



Power Centers in Upper Burma (c. AD 1300 - 1550)





BURMA: SHAN DOMINATION IN THE AVA PERIOD (c. AD 1310–1555)¹

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Abstract

This article deals with the settlement of Shan (Tai) *müang* in northern Burma in the Pagan period (c. AD 1000–1287) and how some of them, notably Tai Mao and Monhyin, became a threat to the Burmese kingdom during the following Ava period (1312–1555). After the fall of Pagan, Burma entered a period of disintegration. The Burmese kingdom was confined to the central dry zone of the Irrawaddy Valley, precariously coping with the threats from the domains in the north. For nearly four decades it had to fight a war with the Mon kingdom of Hanthawaddy in lower Burma as well. Relations between the Burmese kingdoms and the powerful Shan *müang* and the structural changes in the Burmese polity in this period are discussed.

Introduction

Whether or not there was a “Shan age” in Burma’s history has become a matter of debate among the historians of Burma, after Michael Aung Thwin, in his book, *Myth and History in the Historiography of Burma* (1998), argued that the notion of there having been three Shan brothers who founded a new dynasty following the fall of the Pagan dynasty in the closing decades of the thirteenth century was only a myth created by the European scholars Arthur Phayre, Edward Huber, G.E. Harvey and G.H. Luce (Aung Thwin 1998, 125–128). Furthermore, Aung Thwin maintained that these scholars were in fact imposing on the study of Burmese history a paradigm similar to that which organized European history into classical, medieval and modern periods. One effect was to create a Dark Age under the rule of “barbarous” Shan monarchs between the preceding “golden” Pagan period (c.1000–1287) and the early-modern Toungoo period (1555–1752) (Aung Thwin 1998, 136). Aung Thwin criticized Phayre for depending heavily upon the chronicler U Kala, while seemingly unaware of the later chronicler Twinthin-taik-

¹ I am deeply grateful to Chen Yi Sein, my mentor, formerly of the Burma Historical Commission, for my reliance to some extent on his readings of the Chinese texts.

wun Mahasithu's work, *Twinthin-Mahayazawinthat*, which cited numerous references to contemporaneous stone inscriptions (Aung Thwin 1998, 137).

The tradition of writing chronicles in Burma began in the early eighteenth century. U Kala was the first such chronicler and finished his *Mahayazawingyi* during the reign of King Tanninganwe (r. 1714–1730). Before examining the limitations of U Kala, it is necessary to consider four famous Burmese chronicles: U Kala's *Mahayazawingyi*, Twinthintaikwun Mahasithu's *Twinthin-myanmar-yazawinthat*, the *Mhannan-mahayazawindawgyi* compiled by a Royal Commission of eleven scholars in the early nineteenth century, and *Monyway-yazawingyaw* by Monyway Sayadaw, who was the most influential scholar in the commission assigned to write the *Mhannan-mahayazawindawgyi*. Although Twinthintaikwun criticized and refuted some of U Kala's assertions, the other chroniclers, including the authors of the *Mhannan-mahayazawin-dawgyi*, followed U Kala in many controversial cases. A meticulous study of all the chronicles reveals that the classic and standardized *Mhannan-mahayazawin-dawgyi*, surprisingly, relied heavily on U Kala. In fact, some paragraphs from U Kala's *Mahayazawingyi* were directly copied without editing or changing the spelling and punctuation.

In his chapters covering the Pagan dynasty, U Kala adapted some pieces of oral literature, such as the story of the legendary King Pyu Saw Hti, who was said to have been born from a union of the sun god and the Naga (dragon) princess (UK I, 143–146). It was for this reason that some of the above-mentioned European scholars dismissed Burmese chronicles as being legends. *Mhannan-mahayazawindawgyi* begins with the fabricated Tagaung dynasty, which traces the ancestry of Burmese kings to the family of the Sakkyā clan of Buddha. This was clearly an attempt to justify the spiritual omnipotence of the Burmese kings by connecting them to sacred Indian classical myths. Since Burmese kings of successive dynasties claimed to be the descendents of the Sakkyā clan, it seemed to be a stigma for the founders of a new dynasty to declare themselves to be the scions of a subordinate ethnic group, such as the Shan, Mon or Arakanese. In fact, during the Pagan period, King Kyanzittha (r.1084–1112), who was certainly a usurper, declared himself to be the reincarnation of the Hindu god Visnu (Than Tun 1968, 153).

Aung Thwin propounds his theory, strongly refuting Phayre's concept of a Shan dynasty in Burma ruling between the Pagan and Toungoo periods. Accordingly, this article intends to discuss that matter and examine how the political center was vulnerable to the threat of the peripheral provinces, especially from the Shan principalities, in this period of disintegration in Burmese history. For the study of Burmese history in the Ava period (1312–1555), including the short period of Pinya-Sagaing twin cities (1310–1364), there is a wide range of primary literature, for instance contemporaneous stone inscriptions and poems such as

mawgun and *eigyin* in Burmese, as well as the Chinese annals of the Yuan and Ming reigns.

The Burmese chronicles, however, are largely reliable for historical research into the late Pagan and Ava periods. The chroniclers' account of the genealogy of the three brothers, though lacking in firm contemporary evidence, was not a tale like that of the legendary King Pyu Saw Hti, but rather demonstrated the amiable and reciprocal blood relations between the leaders of the two different ethnic groups at the core of Burmese society in a historical context. Aung Thwin (1998, 142) suggests that the "Shan Period should be more accurately placed between AD1527 (when Ava was indeed conquered by the Shan) and AD1555 (when King Bayinnaung of the Toungoo dynasty recovered it)." The assertion that Aung Thwin advances is undeniable. The Shan elite in that period (1527–1555) became a tightly closed, segregated and homogeneous clique at the apex of the bureaucracy, replacing the former bureaucratic system that had been characterized by its flexibility and openness to members of different races, but which was largely dominated by Burmans.

Pagan: Center and Periphery

Throughout history the political stability of the Burmese kingdom in the central dry zone of the country depended remarkably on the center's socio-economic reliance on the periphery, especially the centripetal movement of human resources. The breakdown of this dependence on the periphery would also become the main cause of political instability before the rise of the Toungoo dynasty in the middle of the sixteenth century. The political center of Burma had always been located in the dry zone consisting of three irrigated rice cultivation areas: Kyaukse (eleven *khuruin*) at the foot of the Shan plateau, Minbu (six *khuruin*) on the west bank of the Irrawady River, and the Mu Valley, situated between the Chindwin and Irrawaddy Rivers.² Irrigation projects were maintained by the central administration, using manpower partially, but necessarily, from the periphery. The names of the ethnic groups living in Burma from the early twelfth to the early thirteenth centuries can be read in the contemporary epigraphs, where they are referred to as "*kyun*" (*kywan*), which literally means 'slave', who were mainly bound to the land in the dry zone (Luce 1959b, 52–74). These names can be arranged in chronological order according to the date on which the first inscription appears.

