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Contents

Alyssa Phillips. “Romance and Tragedy in Burmese History: A Reading of G. E. Havey’s The History of Burma” 1


Michael Symes. “Cammuaza, or the Ceremony Used at the Induction of a Birman into the Order of the Priesthood, called Phonghi, or Rhahaan (1795)” 81

“Miscellaneous Letters on Burma, 1755-1760, I” 87

George Baker. “Observations at Persaim and in the Journey to Ava and Back in 1755” 99

“The Treaty Between Alaunghpaya and the British EastIndia Company in 1757” 123

Robert Lester. “Proceedings of An Embassy to the King of Ava, Pegu, &C. In 1757” 127

Walter Alves. “Diary of the Proceedings of an Embassy to Burma in 1760” 143

William Hunter. “A Concise Account of the Kingdom of Pegu” 169

“Gleanings on Burma, December 1826” 195

R. Boileau Pemberton. “Abstract of the Journal of a Route Travelled by Captain S. F. Hannay, of the 40th Regiment, Native Infantry, in 1835-1836, from the Capital of Ava to the Amber Mines of the Hukong Valley on the Southeast Frontier of Assam” 197

“Brief Notice on T. H. Lewin’s Visit to the Arakan Hills in 1865-1866” 229

Book Reviews

Mary Callahan. Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma.

   Review by Patricia M. Herbert 231
   Review by Netina Tan 233

Julian Thompson. The Imperial War Museum Book of the War in Burma, 1942-1945

   Review by Jacob John Rigg 236
ROMANCE AND TRAGEDY IN BURMESE HISTORY: A READING OF G. E. HARVEY’S *THE HISTORY OF BURMA*

you [students of Burma], above all men, should look into the Mirror of the Past, to see its glories and its shames, and take guidance from its successes and its failures. In the beauty of old time you will find an ideal for the future.

G. E. Harvey 1919

Alyssa Phillips  
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In 1919 G. E. Harvey delivered a speech to staff and students of Rangoon College. Entitled “The Writing of Burmese History,” his lecture exhorted local students to look to the ‘glories’ and ‘shames’ of their past, for “in the beauty of old time you will find an ideal for the future.” Harvey encouraged the students to appreciate the “beauty” of their past, yet also to take guidance from their modern English education. In concluding his lecture he exhorted the students to write the history of their own people, stating: “It is for the younger generation with its superior mental training to justify its education, to help these men of an older generation and to take up the magnificent task of writing a fitting History of Burma.”

Six years later a history in a form consistent with Harvey’s description was published under the title *History of Burma: From the Earliest Times to March 1824 The Beginning of the English Conquest.* The author of this history, however, was not a local student who was inspired by Harvey’s lecture, but rather Harvey himself. The *History of Burma* sets out to describe the histories, art and literature of the pre-colonial kingdoms in Burma. In this work Harvey combines the narratives of earlier European travellers to Burma with tales from the local chronicles, and evidence from the local inscriptions. Harvey’s text is an academic account of

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1 Harvey 1919, 63.  
2 Ibid., 63-82.  
3 Ibid., 79.  
4 Harvey 1925 & 1967.
Burmese history, but it is also a highly literary and sometimes contradictory narrative. Harvey, in his introduction to the book, describes it as “a little pioneer work,” as much of the written evidence of pre-colonial Burma remains “untranslated or unprinted.” Yet this book, which was originally published in London in 1925, was not just a “little pioneer work,” it became one of the standard Burmese history texts in the late colonial period. In 1945, D. G. E. Hall in his preface to *Europe and Burma* recognised his debt to Harvey’s text: “Every student of Burmese History to-day must gratefully acknowledge his debt to G. E. Harvey’s *History of Burma*, with its brilliant suggestions, challenging guesses and solid spadework.”

But questions arise about the importance of Harvey’s text today? Removed from the period of colonial expansion, how does one interpret this often difficult, but important colonial work. The process of colonisation in Burma, as in many other places, was not confined to the spheres of politics, administration and economics. The past was also appropriated and rearticulated in colonial institutions and publications, such as Harvey’s the *History of Burma*. There has, of course, been some reassessment of the colonial scholarship about Burma, by scholars including Michael Adas and U Than Tun. More recently Michael Aung-Thwin, in *Myth and History*, has stimulated academic interest in the British scholarship about Burma by challenging the British interpretation of five key events in early Burmese history. These important works have challenged the historical evidence, assumptions and, in some cases, myths present in colonial writing. These studies, however, do not unearth and analyse the underlying colonial approaches, themes and literary styles present in the colonial scholarship.

This reading, therefore, opens a new field of inquiry by investigating these elements of Harvey’s the *History of Burma*. The analysis is concerned with what Harvey tells us about Burmese kings, religious traditions and social conditions, but it focuses in particular on the ways the text draws from earlier interpretations of the Burmese past, and on European literary, historical and religious traditions. This reading focuses on the ways Harvey related personally to Burma, how he figured it as an idea and how he presented Burma’s past in his writing. The reading draws on academic debates about problems of language and signification. The ‘linguistic

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5 From time to time the complex nature of the text is referred to in passing. Shelby Tucker, for example, describes the text briefly as a “difficult but scholarly survey of Burma’s pre-colonial history.” Tucker 2001, 243.
6 Harvey 1925 & 1967, xvii-xviii.
7 Hall 1945, v.
8 For example refer to Adas 1972, 175-192 and Than Tun 1970, 59-60.
10 The aim here is not to establish the accuracy of Harvey’s interpretations of Burmese history, or to undertake a reading and reconstruction of the local sources he used to write the *History of Burma*. 
As these debates have been coined, has redirected the focus on language as not a purely transparent medium, but as a signal of “the manner in which the observer is constitutively implicated in the object of research.”

