes and princesses arrested, including the princess of Pagan, and placed them in confinement. Tharrawaddy felt convinced that the Minthagyi was plotting to usurp the throne, and that the king knew nothing of these developments. He, therefore, gathered his followers and prepared to resist.

Burney also at first thought that the prince was sheltering Maung Ye, and advised him to surrender the Wun. Tharrawaddy turned to a pagoda 'and made an oath that he did not know where Nga Ye was, and observed that he believed the apprehending of that man was a mere pretext, and that the Minthagyi and his party would not be satisfied even if he, the prince, would seize and surrender the man'. (Burney). Tharrawaddy also assured Burney that he himself had no selfish object in view, but that he wished to prevent the sick king from injury, and the throne, which rightly belonged to the king's son, from usurpation.

On 24 February, government troops appeared before Tharrawaddy's house with a view to searching the place for Maung Ye and for fire-arms. The prince declared this to be a shameful insult and resisted. His men fired from within and killed a royal soldier. The captain and his men immediately retired and reported the matter to the Minthagyi and the Hlutdau.

A curious situation was now created. The Minthagyi and the ministers were filled with fear. They thought that the prince was fully prepared for a major operation, and would immediately launch an attack upon the palace with a view to usurping the throne. The whole court was thrown into the greatest consternation, dismay and confusion. Orders were issued for the defence of the palace. On the other hand, Tharrawaddy, fearing that government troops in large numbers would now fall upon him, immediately fled with his armed men numbering not more than five-hundred, and crossed over the Irrawaddy to Sagaing. The Minthagyi had 4,000 troops on the spot, but no attempt was made to intercept Tharrawaddy.

From Sagaing the prince proceeded towards Shwebo 'seizing the muskets of some soldiers whom he met with on
the road, but giving them a regular receipt for the arms and keeping his men in excellent order'. (Burney). He fixed placards in the villages he passed through 'stating that he had no design against the king or the king's son, but that the injustice and oppression of others had forced him to retire from Ava'. (Burney).

In Shwebo, however, Tharrawaddy's ambition was soon fired. He remembered how Alaungpaya, his great ancestor, had won the throne of Burma in that very city. Why should not he follow in his footsteps? Within a month of his arrival there, what had seemed to be a mere fight for self-preservation, developed into a regular rebellion for the possession of the throne. Several factors played their part in bringing about this transformation. The Minthagyi's troops, 10,000 in number, who pursued him right up to the walls of Shwebo, showed no stomach for a fight. A number of robber-chiefs met the prince at Shwebo and offered him help to win the crown. A good many souls who were dissatisfied with the Minthagyi's government, and such other adventurers also joined him at Shwebo. Even palace personalities and government officers secretly corresponded with Tharrawaddy, and encouraged him to advance and take the capital. It appears, that they were not unfaithful to the king, but merely wanted to remove the Minthagyi. Finally, the Minthagyi and the Wungyis failed to rise to the situation. Tharrawaddy discovered that they could be forced into an ignominious surrender without much difficulty. The prince met with phenomenal success and usurped the throne. All the members of Bagyidaw's government surrendered to him. The king, the queen, the Minthagyi, and all those in opposition to him became the usurper's prisoners.
CHAPTER XLVIII

BAGYIDAW IN CAPTIVITY: 1837-46

From 1831 onwards Bagyidaw suffered from recurring fits of melancholia. Later his condition became so serious that he was unable to attend to the affairs of state, and power fell into the hands of his brother-in-law, the Minthagy. Prince Tharrawaddy rebelled in 1837 and tried to seize the throne. The shock brought Bagyidaw complete recovery from his malady; but his government was unable to crush the rebellion. He enquired of Burney, the British Resident, if the English would be willing to assist him against his rebel brother. Burney offered him asylum in British territory, but said 'that the question as to interfering in his dispute with his brother and affording him military aid to recover his capital was one which the Governor-General of India alone was competent to answer.' The king and his queen were desirous of escaping to Rangoon, but the principal ministers did not approve of the plan, and it was abandoned. In Burney's opinion, the king could easily have got away to Rangoon and thence to Moulmein.

Bagyidaw finally surrendered to his brother who deposed him. Tharrawaddy proclaimed himself king, and declared that his brother, owing to ill-health, had voluntarily surrendered the crown to him. At first Bagyidaw was kept as a state prisoner in the palace itself, but his queen and their daughter were separated from him and lodged in a remote and humble building. Burney had several interviews with Bagyidaw and found him in perfectly good health. His great concern was for the safety of his wife. The separation caused him so much distress that finally on 16 April 1837, Tharrawaddy allowed her to rejoin her husband.

On 30 April 1837, Bagyidaw was removed from the palace to a mat house in the southern quarter of the city. Crowds gathered to see him, and openly expressed their sympathy and pity. Public opinion at the capital was most certainly in favour of the deposed monarch. Even government officers
who had supported Tharrawaddy said that they had had no idea of renouncing their oath of allegiance to the king, but that they had joined Tharrawaddy because they wanted to remove the Minthagy$i$ from power. There was no resolute character, however, bold enough to strike back in favour of the deposed monarch.

Towards the end of the month of May, Bagyidaw sent a messenger, Maung Shwe Dwot, to Burney requesting for British help, so that he may be restored to the throne. Burney refused to move in the matter. Maung Shwe Dwot was a Burmese Muslim. At one time he had been the Shahbunder of Arakan, and in 1813 Bodawpaya had sent him on a secret mission to Delhi. After the war with the British, he was appointed Collector of Customs, but fell into disfavour and was dismissed. He was a friend of the Minthagy$i$ and had helped him in his commercial speculations.

Tharrawaddy decided to shift his capital to Kyauk-Myaung, while Burney withdrew and embarked for Calcutta. On 9 June, Bagyidaw was taken in a common boat to Sagaing. When he embarked, some of the officers fastened a white umbrella to it, in spite of Bagyidaw’s objections. He was in full control of all his faculties and had fully recovered from his old malady. On arriving at Sagaing he was told that he would have to proceed to Kyauk-Myaung with the king. Bagyidaw observed: ‘My brother thinks me mad, but he is showing that he is more mad than I by removing the capital in the manner he is doing, and annoying and distressing the poor inhabitants of the country more than ever I did.’

While in Kyauk-Myaung, Bagyidaw again sent a message through Shwe Dwot to Burney in Calcutta, soliciting British help. ‘If the British Government will attack him’, wrote Shwe Dwot ‘and reinstate His late Majesty on the throne, His Majesty assures you that he will attend to whatever the British Government may dictate. If this be delayed, His Majesty fears poison will be administered to him to cause his death. . . . I have correctly stated in this letter whatever His late Majesty desired me to communicate to you.’ Thus it appears that Bagyidaw was willing to accept the position of a subordinate ruler in the wake of so many Indian princes
who had become feudatories of the English Company. Burney forwarded the appeal to the Governor-General, who, however, refused to interfere in Burmese politics.

On 12 December 1837, Tharrawaddy again shifted his capital and established himself at Amarapura. Bagyidaw as a state prisoner was also brought to Amarapura. He was lodged in a corner of the palace belonging to the prince of Prome. Visitors were allowed to see him, but their names were noted down, so that out of fear hardly anyone called on him. To protect himself from foul play, Tharrawaddy made it a practice to furnish Bagyidaw with food from his own table before partaking of it himself. In Amarapura Bagyidaw's health further improved, physically as well as mentally.

When the new British Resident, Col. Benson, arrived at Moulmein (7 July 1838), while on his way to Amarapura, Shwe Dwot immediately called on him as an emissary of Bagyidaw, and enquired if there was any possibility of the British restoring the old king to his throne. Benson conversed with him in Hindustani and gave him clearly to understand that his government would in no way interfere. Tharrawaddy himself was apprehensive of British intervention, especially since he had declined to have diplomatic relations with the Company. Some time in April 1838, he had Bagyidaw's son executed on a trumped-up charge. Throughout 1839 there were rumours, particularly in Rangoon, that the British would come to the aid of Bagyidaw. Tharrawaddy was even advised by some of his supporters to destroy the ex-king and all his family. The king grew greatly alarmed and consulted with his sons, but finally decided not to hurt his brother.

In April 1840, one Shwe Tha rebelled, supported by some Shan tribes; but he was defeated and captured. Tharrawaddy now took the opportunity of doing away with Bagyidaw's wife, Mae Nu, whom he hated. She was accused of being implicated in the rebellion with the object of restoring her husband to the throne. She was made to 'confess' her treason under the lash, and she as well as her brother, the ex-Minthagyi, and his daughter were executed on 2 May 1840. Wilson says that Mae Nu was trampled to death by an elephant. This certainly must have caused much grief to Bagyidaw. Yule
says that the ex-king was spared perhaps ‘through superstitious fears instilled into Tharrawaddy’s mind by his eldest daughter, an adept in astrology’. Yule also reports that after this Tharrawaddy treated his brother with kindness and consideration, and that it was even reported at one time that he invited Bagyidaw to resume the crown.

In 1846 Tharrawaddy was dethroned, and his son Pagan became king. There is no definite information available on Bagyidaw during the last six years of his life. According to Yule, he died some time in the middle of 1845. Wilson says that he died early in the year 1847, and that he outlived Tharrawaddy by a few months. The Konebaungset Mahayazawin, however, differs from both these reports. It does not furnish details of Bagyidaw’s last illness or the cause of his death; but it most definitely states that he died at the end of October 1846: ‘On the 10th waning of Thadingyut of the year 1208 B.E., His Majesty the Elder Brother, the fourth builder of Ratnapura (Ava), died. He was cremated with great ceremony within the compound of his own residence after the manner of the kings of old, and the bones being collected by his own servant Maha-min-hla-kyaw, an officer in the Elephant Corps, were put in a gold betel box, carried on a golden boat, and thrown into the river.’

Thus passed Bagyidaw from the scene. He had inherited the large empire of his grandfather Bodawpaya. He had begun his reign in great splendour; but he was unable to arrest the decline which had already set in. The defeat in the war with the British gave him a rude awakening. He, however, failed to maintain himself over his shrunken empire, tamely submitted to his rebellious brother, and died in captivity, being 64 years of age. With all his faults, Bagyidaw was a kindly monarch, and was perhaps the best loved of all the kings of the Konebaung Dynasty.
Chapter XLIX

Glimpses of Rangoon: 1814-1852

Early in the 18th century the city boasted a splendid harbour. There was much overseas trade, but it was largely in the hands of foreign merchants. Dr. Adoniram Judson and his wife Anne, the Christian missionaries, resided in Rangoon from 1813 to about 1823. According to their report the city itself was 'one of the meanest and most uninteresting that one could think of'. It was situated on a flat marshy plain, and no attempt was made to purge it of this unhealthy association. Houses, with few exceptions, consisted of a collection of bamboo huts with thatched roofs. The streets were narrow. There were a few buildings of timber and brick, but almost all these were ugly.

When the British army occupied Rangoon in 1824, the city presented a desolate and miserable picture. It was a vast assemblage of huts surrounded by a wooden stockade 16 to 18 feet high. This stockade ran along the river bank, too, thus shutting off the only bright spot, namely the River View. There were a few brick houses within the stockade, but these belonged to foreigners. Pucca houses had to pay a heavy tax to the government. The king discouraged the building of brick houses for fear they might be converted into castles by rebels. No pucca house could be constructed without obtaining special permission. The scavenging department was run free of cost, being in charge of a large number of pigs. Packs of hungry dogs roamed the streets, offering free entertainment to citizens with their incessant howling and fights. Their descendants of the 20th century, particularly after the Japanese surrender, are faithfully maintaining the tradition of their forebears! Gouger says that in 1824 Rangoon was a miserable dirty town with a population of anything between 8,000 and 10,000 inhabitants. This undoubtedly is an under-estimation. There was scarcely any drainage.

When in May 1824, Sir Archibald Campbell approached
Rangoon with his army of 11,000 on board ships, escorted by warships, the Governor of the town had only 1,000 ill-disciplined troops to defend the town. Within half an hour the invaders landed, but found the town deserted. On 12 May the troops plundered the town, but were disappointed at the absence of valuables for which they had had high hopes. They found instead plenty of tobacco. At nightfall the British soldiers discovered a store of brandy in a merchant’s house, and made the fullest use of it. Intoxicated they went about the town with lighted torches, as a result of which fires broke out, and nearly half the town was destroyed in spite of efforts made to check the conflagration. If the Burmese had attacked that night, few of the invading troops would have been in a condition to offer any resistance. But there was no Burmese leadership at hand, the Governor had fled, and Bandula was still far away in Arakan.

Reports reveal that in 1836 the population of Rangoon was nearly 50,000. About a dozen foreigners had brick houses, otherwise the people still lived in huts. At this time Moulmein had better houses. Rangoon streets were narrow, and were paved with half-burnt bricks. Wheeled carriages were not allowed within the city, so the roads were not in a bad state. Rangoon possessed neither a wharf nor a quay. At a few places on the river there were wooden stairs where boats landed passengers; but even these stairs did not extend to within twenty feet of low water mark. Vessels had to remain in stream and they discharged their cargo into small boats from which the packages slung to a bamboo were lugged on to the shoulders of labourers bound for the custom-house.

In spite of these disadvantages, the commerce of Rangoon at this time was considerable. Port charges were very high. Rice and precious metals were not allowed to be exported. However, specie was cleverly smuggled out of the country. The price of paddy in Rangoon was Rs. 5 for 100 baskets; the best cleaned rice, 4 annas a basket; the best wheat Rs. 40 for 100 bushels; fowls Rs. 2 a dozen; Chinese Black Tea 4 annas a lb; coffee 2 annas a lb; sugar 2 annas a lb; eggs 100 for a rupee; milk 13 annas for a gallon; servant’s wages
Rs. 12 per month without food or quarters; dhobie charges Rs. 8 for 100 pieces; fuel Rs. 1/8 per month.

Almost all kinds of British-made goods were sold in the Rangoon bazaar; but medicines were scarce and their price very high. Rangoon had ceased to be the ship-building centre that she once was. During the Napoleonic wars, from 1790 to 1802 alone, many ships were built in Rangoon of Burmese teak, 3,000 to 4,000 tons every year, each ship being anything between 600 to 1,000 tons. After 1805 this business practically died out.

Missionary reports show that in 1847-48 the cost of living in Rangoon went up. Milk was sold 2 to 3 bottles for a rupee; loaves 8 for a rupee; fowls Rs. 72 for 100. Bread was of a very inferior quality. According to Adoniram Judson, the police system at this time was well administered, and the citizens of Rangoon were almost as safe from thieves and dacoits as those of Moulmein under the British government. The third Mrs. Judson, however, gives a very different picture: 'the police regulations of the city were in the worst condition possible, indeed quite nugatory, and nightly robberies were taking place all over the city....We learned afterwards that the captains of the bands were the Raywoon and a nephew of the Governor, and that the old Governor himself winked at the wickedness.' There is no real discrepancy between the two accounts. Judson had lived in the country for many years, and was drawing conclusions on lines of relativity. On the other hand, his wife was a new-comer and so found conditions shocking.

Tharrawaddy had in about 1840 shifted the Burmese population from the river-side towards the interior in the neighbourhood of the Shwedagon pagoda. Foreigners were not allowed to reside in this area surrounding the pagoda; they lived in the old town by the river-side. Judson reports (1848) that the old town 'looks much better than I expected, though very much inferior to Moulmein. No dust in the streets which are paved most unevenly with brick, so that it is very difficult walking or riding...filth and wretchedness all around us...crowded population'. His wife Emily says, 'Here, under this barbarous government, we have not yet
been at all molested. Not a pin has been taken from us, except a few things begged and pulled away, in passing through the custom-house—the most vexatious perhaps in the whole world. The Vice-Governor of the place, who is indeed the acting Governor, is the most ferocious, blood-thirsty monster I have ever known in Burma. It is said that his house and court-yard resound, day and night, with the screams of people under torture.

In 1852, just before the Second Burmese War broke out, Rangoon is reported to have been a flourishing town of about 50,000 inhabitants. People of every creed and of every Asian nation, together with a good many Europeans, were to be found there. The bazaars were well stocked with food-stuffs. After the annexation of the province of Pegu by the British, an entirely new chapter began in the history of Rangoon.

Chapter L

What led to the Second Anglo-Burmese War: 1852

After the withdrawal of the British Residency from Burma in 1840, diplomatic relations between Calcutta and Amarapura ceased. The situation thus created was that disputes could readily bring about war if one side did not care to avoid it; and certainly there was a desire for war on the part of the British trading community in Burma. The war would without doubt end in a British victory, and the traders concerned would be saved from the many vexations that were their lot on account of the inefficiency of a decaying administration. Besides, the English conquest of all-Burma would permanently safeguard British commercial interests in the country. There is no doubt that these merchants laboured under legitimate complaints, and they constantly carried their tales of woe to the Governor-General.

The first war was indeed a great eye-opener to many Burmans. Those who had experienced the reality of the defeat well understood the futility of taking the field again.
Still, a new generation of Burmans was springing up which had not seen war, and believed that in the next venture the tables would be turned. In spite of defeat and utter military weakness, the upstanding Burmese characteristic, to maintain one’s self-respect, was still present in a large degree. A clash with the British even over small matters was a possibility.

The outbreak of the war had much to do with the expanding imperialistic policy of Dalhousie. His ambition was to create a large and integrated Indian Empire for his nation. The possession of Lower Burma would link the whole British coast-line up to Singapore. This would be a great asset to a naval power with far-flung possessions overseas. The British would also thus control the mouth of the great Irrawaddy river. The expansion of the Indian Empire into Burma would not only protect the eastern frontier of that country, but would also provide a free market for a rapidly developing industrial England.

Finally, there was complete confidence on the side of the Governor-General to bring the war speedily to a victorious conclusion. The first war and the diplomatic and other relations with Burma which followed in its wake had given Calcutta a thorough grasp of the situation. There was no danger of repeating the old mistakes or of expending a large sum of money as in the first war. It would not be in keeping with facts to say that Burma was the aggressor. Burma was unable to prevent a war because the government of King Pagan (1846-53) had lost all sense of administrative responsibility. It was, of course, equally unqualified to handle adequately foreign affairs. Officers of the government at Rangoon were placed in a most unenviable situation. Were they to submit to the British demands, they would be risking their own lives; and if they resisted those demands, matters would take a serious turn. The result was that the responsible Burmese officer stationed at Rangoon drifted into war with the British for no real fault of his own.

About the middle of 1851, two British merchant-ship commanders, Shepherd and Lewis, came into conflict with the Governor of Rangoon. A charge was brought against Shepherd that he had thrown a pilot into the Rangoon river,
thus causing his death. He was fined and one of his crew was tortured. The charge against Lewis was that he had killed one of his crew, and he too was tried and fined. Both these men, on their arrival in Calcutta, complained to the Governor-General of ill-treatment.

In the past, the Indian Government had taken the view that British subjects who traded in Burma did so at their own risk. But Dalhousie was now the Governor-General, and his attitude was different. He decided to entertain the complaints. An enquiry was held, and it was agreed that the Burmese Government be called upon to pay the two commanders Rs 9,200 as damages.

Dalhousie sent Commodore Lambert of Her Majesty’s Navy with three warships to demand reparation. The Commodore also carried with him two letters from the Governor-General: one for the Rangoon Governor, and if this proved to be ineffective, the second letter, which was for the King, was to be forwarded to the capital. Lambert anchored in the Rangoon river on 25 November 1851, and was joined by the Company’s warship Proserpine. On 27 November, British subjects residing in Rangoon, as well as other foreign merchants of the town, presented an address to the Commodore containing a list of very serious charges of cruelty practised upon them by the Governor of Rangoon. Lambert, therefore, came to the conclusion that the demand for Rs 9,200 was inadequate, and wrote to Calcutta for instructions. The same day he sent three British officers who had an interview with the Governor, Maung Ok, all the aggrieved merchants being also present. The Governor denied the charges, but was conciliatory in his attitude. His officers, however, showed a truculent spirit. Some of them, it appears, were not averse to hostilities. They counted on the presence of European adventurers and British deserters in the Burmese army. These foreigners had manufactured a large number of guns, and had also imparted a measure of discipline to Burmese troops. Young Burmese officers were quite boastful of victory in case of a clash.

Lambert now forwarded the Governor-General’s letter to the King. The Commodore and his party wanted the Governor
speedily to accept all the demands, pay the compensation fixed, and agree to treat British subjects honourably. The Governor, on the other hand, though conciliatory, began to take certain safety measures. He collected his troops and armed one of the royal ships. The European residents of Rangoon in alarm also began to devise means for their own safety. They set up a signal post over the house of Birrell, a British merchant, so as to communicate with the Commodore. The Governor ordered Birrell to remove the signal post, as a result of which some clashes took place between the merchants and the Governor’s men.

On 1 January 1852, the King’s answer arrived which was very pacific. He appointed a new Governor in the person of Maung Hmon, who assumed charge on 4 January. The very next day he cordially received Edwards, the Commodore’s interpreter, and said that he would settle all matters. On 6 January, Lambert sent four British officers with a letter to the Governor, asking for a settlement of the dispute and the re-establishment of the Residency. Edwards went ahead, and informed the Governor that a deputation of British officers was on its way. The Governor pointed out that since the Commodore himself had not condescended to come to him, but had sent his assistants, it would lower his awza (dignity) if he received them. He also said that he preferred discussing matters with Edwards rather than with the officers. In the meantime the officers arrived at the gate on horseback. They were requested to dismount before entering the Governor’s compound, but they took this to be an insult and rode in. This made the Governor take courage. He showed no inclination to see them. After waiting a little while, the officers returned to Lambert who forthwith proclaimed a blockade of the Rangoon, Bassein, and Salween rivers. He ordered all British subjects in Rangoon to embark. He also captured the King’s ship which the Governor had armed.

On 7 January the Governor asked for the restoration of the King’s ship, but Lambert refused to comply. On the other hand he called upon the Governor to come on board and apologize for the insult done to British officers. This of course the Myowun refused to do. He now erected stockades on the
banks of the river and warned Lambert not to pass them, or he would be fired upon. The Commodore defied the Governor and passed the stockades with his squadron on 10 January. Burmese shore batteries opened fire, but it was of no avail. Lambert opened up with his broadsides, silenced the batteries, and destroyed the stockades. He also destroyed Burmese warboats and spiked and sank their guns. All the Burmese soldiers, about 3,000 in number, fled from their fortifications.

War seemed to be inevitable. But the Governor-General had not sanctioned any acts of hostility so far. On the other hand, his instructions to Lambert were that all hostile acts were to be avoided. The Burmese Governor desired peace. In spite of the bombardment he sent a conciliatory message; but Lambert was too hot-tempered to treat with him in a statesmanlike manner. Above all, he was too much under the influence of the European merchants of Rangoon to agree to an amicable settlement. On 12 January an American informed Lambert that the Governor would concede to all his demands provided the King’s ship was returned. The Commodore said that it was too late now, and that matters had taken a serious turn. The Burmese had plundered the houses of foreign merchants and burnt some of them. The same day with one warship Lambert sailed for Calcutta to obtain definite instructions from his Government.

On arrival at Calcutta, Lambert failed to contact Dalhousie who was absent in Simla; so on 26 January he returned to the Rangoon river and waited for despatches. The blockade of the mouths of the three rivers was an easy matter. Burma possessed no navy. Meanwhile, the Burmese Governor complained to the Commissioner of Tenasserim against Lambert.