² The Burmese term *khuruin* often appears in Burmese inscriptions of the Pagan period and is similar to the Thai word *müang*. It is applied to the eleven irrigated areas of Mlacsā in modern Kyaukse District and to the six in the modern Minbu District (Luce 1959c, 85).

Pyu	(AD 1113)
Thet (Sak)	(AD 1113)
Shan (Syam)	(AD 1120)
Pao (Tonsu)	(AD 1165)
Chinese (Taruk)	(AD 1179)
Burman (Mramma)	(AD 1190)
Arakanese (Rakhuin)	(AD 1197)
Kadu (Kantu)	(AD 1198)
Mon (Rmeñ)	(AD 1204)

The number of people from the Shan hills, including Shan, Pao, Wa (Lawa) and Ponlon, bound to the land as slaves, should not be underestimated. For instance, a contemporary inscription tells us of a village of eighty-five Lawa (Wa) slaves in Plaññ-mana of eleven *khuruin* to the east of the Ponlon and Santhway canals (Pl. 20a, 7; Luce 1959a, 41). Another inscription indicates that the *aruin kywan* (wild slaves) settled in the villages in the eleven *khuruin* (List. 1045, 31). Luce located some Lawa villages mentioned in the Pagan inscriptions in the Myinsaing (Mrancuin) area and in the Chindwin valley. It is more than likely that the Shan people were forcibly settled in the Kyaukse and Minbu areas by both conquest and submissive migration. The center's control over manpower was the tool for its control of all agricultural produce in the society. This management of the material subsistence of the commoners, as well as declaring the king the lord of all the land and water (*rimliykhapsim: soasakhan*) (Pl. 235, 10; Pl. 426, 3; List 1055, 13), theoretically buttressed the absolute early modern Burmese autocracy. The frequent appearance of the names of the hill tribes on the stone inscriptions until the end of the sixteenth century emphasizes the nature of this control.

In the late Pagan period, the core area, especially the three granaries, seems to have been occupied by heterogeneous populations from the cumulative settlements of people from the periphery. For instance, Luce wrote about the establishment of the Shan community in six *khuruin* (Minbu) on the west bank of the Irrawaddy, stating:

There is a place, Khamti, often mentioned in Pagan inscriptions, which is doubtlessly derived from Shan Kham-ti "Golden Place." The name probably implies that the inhabitants were largely Shan. Khamti was an important place with canal irrigation and rice fields in the six *khuruin* (Minbu district) on the west bank of the Irrawaddy about 80 miles below Pagan (Luce 1958, 124).

Pagan's sovereign power was based on the extent of its control over productive resources and managing the redistribution of the means of subsistence directly in the core area and indirectly in the periphery. Of the three granaries, for central administrative purposes, Kyaukse was the most important and the most convenient in terms of location. The names of eleven *khuruin* of the Kyaukse area are as follows (Luce 1959c, 75–109):

- (1) Pinlay (Panlay)
- (2) Pyinmana (Plaññmana)
- (3) Myittha (Mlacsā)
- (4) Rangun (Ranun)
- (5) Myinkhuntaing (Mrankhuntuin)
- (6) Panan
- (7) Tamoke (Tamut)
- (8) Thindaung (Santon)
- (9) Makkhara
- (10) Tapraktha (Taplaksa)
- (11) Khamhmu (Khammhu)

Of these, only four, Myittha, Myinkhuntaing, Tamoke and Thindaung, are Burmese names. The rest carry no Burmese meaning and are probably Mon or Shan. Than Tun has pointed out that the names of some important towns in central Burma located in the Irrawaddy and Chindwin valleys were Shan (Than Tun 2003, 50), for example:

- (1) Kalay (Prosperous Market)
- (2) Katha (Silk Market)
- (3) Kawlin (Deforested Mountain)
- (4) Kaungzin (Elephant Hill)
- (5) Kaungtung (Densely Forested Hill)
- (6) Khamti (Golden Land)
- (7) Khampat (Gold Mine)
- (8) Saga (Town Market)
- (9) Sagu (Couple City)
- (10) Sagaing (The Town of Stirrup-makers)

Luce has asserted that in the early thirteenth century the Shan (Tai) people had already established their principalities in northern Burma, among which the founding of Mogaung in 1215, of Mongmai in 1223 and the Ahom conquest of Assam in 1229 were important (Luce 1958, 126). In the east the establishment of

the Sipsong Panna in 1180, according to local history, is presumably credible. Later this principality was known to the Burmese as Kyaingyone, to the Chinese as Cheli and to its own people as Lè (Ji Fu-yi, 1937, 1). Thus towards the middle of the thirteenth century Pagan was surrounded by Shan princedoms (*müang*) in the northern belt of the periphery. The heartland was also inhabited by a considerable population of Shan, as well as other hill tribes. A few years before the fall of Pagan, lower Burma left the sway of the Burmese rulers and became the independent Mon kingdom of Hanthawadi. The Burmese kingdom under the Ava dynasty, as G.E. Harvey stated, ran from Myedu in the Shwebo district and Bangyi in Monywa district to below Prome, and from Laungshe in the Pakokku district to Kyaukse (List. 1014, 2–4; Harvey 1967, 75).

The formation and growth of Shan states after the fall of Pagan not only threatened the Burmese polity, but also cut off its access to the human resources of the northern hilly regions. According to the hypothesis of Luce, Chin tribes had once inhabited the Chindwin valley but were pushed westward by the Shan conquest of the area, taking refuge in the present-day Chin Hills. At the foot of the hills, only 32 km west of Chindwin River, the Shan built the garrison town of Kale with double walls and moats that are still extant (Luce 1954, 26). The area occupied by the Mon-Khmer speaking hill tribes like the Lawa, Ponlon, and Riang seems to have been pushed eastward by the intrusion of the Shan to their present areas of occupation to the east of the Salween River (Luce 1985, 15). The spread of Shan domination into the lowland valleys by both peaceful negotiation and conquest was primarily intended to gain more tributary and tax-collecting areas. The seventeenth century collection of administrative records, *Zambhudipa Oksaung Kyam (ZOK)*, contains a petition by the prince (*sawbwa/chaofa*) of Momeik to the King of Toungoo, probably King Bayinnaung, which includes the following lines:

To the north of Bhamo is the land inhabited by the wild Kachin and Chin tribes. The collection of tax from these people is a formidable task. My invocation is to retrieve the southern territories (ZOK, 27).