The *History of Burma* is rich in literary analogies and metaphors, many of which can be associated with the period of British romanticism. As the British Empire expanded in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the British literary world was also engaged with new artistic and literary traditions loosely known as the period of romanticism. Romantic writers and poets, including William Blake, William Wordsworth and Byron, moved the focus of English literature beyond the realm of reason by embracing aesthetic notions, such as genius, beauty and fantasy. Literary critics, postmodern theorists and historians have undertaken extensive analysis of the associations between British romanticism and literary exoticism, primitivism and Orientalism, which can be detected in novels of the period. To my knowledge no study, however, has analysed the influence of these traditions on the writing of Burmese history. This article suggests that British literary traditions provided, in part, the discursive framework for Harvey to imagine the pre-colonial Burmese – the ‘Other’ – in such terms as the beautiful, exotic, sensual and mystical. The article focuses on the literary style of the *History of Burma* and Harvey’s allusions to European mythology and history. This reading also investigates the central themes of unity and ethnicity within his text. Before examining these aspects of Harvey’s text, however, we first need to understand a little more about the man himself, and environment in which he wrote about pre-colonial Burma.

G. E. Harvey: the Civil Servant and Historian

Geoffrey Eric Harvey arrived in Burma in 1912 at the age 25 to serve in the Indian Civil Service (I.C.S). As was common at the time, prior to arriving Harvey spent...
two years at Oxford University as I.C.S. probationer, where he was taught the methods and theories of colonial rule. The I.C.S., which was a small administrative elite, was ultimately responsible for overseeing all administrative activities in the 255 districts of British India. It is worth briefly examining the composition and ethos of the I.C.S. since it was this administrative corps that brought Harvey to Burma. In the nineteenth century, the I.C.S. also brought to Burma the generation of what we might call the first British historians of Burma, among them Sir James George Scott (Shway Yoe) and Arthur P. Phayre.

By 1919 there were 1318 I.C.S. officers in control of all key posts of administration in British India. Only 123 of these officers were stationed in Burma. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries entry into the I.C.S. was usually limited to the upper classes of British society, with most securing a place in the I.C.S. after a public school education and following the completion of a high honours in the degree examinations at Oxford or Cambridge Universities. British public schools often provided grounding for the teaching of the values and norms expected of servants of the British Raj, with I.C.S. officers being expected to conduct themselves in the best English gentlemanly manner. Simon Raven describes the early twentieth-century English gentleman as:

An agent of justice and effective action, having the fairness and the thoroughness to examine the facts and the integrity to act on his findings…[He had] much regard for the old loyalties – to country, kinsmen, to Church – and as a guardian of such institutions, and no less to assist him in his other duties, he saw fit to adopt a grave and somewhat aloof attitude of mind…[Rule and administration]…were among the many obligations on which his honour was based.

Courage, confidence and self-discipline were qualities that figured largely in popular images of the I.C.S. man, as well as loyalty to Britain and the Church.

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17 It is interesting, though, that Harvey, who followed a conservative education path, came from a politically radical family, as his parents had been involved in both sides of the Anglo-Irish conflicts and also in the suffragette movement. Htin Aung 1975, 47.
18 Sir James Scott was a Scotsman and an official resident in the Shan States in Upper Burma, whose first and classic work *The Burman: His Life and Notions* (1882 & 1963), outlines the way Burmans thought and lived. In this work Scott also began to focus attention on the serious study of Burmese sources. The first detailed attempt to understand the chronicles in their own terms was Arthur P. Phayre’s *History of Burma*. Published in London in 1883, this work was the first continuous history of Burma in a European language.
19 Hall 1960.
Public schools with “the unheated dormitories, cold baths, cross-country runs, rugby and tough discipline were meant to build courage and endurance.”

The lure of the orient, adventure, and good pay and pension were popularly seen as the main attractions of the I.C.S. Late nineteenth century British literature often romanticised and glorified the ideal of the single I.C.S. officer riding around his district, distributing justice to the grateful and needy villagers. According to Ann Ewing the popular image of the I.C.S. officer saw them “settling law cases before breakfast, such a paragon apparently corrected land records before lunch, shot a tiger or two before dinner and wrote some Latin verse before taking a cold bath and retiring to a camp bed.”

In reality the life of an I.C.S. officer was often far from this idealised image, especially in British Burma. Burma was often at the bottom of most candidates’ requests for an I.C.S. post and was popularly viewed as the “backwater of British India.” Up until 1937 Burma was part of both the Indian and British Empires and administrators in the province often found themselves as part of a long chain of command extending from London via Calcutta to Rangoon. Some officials found the life of a civil servant in Burma isolating. Many, stuck in small provinces for years, felt cut off from people with a similar educational background. Maurice Collis described the lonely life of a civil servant in Burma:

His concern was all with the people in his jurisdiction. He grew fond of them, tried to be fair, toured the villages, listened on the bench to complaints and petitions, and became immersed in the details of administration, interesting work enough but not such as to furbish the brains which had enabled him to pass into the Indian Civil Service.

Some administrators accepted the dull life, believing it their mission to care for and instruct the backward Orientals, whilst others, including Collis, Scott and Phayre, and as we shall see Harvey, thrived on the challenge of learning about the people they were sent out to govern.

23 Potter 1986, 74.
24 There was a nineteenth century joke that the I.C.S. officers were good marriage material: They were worth “300 pounds dead or alive” and were assured a steady income and generous pension. Ewing 1982, 45.
25 Ibid., 44.
26 Piness 1983, 373.
27 Ibid., 372.
28 Collis 1970, 14. Collis was posted to Burma in 1912 until 1934. His experiences including those as chief magistrate of Rangoon and as the deputy commissioner of Akyab, formed the basis of a rich literary career. His novels, including The Land of the Great Image and Siamese White, richly describe the exotic Burmese, often in the context of Burmese myths and legends.