On 1 February, despatches arrived from Calcutta; together with a letter to the Burmese Governor calling upon him to pay compensation to Shepherd and Lewis, receive a British Resident, and make a written apology. The very next day the Governor sent a deputation to Lambert with two letters, one for the Commodore, and the other addressed to the Governor-General. In the letter to Lambert he protested against British warships coming so close to the stockades
without permission, and also against the capture of the King’s ship. To the Governor-General he complained that Lambert’s doings were not in keeping with custom, but contrary to friendship, and that disputes could be settled only on the arrival of the Resident. As to the demand of an apology, Governor Hmon definitely refused to comply, and said that British officers had also committed faults.

It was open now to the British either to send a Resident to discuss the disputes in question, or to go ahead and demand compliance to their requirements. British merchants as well as the naval and military officers disapproved of the first alternative, since it necessarily meant delay. The blockade was maintained, and there was an occasional exchange of gun-fire. On 4 February, Lambert landed a party and destroyed the Negrais stockade. The Governor of Bassein, on hearing of this, warned Lambert that he had in his possession all the weapons needed to destroy British warships, and advised him to depart from the Bassein river.

On 10 February, a letter arrived from the King’s government, that the Governor of Rangoon would make the required apology, and that compensation would be paid to the two British commanders. Lambert now decided to wait for further instructions from Calcutta as to how to receive this gesture from the Burmese side. The reply arrived on 18 February. Dalhousie claimed an indemnity of 10 lakhs of rupees for expenses incurred, besides compliance with the earlier demands. This was really an ultimatum which was to expire on 31 March. The Governor wrote to the capital, the ultimatum expired, no reply was received, and war broke out. It is possible Pagan’s government would have agreed even to the new demand; but the time fixed by the ultimatum was not enough for a return message to come from Amarapura.

On 23 January 1852, Dalhousie, in a letter to Sir George Couper, wrote that Lambert had made reprisals in disobedience to his orders; but that he would accept the situation created and go forward. Here are his own words: ‘Our treaty has been violated, our subjects plundered, our traders imprisoned, threatened, beaten, and when redress was sought then came insult, and not insult only, but refusal of all redress. The
simple question is, whether, before all Asia, England will submit to Ava, desert its subjects, and be driven out of the Irrawaddy.' It is clear also from the following words of Dalhousie that he regarded the war to be inevitable: 'There is no doubt Lambert was the immediate cause of the war by seizing the King's ship, in direct disobedience of his orders from me. I accepted the responsibility of his act, but disapproved and censured it. . . . But while I say this, I do not at all mean that but for his act the war would not have been. On the contrary, I believe everything would have been just as it has been. . . . If I had the gift of prophecy, I would not have employed Lambert to negotiate.'

Cobden very severely criticized Dalhousie's policy towards Burma. In a booklet issued by him on the subject, he said that a civilian familiar with Burmese customs should have been sent to negotiate with Burma, not Lambert. Cobden also criticized Dalhousie's action in raising the demand for compensation from nine thousand odd rupees to ten lakhs, and ultimately, after the war was won, requiring the cession of the province of Pegu. Indeed Cobden questioned the wisdom of British conquests in Indo-China on moral, racial, and financial grounds.

Harvey sums up his views on the outbreak of the war with these words: 'At Rangoon the governor would arrest an English ship captain on a charge of murder, telling him privately there was nothing in it but there would be unless he paid up; and ships would not get their men back from the shore. The Viceroy insisted that this state of affairs must cease, but the court would not listen; they believed that the English had been exhausted by the struggle with Mahabandula, and though the Viceroy might protest, he could do nothing more. In 1824, the Viceroy had been driven to fight in self-defence; then he was still winning his empire and did not want trouble in Burma. Now he had won it and was willing to win more. Yet the court persisted in provoking him; his envoys were treated like dirt and shot at.' Harvey is right in saying that the Burmese government was incompetent and that many of the actions of Burmese officers were provocative; but his view that Burma provoked the war and also plunged
into it with a sense of British weakness, is not in keeping with
documentary evidence. It may be said that the Governor-
General was not 'Viceroy' in 1852. He became Viceroy in
1877.

CHAPTER LI

MINDON THE RULER: 1852-1878

Mindow reigned as well as ruled. In personal appearance
and deportment he was every inch a king. European Chris-
tian missionaries who came in close touch with him describe
his personality in the following words: tall, stout, pleasant,
shrewd; hair thin and tied in the usual Burmese knot; large
head, high at the crown, being a mark of self-esteem; eyes
closely set, indicating power of penetration; neck thick,
suggesting vitality and physical power; face close-shaven,
with the exception of a thin streak of black moustache; dress
simple, consisting of a white engyie and a silk putsho. Mindon's
voice was soft and low, and he spoke deliberately and thought-
fully. He was frank, and his conversation, manners, and
demeanour were marked by the buoyancy of a free spirit.

Mindow's literary attainments were of no mean order. He
was a Pali scholar, had studied the Mahayazawin, possessed
a good memory, and was interested in philosophical dis-
cussions. His moral standards were high. He hated blood-
shed, and had a strong sense of public duty. His justice and
magnanimity were universally recognized. Mindon had one
advantage over his predecessors: he knew more of the world
than they did.

Spears, an unofficial agent of the British government
resident at the Burmese capital, says in his report that Mindon's
government 'is very strong, and there is not the least danger
of it being overturned by any revolution'. In 1854, some
followers of the heir-apparent, the Einshemin, Mindon's
brother, conspired to kill a Myowun, who had tried to play
the part of peace-maker in a quarrel over the matter of
elephant trapping. The Myowun, however, just managed to
escape. When the King heard of the occurrence, he had four of his brother’s followers executed. Twelve other accomplices were also sentenced to death, but they were pardoned after being brought to the place of execution. The Crown Prince felt very cut up, and some feared he would break out in open rebellion; but nothing of the kind happened, and the Einshemin took the punishment as a dutiful subject and loving brother should.

Thomas Spears further says, ‘The country up here is very quiet; you hardly ever hear of a robbery.’ The King offered a pardon to all robbers who gave themselves up. A number of them accepted the offer, and on surrendering themselves, their names were recorded, and they were dismissed with small presents. They were, however, sternly warned, that if they took to robbery again, they would not be spared.

The lot of the villagers greatly improved under Mindon. Taxes were reduced. Spears says, ‘all get enough to eat, and we hear of few robberies’; and this in spite of the King’s monopoly of many articles of everyday use. Farmers were so well off that they were able to reserve a considerable part of their produce. The rains failed in 1854, but there was no fear of famine in the kingdom because of the reserves. Spears again: ‘The people formerly were so much pressed to pay taxes and other exactions, that they had generally to sell their paddy as it became ripe, and so had nothing to fall back upon; the case now is altered very much for the better.’ Mindon also made large advances to cultivators to encourage cotton production.

Both Mindon and his brother the Einshemin were deeply interested in the welfare of the cultivators. Since the fertile districts of Lower Burma had been lost to the British, the far-sighted monarch wished to make Upper Burma self-sufficient in food. Old lakes and tanks were repaired, and vigorous attempts were made to increase the food supply. It must be confessed, however, that self-sufficiency in rice was not attained. This article of food had to be imported from British Burma to make up for the deficiency.

In spite of swift and drastic punishment meted out to confirmed criminals, Mindon’s rule was marked by justice.
Twice a month the King made the round of the stockade outside his palace to hear petitions from persons who felt that they had not received justice at the hands of the Hlutdau or at any other court. Every time he thus came out, according to Spears, about a dozen petitions were presented to him. The following case is on record: An old woman petitioned the King in respect of the murder of her son. The murderer was arrested and confined; but the Hlutdau put the old woman off whenever she claimed justice. This dragged on for three months. Mindon enquired and found the complaint to be true. He ordered the members of the Hlutdau to pay the aggrieved woman 450 ticals in all, being the price of blood, inclusive of a fine for their carelessness. The heir-apparent, being the President of the Hlutdau, had to pay the largest amount, 150 ticals. The share of each of the Wungyis was 50 ticals, and of the Wundauks 25 ticals. The murderer, having nothing to pay, was branded on the forehead and handed over to a pagoda there to serve as a slave for the rest of his life.

Minden was interested in developing his country on modern lines in certain directions. He invited European mechanics and engineers to settle in Mandalay and granted them very attractive terms. He connected Burma telegraphically with India and with Europe in 1869. One of his Atwinwuns spoke of the telegraph as 'a science of elements which may be compared to thunder and lightning for rapidity and brilliancy, and such as his royal ancestors in successive generations had never attempted'.

Minden reduced the number of Myosas. He also abolished many grants of revenue to favourites and officials of Pagan, his predecessor. Mindon established a public treasury. He struck coins and issued them as currency: coins of copper, lead, pewter, silver, and gold. He introduced the payment of fixed salaries to his ministers, other officers, and favourites. Unfortunately this good reform failed to reach an acceptable standard of efficiency and salaries fell into arrears.

Minden wished to improve the revenue system. Actually, there had been till then no real system. The farmer could never tell what he would have to pay. Mindon introduced
the Thathameda, which amounted to about Rs. 100 on a group of ten houses. But each house did not pay the same amount: the rich paid more, the poor less. This tax was retained by the British in Upper Burma, while a capitation tax was introduced in Lower Burma. The two taxes came to be bitterly hated in the 20th century. Actually, however, there was nothing wrong with them. There is no reason why those who pay no income-tax should not pay a small direct tax for the support of the government. Men pay for tobacco, pictures, drinks, pwees, racing, sports, etc.

Mndon was well served by his ministers and officers. He had the knack of choosing the best men available: very different indeed from his father Tharrawaddy and his brother Pagan. The Kyouk Maw Wunyi became under Mindon the Magwe Wunyi. He was a man much respected both by the King as well as by the princes. He was the senior Wunyi, and acted practically as the Foreign Minister to the Burmese Government. He was in charge of the correspondence with the British. He fully supported his King in the policy of friendliness towards the British power. The other three Wunyis were the Myadaung Wunyi, the Minlaung Wunyi, and the Pagan Wunyi. The Myadaung Wunyi was also called the Pabewun, since at one time he was the Master of the Ordnance (Head Smith) to the Government.

Although Mindon enjoyed numerous monopolies, he acknowledged the importance of encouraging industries. A good number of factories were established, dockyards were constructed, ships built, fire-arms manufactured, coal and iron mines worked, and petroleum produced.

 CHAPTER LII

 MINDON'S SENSE OF HONOUR

In 1852, Pagan fought the Second Anglo-Burmese War, which was an easy victory for the British. The important towns of Rangoon, Bassein, Pegu and Prome speedily fell
into their hands. Neither Dalhousie, the Governor-General, nor public opinion in England was in favour of prolonging the war. But Pagan’s government refused to negotiate. Dalhousie, therefore, planned to advance on the Burmese capital and dictate a treaty there. Meanwhile Pagan was dethroned, and Mindon became king. Because of this change Dalhousie ordered a cease-fire, and on 20 December 1852, he issued a proclamation annexing the province of Pegu. The boundary was later fixed at Myede, running straight eastwards and westwards. He hoped that the new king would sign a treaty recognizing the annexation.

Mondon had from the beginning disapproved of the war. As soon as he became king he released all Europeans who had been imprisoned by Pagan. In the simplicity of his soul he thought that since the fighting had ceased, the British would withdraw from the Delta. He, therefore, sent two Italian priests, Domingo and Abbone, to contact the British Army Chiefs, and to explain that as soon as order was restored in his dominions to the north, he would send envoys to conclude a peace.

On 27 January 1853, the two priests arrived at Myede about fifty miles north of Prome. General Godwin informed them of the territory that had been annexed, and gave them a copy of the Governor-General’s proclamation. The priests returned to the capital and gave the document to the King. On learning the contents Mindon was greatly put out. He even thought of a personal interview with Godwin to persuade him not to deprive him of his ancestral property. Ultimately, however, in March 1853, the Burmese monarch sent the Magwe Wunygi to Prome for the same purpose.

The Wunygi was received by British Commissioners at Prome on 31 March. He acknowledged Burmese responsibility for the war, but begged for generous treatment. The loss of Pegu would mean, he said, ‘no abode, and the loss of parents to children’. The Commissioners plainly told him that they had no authority to cancel the annexation. The Wunygi then discussed the boundary line and tried to have it revised in his king’s favour. The discussion went on for a whole month, Dalhousie ultimately agreeing to give up the territory
between Myede and Prome, but on the express condition that the King of Burma recognized the annexation of the rest of the territory. The Wunyi, of course, had no authority to sign away territory. He offered to pay the expenses of the war if all the conquered territory was returned. This he was told was inadmissible. Negotiations were broken off, and the British retained the Myede boundary.

The Kanoung Prince, who was the Eiushemin, was in favour of renewing the war, but Mindon stood firm. In June 1853 he directed the Kyauk Maw Mingyi to write to Phayre, the British Commissioner, that the King had no desire for war. In an interview that he granted to Spears, an Englishman resident at the capital, the King at first definitely stated that he would not sign a treaty granting any territory to the British, since it would be both an injustice and dishonour to him. On further reflection, however, Mindon said that he would sign a treaty granting the territory annexed, provided a clause was added that if he paid the British a certain agreed sum of money within two years, the territory in question would be returned to him; but that if he failed to pay within the stipulated time the debt due, the whole territory would be forfeited to the British. Thus, he declared, the King’s honour would be saved. When Phayre was informed of the King’s attitude, he said that the proposal was ‘totally inadmissible’. It was referred to Dalhousie who pronounced it to be ‘nonsense’.

The boundary line that was fixed, as it ran westwards of Myede, cut across the district called Mindon which belonged to the King as Prince, and after which he came to be known. Mindon expressed a desire that the British should not annex it, so that his dignity might not be lowered in the eyes of his people. Dalhousie was quite willing to please the King, but again his condition was that Mindon must sign the treaty: ‘But bear in mind’, he wrote to Phayre, ‘that for the King it is “no song, no supper”—no treaty, no Mengdon Myo.’ (March 1854). Mindon refused to sign the treaty even in return for this much-desired concession.

In August 1855, Phayre arrived in Amarapura, accompanied by a number of followers including Capt. Henry Yule of the
Bengal Engineers as Secretary to the Mission. The object was to establish friendly relations, and above all to make one more attempt to persuade the King to sign a treaty. Phayre’s Mission was very well received. Never before was a foreign envoy so well treated in Burma. Mindon was most hospitable and considerate. He granted several private interviews to Phayre and was most friendly, but he objected to any treaty which would, directly or indirectly, recognize the cession of Pegu. He was willing, he said, to enter into an agreement which would be of mutual advantage, and enquired of Phayre how the treaty would profit him and his country. Phayre said that unless a treaty was signed, the British would not allow arms and ammunition to be imported into Mindon’s territory up the River Irrawaddy; also that without a treaty no confidence would be established between the two states. Mindon, however, was most definite, and refused to sign a treaty, but said that his policy was one of peace and friendship.

Phayre had brought with him the draft of a simple treaty drawn up by Dalhousie, in which no reference to the cession of Pegu was even made; but this cut no ice so far as the King was concerned. Phayre gives the following reasons for the King’s refusal to sign a treaty: That he would go down in Burmese history as the king who signed away territory, even tacitly so; that the British might be defeated in the Crimean War, and withdraw from Pegu; that trouble might break out in India, and as a result the British might deem it wise to withdraw from Burma; that a new Governor-General might reverse the old policy and restore the territory.

Yule, in his monumental work on Phayre’s Mission to Amarapura, gives interesting accounts of conversations between the Monarch and the British Commissioner. One can almost hear him saying in frankness and simplicity, ‘I was opposed to the war. My brother fought you. Now I am king, and you want me to give it to you in writing that Pegu is yours. To do so would be dishonourable on my part. My signature would bring you profit; it would be no gain to me. I am a man of peace. Let us conduct ourselves as friends. You have taken my rich province of Pegu. Why do you want me to say
it in black and white that I give it to you, when I do not wish to give it to you, and I do not want you to take it away from me!!

CHAPTER LIII

MINDON’S ENVOYS IN CALCUTTA: 1854

The Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852), in the reign of Pagan, was a devastating blow to the kingdom of Burma. The British annexed the province of Pegu which had a large revenue. The lucrative ports of Rangoon and Bassein were thus lost. It was upon Mindon’s heart to recover this valuable territory; so that, in his dealings with the British, he consistently declined to agree to a treaty signing off the Delta to the victorious power. He looked upon the recovery of the province of Pegu to be a supreme necessity. Myosas who had assignments in that province were naturally anxious to have their revenues restored to them. Thomas Spears reported in 1854 that ‘Petitions are being received almost daily from Officers in Command of the King’s forces near Toungoo and other places on the border, requesting to be allowed to fight with the English.’ But Mindon understood the position better. His invariable answer to war-mongers was that ‘so long as he is alive he will not allow any aggressive movements on his side of the border.’

Far from threatening war, Mindon in 1854 withdrew his troops from the British frontier, being assured by Spears that the British would not advance to occupy more Burmese territory. Mindon decided to cultivate the friendship of the English hoping thus to recover the lost territory. He planned to achieve his object by sending envoys to Calcutta on a peace mission.

Maung Soe was nominated to this office. Though not a Wunyi, he was a man of rank, being the Myit-sin-wun, that is Governor of Riverine Tracts. He was well spoken of at the capital, and the King himself had a high regard for him. Maung Ba Thi and the Kyauk Maw Mingyi were also in the
party. The Envoys arrived in Rangoon with eighty followers on 5 October 1854. They were received by Col. Sparks, the Deputy Commissioner of Rangoon, Dr. Morton, the Magistrate of Rangoon, Capt. Lloyd, Assistant Magistrate, and Mr. R. S. Edwards, the Collector of Customs. A guard of honour was in attendance, and a thirteen-gun salute was fired. The Mission was detained in Rangoon for over six weeks. It is possible discussions were held as to the ceremonial to be observed by the Burmese Envoys in Rangoon and particularly in Calcutta.

On 14 November, Major Phayre, the Commissioner of Pegu, granted a public reception to the Envoys; and on 16 November the Commissioner and Brigadier-General Steel with all the officers of the Garrison officially received the Envoys who appeared at the function in their state robes.

The Mission arrived at Calcutta by steamer on 27 November accompanied by Phayre. The Envoys carried with them a large number of presents for the Governor-General in 140 boxes besides ten ponies. Three hundred labourers were engaged to carry the boxes. These must have contained articles of Burmese manufacture and produce, such as lacquerware, silk cloth, rings set with rubies and sapphires, rubies cut and polished, rubies rough and unpolished, etc.

The Envoys stayed at the Indian capital for exactly one month. They were very honourably received by the Governor-General, and had several interviews with him. There were talks affirming peace and friendship between the two states. The development of British trade up the Irrawaddy was also discussed. The Envoys, however, did not bring up at any of these discussions the supreme question of the return of the territory conquered by the British in Burma. But they asked for a final farewell private interview (25 December), and here they made a dramatic request for the restoration of the conquered provinces. The request was read out by the Assistant Envoy Wundauk Maha Meng Deng Meng Gyou, and it was interpreted by Phayre. The substance of the request was as follows: By reason of the friendship which existed from old times between the two states, the Envoys had come with letters and presents. The War had arisen out
of trifles, much to be regretted. Now there was peace and friendship. It is the custom of all governments when peace is made to restore the position as at the commencement of a war. Hence the annexed territories might now be restored to the King of Ava.

Dalhousie was at first taken aback by this request; but as was his wont, he remained calm and collected. Turning to Phayre, who was acting as interpreter, he said, 'Tell them that as long as the sun shines in the heavens, the British flag shall wave over those possessions.' He, however, gave an assurance that the British would maintain peace and friendship. The Wundauk replied that the war had been fought by the late king, not by the present king who loved peace. In reply Dalhousie said that the war was fought not with the king but with the Burmese nation: 'Nations war with nations, not individuals with individuals.' The Wundauk then desired some territorial concessions in the name of friendship. Dalhousie answered, 'What is past is past. The declarations which were made at the termination of the war are fixed and irrevocable.' He also added that an embassy would be sent in return with presents for the Burmese King as a mark of friendship. Dalhousie took the opportunity to remind the Envoys 'that it is the custom of civilized nations to confirm relations of friendship with a treaty, and Burma should do this.'

The Wundauk made a memorandum of the conversation, and Dalhousie's reply to the request for restoration of territory he altered to 'that it would not be proper to give back territory'. He said that it would be outside the bounds of courtesy to repeat to the King the peremptory and clear-cut reply made by the Governor-General. History has shown that empires are not permanent institutions. However strong and far-flung they might be, sooner or later they either disintegrate or are destroyed. Victorious imperialists, who in the flush of their power look upon their possessions as permanent acquisitions, may, however, be pardoned for their vanity. The Burmese imperialists were also marked by the same outlook.

Spears reports that when the Envoys returned to Amarapura, the King gave them long audiences, and, unlike Bagyidaw, took the whole affair in good humour, not blaming the
Mission for its failure. The King also saw the many presents that they had received in Calcutta, and in his magnanimity allowed them to keep them. Mindon took particular interest in the portraits of the Envoys executed in Calcutta. He could not believe that photographs could be so realistically taken. He expressed a desire to buy one at any cost.

CHAPTER LIV

BRITISH EMBASSIES TO MINDON: 1855-67

Up to 1862, British Lower Burma consisted of the three Commissionerships of Pegu, Tenasserim, and Arakan. They were mutually independent administrative units, the first two being directly under the control of the Central Government of India, and Arakan under the Government of Bengal. In 1862, these three units were combined into the single province of British Burma, and placed under a Chief Commissioner with headquarters at Rangoon. Phayre was Commissioner of Pegu from 1852 to 1862, and Chief Commissioner from 1862 to 1867, while Fytche was Chief Commissioner from 1867 to 1871. Throughout this period and much beyond, up to 1878, Mindon was King in Upper Burma.

Phayre led no fewer than three missions to Mindon, 1855, 1862, and 1866 respectively, while Fytche led one, in 1867. The great object of Phayre’s first embassy to Amarapura was to persuade Mindon to sign a treaty. Mindon was most friendly and hospitable, but he refused point-blank to sign a treaty which would even tacitly or indirectly recognize the cession of Pegu to the British. Phayre’s mission was otherwise successful. It cemented Anglo-Burmese goodwill, strengthened amicable relations between the two states, and gave the assurance that there was no danger of hostility from Mindon’s side.

In 1857, Mindon shifted his capital to Mandalay. When in 1862, the British amalgamated the three divisions of Arakan, Pegu, and Tenasserim into one consolidated Chief-
Commissionership, the change excited much interest at the Burmese Court. Mindon looked forward to the re-unification of Burma, and was deeply interested in British administration in the lost provinces.

In 1862, Phayre led his second mission to Mindon; this time at Mandalay. The great object was to confirm the friendship existing between the two states. An attempt was also to be made to persuade the King to agree to a treaty of commerce, with a view to the abolition or reduction of frontier duties, so that trade might be opened up with Upper Burma and the regions beyond. To all outward purposes the mission was successful. The British Government agreed to abolish duties on their side of the frontier within one year; while the Burmese Government agreed to do the same within four years at the most. A treaty on these lines was agreed to. Mindon granted to British subjects full permission to trade in any part of his dominions, and even a British agent, it was agreed, could reside at Mandalay.

The treaty, however, failed. The British abolished the duties on their side of the frontier, but the Burmese did not. As a matter of fact, Mindon could not afford to do so. Again, the greater part of the trade was controlled by foreigners, so that the lion's share of the gain would have gone to them. The British merchants of Rangoon resented the situation, but were helpless. One other obstacle was the King's monopoly on grain, timber, kutch, etc. all of which could be bought only through royal brokers. Mindon was indeed well disposed towards British traders, but his officers were of a different attitude. British agents wished to explore Upper Burma in order to discover the possibilities of trade there. Burmese officers put obstacles in their way since they looked with fear and disfavour upon these operations. Phayre, therefore, considered it necessary to contact Mindon again.