As Edmund Leach has explained, until the middle of the twentieth century, in Burma's northern highlands, Shans occupied the river valleys where wet rice cultivation on the irrigated fields was possible and formed administrative centers there. A *müang* with a cluster of non-Shan hill-tribe villages developed into the Shan type of petty state: a replica of traditional Burmese polity (ZOK, 30–38). The center of a *müang* was mainly inhabited by the Shan people who controlled the subsistence economy, thus enabling them to exploit local environmental resources while also allowing the formative ideas of Theravada Buddhism and Burmese culture to develop. It is worth noting that most of the Shan *müang* were located on

the trade routes connecting China with India across northern Burma. As Leach reported, there were small military garrisons at suitable staging posts along the trade routes because the trade seemed to be an important source of power for the Shan chiefs (Leach 1954, 38). Luce, with reference to Yuan annals, pointed out the importance of the Mùbang route and Mèngyang route (Luce 1958, 146). In modern Burma Mùbang was the old name of Then-ni and Mèngyang was the old name of Mohnyin. Shan merchants would have been involved in the local trade of central and northern Burma on a large scale.³ Such commerce was likely to have provided the chiefs with resources for elaborate feasts and other public displays of wealth and status (Johnson and Earle 2000, 203).

The Kachin and the other hill tribes, being subjects of the Shan chiefs and practicing shifting cultivation, had to depend at times on the Shans in the valleys for sufficient food. Leach asserted that until the end of the nineteenth century, these tribes, who were more numerous than the Shans, lived a primitive way of life as “warlike savages.” The Kachin political domains were more or less integrated into the larger Shan political structures as the Shan *müangs* recruited most of the Kachin *kha-phok* or *hka-paw*, meaning mercenaries, and hired soldiers speaking the Jingphaw (Kachin) language for their campaigns in the valleys (Leach 1954, 39). Therefore the non-Shan populations on the hills formed the outer rim of the Shan principality and were submissive to the *sawbwa*. However, there was not much to offer as dues in recognition of the chief’s power except labor and services, especially military service. The instruments of mobilization were the group or village community interests, to respond to the demands of the Shan lord and to loot the wealth of lowland valleys (Leach 1954, 197–212). Marc Bloch describes such troops in his study of European feudalism as “true savages, whom their chiefs drove to the battle with blows of the whip, but redoubtable soldiers, skillful in extricating themselves from the most difficult situations” (Bloch 1982, II:10). There is little information about the size and population of a *müang*. One of the few descriptions is in the Zambhudipa-Oksaung-Kyam, dated 1601, depicting a *müang* named Hmainhtway consisting of five towns, namely Momeik, Moné, Kyaingtaung, Mowan and Bhamo, as well as two hundred villages. There were five Myozas (chiefs of the town) and twenty-three village headmen in the domain (ZOK, 37).

³ In the Konbaung Period (1752–1885), the Natteik Pass, Hsipaw and Hsenwi Tracks were main trade routes, as well as several smaller passes along the line of hills from Bhamo to Toungoo in the south. The Natteik Pass itself was used for trade with Kyaukse. Until the end of the nineteenth century, the caravans went down to the plains from all parts of the cis-Salween states (Scott and Hardiman 1921, 277).

The Shan in Post-Pagan Burma

The fall of Pagan in the late 1280s was a turning point in the history of Burma. It was followed by a period of disintegration (c. 1287–1555) commonly known as the Ava period. The Burmese kingdom of the landlocked dry zone had to fight a long war (1386–1422) with the Mon kingdom Hanthawadi of lower Burma in order to regain access to maritime trade, and was also engaged in defensive wars against Shan intrusions in the north.

The founder of the new dynasty was Thihathu (Sihasu), the youngest of the so-called “three Shan brothers.” The chronicles described the origin of the three brothers as follows:

Once, the Sawbwa [Chaofa] who ruled the city of Beinnaka had two sons. When the Sawbwa was no more, the older son became the ruler of Beinnaka. Bearing his younger brother a grudge, the new ruler plotted to kill him. Theinkhabo, the younger brother, bringing his retinues, fled the city and arrived in Myinsaing, the place where the Pyo people lived. He married the daughter of a rich man who bore him three sons, namely Athinkhaya, Razathingyan, and Thihathu [Sihasu] as well as a daughter (UK I, 321; Mhannan I, 361).

Here the Burmese word *sawbwa* indicates that the Shan prince (*chaofa*), and more probably Thihathu’s father, was a Shan. This is not a myth or socio-cultural phenomenon created by British historians during the colonial period; in this case all the chroniclers, including Twinthintaikwun Mahasithu, followed U Kala, describing the same story about the three Shan brothers (Mahasithu, 1968, 163; Mhannan I, 361). Yet there is a mystery about the “Pyo People”. In the Pagan period there remained a considerable number of Pyu people, appearing as *Pyu* in the contemporary stone inscriptions. The chronicles also used the name “Pyu” and not “Pyo”. Aung Thwin (1998, 123) wrote, “...Binnakha is actually an old Pyu settlement (?) that lies right in the heartland of Burma, just south of the irrigated Kyaukse valley.” The question mark in parenthesis following the phrase “an old Pyu” suggests the claim is dubious.

Luce assumed (1958, 150) that Binnakha was perhaps somewhere in the hills east of Kyaukse. His supposition was supported by an account of a chronicler in a later period. U Maung Maung Tin (1963, II: 89), the author of *Konebounzset Mahayazawingyi* (The Chronicle of the Konbaung Dynasty), referring to the *Minzet Linga* (the chronological poems of the dynasties) asserted that Binnakha was one of the fifty-seven villages located on the banks of the Salween River. As Luce

(1985, 47) pointed out, referring to the T'ang records, the Pyu people, the inhabitants of the upper Irrawaddy valley, were known to the Chinese as Piào and they called themselves Tu-luó-shì. In the late thirteenth century a considerable number of Pyu people seemed to have inhabited the upper reaches of Mu valley. According to the Yuan dynastic chronicle, a place called Piào-dian, which literally means the Pyu region, as it was known to the Gold-Teeth (Jin Chi)⁴ people was on the way to the Burmese garrison town of Jiang Tóu (Cheng), probably Kaungzin (Koncan), and was located on the northern bank of the Taping River (Yuánshi Ch. 210: Wàiyí 3 Mian, Yuáncháozhengmianlù). If this information is to be believed, in the late thirteenth century there were still Pyu settlements in the Irrawaddy valley north to modern Bhamo. The name "Pyo" has never been found in any contemporary sources. It is thus doubtful that Pyo in the chroniclers' account indicates the Pyu people. Unfortunately, there are no clues indicating the location of Binnakha or any other Pyu town or village in the Pagan period around the Kyaukse area.