SBBR 3.1 (SPRING 2005): 1-26
At first, Harvey was enthusiastic at being sent to what he viewed as a British paradise. Obviously well versed in Rudyard Kipling’s poetry, Harvey recollected that:

When I was sent to Burma in 1912 everyone congratulated me on being sent to the happiest and most charming people in India, laughing fair-skinned Mongolians, quite unspoilt, quite unlike the sullen seditious Indians. Kipling makes Burma the daughter, hailed England her mother.29

During his service, Harvey was employed by the colonial government in various roles. He was the Revenue Secretary to the Government and Registrar of Cooperative Societies Upper Burma, and he was also employed in the Local Government (Ministry of Health). 30 In 1947, in a personal letter reflecting on his period of service, Harvey recollected most fondly the period when he was in charge of the frontier area, in the Northern Shan States. Here he was on the outskirts of the empire, preparing the way for the introduction of British rule over ‘headhunter’ ethnic Wa tribes.31

But, underneath his often idyllic view of Burma, nationalist sentiments were stirring, and Harvey was particularly stuck by the supposed change in Burmese attitudes to British rule after World War One. In the same 1919 lecture quoted above, Harvey also writes:

We administrators had imagined that because the Burmese smiled and bowed in our presence, therefore they had no aspirations: as if there were not, in every human society, men with pride and ambitions. We thought the Burman submissive and gentle – we were so busy with pressing daily administrative duties that we did not study the past, when the Burmese were a conquering race under their own kings and prided themselves on their cruelty. The atrocities which came as a complete surprise had been waiting under the surface all the time… 32

One of the ways Harvey sought to understand this change was to turn his attention to the study of Burmese history, and the period “when the Burmese were a conquering race.” While on leave in Oxford in 1924 Harvey wrote the *History of Burma: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the English Conquest.*

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29 Harvey n. d.
30 Harvey 1947.
31 Ibid.
32 Harvey n. d.
The history of Burma is divided into two sections. The first contains the chronological narrative of pre-colonial Burma up until the first Anglo-Burmese War of 1824. The second part includes extensive appendices with detailed discussion of historical events, myths, administrative life and primary sources. Detailed genealogical tables of the chief kings of the Burmese dynasties are also included here. Some of these appendices, such as the outline of the ‘Administration Conditions’ of the kingdoms, are just as significant to understanding pre-colonial Burma as parts of the main historical narrative, leaving one to question the underlying purpose of dividing the historical discussions between the narrative and the appendices.

Some explanation of this can be gleaned from Harvey’s 1919 lecture when, in attempting to inspire Burmese students to take up the task of writing their own history, he offered advice on how that history should be structured. It should be written, he said, in two parts:

The first part will be purely narrative. It should be written in splendid vigorous English, every sentence ringing out like a hammer-stroke: this will need the help of Englishmen. It should be dogmatic and clear: there should be no discussion of doubtful points. The second part will contain no narrative: it will consist solely of appendices and discussions on doubtful points.

In some parts of the first section of the History of Burma the text does read like an exotic novel, embellished with strange and overpowering adjectives, and in other places the prose is quite precise and confident. But, while the text is split between a chronological narrative and appendices, Harvey did not achieve his aim of a clear break in the two sections of the book and between the two levels of prose. In fact there are at least three levels of English at work throughout different parts of this text.

The History of Burma opens with an “Author’s Introduction,” in which Harvey outlines the sources for his history, his chief collaborators, and the aims and limitations of his work. The prose in this section is straightforward and largely unembellished. In discussing the historical material on Burma, for example, he writes: “Hence after the eleventh century the chronology of Burmese chronicles

34 Ibid., 364-372.
35 Harvey 1919, 80.
36 This introduction follows the preface written by Sir Richard Carnac Temple.
are reliable.” There are a few dramatic phrases in this section – Harvey describes the Burmese chronicles as “written in the shadow of the throne” – but these are the exception to the overwhelmingly factual and objective tone of his prose.

Harvey’s prose changes slightly in the first chapter of this text; in examining “Burma before 1044” the tone of the narrative takes a storytelling quality, as we are informed about the earliest attempts of the ‘medley of tribes’ to unify. We learn of the “successive infiltrations” of these races, as “down from the north they came.” Harvey describes the origins of these ethnic groups, the kingdoms they founded, and the ‘little shrines’ they built. The narrative gives an impression of certainty, expressed in such phrases as “after the fall of Prome its people migrated to Pagan” and “To an early chief at Pagan, Popa Sawrahan 613-40, is attributed the introduction of the present Burmese era.” There are also instances when the prose is more colourful, especially when Harvey jumps forward to later periods of Burmese history. In describing the Kyaukky Ohmmin near Pagan he compares it to the work of the “Talaing brick and shoddy which swamped Burma after the eleventh century.”

The second chapter of the text begins in a literary style very similar to the first chapter, as Harvey describes the life of King Anawrahta, the founder of the Pagan Kingdom. But the dualism of the title of this chapter, “the Kingdom of Pagan or the Dynasty of the Temple Builders 1044-1287” gives us some clue to the dramatic change that is about to take place in the literary style of the text. As the narrative of the history of the kings of Pagan progresses, and as we encounter the first of many long quotations from the Hman-nam, Harvey’s prose become more like an example of the “splendid vigorous English” he advocated in his 1919 lecture. For example, after quoting from a passage from the Hman-nam, illustrating the defeat of the city of Thaton by Anawrahta, Harvey describes the king and his forces as riding back to Pagan ‘in triumph’: “Like some great glittering snake the victorious host uncurled its long length and set out through the Delta creeks...”

From this point the text is imbued with examples of Harvey’s characteristic, rich adjectives and imagery. It is impossible to highlight them all, but a few include: “Kyanzittha and his men dazzled the people of Pegu by wonderous feats at practice among the cucumber beds...”; “…the Ananda, with its dazzling garb of white and its gilt spire glittering in the morning sun...”; and “The

37 Harvey 1925 & 1967, xvi.
38 Ibid., xix.
39 Ibid., 3.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., 6-7.
42 Ibid., 15.
43 Ibid., 16.
44 Ibid., 17.
long romance of Kyanzittha’s life now drew to a close.” 46 One of the most interesting literary devices Harvey uses in Chapter Two is to reconstruct the conversations of the past kings, and translate their words using an archaic form of English. When King Anawrahta first meets the Mon monk Shin Arahan, for example, he supposedly asks, “‘Master, of what race art thou? Whence comest thou? Whose doctrine dost thou follow?’” 47 Chapter Two finishes with the description of the end of the Pagan period, and it is here that the use of rich adjectives is best exemplified. Harvey writes about the end of this period, “amid the blood and flame of Tartar Terror.” Terms used in this passage include ‘sun-scorched,’ ‘magnificence,’ ‘purest,’ ‘stricken,’ ‘vainglorious,’ ‘splendour,’ ‘great,’ etc. 48