Meanwhile in 1866, two of the sons of Mindon rebelled and slew their uncle the Crown Prince. It was a formidable rebellion, and was a great shock to the King. Soon after the rebellion was suppressed, Phayre arrived in Mandalay to conclude a commercial pact with Mindon. The King refused to reduce his frontier duties on the plea that the country
was impoverished owing to the recent troubles. He also refused to surrender his monopolies. Phayre broke off negotiations, and recommended to the Governor-General that on the British side the duties might be re-imposed; but the Secretary of State overruled the suggestion. It was considered wise not to irritate the King further.

The situation as to trade being unsatisfactory on the British side, Fytche, the new Commissioner, visited the King at Mandalay in 1867. The object of his mission was to open up trade with Upper Burma, and to despatch a trade expedition via Bhamo into Western China, in order to discover the cause of the cessation since 1855 of overland trade between China and Burma; also to study the geography of the country in those regions.

As Fytche, with his party and military escort, entered the Burmese kingdom across the frontier, they were hospitably received from stage to stage and kept well supplied with gifts of fruits and vegetables. After a journey of seventeen days, Fytche arrived in Mandalay on 7 October. A right royal reception was accorded him. A guard of royal troops in green jackets and red helmets was drawn up on shore in his honour. Wungyis visited Fytche on board his steamer and showed much interest in the vessel and its various interior appointments.

Mendon sent two golden umbrellas for the British Envoy, and two also for his wife, together with Royal warrants of authority to use them. This was certainly a signal honour conferred on the British Commissioner. The white umbrella is an emblem of sovereignty based on the Indian political theory that the King as the Chatrapati is the protector of the realm under whose shadow the people can rest in peace and safety. The tradition has even been imparted a religious turn: for example, the htee or umbrella towering over the Burmese pagoda is suggestive of safety, the votary’s trust being in the Buddha, the law, and the brotherhood.

In the old days foreign missions were made to wait; but Fytche was received by Mindon on the second day after landing from the steamer. In 1866, Mindon had refused to enter into any further treaty with the British; but this time
he agreed, and the treaty of 1867 was concluded. The King abandoned all his monopolies except those in timber, earth-oil, and precious stones. Duties on all goods passing between the two frontiers were reduced to 5 per cent ad valorem for ten years. Free trade in gold and silver was to be permitted. A British Resident was to be allowed to stay at Mandalay with full and final jurisdiction in all civil suits between British subjects. In the case of civil suits between British subjects and Burmese subjects, the Resident was to be associated with a Burmese official of high rank in a mixed court. Rules for the extradition of criminals on either side were agreed upon. Mindon was to be allowed to buy fire-arms in British territory. The Government of India had suggested to Fytche the inclusion of the following article in the treaty: 'The Burmese ruler engages not to enter into negotiation or communication of any kind with any foreign power, except with the consent previously obtained, of the British ruler.' Mindon would not have agreed to it. Fytche disapproved of it and it was dropped.

The treaty failed in actual practice. After all, Mindon did not abandon his monopolies; on the other hand he increased them. They were too profitable to be given up. The British surveyed the routes around Bhamo, and also stationed an agent there. Mindon had agreed to the treaty simply because he wanted fire-arms. He was alarmed at the rebellions of his sons, and thought it best to agree for the sake of these arms. The treaty failed since it could not be carried out cheerfully and willingly.

In his conversations with Fytche, Mindon talked on Buddhism and its principles, the duties of kings, on friendship and how it may be destroyed by listening to the stories of evil-minded men. He recognized with much feeling the evils of polygamy, and appreciated the Christian principle of monogamy. Fytche speaks of Mindon as one of the most enlightened Burmese monarchs. He did not permit wanton atrocities and wild excesses. His manners were polished. He possessed a good knowledge of the affairs of state, and was not ignorant of the history and statistics of Burma and of certain other countries.
Chapter LV

MINDON’S EMBASSY TO QUEEN VICTORIA: 1872

Some of the kings of Burma, particularly Bagyidaw, considered it beneath their dignity as anointed monarchs to have diplomatic relations with the Company’s Governor-General at Calcutta. Mindon’s attitude was different. He was quite happy to converse and negotiate even with the British Commissioner stationed at Rangoon. Peace and friendship with foreigners, and particularly with the British, were the two pillars of his policy. However, the loss of territory suffered by Burma in 1826 and again in 1852, rankled in his bosom. His heart was set upon recovering these territories, but he ruled out war altogether. He believed in peaceful methods. The embassy to Dalhousie at Calcutta did not meet with any success. In 1872, therefore, he sent an embassy to Queen Victoria, the ostensible object being the cultivation of friendship between the two states. The real aim, however, was that the Queen might be persuaded to return to Burma the lost territories of Arakan, Tenasserim, and Pegu.

The Embassy consisted of the following personnel: Mingyi Mahasithu Kinwun Mingyi was the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. He possessed literary attainments, was a trusted adviser of the King, was an officer of large and varied administrative experience, and was marked by prudence, sagacity and courtesy. Maha Minhla Kyaw Din Padein Wundauk was Attache No. 1. He had seen service in Rangoon, had visited England before, possessed a good knowledge of English, and was a man of ability. Attache No. 2 was Maha Mingyaw Raza Pangyet Wundauk. He had resided for several years in Paris, spoke French fluently, possessed polished manners, had obtained a French Diploma in Civil Engineering, had served as a Judge at Mandalay, and was a recognized scholar. Sayedawgyi Minhla Zeyathu was Secretary to the Embassy. He did not know English, but was looked upon as one of the learned men of Mandalay. He was bright, intelligent and of good humour. He was a general favourite everywhere,
and much of the popularity of the Embassy was due to his personality and genialty. Later he was employed frequently in missions to India and was created Wundauk. He fell into disfavour under Thibaw and was executed. The Embassy was accompanied by Edmund Jones, the British Agent to His Majesty the King of Burma. Major-General A. Ruxton MacMahon was attached to the Embassy as the Political Officer.

On 21 June 1872, the Embassy was received by the Queen at Windsor Castle. The Ambassador presented Mindon’s letter to the British monarch. Its contents breathed of friendship, and suggested development of trade between the two countries for mutual prosperity. Kinwun Mingyi also laid at Her Majesty’s feet a casket of presents from Mindon which the Queen graciously accepted. This was followed by some friendly conversation, the interpreter being the Political Officer.

The same evening the Ambassador was received by Edward, Prince of Wales, for whom Mindon had sent a Tsalway of twenty-one strands. It was presented and thankfully received. Only the heir-apparent of Burma was entitled to twenty-one strands. The next day the Prince held a levy at St. James’s Palace. The Duke of Argyll, who was then Secretary of State for India, introduced the Envoy and his assistants. Kinwun Mingyi also presented a Tsalway of fifteen strings to Prime Minister Gladstone. MacMahon reports that later, in 1874, when Mindon heard of Gladstone’s defeat at the elections, he sighed and said, ‘Then poor Ga-la-sa-tong is in prison, I suppose. I am very sorry for him.’

The Envoys stayed for just over two months in London, attended a number of functions, and visited many places of interest. They were present at a state ball and concert given by the Queen, and were invited by the Prince of Wales to garden fêtes. They were received by the Lord Mayor of London, by members of the nobility and gentry, and by certain public bodies with much respect and hospitality. They witnessed reviews of troops at Aldershot, Woolwich, and Wimbledon. They inspected arsenals, gun-foundries, dockyards, museums, hospitals, jails, libraries, markets,
etc. They attended operas, theatres, races, and other places of amusement. They visited the principal commercial and manufacturing towns of the United Kingdom, and made a short trip to Ireland. They met members of the Royal Family, the nobility, and the élite of British society.

The members of the Mission were amazed at the network of railways in London, the vast population of the city, the heavy traffic in the streets, the bridges, embankments, docks, shipping, huge public buildings, and above all the wealth, industry, power, and resources of Great Britain. On their return to Burma they made full reports of their impressions to their fellow-Ministers.

The great object of the Mission was to discuss with the Queen’s Ministers and, if possible, with the Queen herself the question of the restoration of Burma’s lost territory. This they were unable to do. They were told that that was a proposition for the Governor-General at Calcutta to deal with, and if they so desired they could contact him. This was a great disappointment to Mindon.

The Embassy having failed, so far as the restoration of territory was concerned, Mindon hit upon a plan of making use of the Anglican missionary and teacher Dr. Marks for the purpose. In 1873, the King built a church in Mandalay for Anglican worship, and gave Marks a piece of land for a cemetery. He also helped Marks to build a Christian school for Burmese boys, and handed over to this Missionary ten of his sons, about ten years of age and upwards, to educate. One of these boys was Thibaw. Mindon also financed this school, but soon fell into arrears. Once he sent Rs. 200 instead of the usual Rs. 500, and Marks refused to accept the amount. Mindon was annoyed, and at an interview told Marks that even if one of his Wunyis had behaved in this manner he would have been dragged out by the hair of his head. Marks said that he did not mean to offend, but that in any case that kind of punishment would fail in his case, because of his baldness! The King greatly enjoyed the joke, summoned his queens to enjoy it too, and paid up the arrears.

Later, Mindon called Marks to a private room and unfolded his plan to him. He proposed that Marks go to England with
two or three of the Princes, see Queen Victoria, inform her of the goodness of the King of Burma, and request her to restore to him either Rangoon or Bassein, so that he may have a port of his own. Marks explained to Mindon the impossibility of his undertaking any such mission. The King was quite angry, and said, 'Then you are no use to me.' But he soon recovered his good humour. Marks, however, never saw him again.

CHAPTER LVI

MINDON'S FUNERAL

In his sixty-fourth year Mindon went down with dysentery, and in spite of all the efforts of his physicians he died on 1 October 1878. His body lay in state for a few days, and the funeral took place on 7 October. On 4 October the English community resident at the capital was invited to view it between 6 and 9 A.M. Shaw, the British Resident, reported that 'several Englishmen attended, and saw the body lying in a couch dressed as in life, and fanned by the queens and princesses who sat around'. Later the Armenian, French, Italian, Mohammedan and Chinese communities were admitted. After this the body was placed in a coffin.

Shaw, who attended the funeral, says that 'all were dressed in white, the colour of mourning. The whole of the guard and retinue sat down in the Burmese posture of respect..... A funeral enclosure had been made of bamboo-work covered with white cloth, and in the centre of this was an imitation of a cremation-furnace, which, however, was only to be used symbolically. In front of this funeral enclosure there was a little open place which was to be the station of the present King (Thibaw) during the ceremony..... Trays with tea and other refreshments were brought in and offered to us several times during the proceedings..... No attempt was made to interfere with us...though I was sorry to see that all the Europeans in the other booth were compelled to take off their shoes, and mostly to sit on the ground.....
'Facing us was a line of soldiers in red and green jackets with fire-arms, together with one or two gilt palanquins and an old-fashioned European carriage...gilded and provided with a gilt pagoda-roof. Obliquely opposite us was a long shed with a raised floor, which extended past the side of the above-mentioned funeral enclosure. The nearest corner to us of this shed was to be the place of the Chief Queen, the other Queens and Princesses, etc. occupying the remainder of the shed.

'The procession commenced with six or seven large elephants with gold-plated towers, in which were lances and shields. These represented the King's paraphernalia of war, of ancient times. Then came the bearers of vessels and other objects symbolical of agriculture, all dressed in white. Then followed a huge red catafalque and an empty coffin borne on men's shoulders. After this followed musicians, borne sitting on ornamental stands. The Ministers of State followed.... Finally came long lines of white-clad ladies of the palace pulling long white scarf like ropes, the Chief Queen being the furthest back. Behind them came a thick mass of attendants, from the midst of whom rose eight or ten large white Royal umbrellas. We learnt that here was the late King's body on a truck which the Queens and other ladies were pulling, or supposed to be pulling along by means of ropes. As this large group passed, the scarlet cloth which had been spread along the ground for them to walk on, was rolled up behind them.

'A pause now occurred, during which the empty coffin and catafalque were carried into the funeral enclosure. The corpse in its coffin was taken to a new pagoda, behind where it was to be placed and walled up in a vault. The Queens then took their seats in the booth prepared for them... all very plainly dressed in white, without ornaments of any sort.

'After a further pause, two lines of soldiers in single file advanced and took up their places, kneeling with their muskets held in front of them, the bayonets fixed. They were chiefly old men and boys, raggedly dressed in red and green jackets. Between them came the young King (Thibaw), carried on a
splendid golden covered throne by between 50 and 60 bearers. Four maids of honour in peculiar head-dresses knelt, two before and two behind him, on a lower stage of the same portable throne, with hands joined as in adoration. The young King was dressed in a garment entirely covered with small plates of silver, and wore a conical head-dress of the same material. He was carried into the centre of the open space in front of the gateway of the funeral enclosure.... Here he remained seated high on the throne for about a quarter of an hour. A long Pali address was read to him, which concluded by asking an order that the obsequies of the late King might be proceeded with. After this the throne was turned and carried past within a few yards of us—all the Burmese courtiers kneeling as he passed, while we stood up from our seats....

‘When he had disappeared, the Chief Queen arose from her place, accompanied by her own immediate attendants, amid shouts of wailing, and went towards the pagoda where the late King’s body was to be bricked up.....’ (India Foreign Proceedings: March 1879, Secret No. 81).

In the funeral enclosure were displayed a number of rich articles of the late king’s property, placed there nominally to be burnt, but in reality either to be donated to monasteries or restored to the palace. The empty coffin was covered with sheets of gold studded with rubies. It was placed on a metal grating imitating that of a cremation furnace. All round the grating were large red tubes with pistons, representing bellows used to excite the fire under the corpse. Mindon, however, was not cremated but buried.

On 24 October, the new king wrote the following letter to Queen Victoria informing her of his father’s death:

‘Queen Victoria: Royal Friend! Whilst between the Burmese royal dominions and the English ruler’s royal dominions the state of a continuous Raja-Mahamit (great friendship of sovereigns) between the two great countries was firm and lasting; sickness (or suffering) fastened upon His Most Great and Excellent Majesty (my) Royal father the Excellent Rising Sun King against which, notwithstanding that (his) Ministers (or nobles) in consultation with physicians pres-
cribed various medicines (he) could not be free (or get rest), and on the 6th day of the waning moon Thadingyut 1240 of the Burmese era migrated to the country of the Gods profoundly regretted and mourned by his queens, royal sons and daughters, ministers (or nobles), and by all the people of the country. (I) believe and hope that the mind of Her Most Great and Excellent Majesty (the) Queen will be thus (i.e. will share in the regret).

'In the year 2422 of the sacred era and 1240 of the Burmese Koze era, on the 14th day of the waning moon Thadingyut (corresponding with) the year 1878 of the hat wearing (nations) era, on the 24th day of October, I (a term among equals), in the Royal Golden Palace of the capital city, Ratna Bon (Mandalay: Bon=glory; hence the epithet means the glorious jewel Mandalay) of the Burmese dominions, do affix my signature.

'(His) Most Great and Excellent Majesty, who has sovereignty over the dominions of Burmah, the Excellent Burmese Ruler, the Rising Sun King.'

The British Queen was not inclined to send a reply because of the royal massacres for which she thought Thibaw was responsible. The Secretary of State for India, however, persuaded her to affix her signature to a message of sympathy and friendship addressed to Thibaw.

**Chapter LVII**

**STRUGGLES FOR THE THRONE OF BURMA:**

1752-1885

The kings of Burma had no law of succession. The great requirement by customary law was that the successor to the throne should be a queen's son. So a son could claim the throne, but there was no law of primogeniture. A brother or an uncle could also qualify. Usually the king nominated his successor during his lifetime, the heir-apparent being called the Einshemin. The idea was, as in the Middle Ages in Europe, that the most competent prince should ascend
the throne. This led to conspiracies, intrigues, and rebellions. There were always rivals who considered themselves to be more competent. In order to make his position secure, often the successful contestant to the throne had recourse to a massacre of his kinsmen. Kings were in the habit of keeping large harems, so that there were many princes who had thus to suffer death for the offence of being born in the royal household.

Before his death, Alaunghpaya made a will that his six sons should succeed him in order of birth. His eldest son, Naungdawgyi, accordingly became king in 1760. The second son, Hsinbyushin, who was certainly far superior to the new king, rebelled. He was defeated and captured, but was pardoned. When Naungdawgyi died in 1763, Hsinbyushin succeeded him without difficulty. He, however, disregarded his father’s testament and created his son Singu as Einshemin. At his death, therefore, Singu succeeded him in 1776. According to Alaunghpaya’s will Bodawpaya should have been offered the throne. Singu was murdered in 1782, and Maung Maung, Prince of Paungga, son of Naungdawgyi, made himself king. But he ruled for only seven days. Bodawpaya slew him and reigned in his stead.

Bodawpaya decided to take no risks. He carried out a massacre of his kinsmen. A large number of princes and princesses together with their servants and children were burnt alive. Bodawpaya was, however, challenged by one Myat Pon who claimed to be a scion of the Toungoo dynasty of Burmese kings (1531-1752). But he had no real following, and Bodawpaya soon made short-shrift of him. The new king appointed his eldest son Minderagy as Einshemin, but this prince died in 1808 during his father’s lifetime. Bodawpaya then created Minderagy’s son, Bagyidaw, as Einshemin, and when the king died in 1819, this grandson succeeded him.

After Bagyidaw had reigned for eighteen years, his brother Prince Tharrawaddy rebelled, usurped the throne (1837) and put Bagyidaw in confinement. In 1845, Tharrawaddy’s illegitimate son, the Prince of Prome, attempted to usurp the throne. He was defeated, captured, and executed. In 1846,
Tharrawaddy became so ferocious that his ministers placed him in confinement, and raised his son, the Prince of Pagan, to the kingship. Bagyidaw and his brother Tharrawaddy, the two dethroned kings, were now in Pagan's charge. Bagyidaw died in October 1846, and Tharrawaddy about a month later. Pagan Min refrained from assuming the royal title till after the death of these two ex-monarchs. It is possible both were poisoned.

After the defeat of Pagan in the Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852), a serious dacoity took place in Amarapura, the royal capital. Prince Mindon, the king's brother, was suspected. He escaped to Shwebo (December 1852). Pagan was very unpopular with all classes of people, so that Mindon came to have a large following, and he decided to strike for the throne. He proclaimed himself king at Shwebo, and his younger brother, Maung Gauk, known as the Kanaung Min, was nominated Crown Prince. On 31 December 1852, the talented Kanaung Min fought a battle outside the walls of Amarapura and defeated Pagan's general Maung Gale, the Lamaing Wun. Then followed the siege of Amarapura which lasted for just a month. The city fell and Pagan was deposed. Mindon was proclaimed king. The new king, however, did not enter the capital till November 1853.

In September 1854, a plot was hatched by the deposed king's old officers, under the leadership of Maung Bwa, to restore Pagan to the throne. Many others were implicated in it. Pagan lived near the royal palace in a large house with a garden attached where he was allowed recreation. A dozen of his former queens also lived with him. The conspiracy, however, did not cause alarm. Mindon's government was quite strong. The plot was discovered and about 200 men were arrested. No man of rank belonging to Mindon's government was in the conspiracy. Pagan denied all knowledge of the plot and asked the king to put all the conspirators to death.

In August 1866, a formidable rebellion broke out at the capital. Mindon had placed his sons under the control of his faithful brother the Kanaung Min. The princes complained of his harshness. On coming of age, they felt disappointed
that the throne would go to their uncle. Two of Mindon's sons, Prince Mingun and Prince Mingondaing, decided to do away with both their father and their uncle. On 2 August, while a meeting of the Hlutdau was on, these two suddenly rushed in with about thirty followers and killed the Crown Prince. Mindon was at this time in his summer palace near the Kuthodaw pagoda. He was warned by one of the queens, and so managed to escape on foot with his son Metkara to his city palace. When the two rebel princes arrived at the summer palace with their followers, they failed to find the king, but they killed a Wungyi as well as two princes who were senior to them, and then plundered the palace.

When Mindon reached his city palace, he found there one of the conspirators, Maung Baik Gyi by name, under orders to kill the king if he arrived there. Prince Metkara shouted to Baik Gyi to carry the king on his shoulders. He automatically obeyed, and carried the king safely into the palace. In the meantime, the two princes came in pursuit of their father and besieged the city palace, but it was too late. Mindon had recovered his nerve. He rallied his forces, and the troops of the murdered Einshemin rushed to his rescue. The two princes were defeated and the insurrection was suppressed. The rebel princes, however, captured one of the king's steamers and escaped into British territory. On their arrival at Rangoon, the British Commissioner took them into custody and sent them to Calcutta. Mingun later escaped into French territory, and the French kept him as a state prisoner in Saigon.

During the rebellion of the two princes, the Crown Prince's son, the Padein Mintha, escaped to the north. He was joined by a good many of his father's followers. He made preparations to fight the rebel princes, not knowing that they had already been driven out. Mindon thought that he too had turned rebel and sent troops to subdue him, but the Mintha put them to flight. Ultimately, however, he came to know what the true situation was and submitted. Mindon kept him in confinement in the palace enclosure together with a number of his brothers. Now it so happened that his sister managed to interview him by bribing the palace officials.
When Mindon heard of this he feared another conspiracy and sentenced the prince to death. Sladen, the British Resident, obtained a reprieve from Mindon, but it arrived too late. The lives of the other princes were, however, saved.

In 1868, the Prince of Katha rebelled, but was unable to accomplish anything. Executions would have followed; but Dr. Marks, the missionary, pleaded with Mindon, and the lives of the prince as well as of his followers were spared. Mindon’s merciful nature is clearly to be seen in the way he handled these rebel princes and responded to appeals for clemency.

Mindon now considered it unwise to nominate a Crown Prince, for fear an attempt might be made to kill the new nominee also. He expressed an opinion that on his death his three sons should reign jointly: the Prince of Thonze, a man of ability; Prince Metkara, a good soldier with a striking personality; and Prince Nyaung Yan, a man of learning. The arrangement certainly would not have worked out satisfactorily in actual practice.

In August 1878 Mindon fell ill and died on 1 October. The new king came to the throne not by rebellion but through intrigue, the moving spirit of which was the chief queen. Her choice was Thibaw whom she thought she would be able to control. He was to marry not just one of her daughters, whom he loved, but all three of them. She had no son. She managed by some means to obtain the consent of the dying king. It is certain, however, that she succeeded in her device because she was able to win over two of the seniormost ministers (Wungyis) to her side. After Mindon’s death she had over seventy princes and princesses murdered so that her three-fold son-in-law might be rendered safe from the rebellions of rivals who were reputed to be infinitely more competent to occupy the Konebaung throne. Above all she was concerned about herself as king-maker and king-controller. After all her machinations, if Thibaw were to be displaced, her own life would be in danger.

Thibaw now reigned, but he failed to rule the country. Neither the king nor his favourites were interested in administration. His delight rather was in the glamour of his position,
while the Alenandaw Queen and her daughters disported themselves in controlling the king and the palace. The ministers were helpless tools in their hands. The essence of kingship had died with Mindon, only the shell remained, and these creatures of the palace were fighting for this empty shell. In 1885, the British decided to extend their empire into Upper Burma. They calmly walked into the Burmese capital, and carried away Thibaw and his queen to India. Thus once again Burma came to be unified administratively; but this time under foreign rulers. The struggle for the throne of Burma had ended forever.