According to the chronicles, the three brothers were brought up in the court of Pagan and their sister was married to the youngest son of King Tarutplyi (r. 1254–1287). The three brothers were called Athinkhaya, Yazathingyan and Thihathu, names in those days which were used only by the royal family and nobility (UK I, 309; Mhannan I, 361–362). At the beginning of the Tai century (c.1250–1350), the court of Pagan seemed to have established political and cultural relationships based on kinship, extending rights and authority to the Shan (Tai) aristocrats in the inner circle around the center in order to strengthen and secure central government from the threat of the Shan domains. The three brothers had been in royal service, holding the important *khuruin* of Kyaukse area as their appanages before the Mongols invaded the kingdom (Mhannan I, 362). Except for the chroniclers' accounts, there are no contemporary sources to trace their ancestry to the Shan aristocracy. In the inscriptions they left behind, they never declared themselves to be Shan, but instead claimed to be "the equals of the king of Pagan and of the generals who subdued the Chinese army".

In spite of the phrase "equals of the king of Pagan," King Klawcwa (r.1287–1298), the son and successor of King Tarukplyi, was merely a titular monarch of the kingdom. He might have had control over the six *khuruin* area, which was less productive than Kyaukse. The Mu valley was in the path of the invading Mongol campaigns and was probably totally devastated by the war. Therefore the three brothers chose Myinzaing in the eleven *khuruin* as their headquarters and built a strong fortress there. In 1297, they dethroned King Klawcwa, who was later assassinated (Luce 1958, 150).

⁴ The "Gold Teeth People" or Zardandan, as called in Persian by Marco Polo, were mainly the Austric speaking peoples, Palaung, Riang and Lawa. The Mongol records continued to use the phrase for the peoples around the Upper Irrawaddy and Shweli valleys (Luce 1985, 15–16).

The choice of Myinsaing (Mrancuin) as their headquarters was of great political significance because of their reliance on the Shan highlands as their power base and on the strategic position of the city, located in a valley at the foot of the Shan mountain ranges, 5 km east of present-day Kyaukse. The Shan highlands seem to have been considered the main source of manpower and the eleven *khuruin* (Kyaukse) as the main source of economic sustenance. The names of the villages of the Lawa people, one of the most populous groups in the Shan highlands, and the villages of other people, such as the Ponlon, appeared in contemporary inscriptions and can be placed in the Kyaukse area (Luce 1958, n.23). However, the three brothers, and especially the youngest, Thihathu, gained the support of both the Burman and Shan peoples. At the request of the Pagan court, the Mongol army returned, and began to besiege Myinsaing on 25 January 1301. It withdrew all troops on 6 April 1301 without capturing the city. On 20 October 1309 the youngest brother, Thihathu, crowned himself king in the style of the Pagan monarchy with the title *Sritribhawanaditya-thihathura-dhammaraja*, and built the city of Pinya as his capital on the southern bank of the Irrawaddy. The use of the title *Dhammaraja* was an attempt to rationalize his position in the tradition of the kings of the Pagan dynasty and to declare that he was going to rule the kingdom according to the *dhamma* (the law of justice and righteousness). He took the queen of the dethroned King Klawcwa (r. 1287–1298) as his own (Than Tun 2003, 84–85). Phwa Saw, the dowager queen of King Talukplyi (r. 1254–1287), led the opening ceremony at the new royal palace according to the ritual practices of the Pagan dynasty (Mhannan I: 370–371). There was no racial antagonism to Thihathu's acquisition of the throne among the dominant Burman elites because all three brothers had shown their political leadership in the defense of the kingdom during the Mongol invasion and were viewed by the common people with superstitious awe.

Agriculture suffered badly during the Mongol invasions. The irrigation systems were destroyed. Epigraphs in the early fourteenth century often mention the forested paddy lands, as shown in the following contemporary inscription:

Because the Tarup [Chinese] once plundered (the said lands) they became full of jungle. Of these lands some relapsed into jungle and some remained in the support of the lords (Pl. 258, 8; Bennet 1971, 27).

After more than two decades of war and anarchy the people in the dry zone, from whatever ethnic group, were not hesitant about offering obedience to a new ruler who had the ability to rule the country, and thereby bring law and order. The people seemed to believe that if they offered their dues and services to the new ruler, he would provide them with peaceful and prosperous lives (Weber I 1978,

952). As indicated earlier, Thihathu adopted the customs of Burmese culture and Buddhism, and also made efforts to restore the socio-cultural institutions of the Pagan dynasty. He even declared himself to be the “The Lord of the One White Elephant, Tazishin Mintara” (UK I, 330; Mhannan I, 371). It was a positive political action by the Shan aristocrat to be accepted by the Burmans as their ruler. He had shown his *phun-tago* (charismatic glory) by superseding his two older brothers and the last two kings of the Pagan dynasty, King Klawcwa and King Conhac (Saw Hnit, r.1298–1312), who both took an oath of allegiance to the Mongol emperor. Thus, he successfully legitimized his authority according to traditional Burmese practices. It was a shift from being identified as a prominent figure of the Shan ethnic group to identifying with the Burmese people.

In 1322 Thihathu urged his younger son, Saw Yun, to build a city, Sagaing, on the opposite bank of the Irrawaddy. In view of the growing threat from the Shan in the north, he probably intended to develop a frontier defense area between the Irrawaddy and Chindwin rivers. Since the beginning of the fourteenth century, Mongol control over northern Burma and Yunnan province had been declining. Sipsong Panna in southern Yunnan and the Mao kingdom of Luchuan in the Upper Shweli valley grew stronger. Both Sipsong Panna and Lù-chuan raided the neighboring Shan principalities, including those in the interior parts of Yunnan, and expanded their territories. The Mongol officials in Yunnan were unprepared and did not have the strength to deter the expansion of the Lè principedom (Yuánshi Ch. 23, Wuzongbenjìzhìdà 2–11; Yuánshi Ch. 29, Tàidìngdìbenjìzhìzhì 3–11). From then and until the fall of the Yuan dynasty, the Mongols could not give much attention to the southern part of Yunnan.

During this period, the Shan kingdom, Luchuan, also became a dominant power under the leadership of Si Kefa. He founded the kingdom, Tai Mao, which threatened the Burmese kingdom for more than a century (Cheng Yi Sein 1972, 38). Tai Mao was no longer a Shan *müang*, tributary to Ava, but a parallel center with a different political identity as a Shan kingdom. Ava, sometimes as a nominal center, could not maintain control over its distant peripheries, especially the Shan principalities, as their loyalty to Ava was in name only. Sometimes they even challenged the central government. In 1364 Si Kefa with his Tai Mao army sacked the city of Sagaing, crossed the river and occupied the royal capital Pinya. King Narathu (r.1359–1364) and all the townspeople were taken as prisoners to Tai Mao. The Burmans who survived fled south to Minbu, Toungoo, and Taungdwingyi, where the Burman provincial governors could protect them in their garrison towns (UK I, 322; Pl. 591a, 1–10; List. 686, 12).

