

A CHRONICLE OF THE MONS

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INTRODUCTION

This is a translation of a work translated from Mon into Myanmar which its translator refers to in the concluding part of his translation as the "Mon Chronicle" (မွန်ရာဇဝင်).¹ The translation of a translation appears to be odd, but it is attempted here because the Mon original does not seem to have survived and because there are so few Mon chronicles available that any addition to their number could be of some help in arriving at a better idea of Mon historiography.

The best known of the Mon chronicles is the *Akruiñ Kamraulwī Rājādhirāj* (အကြိုက်မြလွှီရာဇာဓိရာဇ်) and its Myanmar translation, the *Yazadarit Ayedawbon* (ရာဇာဓိရာဇ်အရေးတော်ပုံ), "The Struggle of Rājādhirāj." The Mon work is anonymous, but the Myanmar translation in general circulation has been attributed to Banya Dala (ဗညာဒလ) by Maingkaing Myosa Mingyimahathirizeyathu U Yan (1815-1892), Royal Librarian of the late Konbaung period and author of the *Pitakat Thamaing*, one of the earliest of Myanmar bibliographies,² and the attribution has been affirmed by such modern scholars as Yi Yi and Nai Pan Hla.³ It is not very clear on what evidence the attribution is made because Banya Dala does not otherwise stand out as a literary figure. He is undoubtedly the most prominent Mon in Myanmar history and perhaps that accounts for the attribution.

The Banya Dala of Bayinnaung's reign (there are several Banya Dalas, Banya Dala being a popular Mon title) was noted for his skill in diplomacy and war and took active part in such campaigns as those against the Shan states of the north and northeast, Laos and Ayutthaya. His name was implicated in several attempts made on Bayinnaung's life by Mons but Bayinnaung had no doubts about his loyalty. However, he incurred the

¹ Text, 109.

² Mingyimahathirizeyathu (U Yan), *Pitakattaw Thamaing* (History of the Pitakas), Yangon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1959, 265.

³ Dr Yi Yi, "Ayedawbon Kyanmya Pyatthana" (The Problem of the *Ayedawbon* Chronicles), *Kanthaseinlè Sadanmya* (Kanthaseinlè Papers), Yangon: Minhla Book House, 1969, 60. Nai Pan Hla, *Yazadarit Ayedawbon Kyan*, Yangon: Minhlaingdaw Literature House, 1977, 9.

wrath of Bayinnaung for his failure in a campaign against Laos, was sent to exile in Chai Nat and died some time later in Kamphaeng Phet.⁴

The *Yazadarit Ayedawbon* exists in several palm leaf manuscripts,⁵ while one of its earliest printings was in 1883.⁶ This was followed by further printings in 1922⁷ and 1923.⁸ Later, it became part of a collection of *ayedawbon* chronicles published in 1967.⁹ It again appeared in another collection of *ayedawbon* chronicles in 1970.¹⁰

The printing of the Mon text progressed more tardily than that of the Myanmar translation. The first printing was in 1910 and was done at Pak Lat, southwest of Bangkok, where the Mon monk Phra Candakanta, Superior of Krungcin Monastery (နန္ဒဝိနိဘာကြိုင်စိင်) had set up a press to print a number of significant Mon texts. After printing a number of Mon works, mostly in verse,¹¹ Phra Candakanta published the *Kamraulwī Rājādhirāj* as part of the first of two volumes devoted to chronicles, *Pathama Sudhammavati Gavampati Rājādhirāj* (ပဌမ သုဓမ္မဝတီ ဂဝမ္ပတီ ရာဇာဓိရာဇ်) which consisted of three works, (1) a short chronicle of Sudhammavati-Thaton, (2) the foretellings of the Buddha regarding Thaton and Hanthawaddy given through his disciple Gavampati, and (3) the chronicle

⁴ *Mahayazawinthat* (New Chronicle), by Twinthintaikwun Mahasithu U Tun Nyo, Volume II, edited by U Kyaw Win, Yangon: Mibamyitta, 1998, *passim*.

⁵ Nai Pan Hla in 1977 mentioned the following palm leaf manuscripts: a 9-line ms dated 1757 in the Myanmar Historical Commission Library, a 9-line ms dated 1831 in the Buddhist University Library, an 11-line ms dated 1849 in the National Library and a 10-line ms dated 1879 in the U Po Thi Library, Thaton. *Yazadarit Ayedawbon Kyan*, 9-10.

⁶ *Yazadarit Ayedawbon*, Yangon: British Burma News Press, 1883.

⁷ *Yazadarit Ayedawbon*, edited by Ashin Nirodha, Mandalay: Thumingala Press, 1922.