CHAPTER LVIII

TRANSFER OF BURMESE ROYAL CAPITALS

Shifting the capital was a favourite practice or even pastime with Burmese kings after the fall of Pagan in 1287. Myinsaing and Pinya were the capitals from 1298 to 1364, Sagaing 1315-1364, Ava 1364-1555, 1629-1752, 1765-1783, and 1823-1837, Pegu 1531-1629, Shwebo 1758-1765, Kyauk-Myaung July to December 1837, Amarapura 1783-1823 and 1837-1857, Mandalay 1857-1885. History has recorded the shifting of capitals in many states, but there are very few countries indeed that can compete with Burma in the frequency of this practice. The great Akbar built a beautiful new capital at Fatehpur-Sikri, but the venture ultimately failed because of an inadequate supply of water. On the banks of the Jumna may be seen the sites of more than seven Delhis, while the New Delhi of the 20th century is itself situated where one of these old Delhis once stood. Five of the ten kings of the Burmese Konebaung Dynasty changed their capitals: Hsinbyushin from Shwebo to Ava; Bodawpaya to Amarapura; Bagyidaw to Ava; Tharrawaddy first to Kyauk-Myaung and later to Amarapura; and finally Mindon to Mandalay.

The whim of the king was at times the deciding factor; but transfer to a place of supposed greater safety was often an important consideration. In general it may be said that
changing the capital had become a kind of a superstition. The old capital was supposed to have served its purpose, and might prove unlucky; while a new capital, fixed on astrological calculations, would bring success or prosperity.

Sagaing, situated as it is on the right bank of the River, is a good site for a capital, but somehow the Konebaung kings never fancied it. Hsinbyushin removed the capital from Shwebo to Ava. This was a wise step. There was nothing really in favour of Shwebo except that it was the capital of the great Alaungpaya. Again, Shwebo not being on the River, but some twenty miles away from it, was not a convenient site at all: communications were difficult and the water was brackish. Ava was one of the best sites in Upper Burma and superior to Amarapura. It is situated on the left bank of the Irrawaddy and on the confluence of two of the tributaries of this great river. Again, the adjoining region is the Kyaukse granary watered by the Myitnge. As to Mandalay, there is nothing particularly in its favour except that it boasts a pretty hill, and that the city was planned on modern lines.

Tabinshweti (1531-1550) and Bayinnaung (1551-1581), also later Anaukpetlun (1605-1628) had Pegu for their capital; but their successors preferred the north. Tabinshweti selected Pegu since he had a definite policy as to the Mons, and wished to unite the two races. To the successors of Tabinshweti and Bayinnaung, however, the Delta was a foreign country peopled by the Mons. The Mons again were a great-souled cultured race, having proud traditions. They could not persuade themselves to remain permanently subservient to Burmese kings. They rebelled time and again. The successors of Anaukpetlun, out of fear of the Mons, deserted Pegu and the Delta, and established themselves at Ava.

Looking at Burma physically as a whole, a capital like Ava or Sagaing or Mandalay would undoubtedly be centrally situated; but it should be noted that the best developed parts of the country lay not north of these towns but south. All the ports as well as the most fertile regions are to be found in Lower Burma. Flourishing towns, and above all the sea, lay towards the south. The advantages of centrality, for strategic, economic, administrative and other reasons, claimed
by the northern capitals therefore fade away. Again, up in the north, the king, the court and the people developed closed minds. They possessed neither a proper knowledge of their own country nor of the outer world. Their government and policy took on a character after such a state of mind. It resulted in much loss, both moral and material.

These facts lead to the inexorable conclusion that Rangoon (Alaungpaya’s choice for a Burmese port) was and is the best site for the capital of Burma. The great argument in favour of the northern capitals is that it was more convenient to protect the frontier in that direction from the hill tribes and foreign irruptions. Situated as Burma is, however, protection is not possible in any direction without a progressive and enlightened government.

It may seem strange why no king of Burma made Rangoon his capital. The answer, however, is not far to seek. Burmese kings and their people were not enamoured of the sea. They did not care to develop oceanic trade on any appreciable scale. Their rivers, valleys and forests were enough for them. The sea did not appeal to them. It is a sea-faring nation that has created great and flourishing cities and ports like Rangoon, Bombay, Madras and Karachi. Looking at the world as a whole, from the 16th century onwards, the sea, sea-power, and sea-trade were coming into prominence, for example the movements of the Portuguese, Spaniards, Dutch, English and French over the seas. No nation could escape from being influenced by these worldwide operations. The centre of gravity, political and commercial, having shifted, a town and a port such as Rangoon was required to be the capital of Burma.

Maung Shwe Loo was Bagyidaw’s Commandant of the Northern Royal Entrance. He was highly respected by the king. Burney in speaking of him says, ‘At all events he fears responsibility less than any other courtiers; at a time when every other officer here dreaded to say a word in favour of Dr. Judson, this man did not hesitate to receive him and some other prisoners in his house.... We were amazed to see hanging punkhas in his house, the only place (in Ava) where we have seen them. He resided for some time in Rangoon.
and this accounts for his superior intelligence, for we have found all those Burmese officers who have mixed with Europeans at Rangoon most distinguished by good sense, and freedom from pride and prejudice. Mr. Sarkies calls Rangoon the Burmese University.' This testimony is true. Contact, not only with Europeans but with other foreigners, too, certainly affords opportunities for the widening of one’s outlook and the increase of knowledge. To quote Burney again, 'Rangoon...may really be considered as the Burmese University, for all the most intelligent men you meet with in this country have resided there for some time and have had their minds and views enlarged by acquiring some knowledge of European countries, customs, and manners.'

Rangoon as the capital of the country would have afforded far greater opportunities to the kings and government of Burma to adopt a progressive policy than being in the north and living in the past in splendid but ignorant isolation. So far as fear of the Mons was concerned, Alaungpaya had practically destroyed their power, so that in the Konebaung Age this danger was no longer present. If it was a traditional desire to have a northern capital, far-sighted and progressive kings would have had two capitals, Rangoon and Ava, and moved up and down the River as the guardians of law and order. The Persian Emperors of old had several capitals for administrative purposes besides Pasargadae, their ancestral home-town.

In Burma the shifting of the capital was no ordinary matter. It was not like the change in 1911 from Calcutta to Delhi. The kings required all the inhabitants also to shift to the new place. Labour was conscripted for the construction of new royal palaces, government houses, etc. The harassed inhabitants had to build new houses for themselves also. When Tharrawaddy decided to shift from Ava (1837), Burney reasoned with him and mentioned the hardship it would cause the poor inhabitants of the old city; but Tharrawaddy was not to be moved. He said that Ava 'had proved a very unlucky city, the sovereigns residing in which had always been getting into quarrels and misfortunes'. He even threatened to set fire to Ava in order to expedite the transfer.
Bagydaw had shifted the capital in 1823 from Amarapura to Ava; but in 1831 the king fell ill and began to think of returning to Amarapura. Those in favour of the re-transfer said that the change down the river, from Amarapura to Ava, was a mistake, and so the war was lost, since in the past kings always changed the capital moving up the river: from Prome to Pagan, Pinya, Ava, Amarapura. The inhabitants of Ava were greatly alarmed, also the princes and the traders. The Mekkhara Prince, the most learned of the royal house, prepared the following syllogism to repeat before the king: It is not right to molest and give trouble to the poor inhabitants of the land; Our removing from Ava to Amarapura will molest and give them trouble; So it is not right for us to remove to Amarapura. The prince went to the palace for this purpose, but not finding his nephew the king in a suitable frame of mind, he desisted from trying his logic upon him. Fortunately, however, Bagydaw took no active steps to shift the capital.

CHAPTER LIX

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE UNDER BURMESE KINGS

Buddhism was not the state religion of Burma in the organized manner that Anglicanism was or still is in England. It was the national religion of the country in the sense that the vast majority of the people professed it. The king traditionally was looked upon as the protector and supporter of Buddhism. It was taken for granted that the king should be a Buddhist, and so also the native inhabitants of the country.

The king's government was ready to suppress any innovation in religion. The policy was to maintain the established system of the Theravada Hinayana school. Not that this was always done, but unbelievers among the Burmans were at times punished, as also propounders of new philosophies and interpretations as to religion. They were treated as heretics. The recognized principle also was that no native of the country should change over to any other religion. If
he did, he was liable to be punished with imprisonment or even with death. It should be noted, however, that there was no systematized policy of persecution. Since the government itself was lacking in system, and its officers were neither paid salaries nor rigidly controlled, it was not possible to enforce the principle of non-conversion to other religions to an uncompromising degree. Public opinion was also opposed to conversion, and the same naturally was the attitude of the Buddhist monks.

Christian missionaries, however, arrived in the country, and conversions began to take place. In fact, no power on earth can really prevent a conscientious conversion of the heart. The government as well as the people in general often denounced the converts. There were persons who secretly professed their new faith; there were converts who were severely persecuted and punished; and there were also those who were ignored. In 1834, one Ko San Lone, a Burmese Christian, and a British subject from Moulmein, was arrested while preaching on his verandah in Rangoon. Petty government officers demanded his death on the ground that he was a Burman turned Christian. But since the accused was a British subject, the Governor of Rangoon realized that he must be careful. San Lone was tortured and asked to recant, but he stood firm. He was made to work in chains in the Governor's compound. It is strange that the British Government took no steps to protect him. His wife and other Christians in Tenasserim raised Rs. 200, which when paid, it is not known to whom, he was set at liberty. But he was warned that he must in no way preach or distribute any tracts in the king's dominions. There were many other cases of persecution and harassment too.

Because of San Lone's treatment Christian meetings in Rangoon ceased. But in time the alarm subsided, and evangelists from the other side of the Salween again appeared in Rangoon. Being British subjects, they were bold enough to renew their activities. Christians who were the king's subjects had to be very careful. They visited Christian homes late in the evening, and baptisms also took place after nightfall.
During the reign of Pagan religious intolerance towards Burmese converts and foreigners who preached to Buddhists was more zealously practised than under any other king. Pagan connected Christianity with Europeans, and for a good part of his reign there was tension between Amarapura and the Governor-General at Calcutta. It is not surprising that Mrs. Emily Judson reported in 1848, that ‘there never had been a time of such intolerance throughout the land as under the new king’.

There is another side to the religious policy of the kings of Burma. Foreigners residing in Burma were not looked upon as the king’s subjects. They enjoyed complete freedom of worship according to their own religion, be it Catholicism or Protestantism, Hinduism or Islam. Their wives and children, Burmese or otherwise, enjoyed the same freedom. They could freely preach to their own co-religionists, and their priests and missioniares could minister to their own flocks without let or hindrance. It appears that Christians were to be found in Burma at least as early as the 16th century with the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. In 1719, Pope Clement XI sent a mission to China headed by Mezabarba, the Patriarch of Alexandria. Before returning to Europe in 1720, the Patriarch appointed two priests, Vittori and Calchi, to Ava, Pegu and Martaban. When these priests arrived in Syria, they found there two Portuguese chaplains in charge of the descendants of their countrymen there. They made no attempts to convert the Burmans, knew no Burmese, and did all their work in the Portuguese language.

Vittori and Calchi even proceeded to Ava, and had an audience of the Burmese king Taninganwe. They were granted permission to build churches and to preach their religion. The king even sent some precious stones as presents for the Pope through these priests. Calchi built a chapel at Ava. Pope Benedict XIV appointed one Gillizia as Bishop of Burma. A Catholic priest, Nerini, even preached his religion publicly. Roman Catholic worship was allowed to be practised publicly and their religious processions were permitted to march freely through the streets.
When the Mons rose in rebellion in 1745, a massacre of Christians took place at Syriam. Nerini fled to India; but he returned to Syriam in 1749 and built a church there. Besides a church at Ava, the Roman Catholics also had a theological college for men in that city. At Syriam they had an orphanage for girls. They also built a church at Pegu. In 1770 they had a church and a college at Monla. The pongyis, however, claimed the grounds, and the structures were therefore pulled down. The Catholics then built a large church and a convent at Dagon (Rangoon). Later more Roman Catholic priests arrived, such as Cortenovas, Sangermano, Amato and others.

In 1756, Alaungpaya brought over from Syriam some French and other European prisoners, and settled them near Ava. By the end of the century there were nearly 1,000 of their descendants living in six villages near Ava, the largest being Kyun-ta-yue with about 100 houses. Their priests made no efforts to win converts. They conducted their services in Latin, dressed like Burmans, and were notorious for their immorality.

Later, when Protestant missionaries arrived, they were also permitted to minister to their own flock. Chapels, dispensaries and schools were also built. In 1816, Judson, the great American missionary, wrote: ‘We have at present no governmental interdict to encounter, and no greater obstacles than such as oppose the progress of missionaries in every heathen land.’ In 1820, Judson and Coleman petitioned Bagyidaw in person to be permitted to preach the Christian Gospel freely in the empire, and that no Burman, who desired to follow the new faith, be penalised in any way. The king refused to issue any orders pertaining to the request. The two missionaries were told that foreigners were free to practise their religion and to minister to their own co-religionists throughout the country, hence their request was out of order.

In 1821, the medical missionary Dr. Price arrived in Rangoon from America. At this time there were eighteen Burmese Christians in that city. When Bagyidaw heard of Price’s surgical skill, he summoned him to the capital. In August 1822, both Price and Judson were presented to the
king who received them very kindly. Bagyidaw even connived at Judson's evangelistic activities, and when told that some Burmans had become Christians, showed no displeasure. Dr. Price settled in Ava, but he confined himself to his medical profession, and ran a school for noblemen's children. He preached to those who came to his house, but never went among the common people as an evangelist.

During the war of 1824-26, the missionaries were suspected of being spies and confined in prison with criminals. After the war, Christianity being associated with the British, the missionaries and their followers were looked upon with even greater suspicion and dread than previously. In 1830, Judson, from his base at Amherst in Tenasserim, arrived in Rangoon, from where he took boat and proceeded to Prome, preaching the gospel and distributing tracts along the way. The Wungyis complained to Burney, the British Resident. Burney told them that he had 'no power or authority over him; but that I know him to be a very pious and good man, and one not likely to injure the Burmese King or Government in any manner'. The ministers said that the king was very vexed with Dr. Judson for the zeal 'with which he is distributing among the people writings in which the Burmese faith is held forth in contempt, and that His Majesty is anxious to remove him from Prome'.

Government officers and the people in general made things so hot for Judson at Prome, that he retired to Rangoon; not, however, without gaining a few converts. On his way to Rangoon, he wrote as follows: 'Farewell to thee Prome! Willingly would I have spent my last breath in thee and for thee. But thy sons ask me not to stay; and I must preach the gospel in other cities also, for therefore am I sent. Read the five hundred tracts that I have left with thee. Pray to the God and Saviour that I have told you of. And if hereafter thou call me, though in the lowest whisper, and it reach me in the very extremities of the empire, I will joyfully listen, and come back to thee.'

In 1848, Judson again arrived in Rangoon and interviewed the Governor. The Myowun was very kind. He invited Judson to settle in Rangoon and promised to give him land
for an English church, so that the English might be induced to come to the place, and enjoy the "benefit of clergy". As to missionary effort, he wrote to his wife, 'nothing can be done openly. The system of intolerance is enforced more rigidly than ever. It is not as a missionary or "propagator of religion", but as a minister of foreign religion, ministering to the foreigners in this place, that I am well received and patronised by the Government.' Foreigners were an important source of revenue to the government, so that it was felt necessary not to restrict them in any way in their religious practices, but rather to patronize their religion.

According to Judson, King Pagan was a staunch Buddhist, and more so his brother, the heir-apparent. The latter begged the king to permit him to become a priest, but the request was turned down. 'He descends from his princely seat', says Judson, 'pounds and winnows the rice with his own hands, washes and boils it in his cook-house, and then on bended knees presents it to the priests.'

In spite of his religiousness, Pagan's reign was an evil one. Thousands of persons were executed so that their properties might be confiscated. After him came Mindon, who not only continued the old policy of complete religious toleration for foreigners, but even went beyond. He patronized missionary educational activities, placed nine of his young sons under Dr. Marks to be educated, and said that he did not mind even if they became Christians. He was certainly the most liberal Burmese monarch in the matter of religious liberty; but it should be noted that he had a political object in view. He thought his policy might be of help in the endeavour to recover, by peaceful means, his lost territory from the British.

One day Marks presented some of his Burmese boys to Mindon. The king told the youths that they should not lightly forsake the religion of their ancestors. Then he turned to Marks and said that he simply desired to guard the boys from acting rashly, or embracing another religion just to please man. But he added that he was perfectly tolerant, and that he had never invited a Mohammedan or a Hindu or a Christian to become a Buddhist.

Foreign Muslims practised on a large scale the marrying
or taking of Burmese women to wife without a marriage ceremony. There is nowhere any indication of religious sanctions against them. Tharrawaddy, however, issued an order that no Burmese shall be held in slavery by foreigners, and those so held would be redeemed at government expense. The order, however, was never enforced, nor were the slaves redeemed.

CHAPTER LX

HOW THIBAW BECAME KING: 1878

Thibaw was one of the many sons of Mindon. While Mindon reigned, no one could ever have thought that Thibaw would be the next king. Even his paternity was in doubt. His mother was a Laungshe princess. Thibaw had received some education. He had also studied under Dr. John Marks, the Christian missionary, and even knew some English; but he had no knowledge of the world, and had not been out of Mandalay and its suburbs. In general appearance he was quite a contrast to his father. Mindon possessed kingly dignity, while Thibaw looked more like an ignorant labourer.

After the assassination in 1866 of the Crown Prince, the Kanaung Mintha, Mindon’s talented brother, the king did not nominate a new heir-apparent. He, however, expressed an opinion that on his death, three of his sons should rule jointly. This would have created an impossible situation. Prince Thonzew was a dependable character. Prince Metkara was a good soldier and possessed a striking personality. Prince Nyaung Yan was looked upon as a man of learning. But a triple monarchy would never have succeeded. Thibaw was nowhere near Mindon’s choice as to kingship. Somehow, however, the wheel of fortune turned in favour of this prince and he became king.

There was no law of succession to the throne in Burma. It was the practice for the king to nominate his successor. But even the royal nominee did not always manage to obtain the crown. Wars of succession were frequent. It was taken
for granted that the king must nominate the son of a queen, either his brother, or his own son. The problem was not an easy one. Burmese kings practised polygamy on a large scale. Mindon was no exception. There were always many aspirants to the throne. Mindon himself was the son of a lesser wife, and he took the throne by rebellion, setting aside his brother King Pagan. It must be said, however, that the usurper was the better man, and proved himself to be a model king.

In August 1878, Mindon fell ill, and palace intrigues started as to the succession. The leading actor in this drama was the Alenandaw Queen, also called Hsinbyumashin, this being her title. She ruled over the palace. Unfortunately for her, she had no son but three daughters. She was an ambitious woman, and naturally did not want to lose her position in the palace at the death of her husband the king. She drew up her plan of operation, and like Lady Macbeth followed it up relentlessly, till her efforts were crowned with success.

Her plan was to support the candidature of Prince Thibaw, and get him to marry her second daughter Supaya-lat. There was no difficulty as to the marriage. Thibaw was in love with her already. The Alenandaw Queen knew Thibaw to be a happy-go-lucky type. She would be able to control both the new king and the queen, and thus be the de facto ruler over the realm. Having made her plan she was pitiless in her methods, and played her part most cleverly and cruelly. She won over the Kinwun Mingyi and almost all the other ministers. To clear the atmosphere, she then had all the princes arrested: but their mothers rushed into the sick king’s room with tears streaming down their cheeks and appealed for justice and mercy. The king, though a very sick man, rose to the occasion, gave the royal command, and it had to be obeyed. All the princes were released. But Mindon was really on his death-bed, and the Alenandaw Queen knew it. She had the princes arrested again, and for safety’s sake, this time she confined their mothers too in their apartments. The dying king was now in her hands. No one knows for certain what happened. It is possible, while Mindon was dropping into a state of
coma, the Alenandaw Queen contrived in obtaining the
dying king's 'consent' to Thibaw succeeding to the throne.
Minden died on 1 October 1878, and Thibaw was proclaimed
king.

The problem of succession may be gauged from the com-
pliations of the king's numerous families. He had a Chief
Queen, three other principal queens, and fifty-nine other
recognized queens who all lived in the same palace. There
were forty-eight sons, of whom forty-six were eligible to the
throne as the sons of queens.

Thibaw was now on the throne; but what about the other
princes, and particularly the favourites of the dead king?
The female guardians of the throne decided to put them out
of the way. No risks must be taken. In 1879, seventy to eighty
princes and princesses were massacred in order that Thibaw
might sit comfortably on the throne. But Prince Nyaung Yan
the scholar, and a few others managed to escape. The mas-
sacre, however, was not the work of Thibaw. He certainly
agreed to it, but the Alenandaw Queen and her two daughters,
Thibaw's wives, were the moving spirits in this nefarious busi-
ness. The bodies were buried in the palace grounds. The
British Resident protested and later left the capital. The
ministers, including the Kinwun Mingyi, had agreed to the
massacre.

Royal massacres were nothing new in the history of Burma.
The subjects of the king were used to it, however much they
might have disliked it. The difference lay here, that the earlier
massacres took place when Burma was internationally an
unknown country; while the massacre of 1879 came to be
known to the civilised world because of the existing Anglo-
Burmese relations and the presence of a British Resident at
Mandalay. The greater the number of princes, the greater
was the danger of rebellions for the possession of the throne.
The remedy hit upon by tradition was to remove the potential
danger at one stroke by such massacres, and make the posi-
tion of the new king safe. In spite of the massacre, however,
rebellions did not cease. They took place even in the reign
of Thibaw.

Thus did Thibaw ascend the throne. But he neither reigned
nor ruled. The spirit of kingship had gone out of the dynasty on the death of Mindon. Truncated Burma, cut off from the sea, deprived of the mouths of her great rivers, and bereft of leadership, could not abide long as such. The British, in 1885, brought about a unified Burma, and ruled over it for sixty-two years. In January 1948, they honourably retired, and handed over the administration to youthful republican Burmans, who are still doing their best to keep the country together, and to preserve it from internal chaos as well as from foreign domination.

Chapter LXI

The Last King of Burma: 1878-85

Thibaw was one of the forty sons of Mindon. His mother was a Shan princess of not much account in the palace. Doubts have been raised of his legitimacy since his mother was friendly with a monk. He was one of the least esteemed of the royal princes. Mindon entrusted him, together with eight other sons of his, to Dr. Marks; thus Thibaw came to be educated at the Mandalay Mission S. P. G. School. He proved to be a good pupil at school, and was marked by obedience, industry, and an amiable disposition. He learned to speak and read English quite well, dressed in European clothes, was fond of European games and sports, and was known to be a pleasant bright light-hearted youngster at school.

No one could have thought of him, however, as an aspirant to the throne. As to succession to the throne, Mindon’s heart was set upon his three sons, the Thonze Prince, the Mekkhara Prince, and the Nyaung Yan Prince, in order of seniority. The last two were his special favourites. Mindon took notice of Thibaw when the latter in a competitive examination at the Royal Golden Monastery College won top place and became a Pathamabyan in Theology. The Nyaung Yan Prince, however, was both learned as well as pious, and he too was a Pathamabyan.
Thibaw was not a monster of cruelty. It is rumour that has given him a bad name. There is no evidence to show that he aspired to the throne or took part in the conspiracy hatched by the Alenandaw Queen, the Taingda Mingyi, and the Kinwun Mingyi, to set aside the three sons of Mindon; nor is it true that Thibaw engineered the royal massacre of 1879. The scheming chief queen of Mindon selected Thibaw to be the husband of her three daughters, and to place him on the throne of Burma, simply because she thought, and correctly so, that he would be better controlled by her than the other princes. A nonentity had to be selected, and the choice fell upon Thibaw. She realized that he could easily be extolled as a prince, learned both in Burmese as well as in foreign studies, and so was best fitted to be Mindon’s successor. The great object of the Hsinbyumashin was to make herself the factotum of the state by having under her control the new king as well as her three daughters, his wives, namely, Supaya-kyi, Supaya-lat, and Supaya-nge.