Thihathu’s dynasty was restored by Thadominbya (r. 1364–1368), who again claimed to be a direct descendent of Thihathu (Sihasu). In 1364 he abandoned both Pinya and Sagaing and founded the new capital, Ava. It remained the capital

of the Burmese kingdom until the Mao Shan re-conquered it in 1527. After Thadominbya's death, Mingyiswa Sawke (r. 1368–1400) was elected king. Sawke also claimed to be a direct descendent of Thihathu; "...the grandson of King Thihathu (Sihasu) who defeated the invading army of Emperor Khan." (UB 57, 1–4) As a result, King Swake assumed a hereditary charisma from the three brothers, whose courage, victories, and savoir-faire had justified the dynasty they founded, and so firmly established his authority.

During his long reign of thirty-three years, King Sawke had to reform the administrative system. He seemed to have realized that the central administration had been considerably weakened and that reigning supreme over all the Burman and Shan provinces both in the core and on the fringe of his realm was no longer possible. The limited control was noticeable because the lack of security led to the establishment of garrison towns, each with a *myoza* (chief of the town) as commander of the self-defense army. Zatapum Yazawin (probably compiled in the late Toungoo period) has a list of the towns with their founding dates:

(1) Toungoo	(BE 642)	(AD 1280)
(2) Taungdwingyi	(BE 649)	(AD 1287)
(3) Sagu	(BE 661)	(AD 1299)
(4) Laygaing (Minbu)	(BE 665)	(AD 1303)
(5) Yamethin	(BE 665)	(AD 1303)
(6) Salin	(BE 666)	(AD 1304)
(7) Kukhamgyi	(BE 667)	(AD 1305)
(8) Pyi	(BE 673)	(AD 1311)
(9) Salay	(BE 766)	(AD 1404)

Until the fall of Pagan even the most senior administrators, such as the governors of Dala and Prome, though members of the royal family, were only conferred with the title of *Thugyi* (*Sukri*), literally meaning chief (Pl. 12, 15; Pl. 370, 23). In post-Pagan Burma, the emergence of garrison-towns like Taungdwingyi, Yamethin, Toungoo, Salin and Prome, with the bulk of their population Burman, put political pressure on Ava to transfer more power to provincial rulers. As early as the 1370s, the court abandoned the system of countrywide labor conscription, surrendering it instead to the provincial rulers. The garrison towns Toungoo, Taungdwingyi and Hlaingtet were classified as *htaungpyumyo* because they contributed a contingent of one thousand troops, while Pyi (Prome), Yamethin, Salin, Myinsaing, Pinlay and others were called *yabyumyo*, towns that provided hundreds of troops to the central administration in case of war (Zatapum, 95–99). An edict of King Sawke dated 19 June 1368 recognized the provincial rulers as *Min* (sovereign ruler). They were allowed to have a royal umbrella and live in a

palace (*thi:chon:nan:ne*), meaning they were full sovereign rulers (ROB I, 151). The king at Ava called himself the king of kings (*rajadhiraja*), although his predecessors in the Pagan dynasty took the title *Mingyi* (*mankri*), which means great ruler (Pl. 10a, 1).

The Shan Intrusions

Despite the lack of contemporary sources, the foundation of the Tai Mao kingdom in the Shweli River (Lóngchuan) valley can be determined from fragmentary pieces of information in Burmese and local Shan chronicles. According to Shan traditions, the Shan (Tai) people first founded the city of Kenghung on the east bank of the Shweli River. King Khwan Ho-kham (literally, “lord of the golden palace”) divided his kingdom and sent his sons as viceroys to Momeik, Mogaung, Mohnyin, Mohlaing, and Mowun (Khaymeinda 1948, 51–71). The Ming reign chronicle (*Míngshílù*) states that during the rule of the Mongol dynasty both Lùchuan and Píng Mian in the Mao valley (Shweli River Valley) were under the control of Burma (*Míngtàizushílù* Ch. 86, Hóngwu 6–11). Luce dated the emergence of the Mao kingdom of Luchuan only to the fourteenth century on the basis that this is when the capital city Zhelán first appears in contemporary Chinese sources (Luce 1959a, 28).

The Tai Mao kingdom under the rule of Si Kefa was so powerful that it ransacked the twin Burmese capitals of Pinya and Sagaing in 1364. The reign of the first emperor of the Ming dynasty, Hóng Wu, began in 1368 at Nanjing, but Yunnan continued to be under corrupt and weak Mongol provincial government until 1381. However, neither the Ming government nor the Mongols in Yunnan were able to pay attention to the growth of the Mao Shan kingdom that continuously threatened the southern territories. After the Ming conquest of Tali in 1381, Si Lúnfa immediately offered submission to the Ming generals, as did Daokam, the chief of Sipsong Panna (*Tàizushílù* Ch. 143, Hóngwu 15–2; Ji Fúyi 1937, 1). All the Shan principalities, including Mohnyin and Mogaung, were incorporated into the powerful Mao kingdom of Luchuan in the late fifteenth century. Si Lunfa, though outwardly submissive to the Ming court, did not give up the policy of expansion begun by his grandfather Si Kefa. He invaded Sipsong Panna and Lan Na several times, later annexed Kale (Jialí) and brought the whole of northern Burma under his rule (*Tàizushílù* Ch. 155, Hóngwu 16; *ibid* Ch. 176, 18–12; *ibid* Ch. 180, 20–1; *ibid* Ch. 182, 20–5; *ibid* Ch. 188, 21–1; *ibid* 189, 21–3; *ibid* 190, 21–4; *ibid* 198, 22–11 Baiyízhuan). At this point he posed an outright threat to Ava.

In 1392 a Mao Shan army under the command of Tho Chi Bwa, probably Si Jifa, the chief of Mohnyin, attacked Myedu. The Ava army dispatched to defend the town was completely defeated and retreated in disarray. A subsequent military

campaign under the command of the governor of Yamethin was able to defeat the invaders in a battle just a few kilometers north of Ava (UK I, 382–383). By now, King Sawke seemed to have found his kingdom vulnerable to the threat of Mao Shan. Seeking Chinese intervention in the matter, he sent missions to the Ming court. At the same time, the new dynasty of China was eager to establish formal relations with Ava. Three years after the establishment of the Ming administration, Emperor Hóng Wu sent a mission of four to Ava. However, the embassy could not proceed via Yunnan because the province was still under the control of the Mongols, so they took a route through Vietnam, Champa, Lan Na and Toungoo. As soon as they arrived in Vietnam, hostilities broke out between Vietnam and Champa, and they were stranded in Vietnam for two years. When Emperor Hóng Wu summoned them back, only one person returned, as the others had died on the way (Tàizushílù Ch. 86, Hóngwu 6–11).