In contrast, Chapter Three describes the subsequent period of ‘Shan Domination,’ and the period of disunity, in a prose more familiar to us from the first chapter. The emphasis of the first paragraph of Chapter Three is on telling the story of the “princelets who ruled the various parts of Upper and even of Lower Burma.” 49 The matter-of-fact tone, with a few embellishments, leads the reader to believe that the prose has returned to the style of the first chapter. But it is not so simple, for as we read on there are incidents of, interwoven into this story telling prose, phrases reminiscent of Harvey’s ‘splendid vigorous English.’ At the end of the second paragraph of Chapter Three, for example, Harvey writes about the effect of this disunity on the art, literature and religious practices:

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. When at length the darkness lifts, it is from the opposite direction to China that two rays of light appear… 50

The mixture of two levels of English present in the first few paragraphs of Chapter Three – that of storytelling and “splendid vigorous English” – continues throughout the rest of the chapters of the History of Burma. For instance in Chapter Three (a) Harvey tells the story of the career of King Thohanbwa (1527-43), whom he describes as a “full-blooded savage.” 51 In writing about the early western travellers to the region, in Chapter Four, Harvey emphasises the heroism of these explorers

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46 Ibid., 31, 40, 43.
48 Ibid., 69-70.
49 Ibid., 73.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., 107.
who ventured “into uncharted seas which, to their belief, might at any moment swarm with dragons.”

It needs to be emphasised that while Harvey’s prose in these chapters embraces the ‘splendid vigorous English’ familiar from Chapter Two there are some important differences. Most noticeable is the change of style in the conversations that are reproduced in the text. For example, in describing Bayinnaung’s reaction to a message from the king during the battle at Prome in the sixteenth century Harvey wrote:

He [Bayinnaung] sent back an answer that he had already met and beaten the enemy. His attendant said ‘You have reported a victory before we have fought, the odds are against us, we shall probably lose, and think how the king will punish us!’ Bayinnaung answered ‘If we lose? Why then we die here, and who can punish dead men?’

The style here differs markedly from the archaic style Harvey used for conversations in his Chapter Two. Instead the prose takes on a contemporary feel, probably to underscore its context in the more modern period.

Harvey’s chronological narrative of the history of pre-colonial Burma concludes on page 307, and from this point the text is composed of appendices containing detailed notes about points of historical contention, and footnotes. In this part of the book Harvey appears to aspire to modern and ‘objective’ history. His tone loses its ringing certainty and the style returns to the straightforward and factual tone of the ‘Author’s Introduction.’ What is Harvey trying to achieve by using these different forms of English? The History of Burma is well known for its colourful prose and exotic quotations, yet quite clearly Harvey could write precise prose. One can only imagine the problems Burmese students of history in the first half of the twentieth century would have encountered in reading Harvey’s ‘splendid vigorous English.’ But Harvey did not intend to make the information in this text difficult, and interesting clues about his intention in using colourful prose can be found within the text, and also in his 1919 lecture.

In his 1919 lecture Harvey argues that British interest in Burmese history had been lacking, because writers have failed to capture the beauty of Burmese life in pre-colonial Burma. He claims: “People tell us Burma has no history. They tell us that her chronicles are not worthy reading, that everything is mere oriental despotism and vulgarity.” Harvey does not elaborate on the identity of the ‘people’ he refers to, but later in this article he does offer further insight into their claims: “People tell us Burmese history is not worth the trouble, because, they say,
the text-books are full of nothing but this sort of thing: – ‘Anawrahta came to the throne in 1044.’ It is unclear whether Harvey is directing his comments at Burmese language text-books, earlier British writing about Burma, or both. But it is apparent that he sought to challenge British claims which dismissed Burmese conceptions of the past.

Harvey’s 1919 comment about Burmese history textbooks also needs to be viewed in light of a new official interest in the culture and history of the people of Burma. In the 1917 official Report of the Committee to Ascertain and Advise How the Imperial Idea May be Inculcated and Fostered in Schools and Colleges in Burma the committee members expressed some interest in encouraging the study of Burmese history in the schools and colleges, as long as the vital focus remained on the British and imperial story. But, the report also recognised the difficulty in such an undertaking was due to the “dearth” of suitable textbooks about Burmese history. There is some indication that Harvey sought to fill this gap. A few years after the publication of the History of Burma, his text was abridged and republished in a form more suitable for the use as a school textbook, as G. E. Harvey’s Outline of Burmese History.

The Burmese, of course, did have their own form of history writing prior to the arrival of the British. In the History of Burma, Harvey’s attitude towards the local forms of writing is ambiguous. In his introduction his suggests that the “chronicles [are] abound in anachronisms,” and that they “tell little of general conditions.” Yet Harvey was also drawn to the ‘romance’ and ‘magnificent material’ of Burmese history. In this introduction he emphasises the importance of the chronicles for the study of Burmese history, and argues that it is impossible to read the chronicles “especially in conjunction with other native records, without acquiring considerable respect for them.” Harvey’s feeling for the chronicles is demonstrated in the long passages he quotes, and, most importantly, in the way he draws attention to them through the use of his ‘splendid vigorous English.’ These