The proclamation of Thibaw as king in 1878, at Mindon’s death, was the work of the Hsinbyumashin. Greatness, together with the gift of three wives, was thrust upon Thibaw by this ambitious woman. He had not to reason why; he had simply to obey. Had he not yielded to her, another prince would have been selected and Thibaw’s throat would have been bludgeoned. At the funeral of his father, Thibaw made his first public appearance in the procession. At the burial he was so nervous that he could scarcely utter a word. Again, when about eighty members of Mindon’s household were done to death in 1879, it was not the work of Thibaw, although his royal consent had been obtained for it. The whole plot was hatched by the cruel Hsinbyumashin and her second daughter Supaya-lat.

The circumstances in which he found himself must certainly have induced Thibaw to accept some kind of a partnership, in these developments, with his formidable mother-in-law bound to him with a triple cord. After he became king, his former happy relations with his school-mates and old teachers were entirely severed. He was so well guarded by the Great Lady of the Palace that even his old teachers who
wished to contact him failed in their attempts. He was a prisoner in his own palace. The authority of the Hsinbyumashin, however, did not last for long. The Chief Queen, Supaya-lat, began to assert herself very successfully; but this did not bring any freedom to Thibaw. He made attempts to free himself, and even on one occasion threatened Supaya-lat with a spear, but it was of no avail. He was king, but thoroughly under a petticoat government.

As to character, Thibaw was weak and foolish, and possessed none of the kingly majesty of his father. He had scarcely been outside of Mandalay, and was not interested in administration. He was largely a palace king, but in the palace too he did not enjoy any authority. A missionary lady of the time reports that he habitually carried a spear with him; that he was tall, well-built, and very fair, with a manly, frank face; that he had a good forehead with clear, steady eyes; that his mouth was firm but pleasant; that his chin was full and somewhat sensual and that in 1879 he was only 20 years of age. Another report, however, declares that his appearance was very unimpressive, reminding one of a labourer rather than a king.

In his dealings with his ministers, Thibaw at times asserted himself, so much so that the Kinwun Mingyi retired into private life. In spite of his knowledge of the English language, Thibaw was ignorant of the power of his next-door neighbour, the English. When the British army invaded his territory in 1885, he threatened to throw them all into the mighty River. But this was only a traditional threat. Hsinbyushin had issued the same threat against the Chinese invaders of the 18th century; Bagyidaw had ordered the Kyi Wungyi, and later Maha Bandula to drive Campbell and his army into the River. While Campbell was advancing upon Prome, Bagyidaw declared that he would personally take charge of the army and throw the invader into the Irrawaddy.

After the death of Mindon, it was clear that the dynasty was played out. Thibaw was the last royal product of a palace system that specialised in unrestricted polygamy. Besides, the reigning king married his own half-sister with the object of maintaining the blue blood of the royal family in all its
purity. The fashion, however, failed to preserve the dynastic talent. On the other hand, it is quite possible, it was this practice which infected the family with a sense of irresponsibility coupled with the maladies of melancholia and uncontrollable temper.

When the British entered Thibaw’s kingdom in 1885, with a view to the total incorporation of Upper Burma into their empire, there was hardly any opposition from the king’s army. There was indeed some exchange of shots at the frontier fort of Minhla, at Nyangoo and at Myingyan. The Burmese made a stand at the redout of Gwe-gyaun-Kamyo, but were severely defeated losing 200 in killed and some 300 as prisoners. There was no organization, no materials to fight with, no funds, and no officers with any measure of ability to command troops. All was under neglect. The people looked to the king to repel the invaders. It is possible the king expected the people to save the country and the royal family. Mandalay fell without a shot. The people were stupefied at the new developments. They could not understand why the kingship that they had worshipped for so long was unable to protect itself. They even thought that the English would retire. They witnessed in silent amazement the spectacle of Thibaw and his queen Supaya-lat being quietly but firmly taken from the capital, and put on board a steamer to be exiled on the western coast of India. Thibaw led a peaceful life there for over thirty years till his death in 1916.

CHAPTER LXII

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH AUTHORITY

When the British took Upper Burma from Thibaw, the country was once again unified. But mere conquest does not mean unification. Dalhousie in 1852, and Bernard in 1884 had declared that although Arakan, Tenasserim and Pegu had been quickly pacified, Upper Burma would offer prolonged resistance. In 1879, the General Officer Commanding at Rangoon said that with only 500 troops he could take
Mandalay, but that 5,000 men would be required to subdue the Upper Burmans. These fears came true. Upper Burma was a loosely knit state, but there was a stockade in almost every village. Villagers had so much faith in this old-fashioned defense that they were prepared to resist. There was also present a crude but strong sense of nationalism. Defeat in war did not sap the vitality behind this feeling. This vitality expressed itself in a crop of aspirants to the Burmese throne, in an attempt to imitate Alaungpaya.

Dacoity was not only endemic to Burma, and specially to Upper Burma, but it had established itself as an institution. Thibaw's government was unable to suppress it. On the other hand, his ministers were often in alliance with dacoit chiefs, and shared their booty. Governors of provinces were helpless, since they obtained no support from the centre. Left in the lurch, villages tamely submitted to the exactions of the dacoits. In 1884, the Kachins had even taken Bhamo and plundered villages half-way down to Mandalay.

When the British declared war in 1885 and entered Upper Burma, Thibaw issued a proclamation threatening to exterminate the 'foreign heretics'. He did not have the courage, however, to lead an army. The British overcame all resistance because of their overwhelming might, and the king submitted to them. He and his family were, without any hitch, removed to a steamer on the river. The surrender was to all appearances in the nature of a day-light open-air performance, with crowds watching and British troops lining the area. While this performance was going on, the royal palace was being plundered by the king's erstwhile subjects, mostly women. It is possible many Burmans thought that the British would depose Thibaw, place one of his brothers on the throne, and retire. The British, however, had no such intention. In an age of empire building it was their fixed policy to acquire as much territory as possible and thus forestall rivals.

When Thibaw was deported, and it was clear that a British administration was being set up, Burmese soldiers went home with their arms and joined the dacoits. Their patriotism did not rise high enough to strive for unity among themselves
against the common foe. They plundered one another as well as their own countrymen. The poor villagers, sickened by their depredations, threw themselves into the arms of the British.

The British took over five years to dispose of the dacoits, and almost five years more to bring about the pacification of the country. During this period renowned British soldiers visited Burma: Sir George White, Sir George Wolsely, and Sir Frederick Roberts. Large numbers of Indian and Gurkha troops were employed to deal with the dacoits. By 1890, Upper Burma proper and the Shan States were subdued. The Kachins submitted in 1895, and the Chins and the Eastern Karens in 1896.

There were a number of leaders in the resistance movement, which, however, was of a thoroughly disjointed character. Maung Hmat and Maung Thein raised their royal standards at Shwebo. Hla U was a great dacoit leader in the same region. In 1888, he was killed by his own followers. Min O and Tha Pwe were leaders in Sagaing district. Maung Cho operated in Pagan district, but ultimately he submitted. In Minbu, a Thugyi, Maung Swe, rose in arms in 1886 and maintained himself for two years. By 1888 the large bands of dacoits had either been dispersed or destroyed. Many were killed, and many more surrendered.

Maung Po Saw, a Myook, raised his standard in Bhamo district in 1889 and won over the Kachins; but he did not last for long. In 1890, Nga Kan Baw, a dacoit leader, was captured and executed, while another leader, Nga Aga, surrendered. In Mandalay district Nga Kyaw Zaw was pursued from place to place till he disappeared altogether. In Ye-u district alone about 1,200 dacoits surrendered in 1890. This is by no means a full list. Robbers in other districts were also dealt with. With the pacification of Burma dacoities did not cease, however; but it is true that by 1890 the British had crushed the patriotic dacoits and established their own authority beyond question.

For one year after the occupation of Mandalay, the Shan States were not reached; but the intention was to bring them too within the empire. Proclamations and notices were sent
to the Sawbwas enjoining them to keep the peace and to pay the usual tribute to the new overlord. But the fall of the Burmese dynasty did not fail to affect the Shan States too. There were widespread commotions. Some of the princes were prepared to submit to the conqueror of Burma; but there were also a few who thought the opportunity had come to regain their independence and thus escape the burden of tribute. Besides, it was the opportune moment for ambitious rivals to strike for the sawbwaship. There were rebellions and conspiracies galore.

British operations in the Shan States began in 1889, and within a year's time all the princes submitted. Only small detachments of troops were sent against individual Sawbwas. Their tributes were fixed, and they became to all purposes 'subsidiary princes'. But Sawlapaw, the Karen Chief of the Eastern Karenni, created some trouble. This state had been recognized both by Mindon and the British, in 1875, as an independent unit. While the British were busy creating order in Upper Burma, Sawlapaw thought it a good opportunity to get some plunder and also enlarge his territory. He entered the domain of the Sawbwa of Mokme in March 1888 and triumphantly moved forward ravaging the country. The British at once sent out troops who routed Sawlapaw and drove him out of Mokme territory. In December 1888, British troops invaded the Karenni, and in January 1889 occupied the Karen capital of Sawlon, which they found deserted. Sawlapaw was invited to return, but he refused. His nephew Sawlawi was created the new Sawbwa. He became a British subject, paid an indemnity of £30,000 and agreed to render a yearly tribute of £500.

The Shan States were completely pacified. The Sawbwas found the change of masters very convenient. They were sure of protection, and they knew their fixed responsibilities. They had to perform no military duties, and they were safe from exactions. During the war of 1914-18 they manifested their loyalty towards their new masters, and so too during the Second World War, till the British retired before the onrush of the Japanese.

By the Burma Laws Act of 1898, the civil, criminal and
revenue administration of every Shan State was vested in the chief of the state, subject to restrictions specified for each state. However, enactments in force in Upper Burma could be applied to the Shan States too. The states were to administer customary law in other cases, in accordance with justice, equity and good conscience.

When the British decided to apply the dyarchical Montague-Chelmsford reforms to Burma, it was thought best to keep the Shan States, also the other hill areas inhabited by the Chins, Kachins, etc. completely out of the new picture. On 1 October 1922, the Southern and the Northern Shan States were formed into a federation with finances distinct from those of Burma. The Governor of Burma controlled the States through the Commissioner of the Federated Shan States. The states of Karen ri were not included in this federation. They were directly under the Governor, not a part of British India nor of British Burma.

Under the British the face of Burma began to change rapidly from what it had been under the kings. The British speedily began to build roads, bridges and railways. The River Irrawaddy began to develop into a greater highway than ever before. The British established the rule of law in the country. Government servants began to be paid fixed salaries. Taxes were also fixed. Hospitals and schools began to be established. British rule was of a systematized nature. But it should be remembered that foreign rule must necessarily mean exploitation of the resources of the country very much in favour of the ruler. Foreign rule also tends to create among the ruled a spirit of dependence, a slavish mentality, and an inferiority complex. The subject race is taught that it is an inferior race, wanting in initiative. The benefits conferred by foreign rule are considered by many to be hardly a compensation for this moral loss.

The outstanding feature in the history of Burma under British authority has been the rapidity with which she has been drawn into the whirlpool of world markets. Eighty-five years ago Lower Burma was a very sparsely populated region, covered with swamps and forests. Early in the 20th century it became one of the principal rice-exporting areas
of the world. Indian and European capitalists and mill-
owners also stimulated the cultivation of cotton and ground-
uts. The colonization of Lower Burma went on apace, and it became, as it still is, the heart of Burma.

It should be noted, however, that this economic develop-
ment of the country under British rule did not spring from
the indigenous peoples themselves. Almost all the industrial
developments were sponsored or controlled by Europeans,
Indians, and Chinese. Industrial occupations were largely
in the hands of the immigrant population. Although Burma
was an agricultural country and the vast majority of the
Burmese people were agriculturists, the country depended for
her agricultural development upon Indian and British capital,
and largely on Indian labour.

The 20th century Burmese nationalists, waking up from
their deep sleep, found themselves facing problems of a gigantic
nature. How was foreign rule to be liquidated? How to stop
and roll back the British, Indian, and Chinese economic
penetration and exploitation of the country? How to teach
the sons of the soil to shoulder responsibilities by doing hard
work, and to enter the various professions from the bottom
to the top, so as not to be dependent on foreigners? How to
choose leaders who will discharge their duties, not for money,
not for show, but as the true servants of the people? The
British in 1948, gracefully and honourably withdrew their
authority over Burma. Under Burmese self-rule, new as well
as old disruptive forces are at the present time oppressing
the people. It is for Burma and her leaders to bring about
an abiding pacification.

Chapter LXIII

British Burma: Constitutional Developments 1826-1942

From 1826 to 1852 British Burma consisted of the two Commiss-
ionships of Arakan and Tenasserim. They were attached
to British India, and British Indian administration was
introduced in them both. In 1852, the province of Pegu was added to British Burma. So now there were three Commissionerships, each mutually independent, but all controlled by the Government in India.

In 1862, the three Commissionerships were combined in a single province, and placed under a Chief Commissioner with headquarters at Rangoon. When in 1885 Upper Burma was conquered, it was in time combined with Lower Burma and styled the Province of Burma with Rangoon as the capital. The head of the province from 1862 to 1897 was a Chief Commissioner responsible to the Governor-General. In 1897, Burma became a Lieut.-Governorship, and in 1923 she was promoted to a Governorship. In 1937, Burma was separated from India and placed under a Governor directly responsible to the Government of the United Kingdom.

When in November 1885 Thibaw, his queen, and his mother-in-law were deported to India, a provisional government was immediately set up. The Hluttadu continued to function with Sladen in charge of civil affairs, and Prendergast of military concerns. The Hluttadu issued proclamations to the public to remain calm, and to the old Burmese officers to continue at their posts and perform their duties as before. This was meant to guard against any breakdown in the administration and to prevent chaos.

In December 1885, the Chief Commissioner, Sir Charles Bernard, arrived in Mandalay, and the powers of the Hluttadu were reduced. The Taingda Mingyi was removed, but the services of U Gaung, the Kinwun Mingyi, were retained. In February 1886, Upper Burma was incorporated into British India, and soon after the Hlatdau was abolished. Burma became a 'Non-Regulation' province of India. Deputy Commissioners and Police Officers were appointed to Upper Burma in the civil services. Indian subordinates from Lower Burma and from India had to be drafted into service to create a new administration after the Indian pattern.

As the new order was being introduced, large numbers of Burmese officials, hangers-on, and soldiers were thrown out of employment. Many of them preferred to follow the line of least resistance. They joined the professional robbers
who for generations had been the scourge of the country. Added to these there arose numerous claimants to the Burmese throne who challenged the new rulers. They gathered followers in traditional style from amongst the robbers, and Upper Burma became a scene of utter confusion. These claimants and their bandit followers made sudden attacks upon police stations and upon Europeans. They were severely punished, and punitive expeditions were sent to wipe them out. Soon their activities developed into wholesale plunder of their own people. They had to live, and as fugitives they could only live on plunder. From being semipatriots, they now came out in the open as regular robbers. The British increased their troops to 14,000 by 1887, and the new administration began to disarm the people. This was a laborious process, for there were many fire-arms scattered all over the country.

By 1888, the whole of Upper Burma was militarily occupied. Military posts, 141 in number, were established. The civil side and the Police were still in the background. By 1889, nearly 18,000 troops, largely Indian, were operating in Upper Burma. A Karen battalion was also raised. The railway from Toungoo to Mandalay was completed. This communication link was of great significance in the pacification, administration, and unification of the country. Lower Burma meanwhile was passing through fairly normal conditions, with the exception of the districts of Tharrawaddy and Thayetmyo which were disturbed by robbers and patriots.

By 1890, all the disturbed districts were restored to order, and organized crime was largely suppressed. But wild tribes on the frontiers were still a menace. No great dacoit leaders remaining in Upper Burma, the troops were gradually withdrawn, and in their place a body of Military Police was constituted.

Special attention was paid to organize village administration. The powers and duties of the village headmen were defined. In the larger towns of Upper Burma, a simple system of municipal government was introduced, but no attempt was made to extend the principle of self-government.
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Dispensaries were opened, and Upper Burma gradually came to have in principle all the paraphernalia of government as it prevailed in British India and in Lower Burma.

In 1897, Burma ceased to be a 'Non-Regulation' province. The provisions of the India Council Act of 1861 now became applicable to Burma. Fryer, who was hitherto the Chief Commissioner, became the Lieut.-Governor. A Legislative Council was constituted consisting of the Lieut.-Governor as President and nine members, five officials and four non-officials. U Gaung, the ex-Kinwun Mingyi, was the first Burmese M.L.C. It was not meant to be a measure of self-government at all. Even the Indian Council Act of 1892 was not applied to Burma. The functions of the Council were not parliamentary in any form. All legislation was initiated by the Executive; nothing else could be discussed. It was really a committee for making laws and to render advice. There was no element of election, no electorate. All the members of the Council were nominated, and almost all of them were British.

The constitution of 1897 was not reconstituted until 1910. Burma during this period was a peaceful country. The British had no political problem to tackle. But Indian nationalism, with a view to self-government, was fast developing across the Bay. The Indian National Congress, founded in 1885, established branches in Burma, too. However there was scarcely any indigenous Burmese agitation for self-government. The Minto-Morley Reforms of 1910 were granted to India as oil over troubled waters. The reforms applied to Burma at the same time were of a much inferior order. The Legislative Council was reconstituted, but the Lieut.-Governor continued to be the President. The Council was to consist of not more than fifteen members, of which only one was to be elected and that by the Burma Chamber of Commerce which was a European body. The Lieut.-Governor nominated the rest of the fourteen members. Of those nominated, not more than six were to be officials; all others were to be non-officials. Of the non-officials, four at least were to be Burmans, one Indian, and one Chinese. Thus non-officials were in the majority; but as to powers, the Council was
nothing more than a debating club. The only saving clause was that there was no religio-communal representation on it.

In 1920, the number of Council members was increased to twenty-eight but only two were elected, both Europeans. The remaining twenty-six were nominated, Burmans, Indians, and Chinese, also officials; but non-officials were in the majority. The character of the Council as a debating society, however, was not altered. Meanwhile, the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of an advanced type, and with an element of self-government in them, were being applied to the provinces in India. The British authorities did not consider Burma to be politically advanced enough for these reforms, and so left her out. Actually, however, the idea was later to separate Burma from India, and to give her a different constitution. The British were afraid of Indian nationalist influence which was spreading in Burma. A separated Burma, they judged, would be more convenient to handle than otherwise. It is indeed true that Burmans are not Indians, and they were entitled to have a separate government of their own. British hopes, however, were not realized. The decision to leave Burma out of the Indian reform scheme produced a strong wave of national feeling. It touched the people’s pride that they were looked upon as politically backward. For long Burmans had shown no signs of a political awakening on any large scale. Now there was a change. During 1920-21 a rapid development of political activities among the people became evident. The war of 1914-18 had made a difference, and Indian Congress influence was spreading. There was a demand that the new Indian constitutional reforms be applied to their country too. Agitation sprang up in various parts of the country, particularly in Lower Burma.

Political agitation manifested itself in strikes among millhands, crews of the British Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, railway hands, tramway employees, and dock labourers. Even school-boys and University students went on strike in the name of patriotism. These developments were related to the Satyagraha and non-co-operation movements started by Mahatma Gandhi in India. The British finally decided to
extend the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms to Burma too. With effect from 2 January 1923, the Province of Burma was constituted a Governor’s Province under the new Government of India Act.

Under the new reforms, executive authority was vested in a Governor-in-Council of two members in respect of certain subjects known as Reserved Subjects, and in the Governor acting with two Ministers in respect of Transferred Subjects. The Governor and the two Executive Councillors were not responsible to the Legislature. The two Ministers were to be appointed by the Governor from among the non-official elected members of the Legislative Council. They were responsible to the Governor as well as to the Legislature. All provincial subjects other than Transferred Subjects were Reserved Subjects. Among the Reserved Subjects were Finance and Law and Order. Thus the Ministers were dependent in respect of finances upon the Executive Council.

The new Legislature had a strength of one hundred and three, consisting of the two Executive Councillors being nominated, seventy-nine elected members, and twenty-two nominated by the Governor. Of the nominated members not more than fourteen were to be officials. Of the seventy-nine elected members, eight were Indians, five Karens, and eight Europeans and Anglo-Indians, all elected in their own separate constituencies. There were six special constituencies, such as the University, and the various Chambers of Commerce. The Governor was not to be a member of the Council, but he could address the House.

Although these dyarchical reforms were welcomed by many Burmans (but not by advanced Burmese politicians of the Congress school), it was soon realized that power still lay in the hands of the foreign bureaucracy functioning in the country, and that the Governor and his Councillors were the real rulers. In the meantime, Indians on the other side of the Bay were taking strong measures, under the Mahatma’s leadership, to compel the British to part with power. The result was a new Federal India Act. At the same time, the British Parliament passed the Government of Burma Act of 1935 for a Burma separated from India.
The new Burmese reforms, which came into operation in 1937, were certainly an advance upon the old; but the dyarchical system was still there, and real power lay in the hands of the Governor, his three Counsellors, and a Financial Adviser. The Advocate-General, the High Court, the Public Service Commission, and the Railway Board, were all under the Governor's control. The Legislature consisted of two chambers. The communal and racial legislative representation of 1923 was retained and enlarged.

In the meantime a new generation was springing up in Burma, consisting of young nationalists, produced by the University of Rangoon, who had studied History, Politics, and Economics. While Britain was battling with Germany, there was a demand for home-rule and even independence. Agitation for freedom began to spread, and strikes became the order of the day. It was under these conditions that the Japanese in December 1941 declared war on Britain, and entered Burma early in 1942. The British regime was over, at least for three years to come, and the Japanese established a military dictatorship over Burma.

CHAPTER LXIV

POLITICAL PARTIES IN BURMA UP TO 1941

Under Burmese kings there was nothing like political parties in the modern sense. Aspirants to the throne had their followers. The game of politics consisted of conspiracies and rebellions against the ruling monarch. It was thus that Tharrawaddy in 1837 supplanted Bagyidaw and rewarded his supporters with offices. Thus again did Mindon set aside Pagan in 1852, and chose his ministers from amongst his own followers. Party politics, if they can be so-called, were entirely secret, and revolved round the persons of princes of the royal blood.

Party politics in Burma began in 1908 when the Young Men's Buddhist Association was founded in imitation of the Y.M.C.A. It was not meant to be a political body, but
it soon took to politics. When the Montague-Chelmsford reforms came under discussion in 1918, there was a split in the Y.M.B.A. The younger members were zealous nationalists, and broke away from the older people who were willing to co-operate with the British. The Younger Party, led by U Chit Hlaing, developed into the General Council of Buddhist Associations (G.C.B.A.) and demanded more liberal reforms. U Ba Pe assumed the leadership of the Moderate Peoples' Party, also called the Twenty-One Party. Sir J. A. Maung Gyi was the leader of a rival moderate body called the Progressive Party, which in 1924 came to be called the Independent Party, nicknamed the Golden Valley Party. There were quarrels (1924-28) for leadership in the Chit Hlaing G.C.B.A., and it split into three small groups under the leadership of U Chit Hlaing, U Su, and U Soe Thein respectively. There was no difference in their principles and objectives. All three were under the influence of the Indian National Congress, and adopted the Congress policy of boycotting the Montford Reforms.

When the British decided to apply the dyarchical reforms to Burma, the Twenty-One Party and the Independent Party showed willingness to co-operate and accept office. They had no definite programme, still they were able to dominate the political field, and held office for ten long years.