One year after the Mao Shan invasion of Ava, King Sawke was able to establish contacts with the Ming court. Although the Burmese sources are silent on the missions to the Ming court, Burmese emissaries led by Bannánsùcì (Pandhisithu?) arrived at the imperial court on 14 April 1393 after traveling through Lan Na, Sipswang Panna and Yunnanfu (Tàizushílù Ch. 226, Hóngwu 26–3). Another group arrived in December 1395 and the third came four months later to complain about the Mao Shan raids from Luchuan. The emperor sent two envoys, Li Sicong and Qián Gucong, to mediate in the dispute. They went to Ava first and brought a letter from King Swake requesting Chinese intervention. In the letter from the emperor to Si Lunfa, the Mao Shan king was warned against making inroads into the territory of Ava and threatened with punishment if there were cases of further aggression on the small and less populous states, which were also tributary to China (Tàizushílù Ch. 242 Hóngwu, 28–10; *Ibid* 244 Hóngwu 29). It is clear that the Chinese regarded Ava as only a petty tributary state, weaker than the Mao Shan kingdom. As described by Harvey, “Ava was a bedlam of snarling Shan states” for nearly a couple of centuries (Harvey 1967, 80).

The policy of the Ming government to keep Yunnan and its southern and southwestern areas under effective control enabled Ava to survive as a Burmese kingdom, though tributary to Ming China. In 1397 a rebellion broke out in Mùbang and Si Lúnfa fled to Yunnan. The rebels were defeated by the Ming army, but the governor of Yunnan, Zhanghóng, took advantage of this incident to intervene and divide the Mao kingdom into separate principalities. As a result, the supremacy of Lù Chuan was reduced. Mùbang (Theinni) and Mèngyang (Mohnyin) became protectorates under the direct control of the Ming provincial government of Yunnan (Míngshì Ch. 314 Yúnnántusi-Lùchan; Tàizushílù Ch. 255, Hóngwu 30–9; *ibid* Ch. 256, 31–2; *ibid* 257, 31–50). From then onwards, Mao’s policy towards Ava changed and became ambivalent. The Mao leaders maintained friendly relations



with Ava when the latter was strong and occasionally raided the northern plains when it was weak.

There were two causes that led to the collapse of Shan power in northern Burma. First, Ming policy did not allow any Shan (Tai) state to grow stronger and form a united Shan kingdom in Yunnan or in the adjacent areas in northern Burma. Secondly, the Shans (Tai) could never demonstrate collective action in pursuit of national unification. The regional interest of the Shan people that viewed a *müiang* as a fully independent unit kept the Shan principalities aloof from one another, whereas the Burmans considered central Burma their homeland, *Mramma-mandhala* or *nuinnamto*, meaning Burmese sovereign state (UK I, 361).

In the 1420s, Luchuan again rebelled against the Ming government. Its ruler Si Rènfa annexed the territories of the neighboring tribes in the Salween Valley area (Míngshì Ch. 314, Yúnnántusì; Tàizushílù Ch. 136, Yonglè 11–1; *ibid* Ch. 254, 20–12; Xuanzongshílù Ch. 24, Xuandéyuán 1). The Shan chronicles give a brief account of his incursions into the Mu valley and the sudden attack on Myedu in 1426 (Khaymeinda 1948, 85). He devastated the villages in the Yongchang area in 1436. The Ming court ordered Mù Shéng, the commander in chief of imperial forces in Yunnan, to take necessary action against Si Renfa (Yingzongshílù Ch. 24, Zhèngtongyuánnián 11; *ibid* Ch. 35, 2–10). Si Renfa declared that he would send a tribute mission to the Ming court, apparently to delay the expedition. Mù Shéng believed him and did not cross the Salween to attack Lu Chuan (Míngshì Ch. 314 Yúnnántusì 2 Lùchuan). However, Si Renfa moved his army of 10,000 men, seized strategic positions in the Salween valley and constructed three hundred boats on the river bank (Yingzongshílù Ch. 44 Zhèngtang 3–7). A column of imperial forces under Commander Fang Zhèng advanced to attack the rebels. Surrounded by the Luchuan army in the northeast of Téngchang, Fang Zhèng's army, consisting probably of no fewer than ten thousand men, was defeated and Fan Zheng himself was killed in battle. The defeat prompted the Ming government to establish itself more vigorously in Yunnan (Yingzongshílù Ch. 51, Zhèngtang 4–2; Míngshì Ch. 314 Yúnnántusì 2 Lùchuan).

In 1441 Wáng Jì, the Minister of War, was sent as commander of a new expedition (Yingzongshílù Ch. 75, Zhèngtang 6–1). It is estimated that an army of 150,000 was recruited from many provinces for his campaign during the years 1441 and 1442 (Mínshì Ch. 314 Yúnnántusì 2 Lùchuan). According to his report to the emperor, in two engagements to the east of Téngchang his soldiers decapitated 50,000 Shan rebels and another 2,390 Shans in the battle of Shan Mù-lóng. Si Rénfa's headquarters was captured and Wáng Jì declared on 26 January 1442 that his mission was accomplished (Yingzongshílù Ch. 88, Zhèngtang 7–1; *ibid* Ch. 88, Zhèngtang 7–7; Míngshì Ch. 315 Yúnnántusì 3 Miandian). The casualty figures reported by Wáng Jì were doubtless exaggerated. Despite this, they indicate how

vigorously the Chinese had to quell the uprising, and demonstrate what a great threat the Mao kingdom was to Ava. Si Rènfa escaped to Mohnyin and was later arrested by Ava forces. A contemporary inscription dated 18 March 1442 states:

Tho Ngan Bwa, the overlord of the ten umbrellas [ten vassal states] and the grandson of Tho Khin Bwa the lord of nine hundred thousand [soldiers?] was captured (List. 934a, 22–25).

Si Rén-fa was turned over to the Chinese. He was beheaded in the market place of Ava and his head was sent to Beijing (Mhannan II, 85–88; Yingzongshílù Ch. 136, Zhèngtang 10–12; *ibid* Ch. 239, Jingtài 5–3; Míngshì 315, Yúnnántusì 3 Miandian). After the fall of Luchuan, two sons of Si Rènfa, Si Jifa and Si Púfa, known to the Burmese as Tho Chi Bwa and Tho Pope Bwa, swore allegiance to King Narapati of Ava (r. 1443–1469) and were sent to Mohnyin and Mogaung as *sawbwas* (List. 939b, 19–20). Most of Si Rènfa’s followers seem to have taken refuge in Ava, leading to a population increase among the Shan in the vicinity of the royal capital. There was no place of refuge for the lieutenants of Si Renfa. The Lè chronicle tells of a Lè minister who escaped to Sipsong Panna, was executed by Si Lúnfa, and his head sent to the imperial court. As a result of this, Si Lúnfa was honored with the title “the person who guarded the Golden Gate of the Empire.” (Jì Fúyì 1937, 11)