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55 Ibid., 75.
56 This report, an initiative of Governor Sir Harcourt Butler, devised ways of encouraging the ‘Imperial Idea’ of “personal loyalty to the King-Emperor” amongst Burmese students. The Committee appointed to write this report, included: U May Oung, Barrister-at-Law, Rangoon; R.R. Brown, Esq., I.C.S., Register, Chief Court, Lower Burma; J.T. Best, Esq., Principal, St. John’s College, Rangoon; M. Hunter, Esq., C.I.E., Director of Public Instruction, Burma; and S.W. Cocks, Esq., I.E.S., Inspector of Schools, Pegu Circle, Rangoon. Other notable people who assisted the committee included: L.F. Taylor, Esq., I.E.S., Principal, Government Anglo-Vernacular School, Rangoon; J.S. Furnivall, Esq., I.C.S.; Maung Tin, Professor of Pali, Government College; J.A. Stewart, Esq., I.C.S.; J.M. Symns, Esq., I.E.S., Inspector of Schools, Mandalay Circle; and Dr. G.R.T. Ross, I.E.S. Government of Burma 1917, 6 & 20.
57 Ibid., 61.
58 Harvey 1926 & 1954.
59 Harvey 1925 & 1967, xvii, xix.
60 Harvey 1919, 77.
61 Harvey 1925 & 1967, xix.
local sources, including inscriptions, the *Hman-nan*, and Burmese poetry, occupy the foreground of Harvey’s narrative. It is not uncommon for quotations from the Burmese sources to cover whole pages and engulf Harvey’s own account. Indeed, it is when we encounter excerpts from the chronicles that Harvey’s style becomes most embellished and ‘vigorou...
The Chinks came down the passes
Roaring boys, roaring;
The rain of their arrows
Pouring, boys, pouring

Aung-Thwin argues that the Burmese equivalent actually states:

The Taruk Came
Many as can be
Arrows Rained
Many as can be

Aung-Thwin points out that this mistranslation changes the meaning of the poem, writing that:

There were no “boys,” “roaring,” “pouring,” “Chinks,” or “passes” in the Burmese version he himself [Harvey] provides, nor were the arrows referring to those of the Chinese but of the Burmese as the Chinese’ own record of the event reported.…

Aung-Thwin points to the errors in Harvey’s translation, and their consequences for what he argues were colonial scholarly misconceptions about the period between 1287 and 1368.

Aung-Thwin, however, does not elaborate on the topic which is of most interest here, the way in which Harvey’s translation also changes the tone of the poem. In this instance, Harvey’s translation appears reminiscent of English school-boy chants. It is unlikely that Harvey set out to intentionally mislead his readers, as beside his English translation he also provides the text of poem in original Burmese script. Rather, Harvey’s translation of the poem appears to be a further example of his desire to draw attention to the Burmese sources and make them attractive to an English readership.

The History of Burma: Working by analogy

Within the narrative of the History of Burma reference is often made to a range of European myths, historical events and religious traditions. In the concluding
passage of Chapter Two, for example, Harvey celebrates the best aspects of the Pagan kingdom by comparing them with aspects of British history:

If they [the kings of Pagan] produced no nation-builder like Simon de Montfort, no lawgiver like Edward I., they united Burma for more than two centuries, and that in itself was an achievement. But their role was aesthetic and religious rather than political. To them the world owes in great measure the preservation of Theravada Buddhism, one of the purest faiths mankind has ever known…Those who doubt the reality of the populous city given up to the spiritual, should read the numberless inscriptions of the period, richly human and intensively devout; contemplate the sixteen square miles at Pagan, all dedicated to religion; contrast each separate brick from the depths of a great pile with the rubble of the Norman pillars; reflect that each temple was built not in generations but in months; remember how short was the period when Pagan was inhabited; think of the literary activities of the Kyaukky Onhmin; add to all of this our natural preconception of the conditions necessary to the production of the great religious art; and then say whether those campaigns for a tooth, those heart searchings over the loss of a white elephant, at which we smile, are not rather possessed of a significance as deep to men of the age as the quest of the Holy Grail had for Arthurian knights.72

In this passage Harvey strives to make the Burmese past live, by directing his readers to all that is good about Burmese religious traditions. He glorifies the literary activities, temple building and religious arts of the Pagan Kingdom. Historical activities and images that may seem strange to the western educated reader, such as “those campaigns for a tooth, those heart searchings over the loss of a white elephant,” will not seem so out-of-place, Harvey argues, if we compare them to our own myths. Working by analogy Harvey places these aspects of pre-colonial Burma in a positive light by drawing parallels with the British historical imagination and, in particular, the Arthurian myths. He also compares Burmese practices with aspects of British history and historical figures, such as Simon de Montfort, Edward I, and the ‘Norman pillars.’ This passage answers Harvey’s 1919 call for a new account of Burmese history: “We want colour and lift, a connected account which will make Burmese history live again.”73

Harvey’s tendency to draw on colourful European images is particularly evident when he describes pre-colonial Burmese religious traditions. In the History of Burma he interweaves descriptions of the history of Christianity with the development of Buddhism in Burma. He refers, for example, to the story of the

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72 Harvey 1925 & 1967, 70.
73 Harvey 1919, 80.
coming of the Buddha to Burma as “on the level with Joseph of Arimathea’s planting of the Glastonbury Thon.”74 Shin Arahan, the Mon monk who helped to introduce the Buddhist texts to the people of Pagan, is described as “the apostle,” who “burned to evangelise the heathen land of Upper Burma.”75

While the text points to similarities between British and Burmese religious history, it also suggests areas of difference. Harvey, for example, writes that:

None of the temples at Pagan took more than a few years to build…[but]…The Gothic cathedrals took generations…The Gothic cathedrals are the work of the seething democracy of the mediaeval cities. The temples of Pagan symbolise the might of a great despotism, and they were built by the forced labour of villagers torn in thousands from their husbandry. Yet though they grumbled the people [of Pagan] would not have had it otherwise. The dynasty appealed to their imagination, and the age they lived in was an age of religious enthusiasm.76

In this passage there is an unevenness in Harvey’s description of the temples of Pagan. They are seen in a negative light, especially when compared to European cathedrals, but they are not completely dismissed, because of the important meanings they had for the people of Pagan. Like the Gothic cathedrals, Pagan, with its temples, reflected a sense of unity and “expressed the collective spirit of the age.”77 The images used in this passage swing between empathy for the ‘imagination’ and ‘religious enthusiasm’ of the people of Pagan, and a gloomy account of the ‘great despotism’ of their rulers.