From 1930 onwards, the issue of separation from India came to the forefront. This led the groups of Chit Hlaing, Su, and Soe Thein to join hands as anti-Separationists. They felt that it was British diplomacy to divide and rule. There were scarcely any anti-Separationists, however, who were definitely opposed to separation. They desired to be in federal India only till such time as both the countries were granted self-government. They were well aware of the fact that the Indian National Congress was the only body capable of fighting for freedom. The fear was that India would win self-government, while separated Burma would be kept firmly under British control.

In 1930, Indo-Burmese labour riots broke out in Rangoon. Although the trouble was confined to Rangoon and to the
labouring classes, the sentiment of 'Burma for the Burmans' became more wide-spread through this upheaval. The Thakin (=Master) or Dobama Party was formed, whose avowed aim was complete independence. The Thakins declared that Burmans, not the British, were the true masters or owners of the country. In December 1930, the Tharrawaddy Rebellion broke out under Saya San and in 1931 began to spread in the neighbouring districts. But it was crushed and Saya San was hanged. A Sino-Burmese riot also troubled Rangoon in December 1930. These disturbances stimulated nationalism as well as an anti-foreign spirit in the country. U Maung Gyee, the former Education Minister under the Reforms, organised his Green Army of National Volunteers. He declared that the aim was to instil patriotism and discipline into Burmese youth. Dr. Ba Maw also organised a volunteer corps, the Dahma Tat, adopted the Nazi salute, and a cap resembling that of the Italian Fascists.

In 1935, the British decided to separate Burma from India, and Parliament passed the Government of Burma Act. This brought about a further change in party position. Dr. Ba Maw, once a strong anti-Separationist, joined the People's Party, and succeeded in passing a vote of no confidence in the Legislative Council against the Ministers. They resigned, and Ba Maw and Ba Pe stepped into their shoes. The new Ministers remained in office till the Council was dissolved in 1936 in view of the elections under the new constitution of a separated Burma.

In September 1935, Rangoon school-boys went on strike, and in March 1936, University students followed suit. Students proud of their newly roused patriotism, showed marked signs of indiscipline, began to dabble in politics, and even aspired to leadership and office. Politicians encouraged their restlessness, and made full use of them against their rivals.

In 1936, Ba Maw formed the Sinyetha or the Poor Man's Party. The year was full of political activity in preparation for the general elections to the House of Representatives under the new constitution. The elections (December 1936)
resulted in U Ba Pe’s United G.C.B.A. winning forty-six seats, the Sinyetha Party sixteen seats, Chit Hlaing’s Party twelve seats, the Thakins three seats, Golden Valley two seats, Thetpan one seat, Fabian Party one seat, non-Party Burmese members seventeen, and others to include Indians, Europeans, Karens, etc. thirty-eight seats. No one party was strong enough to form its own government: a coalition government was inevitable. This was the sectional nature of Burmese politics. Burmans failed to develop a party like the Indian National Congress. Ba Maw’s Sinyetha Party was the only one with an economic programme. The struggle for office was the chief feature in party conflicts and personal rivalries. Without the creation of a multi-group system, as in France, it was impossible to form a government. Even Ba Pe, the leader of the largest group, failed to form a ministry, but Ba Maw succeeded and became the first Prime Minister of Burma.

The Ba Maw ministry assumed office with all good intentions. It tried to maintain peace and tranquillity in the country, and relieved the peasant by passing the Tenancy Act. The opposition parties, however, gave no rest to the government. Throughout 1937 the political atmosphere was one of intrigue for the loaves and fishes of office. There were many aspirants to office within the party itself. There was scarcely any element of loyalty to one’s party or to the leader; and loyalty that is bought with gold or with office cannot be depended upon.

In 1938, the Thakins instigated a strike among the oilfield labourers. In March 1938, U Saw broke away from Ba Pe and formed the Myochit Party. He also organised his army of volunteers, the Galon Tat. In July-August 1938, Buddhist-Muslim riots of a serious nature broke out in Rangoon and neighbouring parts. The Thakins took advantage of the situation, and promoted strikes of labourers and students in various parts of the country. Even the monks joined hands with political extremists, particularly in Mandalay. The result was that the Ba Maw ministry fell in February 1939, and a new coalition ministry was formed by U Pu, supported by Ba Pe and U Saw. Ba Maw, being
now out of office, joined hands with the Thakins and formed the Freedom Block.

In September 1939, the War broke out in Europe. Ba Maw and the Thakins began to make their voices heard. They demanded from Britain the promise of democratic freedom for Burma, to be granted immediately on the conclusion of the war. Ba Maw called upon the people not to assist the British in the prosecution of the war. He was arrested, tried, and jailed. Some of his associates were also imprisoned, and the Freedom Block ceased to exist.

The sympathies of the large majority of the Burmese were with the British in the war against Germany. Britain was being severely bombed, but the people in Burma felt safe. In the House of Representatives political intrigue did not cease. Many were struggling for office. In January 1940, U Pu dismissed Ba Pe from the ministry, but in September he was himself desert ed by U Saw, and his ministry fell. U Saw now formed a ministry, and promised to purge the country of nepotism and corruption, and to Burmanise the services. He had a number of his opponents arrested under the Defence Rules. In September 1941, he proceeded to England, and requested the British Prime Minister to promise freedom to Burma, to be implemented at the conclusion of the war. This was refused.

On 8 December 1941, Japan declared war, and began to make preparations to occupy Burma. Some young Thakins, under Aung San’s leadership, had already got in touch with the Japanese in Japan and in Siam. They raised a little army of patriots, which the Japanese trained and armed. The idea was to enter Burma in company with the Japanese army, and with the help of Nippon win independence for their country. In January 1942, U Saw, while on his way back to Burma, was detained by the British Government. He was discovered to be in communication with the Japanese. The Governor, therefore, removed him from office, and Sir Paw Tun became the fourth Premier of Burma. As the War progressed, and the Japanese began to occupy more and more of Burma, the British withdrew, and by May 1942, the Japanese came to be in full possession of
the country. The Governor, with the Prime Minister and one more Minister, together with his officers, withdrew into India, and made Simla his headquarters. The age of Burmese political parties, their intrigues and struggles for office, under the British regime, was over. With the coming of the Japanese an entirely new chapter opened in the history of Burmese politics.

CHAPTER LXV

ONE POLITICAL PARTY IN BURMA: 1942-45

While the Japanese were planning to enter Burma by way of Siam, some of the Thakin leaders contacted them. About thirty Thakins even received military training under the Japanese, and when the latter entered Burma early in 1942, a small Burmese army followed in their wake. As it proceeded towards Rangoon, its numbers increased, and it assumed the name of the Burma Independence Army (B.I.A.). They did some fighting, but the great object was to set up, with the help of Nippon, an administration for an independent Burma. Since the Thakins were the ones to contact the Japanese, the Thakin Party now came into prominence.

As the old government, particularly district government, collapsed, at the withdrawal of the superior civil officers with the British Army, in many villages and towns the inhabitants asserted themselves, and took measures for defence against bad characters. The B.I.A. leaders tried to step into the shoes of the old government. They set up, where they could, village, town, and district committees, while the Japanese military authorities organised local peace committees in order to calm and conciliate the people, and above all to keep a watch over the various localities in their own interest. The B.I.A. committees were at first only local organisations with no central authority to control them. But when Rangoon fell (8 March 1942), Thakin Tun Ok set up in that city a central government, the Burma Baho Government, with himself as the Chief Administrator, the Japanese
authorities agreeing to this, or at least not objecting to it. Tun Ok tried to organize ten departments at the centre, each under a secretary. These ten secretaries acted as an advisory council to himself, the Head of the Government.

Tun Ok also tried to organise district administration consisting of a District Officer and a secretary. Directly under the District administration was the Township which also was to have a unitary administration under a Township Officer and a secretary. Directly under the Township administration was the administration of each town in the township. Each town was to have its own unitary administration with a President, Vice-President, Secretary, and a committee of not more than six other members. Also directly under the Township administration was the administration of each village within the township. Each village was to have its own village authority consisting of a President, Secretary, and between four and eight members of the village committee, according to the population of the village. It is doubtful if this new organisation of government was much more than what was drawn up on paper.

On 23 March 1942, the representatives of the B.I.A. government concluded a treaty with the Japanese. It was agreed that Burma would feed Japanese soldiers stationed in the country, that Burma would repay the cost of munitions expended, that Burma would pay an indemnity of Rs. 3,000 for every Japanese soldier killed in the Burmese campaign, that no custom duty would be collected on Japanese goods for fifteen years, that a Japanese minister would be entertained in Burma so long as the debt to Japan remained unpaid, that Japan would give to Burmans military, industrial, and commercial training, that Burma would not seek for relations with any foreign country without the consent of Japan, that no tax would be imposed on Japanese nationals entering Burma, and that no foreigner would be allowed to own land and water in Burma.

The Burma Baho government employed mostly Thakins to fill the various important posts in the state. The leaders of the Thakin Party, who escaped from British jails in Upper Burma, also began to have a share in the new government.
The Thakins were well-meaning, but they were unable to maintain law and order in the country, and failed to satisfy the Japanese as well as the people. One of the great objects of the Japanese was to conciliate the Burmese people, win over their experienced leaders, and make use of the old government officers, so that the administration of the country would run smoothly, and above all that by these means the Burmese people would help the Japanese with all their heart to win the war against the Allies.

The Nipponese Commander-in-Chief, Iida, soon came to the conclusion that the Burma Baho government, which consisted largely of inexperienced young men, would not do for the Japanese purpose. In many parts of the country robbing and looting was rampant. At times the Thakins themselves committed excesses which created much resentment. A Japanese officer was murdered by some Thakins, and the Nippon authorities thereupon executed a number of Thakins. On 4 June 1942, Iida put an end to the Burma Baho government. The B.I.A. as a military force was to continue, but it was not to take any part in politics or in the administration of the country. Iida then set up an Interim Central Government and appointed Dr. Ba Maw and twelve others to shoulder the burden of government for the time being. At the same time Iida appointed a Preparation Committee, consisting of Ba Maw and certain others, to draw up a constitution for a central government which would be subordinate to the Japanese Military authorities, a government which would work for Japanese victory with all the resources at its command, and also ensure friendship between the Japanese and the Burmese.

Dr. Ba Maw, the Chairman of the Preparation Committee as well as Head of the Interim Government, felt much depressed over the situation. The British, the old masters, had gone, but the Japanese were the masters now. He had just left prison doors. He was more or less ignorant of conditions in the country. His mind, he himself said, was a blank, and he did not know how to begin. His difficulties, however, were soon solved by the Japanese authorities. They made it clear to him that the new central government was to be patterned after Japan’s government which was Fascist. Japan had a
Diet, but Burma was not to have the paraphernalia of a legislature, that no political party disputes were to be allowed, and the great thing was to win the war. It was pointed out to him that all the great warring countries were being run as dictatorships, that even Churchill and Roosevelt were also really functioning as dictators, and that the war could best be fought under such an economy.

The Preparation Committee completed its work within less than two months, and on 1 August 1942, the new government was set up called the Burmese Executive Government. Ba Maw was appointed the Chief Administrator, and there were ten Executive Officers to help him, each in charge of a department. Japanese advisers were attached to each department. The Japanese Commander-in-Chief was the supreme head of the new government. All the Burmese Executives took the oath of allegiance to Japan. Burma, therefore, on 1 August 1942, officially became a totalitarian state. Ba Maw was the subordinate Burmese dictator, the Japanese Commander was the supreme dictator in Burma, Tojo in Japan being the dictator of the Japanese Empire, also called the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. With the emergence of Ba Maw, his Sinyetha Party also came into prominence.

Thakin Mya, one of the executives without portfolio, was directed to bring about an amalgamation of all the parties. This he accomplished by persuasion and force. The last party to be amalgamated was the Myocht. The single united party was named The Dobama Sinyetha Asi Ayon. Later it came to be called the Maha Bama Asi Ayon. The Japanese authorities made a promise, that after the successful conclusion of the war, Burma would be made a free country under the protection of Nippon. On 1 August 1943, Burma came to have a second new constitution, and her independence was proclaimed, but the One-Party system was maintained and strengthened, also Ba Maw continued to function as the Burmese dictator.

Dr. Ba Maw thought it a good opportunity, under the circumstances, to attempt a unification of the various peoples and races living in Burma. This unity would help national development. 'All must sacrifice', he declared, 'for the success
of this scheme. The Government led by Nippon has opened a way for Burma to be a free country. Believe Nippon’s announcement to the world that Burma is to be a free country. . . . Now all parties are united, and the people of Burma must listen to the united voice.  

He made it clear to his people that the voice of the dictator must be accepted as the voice of the Burmese nation. The motto now was to be ‘One Blood, One Voice, One Order’: *Ta Thwe, Ta Than, Ta Mein.*

The new era was expressed poetically as:

A new world! A new era! A new Burma!
One blood! One voice! One order!
Nippon has promised Burma is to be free;
The new scheme of Dictatorship,
Please write—Burma and Nippon,
Nippon and Burma, “Ban Saing.”
Destroy the Americans and the British!
The Dictator will order and help,
The capitalists have gone! Dobama! Dobama!

1 Banzai=Long live.

CHAPTER LXVI

BURMESE INDEPENDENCE UNDER NIPPON: 1943-45

On 28 January 1943, Premier Tojo, addressing the Japanese Imperial Diet, said, ‘Peace and order have already been restored in Burma. With the most influential leader Dr. Ba Maw, as the President of the Central Government of Burma, we have succeeded in mobilising the Burmese to co-operate with our Army stationed there. They are actually endeavouring to build up Burma for the Burmese, thus contributing to the construction of the Greater East Asia . . . . The Imperial Government intends to offer the area now under the jurisdiction of the Burmese Government for the establishment of a Burmese nation by the end of the year at the latest. Hereupon the long cherished desire of the Burmese for the independence which our Government promised at the last session of the
Diet (on 10 February 1942), is about to be realised. The Government has the satisfaction of being able to declare this intention to the Diet. This is, therefore, a matter of mutual congratulation in Japan and in Greater East Asia.’ In a later speech Tojo re-iterated the promise of independence in the following words: ‘The Empire of Japan wishes to see the early realisation of a new entirely independent state of Burma in the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.’

In Burmese political circles the Japanese promise of independence produced an electric effect. Many must have looked upon it as a mere mirage. However, the leaders of almost all the old parties as well as Burmese I.C.S. men fell in line with the Japanese policy. They could do nothing else. In any case they had no power to oppose Nippon. For full six months the political atomsphere in Burma was charged with thanks to Japan, praise for Japan, co-operation with Japan, and a looking forward to a glorious future. ‘Like planets, finding their own orbits, after some solar cataclysm’, said Ba Maw, ‘those countries in East Asia will sooner or later revolve round Japan.’ ‘I am at a loss for words’, he said, ‘...the dark days in which we were struggling under the British yoke have passed, and in their place a new light now shines on us....We are now on the threshold of independence, and I have never felt so happy as I am now. What I now wish to impress on all Burmans is that they should be willing and ready to assist Nippon, even if they have to sacrifice their comforts, properties, and lives, because the true intention of Nippon has now been made known to all.’

A great many meetings and rallies were held, the democratic ideology was denounced, talks were given on ‘Evils of Democracy’, and the British political system was branded as ‘blood sucking democracy’. Some of the slogans were, ‘Let us repent of past beliefs’, ‘Death to Democracy’, ‘Let us help our benefactors’. Thakin Ba Sein declared: ‘For a hundred years the British ruled, and we were still slaves, but now within a year of Japan’s arrival we can be independent. We Burmese must now pay our debt to Japan. We must start now to help towards Asiatic prosperity....Build up a mighty Burma, do everything in your power to enable the Nippon
Army and the Burma Defence Army to win the war. Dobama, Hey Dobama!

Educated Burmans living largely in towns had come to look upon Japan as the mightiest power on earth; and truly she had fully demonstrated her power: for over a year and a half she had been triumphant everywhere. Burmans for some time were not able to get news of Japanese reverses. The new empire of Nippon had an area of over 3,280,000 sq. miles. Japan possessed a powerful navy and air force, and she had over three million men under arms. She had about 65,000 troops in Burma alone. As to the reactions of the rural population, conditions were not quite the same. Intuitively they differentiated between the old Government and the new Japanese-controlled Government: they called the former by the term 'Asoya', meaning 'genuine government'. The cultivator was not interested in politics or in Japan or in Asia. His interests lay in the safety of his family, his fields, and his cattle.

The promise of independence having been made, and the imagination of vocal Burmans having been thus fired, Tojo invited Ba Maw to Tokyo to discuss the preliminary measures for the independence of Burma. Accompanied by Thakin Mya, Dr. Thein Maung, Major-General Aung San, and U Hla Pe, Ba Maw arrived in Tokyo on 18 March 1943. He spent eleven days at the Japanese capital, and was back in Rangoon on 14 April 1943. It appears that principles pertaining to a new 'independent' Burma were discussed in Tokyo. In May 1943 a Preliminary Independence Commission consisting of twenty-two members with Ba Maw as Chairman was appointed to draw up the constitution of independent Burma in consultation with the Japanese Military authorities in the country. Ba Maw thereupon nominated a committee consisting of himself and four others to negotiate with the representatives of the Nipponese Military authorities.

At the first meeting the Japanese representatives made it clear that the new independent state would be an integral part of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere with Nippon as the central figure, and that Burma would have to co-operate fully with Nippon both spiritually and materially during the course of the war, and even after peace was
concluded. The Japanese representatives gave the Burmese committee an outline of what the new constitution should be. They said that it was meant to be a temporary constitution for the period of the war, so as to fight the war efficiently, and that a permanent constitution would have to be drawn up later.

The outstanding feature of the constitution was that Burma was to continue to be a Dictatorship. One person was to occupy concurrently the posts of the Prime Minister and the National Representative or the Head of the State. He would be the Dictator, and would enjoy legislative power. For the time being, the Shan states, the Karenni States, and the Frontier districts would be excluded from the territory of the new state. Indians and Chinese who had permanently settled in the country would be counted as Burmese nationals. Japanese experts would be attached to certain departments, particularly to advise in the making of laws, and in the matter of the prosecution and trials, civil and criminal, of Nipponese subjects. The exchange value of Burmese currency would be under Japanese control, and new Burma must not enter into any monetary arrangements with a third power without first consulting the Japanese Government. All foreign relations must be conducted after previous consultation with the Japanese Imperial Government. Burma must fully co-operate with the Nipponese army in the country, as to transport, communications, commandeering supply of labourers, etc. The Japanese Imperial Government would appoint and despatch Advisers whom the Government of Burma should engage; but the Advisers would be under the control of the Japanese military and naval authorities in Burma.

The majority of the members of the Burmese Commission as well as of the Negotiation Committee were willing to agree to all the Japanese requirements. A minority suggested certain changes of a liberal and a democratic character. None of these, however, were agreed to by the Japanese, except that a Vice-Prime Minister may be appointed.

On 1 August 1943, Burma was proclaimed to be an independent state with Ba Maw as Dictator, Prime Minister, and Head of the State, to be called the Adipadi. He then
formed his ministry of fifteen others, with Major-General Aung San as the Defence Minister. The Adipadi also constituted a Privy Council of twenty members, all nominated by himself. This Council was no more than an advisory body. The Adipadi was supreme in the Burmese official sphere, but he was responsible to the Japanese Commander-in-Chief in Burma. Renzo Sawada was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Burma. The new state of Burma was recognised by Thailand, Nanking, Germany, Manchukuo, Croatia, Slovakia, and Bulgaria, countries in alliance with the Axis powers. Messages of felicitation were received from Vichy France, Argentina, Spain, the Philippines under Japan, and Sweden.

The first important act of the new state of Burma was to declare war upon Britain and the U.S.A. This was done on 1 August 1943, at 4.30 A.M. The declaration says that Burma would fight on the side of Nippon till the enemy was vanquished. A pact of alliance was then signed between Burma and Japan, and also a treaty by which Burma recognized the transfer of the two Shan States, Kengtung and Mongpan, to Thailand.

One noticeable feature in the Japanese position in Burma (1942-45) was that Nippon did not establish a bureaucracy of her own to run the day-to-day government of the country. This was left to Ba Maw and his government. Japan did not wish to bother with this side of things. The Japanese Army, however, maintained a vigilant eye over the Burmese bureaucracy. Nippon’s great object was first to win the war, and Burma was to be used as a spring-board for the purpose of penetration into India. It was planned that Germany, after overthrowing Russia, was to enter the Middle East and meet the Japanese allies somewhere in India, and redraw the map of the world.

The new Japanese government under Ba Maw showed great pro-Japanese activity. In November 1943, Ba Maw attended the Tokyo Greater East Asia Conference held under the Chairmanship of Tojo. Great efforts were made to supply the Japanese army with food, labourers, carts, bullocks, etc. These had to be commandeered, and it produced
much resentment in Upper Burma where the Japanese army was concentrated with a view to the invasion of India. The Publicity or Propaganda Department was particularly active in support of Japan and her war aims. Slogans and poems were freely made use of, and the Burmese press fully entered into these activities:

Wake up little brother  
Morning sky is glowing brighter  
To win the Asiatic war.  
Thou should'st help, little brother  
Unto Burma's New Era;  
Step in, my brother  
Shoulder thy responsibility  
In the service of thy country.  
Victory is not far away, and is in sight;  
Join the march, little brother, and fight.

In his battle speech, the Adipadi said that Burma had become a battlefield, and all the sixteen million people were on the battlefield, and must work: 'I am giving all Burma a battle order: Those on the battlefield should kill, fight, and suffer. Both sides must encounter various hardships in the course of the fighting. This is the natural consequence of the war.... It is not the time to return to the house to consult astrology. The only thing required is to kill the tiger.'

When in January 1944, Subhas Chandra Bose, Head of the Provisional Government of Free India, arrived in Rangoon, he was accorded a great welcome. It was declared that Burmans and Indians were to fight unitedly under Nippon's leadership to free Asia from the Anglo-Americans. In spite of all her spectacular successes, Japan's position in Burma failed. She entered Assam but was soon driven out with fearful losses. Earlier, Italy was brought to her knees, and in the Pacific, the Americans went from victory to victory, driving the Japanese out of the islands and from the Philippines, till they came within easy reach of the Japanese Home Islands. The Germans began to withdraw from France before the Anglo-American onslaught, and in May 1945, Germany completely collapsed and surrendered unconditionally. The Allied Army in the meantime entered Burma, and the
Japanese retreated with a view to pulling out of the country. The Government of independent Burma collapsed, and the British were back in Rangoon on 3 May 1945. The pro-Japanese mentality of the Burmese disappeared like the morning mist. The leaders of Burma welcomed back the British, but the Burmese Adipadi fled with the Japanese to Nippon. It is possible he thought the British would take strong measures against him. In time, however, he was repatriated from Japan, and he returned to his home in Rangoon without any let or hindrance.

The Japanese regime was over and with it the two-year old government of ‘independent Burma’. Japan surrendered in August 1945 and the war was over! There was one redeeming feature in the history of the Japanese occupation of Burma from 1942 to 1945. Law and order were maintained in so far as dacoits and robbers were concerned. Japanese firmness was unyielding in this respect. When the British returned, the Burmans breathed a sigh of relief.

CHAPTER LXVII

HOW BURMA BECAME TRULY INDEPENDENT

The War was a cruel blow to Burma. The country was twice overrun, once by the Japanese army in 1942, and then by the Allies in 1945. It was bombed by the Japanese. It was later most severely bombed by the Allies who had plenty of material for the purpose at their command. In 1945, the Japanese were practically bombed out of the country. American troops and warships were knocking at the gates of Japan. Nippon was in a position to hold neither Burma, nor even her own Islands before the overwhelming might of the United States of America.