The Fall of Ava

According to the Shan chronicles, Mogaung was the main gateway for Shan migration into Assam (Elias 1876, 41). This is indicated by the spread of Shan people called Tai Long (Great Shan), who speak the same dialect as those from Bhamo in the east, and from Mohnyin-Mogaung to Manipur and Assam (Scott and Hardiman 1921, 200). It is notable that both Mohnyin and Mogaung were situated on the trade route that connected Yunnan and India. It can therefore be assumed that Shan *müangs* like Mohnyin and Mogaung, though situated in narrow valleys of a mountainous region, by their command of the trade routes and access to human resources in the uplands, became so powerful that they could occasionally manipulate the court of Ava in this period. For instance, on three occasions during the fifteenth century, Mohnyin and Mogaung played the role of king-makers to the court of Ava. As F. K. Lehman (1967, 136) speculated, the hill tribes participated in a loose system of inter-group relations whose major focus was Burma proper. King Sawke and King Min Khaung I (r.1401–1422) had to rely on the Shan troops provided by Kale, Mohnyin, Mogaung and sometimes from Oungboun (Hsipaw) in their military expeditions to Hanthawadi in lower Burma. The Shan

chiefs always joined Ava as equal allied powers, whereas the Burman provincial rulers participated because of their liability for military service (UK II, 5). The *sawbwa* of Mohnyin even proposed a demarcation between his domain and Ava, but on the advice of chief minister Wunzin Minyaza, King Swake ignored the proposal (Mhannan II, 59–67).

The alliance between Ava and these Shan *müangs* was based on reciprocal dependency. The Shan chiefs seemed to have direct contacts with the Ava royal family. The Burmese chronicles often mention that some Shan chiefs were paramours of the queens of Ava. Probably Ava adopted a policy aimed at absorbing the Shan elites into the Burmese royal family. In 1426, King Thihhathu (r. 1422–1426) of Ava was assassinated in a palace intrigue masterminded by his chief queen, Shin Bo May, and her lover, *sawbwa* Kye-taung-nyo of Kale, who was put on the throne for a few months. However, Mohnyin Thado (r. 1427–1440), probably a Shan brought up in Mohnyin, came down with his army, defeated Kye-taung-nyo and ascended the throne (UK II, 54–55). Mohnyin Thado had to face dissent from the Burman provincial governors of Pinlay, Yamethin and Taungdwingyi, who persuaded the *sawbwa* of Oungboun (Hsipaw) to side with them. Finally, the *sawbwa* of Oungboun supported Mohnyin Thado and the dispute came to an end. Throughout the Ava period, Oungboun never recognized the king of Ava as its overlord. According to the chronicles, the *sawbwa* of Oungboun addressed the king of Ava as *thway-thauk*, which literally means ‘companion’ (UK I, 363).

The Burmese chronicles repeatedly mention incidents of political unrest in Ava at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries. The causes lay in the withdrawal of fealty by the Burman provincial governors and the perpetual intrusions of the Shans into the dry zone. The Ming dynasty chroniclers did not pay attention to the resurrection of the descendents of Si Rènfa, now ruling as the single entity, the merged Mohnyin and Mogaung. In contrast, their Burmese counterparts described the formation in the fifteenth century of a powerful kingdom under Mohnyin Salun (Sa Lun, Si Lún?), the grandson of Si Rènfa (Mhannan II, 105). From the beginning of the sixteenth century, Sa Lun began to expand his territory into the northern part of the Mu valley, incorporating Myedu. In 1506 he advanced to the south and attacked Dipeyin. Ava’s army was defeated and the king of Ava, Shwenan-kyaw-shin (r. 1502–1527), had to recognize Myedu and Ngayane as Shan territories. Sa Lun fortified Myedu as a base for further campaigns. After Mübang (Theinni) was reduced by Sa Lun, Oungboun (Hsipaw) remained the only powerful Shan ally of Ava.

In 1511, Si Lun attacked Oungboun. King Shwenan-kyawshin of Ava, at Oungboun’s request, opened the southern front against Mohnyin. Ava’s troops besieged Myedu. Sa Lun suddenly turned south and attacked the Burmese forces.

Ava's entire force of twelve battalions was defeated. King Shwenan-kyawshin narrowly escaped and made his way to Ava. Shwenan-kyawshin strengthened Mingin on the west bank of the Chindwin River in order to defend the Minbu (six *khuruin*) area. In 1523 and 1524, Sa Lun occupied the whole Mu Valley and destroyed all Burmese settlements on the banks of the Irrawaddy and Chindwin rivers. Finally, the city of Sagaing, opposite Ava on the bank of the Irrawaddy, was sacked and all the Burman people were taken north. Then the Shan Army crossed the Irrawaddy and occupied the larger Burmese cities like Pukan (Kukham) and Salin. At the end of 1524, the whole Minbu District (six *khuruin*) area was occupied and Sa Lun and his army temporarily stationed at Thayetmyo. Now the Mu valley, the Minbu, and all the trade routes that connected central Burma with China and India were under the control of Sa Lun of Mohnyin (Mhannan II, 126–128). From the six *khuruin* Sa Lun immediately threatened Pyi (Prome). After Prome offered submission to Sa Lun, Ava lost access to lower Burma through the Irrawaddy and became isolated. In 1526, Sa Lun finally attacked Ava and King Shwenan-kyawshin was killed in the battle. Sa Lun put his son Tho Han Bwa (Si Hongfa?) on the throne, and in this manner the Burmese kingship disappeared for three decades (Mhannan II, 130, 134–135).

Ava under Shan Rule

Under the rule of Shan kings, there was no institutional change in the Burmese system of government. All the ministers of the former king who offered submission were sent as governors to the Minbu and Kyaukse areas. Mingyi Yannaung, the nephew of King Shwenan-kyawshin, was appointed chief minister. According to the chronicles, Sa Lun said to Mingyi Yannaung:

My son Tho Han Bwa does not know the Burmese ways and rules. Mingyi, you are trusted to be his chief minister to give him advice when you are consulted, so that he can rule the whole country peacefully. (Mhannan II, 138)

Subsequently, only two Burman provinces, Toungoo and Prome, stood defiantly against Ava. Tho Han Bwa consulted Mingyi Yannaung about his plan to conquer these two provinces. The chronicles state:

Mingyi Yannaung realized that Prome and Toungoo would not be able to withstand the Shan incursions. And he thought that if the Shans occupied them there would be no more Burman domains at all. He wished them to remain as Burman domains. He therefore



said to Tho Han Bwa that Toungoo and Prome would be made to offer submission not by using force, but by admiration for the glory of the lord of Ava. Then he sent envoys to Toungoo and Prome and urged to send tribute mission to Ava. (UK II, 132)

Toungoo and Prome agreed. They sent tribute missions, and at the same time Toungoo also strengthened its position. Mingyi Nyo, the ruler of Toungoo, destroyed all the dams and canals in Yelwe five *khuruin*, an important rice producing area in the south, lest the Shan should try to settle the area. After that, all the Burman people were brought into the city of Toungoo and its vicinity (UK II, 132).