In contrast to the long passage quoted at the beginning of this section, this description highlights a range of inconsistencies and changing attitudes towards the Burmese past within the History of Burma. While Harvey aims to make the good aspects of the Burmese past ‘live,’ his text actually contains many negative images and attitudes, especially towards the Burmese kings. In his introduction Harvey sets out to write a different history of Burma from those that have come before him.

It is difficult to see the history of Burma in its true colour and orientation, because the material is lacking. Weakness is the predominant feature of central government in the East, and in Burma most of our material is that

74 Harvey 1925 & 1967, 308. In lecture about the writing of Burmese history Harvey states: “There is thus a curious parallel between Buddhism and Christianity; each is one of the purest faiths the world has ever seen, and each has produced its opposite in the form of obscene heresies – just as Buddhism has the Ari, so Christianity had the Black Mass and the Bulgars.” Harvey 1919, 65.

75 Harvey 1925 & 1967, 26.
76 Ibid., 331.
77 Ibid.
of the central government; hence the story told in this book is sombre. But it is less depressing than that of many eastern countries, and it would not be depressing at all if only we could get out of the palace and among the people. It is a people which must sometimes have wondered whether its government did not emanate from a vampire rather than a king, and yet it never lost its buoyancy or missed its hold on the essentials of civilisation. The clergy may have been recluses, but they not only lived beautiful lives: they fearlessly maintain the Law of Mercy. When greater races bound the feet or veiled the face of their women, or doubted if she had a soul, the Burmese held her free and enthroned her as chieftainess and queen.78

There is much happening in this passage that needs to be teased out. Firstly, Harvey gives his reader a very different impression of the Burmese historical records than that given by earlier British writers of Burmese history. Sir James Scott (Shway Yoe) 1882 book *The Burman*, for example, described Burma as possessing a ‘very voluminous history,’ most of which could be dismissed as ‘pure romance.’79 Scott argued that this ‘romance’ in the historical records had an undesirable effect on the people of Burma, since it encouraged them to believe in the absolute authority of their rulers. Harvey, on the other hand, argues that there was a ‘dearth’ of Burmese historical accounts, especially those which can tell us about the social conditions in pre-colonial Burma. He suggests that the dominant view of the “sombre” history of the kings was not due to any romantic tenor in the historical records, but rather, because most of the Burmese historical records came from a ‘weak’ central government. Unlike Scott, Harvey seeks to write against this ‘sombre’ history of the kings by emphasising the ‘romantic’ aspects of pre-colonial Burma. As argued, Harvey attempts to achieve this through his use of ‘splendid, vigorous English.’ He also tries to elevate aspects of the Burmese past through the use of European analogies.

The use of European analogies, in particular to describe the local rulers, is also present in other accounts of Southeast Asia, and has a much earlier foundation. William Marsden, an eighteenth century historian of Sumatra, for example, described the authority of the Minangkabau kings in these terms: “Their authority, in short, resembles not a little of the sovereign pontiffs of Rome during the latter centuries, founded as it is in the superstition of remote ages; holding terrors over the weak, and condemned by the stronger powers.”80 In this passage Marsden draws on a familiar European institution to reinforce his image of the ‘superstition’ and ‘terrors’ of the Minangkabau kings.81

78 Ibid., xx.
81 Drakard 1999, 4.
But Harvey is actually drawing on European analogies in a quite different way from earlier writers such as Mardsen. Rather than using European analogies to criticise Asian institutions, Harvey uses European and other Asian analogies in an attempt to elevate Burmese history. There is a sense, evident in the last two lines of the passage from Harvey quoted above, that in working by analogy Harvey is trying to say that his Burma is better than other countries. Using the example of Burmese women, he argues that in pre-colonial Burma women had guaranteed rights that were denied in the West, East and Islamic World.

The History of Burma: The “Unification of Burma”

Underlying Harvey’s other, sometimes complex, preoccupations in the History of Burma is the question of judgement. In his unpublished reflections on Harvey after his death, G.H. Luce offers an interesting insight into Harvey’s approach to Burmese history. “As a lover of Burma,” Luce writes, “but also a moralist…he regarded the writing of history as no mere intellectual exercise, but as the best practical means of pointing the way to Heaven, and also as a touchstone of his own sense of truth, goodness and beauty.”82 Luce believed that Harvey “felt it is his duty, not merely to record them [the local sources], but also pass judgement on the record.”83

This is consistent with Harvey’s 1919 lecture where he sought to make an integrated moral judgement on the pre-colonial past. As he explains, for history to make sense, one must try to find meaning in the form of a single guiding principle. That principle, in Harvey’s mind, is unity:

that is the meaning of Burmese history: the Unification of Burma, the Unification of the Race. That was the Dream of all the ages, that was the Vision, the Dream of Anawrahta and Bayin Naung and Alaungpaya. That was the Dream of the good and great men who ruled Burma…The ideal history of Burma must trace the development of this unity; it must be written round this unity; it must shew how, though the Ages, over a long and bitter path, Burma struggled up to Unity, up into the Light.84

The central argument in the History of Burma follows this approach, and emphasises the struggle to unify the races in pre-colonial Burma, their progress and decline through time, and thus the efforts to unify the Burmese nation. Interestingly, too, as the passage above suggests, Harvey did not by any means see

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82 Luce n. d.
83 Ibid.
84 Harvey 1919, 81.
all the kings as ‘despotic’; there were, he states, “good and great men who ruled Burma.” But, ultimately, he concludes that even the ‘good’ efforts of such kings as Anawrahta, Bayinnaung and Alaungpaya were unsuccessful in maintaining the unity of the kingdom.