⁸ *Yazadarit Ayedawbon*, edited by U Bi, U Thein and U Ba Kyaw, Yangon: Thudhammawaddy Press, 1923.

⁹ *Myanmaminmya Ayedawbon* (The *Ayedawbon* of Myanmar Kings), Yangon: Natha Press, 1967.

¹⁰ *Ayedawbon 6-saungdwè* (Collection of 6 *Ayedawbon*), Yangon: Nanmyint Sarpay, 1970.

¹¹ In verse, *Siddhilokavajjārabbhakathā* (သိဒ္ဓ္ဌိလောကဝဇ္ဇာရပစ္စကထာ) in 1906; *Tikkhatyalokavajjārabbhakathā* (တိက္ခဏျလောကဝဇ္ဇာရပစ္စကထာ) and *Lik Bodhisat cah blāi bhā* (လိက်ဗောဓိသတ်နိ) in 1908; *Lekhachandadānasīlakathā* (လေခဆန္ဒဒါနသီလကထာ), *Lekha Likh pāramī kān* (လေခလိင်္ဂပါရမီကာနိ) in 1909. In prose, *Slapat Anamataggasamsarakathā* (သုပတ် အနမတဂ္ဂသံသရကထာ) and *Navakovāda Vinayakathā* (နဝကောဝါဒဝိနယကထာ) in 1908.

of Rājādhirāj which took up four-fifths of the whole volume.¹² In 1953, Nai Pan Hla used the occasion of a visit to Thailand to collect Mon materials there and, together with other texts, acquired the Pak Lat text of the Rājādhirāj chronicle. The text was then published by the Burma Research Society in 1958 under the title *Akrūñ Kamraulwī Rājādhirāj* with Nai Pan Hla editing the text.¹³ The Mon text revealed differences between the Mon original and the Myanmar translation in general currency, and Nai Pan Hla, basing himself on the Mon text but referring also to Myanmar palm leaf manuscripts, undertook another Myanmar version of the *Yazadarit Ayedawbon* which was published in 1977¹⁴ and has gone through several reprints.

More recently, another version of the Mon text has been published, with Nai Maung Toe editing a handwritten manuscript which was part of the collection of Mon palm leaf manuscripts which had been copied on to paper and were in the Bernard Free Library and are now in the National Library.¹⁵ Also, an English translation by San Lwin of the Myanmar translation attributed to Banya Dala has been published.¹⁶

As published, the *Kamraulwī Rājādhirāj* has no preamble to the work, no opening statement of purpose or expression of reverence for the Three Gems which is almost obligatory in such works. It also ends rather abruptly with a matter of fact statement:

Rājādhirāj, formerly Banya Nwai, attained prosperity at the age of twenty. He strove to unite the country and to pacify the Mon vassals for three years. He made war with Mingaung for six years and then they swore loyalty. Twenty-two years later he made war with Minyèkyawswa for three years. In the fourth year, he made

¹² The second volume, printed in 1912, was *Dhammaceti Mahāpiṭakadhara dutiya* (ဓမ္မဇေတိ မဟာပိဋကဓရ ဒုတိယ).

¹³ *Akrūñ Kamraulwī Rājādhirāj*, (Struggle of Razadirit) edited by Nai Pan Hla, Rangoon: Burma Research Society, 1958.

¹⁴ Nai Pan Hla, *Yazadarit Ayedawbon Kyan*, Yangon: Minhlaingdaw Literature House, 1977.

¹⁵ Nai Maung Toe, *Akrūñ Rājādhirāj*, Yangon: National Archives Department, 2000.

¹⁶ *The Campaigns of Razadarit*, by: Binnya Dala, translated by San Lwin, Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 2007.

When Min Mawdaw died, there was no one to succeed him. The ministers and the generals said,

“In the past, when a king died [and there was no heir], even a pet animal which the King kept had to be installed as king and be revered. Now, although she is a woman, we have one who is the offspring of kings, and we can install her as queen and have her rule.”²⁴⁵

The ministers and generals, of one mind, installed Shin Sawpu as queen and consecrated her with the title Sri Tribhavanābrahmā Aggadhammarājādhirājā Mahārājādevī.

With the royal appurtenances, wearing a crown and holding a *thanlyet* dagger, Shin Sawpu went in a palanquin, making a tour of the city. Her *samyaung* attendants²⁴⁶ told an old man, “Get back, old man!” The old man replied,

“You call me an old man, but if you provide me with a young woman, I can still have children. It is your Queen who is old; I am not old at all.”

Hearing this, Shin Sawpu said,

“These are the words of the *devas*. They have spoken it because they want me to take the title of Old Queen.”