In 1942, the Thakins and certain other leaders, including Aung San, had welcomed the Japanese into Burma; but they soon realized their error. In spite of Burma’s ‘independence’ of August 1943, the Japanese grip over Burma was as firm as could be. It could not be otherwise. Japan
was fighting a major war with two of the greatest powers of the world, so that she could not afford to slacken her hold upon conquered territories. The Burmese leaders and the people soon got tired of the Japanese regime. Japanese ways and methods they found galling. They longed for the British to return. They knew that they could take liberties with the constitutionally-minded British which would never be permitted by the Japanese. They started a secret resistance movement called The Anti-Fascist Organization (AFO). As early as December 1943, the leaders of the AFO made contacts with the Allied Army. A year later they again approached British military officers and informed them that the Burma Defence Army (BDA) under Major-General Aung San was planning an armed rising against the Japanese. The Japanese were using this army for maintaining internal security. The BDA, however, was not sufficiently well armed to fight fully-equipped regular troops. The Allies, therefore, supplied them with about 3,000 arms. Rear-Admiral Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander, issued a direction to his officers that guerillas, of whatever nature, should be encouraged to participate actively in the operations against the Japanese.

The BDA under Major-General Aung San consisted of not less than 5,000 armed men stationed in the Pyinmana, Toungoo, and Prome areas. British military officers welcomed Aung San’s decision to break away from the Japanese, and desired to give him all the support they could. The Burma Civil Service Affairs Officers warned the Supreme Commander that arming the guerillas and encouraging the BDA to rebel, would later seriously increase internal security problems in Burma. Admiral Mountbatten, however, decided to support the BDA rising, but directed his officers to see that it was controlled and co-ordinated through British liaison officers, and to ensure that it synchronized with the Allied plan for the drive to Rangoon. ‘It seemed unlikely’, Admiral Mountbatten said, ‘that the BDA (though an establishment of between 7000 and 10,000 men was claimed for it) would be able to inflict serious losses on the Japanese. The value of the rising would be psychological rather than
military, for not only would this action prove a great surprise and embarrassment to the Japanese, but it would provide a stimulus to pro-British sentiment in Burma by providing the local population with a stake in the actual fighting.'

Major-General Aung San and his officers were informed that 'their assistance was appreciated, but that their past offences were not forgotten, that no general amnesty would be given, and that offenders might consequently be required to stand trial in due course—though any service to the Allied cause would be taken into account.' They were also told that 'their movement would be expected to disarm voluntarily when instructed, though opportunity would be offered for suitable volunteers to be enrolled in the regular Burma armed forces.'

The Allies captured Mandalay on 20 March 1945. On 28 March the BDA, renamed the Burma National Army (BNA), rose in revolt against the Japanese in various parts of central and southern Burma. The BNA killed some 700 Japanese, including a Divisional Commander and a General. They attacked isolated Japanese garrisons and enemy lines of communication. By maintaining pressure on the Japanese Area Army they tied down a large number of Nipponese troops which could otherwise have been used to block the Allied Fourteenth Army in their drive on Rangoon.

After the occupation of Rangoon by the British in May 1945, the AFO leaders renamed their organization as the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). They issued a manifesto setting out their policy, namely: Drive the Japanese out of the country; set up a People's Democratic government; destroy Fascism; and co-operate with the Democratic Allies. Certain officers of the Civil Affairs Staff advised the Supreme Commander to declare the AFPFL an illegal body, and treat Aung San as a war criminal. The Admiral did not agree with this view. He decided to control the BNA, to incorporate suitable elements from it into the Burma Army, and to disarm and disband the rest of them.

On 16 May 1945, Major-General Aung San called on Lt.-General Slim. The Burmese leader announced that he was the military representative of the Provisional Government
of Burma set up by the AFPFL, and that he had come to treat with the British. Lt.-General Slim told him that a Military Administration was in force, and no civil government of any kind could therefore operate. He suggested that the BNA become a part of the future defence force of Burma. Aung San replied that he was unwilling to owe allegiance to any body except to his 'Provisional Government', but that he was prepared to place his army under the Allied Commander in the field as a recognized ally. After further negotiations Major-General Aung San became quite cooperative, and agreed to the reconstitution of the Burmese army, into which elements of the BNA, otherwise called 'Patriotic Burmese Forces', would be incorporated. Admiral Mountbatten invited Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, the Governor of Burma, to offer to Aung San one of the posts of D.I.G. and to grant him a commission as Brigadier in the Burma Army. Aung San, however, declined the offer, and said that he had decided to abandon his military career and confine himself to politics.

As early as 12 December 1944, the British Government had announced that it would stand by the promise to give Burma complete self-government as soon as possible after the country was liberated. On 17 May 1945, that is two weeks after the capture of Rangoon, the British Government announced that after the restoration of civil government in Burma, the policy was to assist Burmese political development until the country could sustain the responsibility of complete self-government within the British Commonwealth on a status equal to that of the Dominions and of Great Britain. However, because of the dire need of first rehabilitating the country, up to 1948 Burma would be administered with the Governor as responsible to the British Parliament. A few days later, the supreme council of the AFPFL issued a statement to say that 'the final objective of the People's Freedom League, as it has been hitherto, is the attainment of the right of self-determination for Burma. In concrete expression, Burma desires to determine her own constitution by means of a Constituent Assembly elected on universal adult suffrage.'
In June 1945, Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith invited representatives of the various political parties of Burma, and explained to them the policy of His Majesty’s Government to hand over to the Burmese people the responsibility for the government of their own country. He called upon them to assist him in the government of the country when civil government would be restored, and said that executive posts would be offered to them.

During the months of July and August the disbandment of the Patriotic Forces began, but it did not proceed satisfactorily. The British authorities thought that the leaders were procrastinating. The Supreme Commander summoned them to Kandy (September 1945) and told them that the disbandment must proceed apace and all arms handed in, and that he could not consider handing over the country to civil government until the disbandment of the PBF was complete. The leaders agreed to fall in line with the Supreme Commander’s requirements, and volunteered the full support of the AFPFL and of the PBF in collecting arms throughout Burma.

In the meantime, Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, the Governor of Burma, backed by his senior Civil Officers, began to press for the restoration of civil government in Burma. The Supreme Commander as well as the Commander-in-Chief were strongly of the opinion that the return of civil government at that stage would be premature. There were large numbers of Japanese troops in Tenasserim and the Karenni States still to be disarmed, and if the local Japanese commanders disobeyed the surrender orders of their superiors, a dangerous situation would be created. Besides, the Burmese Patriotic Forces were also to be disarmed and disbanded. The Governor, however, in the strongest terms pressed his request to be allowed to return. Admiral Mountbatten was unable to resist him for long, and while warning him of the danger, finally transferred to him the responsibility for the governance of Burma with effect from 16 October 1945, that is only two months after Japan had capitulated. On 1 January 1946 the British military administration was withdrawn, and the whole of Burma was brought under civil control.
The leaders of the AFPFL strongly supported the Governor in pressing for this transfer.

After the Governor had assumed responsibility, he proposed to appoint fifteen Councillors, and offered seats on it to the AFPFL. The Governor and the League, however, failed to agree on the distribution of the portfolios, and ultimately the League kept out of the new government. The Governor tried to carry on with the help of some of the old ministers, but failed. The AFPFL led strikes in various fields of public service, viz. the police, the ministerial services, the postal services, railway employees, factory hands, etc. The newly appointed Councillors resigned.

In the meantime a new Parliament was elected in Great Britain, and a Labour Ministry was formed in place of Mr. Churchill's government. The policy of the new government under Mr. Attlee was to grant freedom as soon as possible to India, Burma and Ceylon. Major-General Hubert Rance was appointed Governor of Burma. He invited Aung San, the AFPFL chief, to join the Executive Council, which he did, and this time there was no difficulty over the distribution of the portfolios. The leaders of the strongest political party, the AFPFL, came to have the largest portion in the Government.

On 20 December 1946, the British Prime Minister announced that a Burmese delegation would be invited to London to discuss with the British Cabinet the details of the transfer of power to Burma. The Premier reiterated the declared policy of His Majesty's Government to grant to Burma the option to stay in the Commonwealth as a Dominion, or to be an independent state outside the Commonwealth. The Burmese delegation had talks with the members of the British Cabinet in January 1947, and an agreement satisfactory to both the parties was arrived at. The conclusions were as follows:

A Constituent Assembly was to be summoned, so that the people of Burma may decide on the future of the constitution of the country. The frontier areas, to include the Shans, the Eastern Karen, the Chins, etc. were to decide for themselves if they would like to be included in the new Burmese
constitution or not. For the financial year 1945-46 Burma had received from Great Britain an interest-free loan of £8 millions, and for the year 1946-47, £7½ millions. The British Government agreed to render further help for 1947-48 so as to cover that year's deficit. Two members of the Burmese delegation, Thakin Ba Sein and U Saw, did not agree to these conclusions.

In May 1947, the AFPFL held its party convention and passed a resolution of fourteen points: 1. Burma was to be an independent sovereign republic. 2. The new Burma territorially would include all British Burma as well as the Shan States, Kachin Hills, Chin Hills, etc. 3. That the Shan country, the Karenni, the Kachin Hills, and the Chin Hills would enjoy autonomy under the new constitution. 4. That the Union Legislature or Parliament would have jurisdiction over the whole Union. 5. That all powers of government are derived from the people. 6. That justice, equality, freedom of thought, faith, worship, etc. shall be guaranteed to all citizens. 7. That the rights of national minorities shall be guaranteed. 8. That residuary powers shall vest in the Union Legislature. 9. That the Head of the State shall be an elected President; that the Union Parliament shall consist of two Houses: a Chamber of Deputies, and a Chamber of Nationalities. 10. The people to have the right to recall any elected representative. 11. The Union Government to be responsible to the Chamber of Deputies. 12. The Judiciary to be independent, subject only to law and to the Constitution. 13. The integrity of the State shall be maintained according to the law of civilized nations. 14. That New Burma shall stand for peace and the welfare of mankind.

The country seemed to be in a buoyant mood at the prospect of independence. A Constituent Assembly was elected, and a number of sittings were also held. But all of a sudden a horrifying explosion shook all Burma. Aung San and six of his Cabinet colleagues were assassinated on 19 July 1947, while an Executive Council meeting was on. The chief assassin expected to step into Aung San's shoes. He, of course, hoped to remain undetected, and waited for the Governor to invite him to form a new government. But his hopes were
not realized. Thakin Nu of the AFPFL took the place of the great leader and instilled confidence among the people. In time the assassins and their leader were arrested. They were tried, convicted and hanged.

The assassination did not retard constitutional developments in the country. The frontier areas of the Shans, Karens, Kachins, and the Chins all agreed to throw in their lot with the rest of Burma. A Constitution for the Union of Burma was drawn up in keeping with the fourteen points of the AFPFL. A provisional President of the Union was elected, also a Prime Minister in view of the approaching independence which the British Parliament was willing to grant.

In October 1947, a treaty was signed in London between the British Prime Minister and Thakin Nu as the representative of the provisional government of Burma. By this treaty the Government of the United Kingdom recognized the Republic of the Union of Burma as a fully independent sovereign State.

The independence of the country was proclaimed on 4 January 1948, amidst the acclamations of many, and the fears of many too. Thus did Burma part company with Great Britain and assume nationhood without any clash with the British people. The reason was that the main battle for freedom was fought in India by Gandhiji and the Congress. When India became free, the two appanages, Burma and Ceylon, were bound to share in this gain. The battle for the freedom of these three countries was also fought by the British Labour Party in Great Britain at the Parliamentary elections of 1945. This party, led by men of vision, having won the election by an overwhelming majority, acted in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter, withdrew their authority from over these countries, and handed over responsibility to the natural leaders of those lands.

Important sections of the people who had made Burma their home were not happy over the withdrawal of British authority from the country. Europeans, Anglo-Burmans and Anglo-Indians had their own fears. In the past they had enjoyed certain special privileges; now they would not only lose these privileges, but there was a haunting fear
as to how they would be treated by the new rulers. Many shed tears as they witnessed the Union Jack being hauled down to make way for the Burmese flag. Some of these people left Burma to find new homes in other countries. The Indians who formed the largest foreign community (over one million in 1941, and over 700,000 in 1948), also felt apprehensive of their future.

The new rulers of Burma were prepared to recognize as Burmese nationals only those whose ancestry, however slight, was indigenous in origin. Many non-Burmans, who for decades and even generations had been living in the country and had never been outside of Burma, lost their parliamentary as well as municipal franchise. But this could not be helped. Franchise belongs to the sons of the soil. It is open to non-Burmans to become Burmese nationals by the process of law for which there is provision in the Constitution of the country. Those who wish to retain their own nationality are permitted to earn their living in the country as non-nationals; but if they so desire they can return to their own land. The policy of the British rulers, in placing various nationals, racial groups and communities in water-tight political compartments, was different. It was the policy of foreign rulers. As truly independent, Burma must preserve and develop a unitary nationalism. There is much truth in the war-time motto: “One Blood, One Voice, One Order.”

The Karens, especially the Christians, also felt afraid, and wondered if the tyranny of old from which they suffered for centuries would repeat itself. Some of the other racial units also had their fears, and in Arakan there was even a movement to have a separate independent state of their own. However all these indigenous peoples have now the Parliamentary vote, and the Burmese leaders have it as their settled policy to conciliate them, soften the old inter-racial antagonism, and thus ultimately to create a united nation. It would be fatal for any racial group, Karen or any other, to invoke old fears. Times and ideologies are different now. Although Burmans are in the majority and that for no fault of theirs, their leaders know full well that they cannot afford to antagonize any of the other racial groups.
Chapter LXVIII

BURMA IN TRAVAIL

When Burma became independent in January 1948 the political scene appeared to be very bright. The leaders of all the races inhabiting the land were united in the desire to serve the country. It seemed to many at home and abroad that Burma had a bright future before her. The AFPFL was the strongest political party, and was in a position to take up the reins of government. There were other parties too, including the Communist party, but these had very small followings, and were not considered to be a danger.

Soon after independence, however, many in opposition to the Government, and even some of those at first in favour of the Government, threw constitutionalism to the winds, and drew the sword. Strikes, riots, insurrections, rebellions, and desertions of soldiers and their officers from the army took place in various parts of the country. For over five years the most important and urgent duty of the Government had been how to crush these armed revolts. It has been a ding-dong struggle; and though Government forces have come out with flying colours in their innumerable clashes with the rebels, the country has not yet been fully pacified, and independence has not yet been consolidated. Rebels are adopting guerilla tactics, and 57% of the face of the country being covered with forests, nature has been of assistance to them in carrying on the struggle somehow.

The confused state of affairs that has prevailed in Burma since independence is an expression of the weaknesses inherent in the body politic. There are too many political parties and factions in the country. The AFPFL itself, the strongest party, is not one united whole, but composed of a number of affiliated bodies. Again, it is a new party, brought into existence as a secret body during the Japanese regime. The leaders of the party are lacking in maturity and experience. There are too many leaders in the country, and too many aspirants to leadership. The result is personal rivalry of a
very undesirable nature. In the clash of personalities, the
good of the nation is more or less lost sight of. The struggle
for the loaves and fishes of office is intense. Troops dabble
in politics. Members of political parties don military uni-
forms. University and school boys and girls consider them-
selves to be a political party, if not officially so, certainly in
spirit, and particularly so in their activities. A good many of
the political leaders and their followers do not wish to abide
by constitutional principles in the struggle for office. Some
definitely declare that they will destroy the constitution
accepted by the representatives of the nation, and draw up
a new constitution. There is present in the country a strong
feeling of racial rivalry. On the part of some of the racial
groups, which are in a minority, there is the natural feeling
of jealousy, suspicion, and the fear of the largest group, namely
the Burmans, dominating them. The principle of loyalty to
one’s country and to leaders is seriously lacking in many
politicians and their followers. Added to all this, the Japanese
as well as the Allies left behind them not only a great many
fire-arms in the country but ammunition too. Civil govern-
ment was ushered in too early because of the importunities
of the British chiefs of the country’s civil service and the
Burmese politicians. The Allied Army was not given sufficient
opportunity to collect the many arms scattered all over the
country. The warnings of British Army chiefs were not
heeded.

In March 1948, the Communists rose in revolt in Myin-
gyan, Bassein, Maubin, Insein, and Hanthawaddy districts.
They engaged in looting rice and fire-arms. In April their
depredations spread into Toungoo and Pegu districts. Soon
after some Burmese troops stationed in Pegu district deserted
and went over to the Communists with their fire-arms and
vehicles. In July 1948, some of the disgruntled Karens, who
were not without legitimate complaints against Burmans,
rose in rebellion in Salween district. They expressed a strong
desire to have an independent state of their own in Lower
Burma. At the same time, a section of the AFPFL, called
the People’s Volunteer Organization (the White PVO’s),
broke away and drew the sword in Pegu and Bassein districts.
The army mutineers joined hands with them. In August 1948, the extremist Karens and Mons unitedly rose against the Government in Thaton and Moulmein districts. The PVO’s at the same time began their predatory operations in Hanthawaddy, Maubin and Bassein districts. In the same month the 1st Burmese Rifles, stationed at Thayetmyo and Prome districts, deserted; also 350 Burmese Army officers and men deserted from Mingaladon and joined the anti-Government front. In February 1949, they made their presence felt in Prome, and two months later in Tharrawaddy and Henzada districts as well.

Early in 1949, important sections of Karen battalions in the Government Army deserted with their arms in Toungoo and Bassein districts, and agreed to help their political leaders overthrow the AFPFL Government by force of arms. In February 1949, the Karen Rifles mutinied in Tharrawaddy, Meiktila and Maymyo districts. In March 1949, they became very active in Insein and Pegu districts. A grand attempt was now made by the leaders of the Karen National body, with headquarters at Insein, to capture Rangoon, overthrow Thakin Nu’s Government, and set up a government of their own. They came very near taking Rangoon, but were ultimately beaten back by Government forces. In March 1949, the Karens, in alliance with the Communists, occupied Mandalay, and soon after raised their heads in Sagaing district as well. At the same time the White PVO’s began to operate in Prome, Thayetmyo, Minbu, Magwe, Henzada, and Tharrawaddy districts.

The period from February to April 1949 was indeed very dark for Burma and for Thakin Nu’s Government. Communists, White PVO’s, Democratic Front insurgents, and Army mutineers dominated almost the entire Irrawaddy Valley and much more, right from Shwebo in the north up to Insein in the south; while the Karen rebels held all the territory between the Salween and the Sittang rivers, from a point immediately south of Loikaw to a point north of Moulmein. The important towns of Toungoo, Papun and Thaton were in their hands. They also controlled a part of the Delta. The Communists were strong at Yamethin, Myingyan, Sagaing,
Pegu, Pakokku, Pyapon, and in parts of Arakan. The mutineers had made much room for themselves in Minbu, Magwe and the surrounding country.

Townsmen as well as villagers had to pass through very difficult times, being mulcted by the various insurgents according to opportunity. Railway, road, and river transport were not only entirely disorganized, but often brought to a stand-still. Agriculture, trade, and industries all suffered tremendously. Many lives were lost, and vast numbers of people had constantly to pass through prolonged nightmares.

In spite of all these commotions, dangers, bloodshed, and destruction, the Government of Thakin Nu held on and struggled manfully against the insurgents. The vast majority of the people desire peace, and are supporters of the Government, although it is true that many under stress of circumstances have joined the rebels in order to obtain a living by the sword. The Government has throughout continued to hold the ports, and so has maintained contact with the outside world. So long as the ports are held, the national Government cannot be overthrown. By 1951-53, the rebel groups, having lost many of their leaders, became disorganized. Almost all the important towns are now in the hands of the Government. The troubles of Burma, however, have not yet ended. Rebels are turning to robbery as a profession, and the danger is that many who have no employment, or are not inclined to settle down to peaceful pursuits, may augment the ranks of the robbers. It is to be hoped that Burma will throw up statesmen, soldiers, and patriots who will handle the situation with firmness and tact, for thus alone can the country be saved from indiscipline, chaos, and disintegration.
Chapter LXIX

Burma's Karens in Revolt

The Karens in Burma number over 2 million. Both Burmans and Karens are of Mongolian stock, but the former belong to the Tibeto-Burman family, while the Karens are of the Tai-Chinese family. The Karens, therefore, are akin to the Shans, Thais, Hkuns, Laos, and such others. Linguistically the Karens are divided into three groups: the Sgaw, the Pwo, and the Bwe, the most numerous of them being the Pwo. Their language is Sinitic and monosyllabic. Till the coming of the Christian missionaries they had no script, and so possessed no literature. All tradition, songs, prayers, etc. were handed down by word of mouth. In the 19th century, American Baptist missionaries invented a script for the Karens. It is really an adaptation of the Burmese script. The Burmese script again is an adaptation of the Indian Nagari script. There are many tribes of Karens, but there is much similarity in their dialects and traditions.

Their earliest home, it appears, was in the Yunnan region. They entered Burma earlier than did the ancestors of the Burmans. Being much weaker in numbers they were driven into the hills in the vicinity of Toungoo and in the district now called the Karenni. There they engaged in agriculture, hunting, fishing, spinning, weaving, mat-making, basketry, etc. Large numbers of them still practise these industries. After the conquest of the country by the British, Burma having come under settled government, Karens in large numbers began to come down from their hills and spread out in the plains.

One most interesting piece of information, and that of historical importance, is the Y'wa tradition of the Karens. This is truly a Hebraic tradition. The Karen Y'wa is the Yaveh or Jehovah of the Old Testament. There is no trace of Messianic tradition in their folklore. It is clear that at some time in their history they came in touch with the Jews and the Old Testament. They have stories of the Creation and the
Fall of man, of the Flood in Noah's time and the division of mankind at Babel. They firmly believe that they once had 'The Book' in which were contained the rules of their faith and the truth concerning Y'wa; but that owing to the unbelief of their elders and their own disobedience 'The Book' got lost. They have also a prophecy that the 'Lost Book' would be restored to them by the White Brother. The following is one of their verses on the Book:

Our Book of gold that Y'wa gave,
Our Book of silver that He gave,
The Elders did not obey:
Lost it wandered to the foreigner.

The Hebraic tradition is further seen in their conception of Y'wa:

Y'wa is eternal, He alone existed
Before the world was made; His throne
Interminable ages stood,
And He the everlasting God,
Two worlds may pass, and yet He lives,
Perfect in attributes divine,
Age after age His glories shine.

Y'wa is unchangeable, eternal,
He was in the beginning of the world;
Y'wa is endless and eternal
He existed in the beginning of the world.

The life of Y'wa is endless;
A succession of worlds does not measure His existence,
Y'wa is perfect in every meritorious attribute,
And dies not in succession on succession of worlds.

The Karens, like the Israelites, also offered sacrifices. Their prayers show that sacrifices of buffaloes, oxen and goats were necessary to obtain forgiveness of sins, so that they and their land might prosper.

When in 1813, Adoniram Judson, the great American missionary, arrived in Burma, he visited Karen villages, showed them the Bible, and confirmed the tradition that the 'Lost Book' would be restored. Many Karens acknowledged
the fulfilment of the prophecy and accepted baptism. A Karen chief secured a copy of the Bible and took it to his village. Men, women and children flocked to have a look at the ‘Lost Book’ at last found and restored to them. They came rejoicing, wondering, weeping, worshipping. They kissed the Book, they caressed it. They decided never to part with it again. Christianity spread more rapidly among the Karens than among any other people of Burma. There are now about 300,000 Karen Christians in Burma, and they form the cream of the community.

Under British rule and with the help of Christian missionaries the Karens made all-round progress. They have produced men of note in all walks of life. Under the rule of Burmese kings they were severely treated and had to remain in the background. But during the past one century and more they have taken a forward place, being Christianised, Westernised and Burmanised. In the old days they were shy, retiring and submissive. Karens in modern life have in large numbers taken service in the Armed and Police forces, on the Railway and in Government offices, in hospitals and in educational institutions. The Karens are a lovable people, honest and hospitable, industrious and dependable. Karen women have distinguished themselves as nurses in hospitals and in homes. They are great lovers of music, and both men and women have excellent voices. They have taken to Western tunes and can sing most charmingly.