The *History of Burma* begins by suggesting that this ‘dream’ had its origins in the ancient tribes, including the Mon, Pyu and Thet, who migrated into the region of the Irrawaddy valley. The text describes them as “illiterate animist tribes with little political organisation,” who “came down from the north…tribe after tribe of hungry yellow men with the dust of the world upon their feet, seeking food and warmth in tiny homesteads.”85 The origins of the people of Burma, who came out of the “merging with local tribes” is the main concern of Harvey’s first chapter.86 Here he depicts the ethnic groups in opposition to each other, arguing that the “civilising influences were strongest round the coast and in the Delta” and predominately in the areas of the Mon.87

By 1044 the Burmese had united under the Kingdom of Pagan, which Harvey describes as “the Dynasty of the Temple Builders.” In describing the dedication by King Kyanzittha of the great Ananda temple, he writes:

Kyanzittha, riding a white horse at the head of a great procession of monks and people, dedicated the temple in 1090. With its tender beauty, its wealth of sculpture, its mingling of races and languages, the Ananda shows forth the kingship’s undivided sway over the upper reaches of the Irrawaddy and the Talaings of the Delta, in the days when Pagan was a religious centre far and wide, and men came even from India to worship at her shrines.88

This passage suggests that during the Pagan period the country was progressing. In imagery designed to resonate with European readers, the king rides into this scene on his ‘white horse.’ The Ananda temple itself is used as a metaphor for the “mingling” of the races, the kings’ power and the rich religious landscape. It is in his descriptions of this period of Burmese history that we sample the heights of Harvey’s ‘splendid vigorous English.’

This progress was short-lived however. According to the *History of Burma* the building of the great temples of Pagan lasted for three centuries. Then, in the thirteenth century, tragedy struck. The ‘blood’ and ‘flame’89 of the Mongol invasion in 1277 shattered the kingdom of Pagan, and from this point Harvey’s narrative describes Burmese history as a continuing cycle of unity and fragmentation. Incidents of war, injustice, murder and rebellion dominate the

85 Harvey 1925 & 1967, 3-4.
86 Ibid., 15.
87 Ibid., 9.
88 Ibid., 41.
89 Ibid., 69.
narrative. The great heroes of these times, including King Bayinnaung and King Alaungpaya, only briefly unified the country, as the heights of the Pagan kingdom were never again achieved.

In his 1919 lecture Harvey illustrated this theme of unity and disunity by directing his audience to a series of maps, which highlighted the early migrations, unification and decentralisation of the tribes of Burma.90 The point is further emphasised by the labels accompanying the maps: ‘The Dawn,’ ‘Progress,’ and ‘Regress.’ These maps are reminiscent of early twentieth century maps of the British Empire, on which areas shaded pink illustrated the unity and dominance of the British Empire across the globe. In this case colour was used to represent the different tribes of Burma. Harvey, familiar with nineteenth century scientific positivism, believed that observation, in this case of the maps, was one way of finding meaning in Burmese history. As he suggests, “they shew that Burma’s constant aspiration was towards unity, and that she failed to fulfill her early promise because this unity was always eluding her grasp.”91 The same maps are included, without their labels, in the History of Burma. Harvey’s point was that the struggle for unity in Burmese history involved the efforts of the various races of Burma to accept their differences and learn to progress together. The periods of unity in Burmese history, when the maps of Burma glow with one dominant colour, show the successes of this racial struggle.

Harvey’s description of the ethnic people of Burma suggests that they were in constant competition with each other, and often in open warfare. At times one group dominated, for example, in the Pagan period when the Burmans were able to unify the country. This peace, however, was short-lived as the countryside was taken over by the ‘swarming of the Shans.’92 But Harvey does not merely place the people of Burma in a Darwinian form of competition with each other. Harvey also made frequent judgements about the stage of civilisation each race had attained, suggesting that the art, literature and religion of Pagan demonstrated the civilised state of the Burmans, compared with other ethnic groups. In his text Burman rule at Pagan is contrasted sharply with their successors, the Shan:

The Shans, having dwelt so long in isolated valleys, seem to have inherited centrifugal instincts, and for the next two centuries Burma was the victim of separatist tendencies.93

The description of Shan migrations, warfare and disorder in the countryside, in the History of Burma, implies that the Shan were more uncivilised than the Burmans, and that unity, as much as art and literature, was an index of racial superiority.

90 Harvey 1919, 65, 66, 70, 71,73.
91 Ibid., 81.
92 Harvey 1925 & 1967, 74.
93 Harvey 1925 & 1967, 79.
This emphasis on racial difference allows Harvey to concentrate on ‘watersheds,’ and facilitates his theme of progress and decline, which also has the effect of compartmentalising Burmese history into a neat chronological framework. Harvey’s chapters progress from “Burma before 1044,” to the “Kingdom of Pagan 1044-1287,” “Shan Dominion 1287-1531,” the “Toungoo Dynasty 1531-1752” and the “Alaungpaya Dynasty 1752-1824.” This chronological framework of Burmese history is not new to English-language histories about Burma, as it was also employed by Arthur Phayre in his *History of Burma* (1883). What is different about Harvey’s work is the impression he creates of the tragic nature of Burmese history. For him the Burmese people with their continuing and unsuccessful struggles to unify are objects of pity: “There is something intensely saddening about Burmese history. It began so finely and ended so feebly.”

**Unity and the question of judgment**

Harvey’s theme of unity in the *History of Burma* is very different from nineteenth century accounts of Burma. This point is illustrated in a note in the appendix of the *History of Burma* where Harvey reviews comments by earlier writers on the ‘despotic’ kings of Burma. Harvey’s purpose is to review administrative conditions in the kingdom, and he comments on the consistency of his sources, despite the fact that they differed in nationality, class and “mental outlook.” It is working from these sources that Harvey produced one of his most famous passages, in which he describes the ‘golden court’ as ‘largely tinsel.’

The court was the most stupid and conceited imaginable, and did not contain a single man of common understanding; or if there were such he was afraid to show it, for the government was a sanguinary despotism.