In Ava, the Shan elite set themselves apart from the Burmans with whom they coexisted in the administrative hierarchy. This system was minutely constituted and regulated by the Shan monarch and his Shan counsel. The permanent presence of Shan officials, as *primus inter pares*, at the court differentiated the Burman elites into subcategories. Although Burmese cultural values were sanctioned, the chronicles inform us that in administrative functions Shan aristocrats usually had a superior status (UK II, 137). The ethnic cleavage was widened by these tensions in the central bureaucracy. The way the Mao Shan elites established themselves at the court of Ava was different from that of the three Shan brothers who had skillfully adapted the changing social and political situations at the beginning of the fourteenth century. In Burman eyes, this action denigrated the traditional values of the Burman majority. The chronicles describe the situation:

Tho Han Bwa, the king of Ava, was a ruthless ruler. He did not value human life. Nor did he show any respect for the Three Gems [Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha]. He destroyed the pagodas and images of Buddha and took the jewels enshrined in the religious monuments. He thought the Buddhist monks, who lived a life of celibacy with many followers, might arise in rebellion. As a precautionary measure, he planned to kill all the monks. (UK II, 135)

In 1539, almost all the Buddhist monks in Ava and the Sagaing area were invited to an alms-giving ceremony and later brutally massacred. Those who survived fled to Toungoo and Prome. The monasteries were destroyed and Buddhist scriptures burnt. The Burmese chroniclers portrayed the incidents as the deadliest attacks on Buddhism in Burmese history (UK II, 135; Mhannan II, 142–143; List. 1073b, 8). Although we cannot draw a parallel with similar events in early medieval Europe, the scale of the attacks is reflected in Marc Bloch's descriptions of the situation in Europe at the beginning of the feudal period: "...there was naught but towns emptied of their folks, monasteries razed to the ground or given to the flames." (Bloch 1982, 3)

The massacre of the monks prompted the Burmans to rebel and, under the leadership of Mingyi Yannaung, a revolt broke out in 1542. Tho Han Bwa and all his Shan ministers were assassinated. Although Mingyi Yannaung was elected king, he refused to ascend the throne. He may have doubted the strength of the Burmans in Ava to resist the possible Shan raids from the north. At his behest Khun Hmaing, the Shan chief of Oungboun, was invited to become the king of Ava. Oungboun had been a close ally of Ava until it fell into the hands of Shans from Mohnyin and its rulers had formed reciprocal marriage alliances with the kings of Ava. The Oungboun Shans were Buddhists and shared the most obvious identifying social, cultural and religious values with the people from Ava (Mhannan II, 145). Burmese sources do not indicate any Burman dissatisfaction with the rule of Shan kings from Oungboun. King Khun Hmaing (r.1543–1546) was succeeded by his son, the prince of Moby, who took the Burmese title King Narapati (r. 1546–1552). Under his rule, most of the Shan elites in Ava seemed to have been completely drawn into the Burmese socio-cultural arena. The chronicles state:

When Moby Narapati ascended the throne in Ava, he was no longer in contact with his close Shan kindred in Oungboun. He did not like Shan ways of life and did not use Shan traditional paraphernalia any more. He finally entered into alliance with King Tabinshwehti [of Toungoo].” (Mhannan II, 149)

In 1552 he was defeated by Sithu Kyawhtin, the Burman lord of Sagaing, who was supported with military aid from Mohnyin. Sithu Kyawhtin ruled Ava as a subordinate king of Mohnyin for three years, until he was deposed by King Bayinnaung of the Toungoo Dynasty in 1555 (Mhannan II, 149–150).

Conclusion

The facts documented by the chroniclers and used by European pioneers to reconstruct the history of Burma in this period are not mythical. There is no controversy among the chronicles about the assertion of Shan dominance in Burma in this period. However, we do not have any contemporaneous sources to substantiate the chroniclers' account that Thihathu, the founder of the Pinya-Sagaing-Ava line of monarchy, was a Shan. There is no indication in the historiography that the European scholars were forced to create a picture of a dark age in Burmese history under the thumb of barbarous conquerors from the highlands. It was true that Thihathu's successors considered themselves members of the same elite who inherited the political legacy of the Pagan dynasty. They also developed a common racial consciousness by the process of socio-cultural interaction.

The southward infiltration of Shans could be seen as closely related to the political strategy of founding a Shan empire with its center in the Shweli River valley and was probably economically motivated, to control the trade routes and rice-producing lowland areas. For nearly two centuries the Burmese kingdom had precariously survived the territorial expansion of both the Mao Shans of Luchuan in the Shweli valley and the Mohnyin Shans. The assimilation of Shans in the Irrawaddy valley into Burmese society and the export of Burmese cultural norms, especially to the eastern Shan princedoms such as Oungboun and Theinni, was successful, although the western Shans seem to have maintained strong cultural affinities with the Tai peoples in Assam and Manipur until the Burmese conquest of all these Shan *müang* in the reign of King Bayinnaung (r.1551–1581). Although the three Shan leaders, the founders of the Ava dynasty (c. 1300–1364), and the Shan chiefs of Oungboun, as elected kings in Ava (1533–1555), showed a strong sense of community with Burmese society and desire to adopt Burmese socio-cultural traditions, the Shan invaders from Mohnyin-Mogaung and their leader King Tho Han Bwa (r. 1527–1533) were hostile to the Burman communities at Ava. Indeed, they attacked Buddhism, brutally assassinating Buddhist monks, burning Buddhist scriptures and destroying religious buildings. These tragic events forced most Burman and non-Burman inhabitants of central Burma to flee south.

Acronyms Used in the Paper

BE	Burmese era
JBRS	<i>Journal of the Burma Research Society</i>
JSS	<i>The Journal of the Siam Society</i>
List.	Duroiselle, Charles.1921. <i>A List of Inscriptions Found in Burma</i> . Rangoon: Government Press.
Mhannan	1967. <i>Mhannan-Mahayazwindawgyi</i> 3 vols. Rangoon: Pyigy Mandine Press.
Pl.	Plate Number in Pe Maung Tin and Luce, G.H. 1933–1957. <i>Inscriptions of Burma</i> . Five Portfolios. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933–1957.
ROB	Than Tun, ed. 1983. <i>Royal Orders of Burma</i> . Vol. I. Kyoto: Kyoto University, Center for Southeast Asian Studies.
UB	1900. <i>Inscriptions Collected in Upper Burma</i> . Rangoon: Government Press.
UK	Kala, U. 1960. <i>Mahayazawingyi</i> . Vol. I and II. Rangoon: Burma Research Society.
ZOK	Pe Maung Tin and Furnivall, J.S., eds, 1960. <i>Zambhudipa-Oksaung-Kyam</i> . Rangoon: Burma Research Society.

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[*Míngshílù*]

「明史錄」

[*Míngshǐ*]

「明史」

[*Yuáncháo zhèngmìnlù*]

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