The twentieth century Karens living in the plains are a very different people from their ignorant brethren of the hills. When in 1937 Burma was separated from India, under the new constitution framed by the British, the Karens were granted twelve seats in the popular house, members to be elected by themselves in separate constituencies. This arrangement certainly kept the Karens apart from the Burmans in political life. When in 1942 the Japanese invaded Burma and occupied the country, the Karens fought for the British most faithfully. When the British returned to Burma in 1945, Karen leaders, realizing that Burma would be granted at least Dominion Status, began to think of a homeland of their own within the new Dominion. Some even dreamt of
an independent Karen state. If a Pakistan could be created to placate the Muslims of India, why not a 'Karenistan'? A Karen deputation proceeded to Great Britain and drew the attention of the authorities to their fears and requirements: where would 20 lakhs of them be before the 100 lakhs of Burmans?

The British in January 1947 agreed to leave the choice for the future of Burma, either within the Commonwealth or outside of it, to the people and races of the country itself. The general consensus of opinion expressed by representatives of the various races was in favour of one Constitution of a Federal type for the whole country. In September 1947, the Burmese Constituent Assembly adopted a Constitution announcing complete independence for the new federal republic of Burma outside the Commonwealth. The British agreed to it, and on 4 January 1948, Burma proclaimed her independence.

The new Constitution dealt with the Karen problem quite liberally. The Karenni territory was constituted into one of the four constituent units of the Union of Burma with a representation of three Karenni members in the Chamber of Nationalities; while Karens in other parts of the country were granted twenty-four seats in this Chamber. Only a small and a backward minority of Karens live in the Karenni. It became necessary, therefore, to make some arrangement so as to win over the Karens scattered all over Lower Burma. The Constitution provided that if the Karens so desired it, a second Karen state would be set up as an autonomous unit of the Union, territorially to consist of the Salween district and such adjacent areas occupied by the Karens, as may be determined by a special Commission to be appointed for the purpose.

The vast majority of the Karens, although sympathising with the ideal of an independent state of their own, were not unwilling to accept the Constitution and the arrangement as to the new autonomous Karen state. It must be said that the Constituent Assembly as well as U Nu’s government did deal with the Karen problem generously and justly. Karens were appointed to the highest posts in the Defence Services and
in other departments of the state. A section of the vocal Karens, however, was not satisfied. They looked upon themselves as a separate people. Their fear was that ultimately their individuality as a people would be destroyed, unless they were masters in their own homeland. They began to look for ways and means to set up an independent state.

There were indeed certain factors which encouraged the Karens into this militant attitude. They were well organized under able leaders, who, as Christians, were used to running Church associations. The best troops in the Republican Army of Burma consisted of Karen battalions. Large numbers of them were encouraged to desert and fight for independence. The fleeing Japanese and later the departing Allies had left behind an abundance of arms and ammunition scattered about the country. The Karens enjoyed the sympathy of many influential foreigners. The Karens and their leaders were smarting under the cruel treatment that some of them had experienced at the hands of pro-Japanese lawless Burmese bands in 1942, because the former had supported the British as against the Nipponese invaders. A Karen Cabinet member of the British regime had been mercilessly done to death, and his wife and children cruelly massacred. The Westernised Karens were no longer marked by the submissive spirit of their ancestors. Large numbers of them were not prepared to trust the leadership of the Burmese majority community. Some of the leading spirits amongst them roused the fears of their compatriots and warned them of the danger of again falling a prey to the old slavery under the Burmese kings.

For the Karens to draw the sword, however, against organized government was by no means easy. It is very doubtful if they would have risen in revolt, had the Burmans conducted themselves with loyalty towards their new free state and towards their own national government constitutionally established. Disunion of a very serious and highly unconstitutional nature appeared in their own ranks. Already in July 1947, before independence, one of their important leaders had cruelly compassed the assassination of U Aung San, the Vice-President of the Executive Concil, together with five of his
Cabinet Members. Even then, under U Nu all seemed to go well for some time. Then came tragedy after tragedy. Leaders appeared who placed self before the state and the nation. Burmese ranks became thoroughly divided. Burmese Communists raised the standard of rebellion. Next the White Band People’s Volunteer Organization (the PVO), which was a wing of the national party, broke away, and decided to fight the government at the point of the sword. Large bodies of lawless elements in many parts of the country began to take to burglary and dacoity. To crown the tragedy, disloyal elements belonging to the Burmese soldiery and the police force took part in these lawless activities. In the civil field too sections of educated government servants raised their heads to paralyse the government, not thinking of the country, but looking upon their salaries and allowances to be the be-all and end-all of life.

Under the circumstances certain Karen leaders thought it an opportune moment to demand a separate state for themselves outside the Union of Burma. It is possible they thought that without Burmese interference they would be able to run their own state peacefully and efficiently. Burmese national leaders were willing to grant them almost all their demands, except the one to secede from the Union. They definitely said that they would not agree to a division of the country. Indeed, even the creation of another Karen state, as a federal unit, bristled with difficulties. With the exception of the KARENNI, the Karens are nowhere in the majority in any area that may be suitably selected for a territorial constituent unit. Nevertheless the Karens are numerous in the Tenasserim, Pegu, Salween and Toungoo districts of Lower Burma. They are also found in large numbers along the Burma-Siamese border. Still a Boundary Commission was appointed to enquire into the matter; and it recommended that the boundaries of a second Karen state be fixed, U Nu’s government and the Karen leaders agreeing thereto.

However, before the agreement could be signed, many Karen troops deserted with their fire-arms and other military equipment. Karens in the Insein area, immediately north of Rangoon, and in certain other parts of the country, broke
out in open rebellion. A small minority had all along been busy underground, not willing to come to terms with the government. The Karen eruption that took place early in 1949 was their work. They came to the conclusion that if they could launch a successful attack from Insein upon the much harassed government of U Nu at Rangoon, they would in all probability overthrow it, hold the port of Rangoon, and thus either control the country, or get the sinews of war from abroad and set up a Karen state in Lower Burma. They claimed that in days of yore Lower Burma was their homeland, but that the Burmans and others had driven them into the hills. The attempt to take Rangoon failed, but it just failed.

Karen fears of the Burmese majority were not without foundation. Although the government is well-meaning and would like to satisfy the reasonable aspirations of the Karens, there are many classes of Burmans who look upon the Karens with contempt. In certain places, lawless elements, including those in uniform, carried out massacres of Karens, and the latter retaliated in areas where they were at an advantage. Then came the conflagration at Insein. Thence it spread to other parts of the country. Dislodged from Insein, they established themselves in Thaton, Toungoo and Lashio. The Karens proclaimed that they had founded a state of their own, the Kawthulay. They announced the names of their President, Ministers, etc. They encouraged themselves by declaring on the radio that their state would soon be recognized by the United Nations Organization. These tactics were, however, bound to fail.

In spite of all their good qualities, the Karens are too small and scattered a people to succeed in establishing an independent state in Burma. It would be wise on their part to accept the two constituent states offered to them. Their resistance has already been broken by government troops. Ultimately, however, success in the endeavour to conciliate the Karens and the country will very largely depend upon how Burmans will conduct themselves. Will there be found among them that measure of loyalty as will produce a united stand for the maintenance of the integrity of their state? Will they have the statesmanship relentlessly to pursue a conciliatory
policy and thus win over the Karens, accepting them as their equals? A few Karen elements are still fighting the government for a cause which to all appearances is a lost one.

Chapter LXX

Burma under Army Control: 1958-1960

Burma under her kings suffered badly from the malaise of rebellions, dacoities and other crimes. Under the British, after the pacification of Upper Burma before the close of the 19th century, the rebellions ceased, the only exception being Saya San’s rising. Burma, however, continued to suffer from crime, not indeed on the same scale as under her kings, but she still occupied a high rank for criminality among the nations of the world.

During the War (1942-45) Burma suffered terribly owing to the ‘scorched-earth’ policy of the British and later of the fleeing Japanese. The country was bombed by the Japanese, and later more severely by the Allies. Trade declined and the national income fell by 40% from the figure for 1938-39. In January 1948, Burma became a Republic, and high hopes were now entertained by many at home and by her friends abroad that the AFPFL, like the Indian National Congress, would under its leadership bring peace and prosperity to the country. These hopes were, however, soon dashed to the ground. Problems old and new began to manifest themselves, throwing the country further back economically, socially and politically.

Under the British, after the establishment of Dyarchy (1922-23), Burma suffered from the clash of political parties and political leaders. The two highly paid Ministerships in the Governor’s Executive Council became coveted positions. When Burma was separated from India (1937) and came to have its own Cabinet Government under a Prime Minister, political strife, especially for Ministerial positions, became intensified. Early in 1948 when the Republican Constitution came into force, it was thought that at long last there would be
political stability in the country since the AFPFL had no rival. Unfortunately, however, insurrections broke out creating serious difficulties for the government and plunging the nation into a kind of a civil war. The Communists broke out in open rebellion, the Karens raised the standard of revolt, several Karen and Burmese Army units deserted with their fire-arms and joined the insurrectionists. The PVOs drew the sword, dacoities increased, and figures for crime in general greatly multiplied. As a result, the national income, which by 1946-47 had risen by 12% over the War figure, went down by the same percentage. The government, however, took strong measures, so that by 1955-56 the rebel-back was broken and the national income figure rose to 90%, only 10% below the 1938-39 figure.

It appeared now that Burma was on the highway to peace, progress and prosperity. But it was not to be. The leaders of the AFPFL fell out and the party split into two ranks, one section led by U Nu and the other by U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein. U Nu, though he was the leader of the smaller faction, continued for some time to hold the reins of office with the help of the Communists. Even then he had a majority of only eight in Parliament. The country began to suffer seriously from civil commotions: strikes of school-children and of University students, and indiscipline in general in various spheres of life. Anti-social eruptions intensified. Democracy seemed to be on the down grade. U Nu’s government began to be criticized most severely, and the old diseases in the political life of Burma began to manifest themselves. This brought into existence an altogether new phase in the history of modern Burma.

The Burmese Army had been faithfully fighting the Communist and other insurrectionists as well as the dacoits with much success. The Army leaders, it appears, were alarmed that U Nu was not only carrying on his government with the support of Communists in Parliament, but also offering favourable terms to the Communist rebels, inviting them to surrender and return to the fold. Besides, in the civil life of the country, particularly in the civil department of Government, indiscipline and negligence of duty had been
making serious headway. It appears that under the circumstances, General Ne Win, Chief of the Army Staff, advised U Nu, the Prime Minister, peacefully to transfer power to the Army, so that the country may be saved from the evils current. On 7 October 1958, General Ayub had seized the reins of government in Pakistan and established Army rule in the country. Later Sudan, Iraq and Thailand also passed under Military rule. Now came the turn of Burma. But the transfer of power to the Army in Burma took place on very different lines. It was done not by force but by agreement. U Nu placed authority in the hands of General Ne Win, the Burmese Parliament agreeing thereto with the support of both the AFPFL factions. The understanding was that the General would be the Prime Minister with a view to stabilising the situation in the country torn by political strifes, civil disorder, and indiscipline in public life. Parliament was to continue to function. The General was considered to be a neutral in the strife between political parties, and even averse to politics. He was to hold the reins of government for six months, restore order, hold fresh elections, and then hand over authority to the leaders of the majority party in the new Parliament. The transfer of power took place on 28 October 1958.

On assuming the Prime Ministership at the instance of Parliament, General Ne Win assured the people that he would establish law and order in the country and create the necessary atmosphere so that just and fair elections may be held within six months, and that in his foreign dealings he would follow the policy of non-alignment. Now when the Japanese were in authority (1942-45), they, unlike the British, did not take over directly the civil administration of the country. Burmese officers functioned from the highest to the lowest in all the branches of administration. But the Japanese Commander-in-Chief had his officers to watch and to control all the responsible Burmese civil officers. The Burmese officers could do nothing that the Japanese disapproved of. Ne Win’s government followed the same method and policy. In addition, he was himself the Prime Minister, and his Cabinet consisted not of politicians but of reliable gentlemen-citizens. Thus control over the civil services was firmly established.
On 20 November 1958, Parliament adopted a law prescribing seven years' imprisonment for any activity directed against the Army and Ne Win's government. Because of the state of emergency in the country hundreds of politicians representing the various political parties and youth organizations were arrested. Many more belonging to non-political groups were also safely locked up. Firm control was established over the Press and a few newspapers had to close down. The policy of non-alignment in foreign dealings was firmly maintained.

There was much murmuring in certain quarters at home and abroad against Ne Win's firm rule. It was feared that he would make himself a Dictator like Mussolini, that he was terrorising the people, and that citizens were being deprived of their fundamental rights, etc. He certainly had over fifty members of the two AFPFL factions arrested on charges of corruption. It was also rumoured that he would give up the policy of non-alignment and join the Western bloc, since he was willing to accept help from America.

The fears, however, were not justified. Under Army-controlled administration red-tapism cannot have a place: speedy measures have to be taken against what is found to be undesirable and dangerous: punishment has to be meted out without delay. These are the natural accompaniments of Army rule. It was also advanced against the General that his government had failed to solve the economic problem, that the budget was still on the deficit side, and that trade had declined. It would be unreasonable to expect any government to turn the country into a paradise within a couple of years. The great burden that the General had undertaken was to give Burma the gain of law, order and discipline, so that Parliamentary elections could be held, after which government would revert to the leaders of the political parties. When the six-month period was coming to a close, it was found that the time prescribed was not enough. Parliament, therefore, extended the period, and Ne Win fixed April 1960 for the elections.

During the one and a half years that he was in authority, General Ne Win succeeded in a very large measure in his
undertaking. Besides making a success against the insurrectionists and dacoits, he toned up the social health of the country. Officers and clerks at the government offices were watched. They had to come on duty in time, attend to their duties without idling about, and not leave their offices before it was time. Judges, magistrates and their staff had in like manner to attend to their work, so that there might not be accumulation of cases. Touts at courts and at immigration offices were driven out. Great emphasis was laid on the maintenance of sanitation in Rangoon and other towns. Before the General took over, these towns were in a filthy condition. The back-lanes were cleaned up; and those throwing refuse from their windows were heavily fined. These dung-hills of lanes soon took on a great transformation. Spitting pan juice on roads, on pavements, on walls, etc. became a thing of the past. All pan shops were removed, and those guilty of spitting or throwing any rubbish whatever on roads were heavily fined, often on the spot. Itinerant vendors, shops on foot-paths and night-bazaars on foot-paths, which were a speciality of Rangoon, ceased to be. No kind of nuisance was permitted in public places. Suitable sanitary conveniences were constructed on the main roads. Huts which had sprung up all over in town areas were removed, and sanitary colonies were constructed in the suburbs. Buildings which had been destroyed during the bombings had to be rebuilt by the owners. Discipline on the public roads was firmly enforced. Pedestrians had to use the footpaths under pain of heavy fine. Streets could be crossed by them only at fixed points. No encroachments were permitted on the footpaths. Superior public buses were put on the road and the drivers well controlled. Motorists and drivers of all vehicles were kept in check and heavily fined for violating traffic rules, or even jailed. Men up to 50 years of age had by shifts to patrol their own streets during the night. Students at the University and school-children, who since 1937 and even earlier were often used as tools of politicians, were brought firmly under discipline. Some of the students at first tried to play the old game. They were arrested and whisked away. This gave to the educational field the much needed peace and quietness.
This list is by no means complete, but it is enough to show that Burma did need a firm government. Right thinking people were thankful to General Ne Win and his lieutenants for their achievement and patriotism. Many educated Burmans would have preferred a prolongation of Army control.

When the time arrived, the General held the promised elections in April 1960. U Nu's party swept the polls, while the other faction was badly defeated. U Nu won for two reasons: his own personality and his election promise to make Buddhism the state religion. It is thought by many that it was a rash promise, and if implemented may later on complicate matters. The General resigned and U Nu became premier again. The fears of those who thought that Ne Win was out to make himself Dictator of Burma were belied. When he relinquished office many feared that Burma would again fall into the chaotic state from which it was rescued by the Army. What is really in store for Burma still lies in the womb of time.
GLOSSARY

Acheik Pattern in silk introduced into Burma from Manipur.

Alenandaw Queen Lit. ‘Queen of the Middle Palace’; a title.

Atwinwun Interior Minister of the King. Atwinwuns acted as private secretaries and were always in personal attendance on the King.

Awza Self-respect in keeping with one’s standing, official or otherwise.

Bayingyi Burmese form of ‘Feringhi’, which see.

B. E. Burmese Era, the first year being A. D. 638.

Betel Nut used with pan leaf for chewing; it is very popular in parts of Burma and India.

Bo Military officer: a general term.

Boddhisattva Buddhist saint in heaven.

Buddha-Gaya Where the Buddha received enlightenment: situated in Bihar in India. There is a great temple there and the Bo tree under which the Buddha is said to have received the light.

Cassay Kathe; a term applied by the Burmese to the Manipuris.

Dhamma Pali form of the Sanskrit Dharma which conveys the sense of ‘the whole duty of man’. Now generally used to mean religion.

Einshemin Heir-apparent to the Burmese throne; lit. ‘Prince of the Eastern Palace’.

Engvie Burmese coat worn by both men and women, the woman’s being different in cut and style.

Factors Commercial agents of the East India Company in India; so called for being placed in charge of the Company’s factories or warehouses.

Feringhi Europeans were called by this term in India and in the neighbouring parts; perhaps because of their coloured or discoloured appearance.

Firman Royal order given in writing; a Persian term.

Golden Foot Burmese King’s title.

Golden Umbrella Emblem of royalty.

Hlutdau Burmese King’s Council—executive, legislative, and judicial all in one. It consisted of his Great ministers, the Wungyis.
Howda: Box to accommodate riders on elephant-back.
Hsinbyumashin: Lit. ‘Lady of the White Elephant’; the Great Queen’s title.
Hti: Umbrella. It surmounts the Burmese pagoda as a sign of the soul’s refuge.
Jingal: Swivel-musket.
Kalā or Kulā: Foreigner: lit. Ku = cross, lā = come; that is one who has come crossing the sea. A term applied largely to Indians. Europeans were called Kalaphyoos = white kalās. Some think that the term is derived from kula, Sanskrit for ‘clan’. Hence kalā would mean the ‘Caste people’. Kalā has become a term of reproach in Burma.
Kapilvastu: Where the Buddha was born, in India.
Karma: Fatalistic theory of transmigration on the principle of, ‘as you sow, so shall you reap’ through a succession of endless rebirths.
Kosala: Ancient Indian kingdom in the neighbourhood of Magadha.
Kutch: Catechu: a substance used for tanning and dyeing, obtained from the heart-wood of certain trees such as the betel-tree.
Kyaung: Monastery with an elementary school attached.
Lumbini Gardens: Where the Buddha died, in India.
Magadha: Ancient kingdom in modern Bihar.
Maha: Great.
Mahamuni: Lit. ‘the Great Teacher’, that is the Buddha; the great image of the Buddha erected in Arakan. Bodawpaya transferred it to Upper Burma.
Mahayazawin: Lit. ‘the great royal chronicle’, that is the history of kings.
Mahout: Elephant driver and controller.
Mingyi: Great Minister of State; also used for the king.
M. L. C.: Member of the Legislative Council, set up by the British in Burma and in the provinces of India.
Myana Pyi: Land of the Burmans, that is Burma. Myana
is the original form of the term 'Burma'; ဗီ country.

Myo
Town, township.

Myo-ok
A magistrate.

Myosa
Lit. 'Eater of a town or township'; that is the revenues of which were assigned to him by the king; a kind of a jagirdar, but holding the benefit at the pleasure of the king.

Myothugyi
Inferior government officer.

Nat
Demi-god in Burmese belief.

Nga
Prefix to the name of an inferior, e.g. Nga Tu.

Nirvana
The great goal before the devout Buddhist. It has various interpretations: extinction, heaven, end of rebirths, etc. Lit. it means 'without breath', that is no more life.

Non-Regulation Province
Provinces in British India to which Regulations (in the nature of laws) made by the Governor-General’s Council did not apply. Such provinces were placed under Commissioners and Dy. Commissioners who enjoyed very large powers, uncontrolled in the day-to-day administration by the aforementioned Regulations. They were trusted as 'on-the-spot men' and were empowered to take action according to the situation. Burma was one such province for long.

Pan
The betel leaf.

Pandus
Ancient renowned Indo-Aryan clan of Kshatriyas.

Pataliputra
Capital of the Maurya Emperors of India: near Patna.

Pathamabyan
Public examination in the Burmese scriptures. Candidates strove hard to obtain first place in it. It carried a royal reward.

Pindharees
Dacoits.

Punhkas
Ceiling fans worked by hand.

Putsho
Waist-cloth.

Pwe
Burmese drama and dance.

Rajagriha
One of the capitals of ancient Magadha.

Raywoon
Raywun or Yewun: officer in charge of the port or the river.

River, The
The Irrawaddy, the greatest river in Burma.

Sakya
Kshatriya clan in India to which Gautam Buddha belonged.
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<th>Term</th>
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<td>Satyagraha</td>
<td>Lit. ‘I hold to the truth’. The weapon of truth recommended by Mahatma Gandhi to fight an opponent without using violence, through non-co-operation, civil disobedience, fasting, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawbwa</td>
<td>Shan ruler or prince.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saya</td>
<td>Teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shahbunder</td>
<td>Officer in charge of the port collecting custom duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidaw</td>
<td>Royal drum music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sivaism</td>
<td>Worship of Siva or Shiva, one of the Brahmanic Trinity. He is the destroyer-god.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidiary Alliance</td>
<td>By which instrument Indian Princes were brought in subordination to the Governor-General. They surrendered their foreign affairs to the British and accepted their protection. They had to pay a subsidy to the British for the upkeep of troops which would be used to protect the Princes against aggression, internal or external.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talaings</td>
<td>National term used for the descendants of the Mon people; perhaps derived from Telingana, a district on the eastern coast of India.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxila</td>
<td>Same as ancient ‘Taksh-shila’, a great seat of learning in ancient India, on the River Indus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thais</td>
<td>The Siamese. Siam is now called Thailand, the ‘country of the Thais’ (= the free).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theravada Hinayana School</td>
<td>Type of Buddhism prevalent in Burma and Ceylon, the other form being the Mahayana School found in China and Tibet. The Hinayana School claims to be a purer form of Buddhism than the other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thein</td>
<td>Religious building associated with a pagoda or Buddhist temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tical</td>
<td>100 ticals = 3.75 lb. weight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripitika</td>
<td>The Three Scriptures of the Buddhists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsalway</td>
<td>Thin chain of gold in strands conferred by the king as a honour; the more the strands the greater the honour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaisali</td>
<td>Town in Bihar. Its namesake is Vesali in Arakan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vikrama</td>
<td>Name of an ancient Indian hero; also the name of a dynasty of kings who ruled at Prome in Burma. Most probably this kingdom in Burma was founded by a prince of Indian origin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Elephant</td>
<td>Held in great respect in Burma, being an emblem of sovereignty and imperial power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Umbrella</td>
<td>Emblem of royalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wundauk</td>
<td>Asst. Wun or Minister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wungyi</td>
<td>Lit, 'the great Wun' or 'Minister'. The King's Minister and a member of the Hludau.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow Robe</td>
<td>Worn by Buddhist monks in Burma and elsewhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoma</td>
<td>Mountain range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zayat</td>
<td>Building for public accommodation such as a rest-house.</td>
</tr>
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