She was consecrated again with the title Old Queen,²⁴⁷ and was called *Banya Htau*.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ In the account of *Dhammazedi Ayebon*, Shin Sawpu, returning from Inwa, was at Thanlyin when Minmawdaw died while on an elephant hunt. Her younger sister Shin Sawhnit ascended the throne, but Shin Sawpu gathered an army at Dagon and won a military victory against her sister's forces. Shin Sawhnit was then persuaded by the ministers to abdicate in favour of her sister.

²⁴⁶ မြောင်း၊ attendants preceding a royal procession to clear the way.

²⁴⁷ မင်းအို

²⁴⁸ ဗညားတော်. In *Slapat Rājāwan*, *Banya Htau* (ဗညာတော်), *htau* (တော်) = old. In *Dhammazedi Ayebon*, Shin Sawpu adopts the title *Banya Htau* before she became queen on the words of an old man on the Shwedagon Pagoda whom she took to be a *deva* who had assumed human form.

Dhammazedī's Promotion of the Religion

As it was not reached at the time of Thursday/ Monday, 11th /5th day waxing of Tabodwè, Sakkaraj 832, the year 201[4] of the Religion of the Lord Buddha [?],²⁸⁰ on Monday, 7th day waning of Thadingyut, Sakkaraj 839,²⁸¹ in order that a renewed and purified Religion might be established and the Seven Sacred Places,²⁸² the Place of the Miracles,²⁸³ the Bodhi Tree and Nerañjarā Stream,²⁸⁴ the Pubbārāma Monastery erected by Visākhā²⁸⁵ [might be re-created] in their exact form, Buddhaghosa, who was great in learning and wisdom, 55 [*sic* 22] monks and four ministers, together with four artists and 30 servitors,²⁸⁶ went from the port of Pathein to Sīhala and asked the King of Sīhala about the forms that were in Majjhimadesa.

On Thursday, 5th day waning of Tazaungmon, Sakkaraj 840,²⁸⁷ the ship arrived back in Pathein from Sīhala. After the arrival back from

²⁸⁰ The meaning of this clause is obscure: မြတ်စွာဘုရား သာသနာတော် ၂၀၁၄ နှစ် သက္ကရာဇ် ၈၃၂ ခု တပို့တွဲလဆန်း ၁၁ ရက် ကြာသပတေး နေ့ကာလ အချိန်မရော်သောကြောင့်။ (Text A).

²⁸¹ Texts B and C, 28 September 1477 (Friday). Text A has Monday, 5th day waning of Thadingyut, Sakkaraj 839, 26 September 1477 (Sunday). According to *Kalyani Inscriptions* (pp 75-76), the mission left on two ships, the first departing Sunday, 11th day waning of Māgha (6 January-Saturday), the second Monday, 12th day waning of Māgha (7 January-Sunday), Sakkaraj 837 (AD 1476).

²⁸² The seven places at each of which the Buddha spent seven days immediately after his Enlightenment: (1) the Bodhi Throne; (2) the Animisa, Place of the Fixed Gaze; (3) the Ratanacaṅkama, Jewelled Ambulatory; (3) the Ratanaghara, Jewelled House; (5) the Ajapāla Banyan Tree; (6) the Mucalinda Tree; and (7) the Rājāyatana Tree.

²⁸³ The City Gate of Savatthi, where the Buddha, responding to a challenge of the heretics, made the Gaṇḍamba mango tree grow from a mango given him by the king's gardener Gaṇḍa, and, under it, performed the Twin Miracle (Yamakapāṭihāriya)—the appearance of phenomena of opposite character in pairs, e. g. flames of fire produced from the upper part of his body and streams of water from the lower part, then alternatively.

²⁸⁴ River in the neighbourhood of the Bodhi Tree in Bodh Gaya.

²⁸⁵ The Migāramātupāsāda monastery built for the Buddha in the Pubbārāma park east of Savatthi by Visākhā, chief among the female lay disciples of the Buddha; it had two floors of 500 rooms each, was richly furnished and was surmounted by a *prāsāda* of solid gold.

²⁸⁶ Texts B and C, Text A has 12 monks. According to *Kalyani Inscriptions* (p 75), the religious mission consisted of 22 *theras* and their disciples and the ministers Citradūta and Rāmadūta. Buddhaghosa is not mentioned; the seniormost *thera* would be Moggalāna.

²⁸⁷ Texts A and B, 14 October 1478 (Wednesday). Text C has 5th day waning of Kason, Sakkaraj 840 (20 April 1478). *Kalyani Inscriptions* (p 81) gives Thursday, 2nd day waning



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