But, as Harvey’s note to the text makes plain, these are not Harvey’s words, neither is this his own judgement of the Burmese kings. Instead Harvey’s footnotes direct the reader to where this description originates. Sonnerat and H. Gougher, in their nineteenth century accounts both describe the court as ‘stupid.’ Crawfurd and H.H. Wilson make the statement that the court lacked a “single man of common

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94 Phayre 1883 & 1967.
95 Harvey 1919, 74.
96 This five page note about ‘Administrative Conditions’ on pp. 356-361 refers to a section of Harvey’s text outlining the “Talaing outbreak at Rangoon in 1783,” 267.
97 Ibid., 359.
98 Ibid., 361.
understanding” in their works. Harvey also cites Mrs. Judson’s 1823 book as the source for the statement “the government was a sanguinary despotism.” 99

Harvey was, in fact, looking for something very different in Burmese history, from that of the images of the ‘tinsel’ court and the ‘despotic’ kings present in the earlier colonial writing. This is especially evident in the introduction to his text, where Harvey wonders if:

> Perhaps some better equipped writer will tell this story and portray the life of which we catch glimpses in many an old song. When he appears, much that is ugly will recede into the background; at present it clogs the foreground. 100

The story Harvey refers to in this passage, which can only be caught in such ‘glimpses’ from ‘an old song,’ is that of the lives of the people who lived under the rule of the kings. In the *History of Burma* he attempts to give some impression of this different story of pre-colonial Burma. But, as this passage suggests, Harvey also feels the need to apologise to his reader, as by his own admission he can not overcome the impression of the earlier British accounts of the Burmese kings, and also the images in the local chronicles. In addition, this excerpt gives an insight into the importance Harvey places on the historical narrative when writing about Burma’s history. He argues that this story of the ‘life’ of the people of pre-colonial Burma will only become apparent when there appears a ‘better equipped writer,’ who has the ability to capture the essence of this story.

As argued above, the use of earlier accounts of the Burmese kings is especially apparent in Harvey’s note on the ‘Administrative Conditions’ of the Burmese court. At the same time, though, Harvey’s own view of the administrative conditions does appear in this section, but only, I would argue, in the last paragraph of this five page note. This is the sole paragraph in which there are no footnotes referring to other writers. It begins by contributing a different picture of administration to that provided by his sources. Harvey refers to the ‘remote areas’ of the country, where the “men breathed more freely, [and] the good qualities of the Burmese people asserted themselves.” Indeed, Harvey appears to be explaining the circumstances in which the kings found themselves and in which they were lead into despotism.


100 Harvey 1925 & 1967, xx-xxi.
But the terrible conditions described above obtained, probably throughout the historic period, along the beaten track, e.g. Bhamo, the capital, and Rangoon; and as these were the most important places in the country, the national life was polluted at the source. The great kings were despotic and cruel because they were grappling with a task which was beyond their capacity. The people were taxed but they were not governed, for the kings had not the organisation to deal with a large area covering the Irrawaddy valley, the Shan states, and sometimes Arakan and Tenasserim as well. The function of government is to govern, but it was difficult to govern when so much of their attention was spent on maintaining themselves in power against endemic rebellion.101

The importance of this passage lies in the explanation in which Harvey offers his readers for the ‘despotic’ and ‘cruel’ nature of the Burmese kings. He points to the inherently difficult task the kings faced in trying to govern and even to organise the ‘large area’ of Burma, which encompassed such racially diverse areas as the Irrawaddy valley and the Shan states. In this excerpt Harvey implies that the kings were ‘despotic’ because they had to spend much of their efforts on protecting themselves against ‘endemic rebellion.’

Harvey’s interpretation of the Burmese past

Harvey’s History of Burma established a new way for thinking about Burma’s pre-colonial past, one which emphasised the ‘beauty’ of the Burmese historical records and the struggle for ethnic unity. Harvey sought to challenge earlier British assessments of Burma, whilst also, at the same time, drawing upon those ideas. Unlike earlier nineteenth century British authors, Harvey did not dismiss the Burmese historical records, rather he celebrated them. Through the use of ‘splendid vigorous English’ and European analogies, Harvey knowingly presented a highly romantic picture of pre-colonial Burma. He also, at times, sought to write an objective and modern style of history. By his own admission, though, earlier European accounts of the ‘despotic’ and ‘cruel’ kings also filter into this romantic and objective view, and ‘clogs the foreground.’

The main argument of the History of Burma, however, does not rest upon the romance of Burmese history, or on the earlier British judgement of the ‘despotic’ kings. Rather, the narrative of the text is structured around the theme of the unity and disunity of the Burmese kingdoms. This theme is linked in Harvey’s account to what he clearly sees as the most successful and beautiful period in Burmese history, the Pagan Kingdom. The heights of ethnic unity in Burma,

101 Ibid., 361.
Harvey argued, were achieved during the time of the Pagan kings. But the unity of this period, according to Harvey, was never again restored. After Pagan there were new dynasties, rulers succeeded one another, and murder, war and ethnic rebellion all took place, but these occurred, in Harvey’s text, within the pattern of unity and fragmentation of the people of Burma. This problem, Harvey argued, of unifying Burma, was still present in the nineteenth century, when inter-ethnic wars undermined the establishment of a ‘good administration.’ In describing the early administration of the Konbaung Kings he wrote:

> Their ideas remained in the nineteenth century what they had been in the ninth. To build pagodas, to collect daughters from tributary chiefs, to sally forth on slave raids, to make wars for white elephants – these conceptions had had their day, and a monarchy which failed to get beyond them was doomed.

Thus, according to Harvey’s view of the Burmese past, the pre-colonial kings failed to progress and to overcome disunity. Even though their historical records contained such ‘beauty,’ in the end the Burmese kings were always ‘doomed’ by their own history.

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102 Ibid., 249.
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TEXT AND CONTEXT: ANOTHER LOOK AT BURMESE DAYS

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Students of colonial Burma inevitably turn to Burmese Days. The frequent pedagogical use of George Orwell’s (1903-1950) novel has meant that the text has become a part of the mythology of imperial experience not only for Burma, but for the British Empire as a whole.1 In fact, it is also possibly the most widely read book involving Southeast Asia. Burmese Days is often assigned to complement general service courses in world history, literature and political science. Since these classes aim to introduce students to liberal arts--less modestly referred to as ‘the humanities’--they are basic staples of American university education. This means that thousands--if not tens of thousands--of students encounter the novel each year. In addition, Burmese Days is often assigned with texts such as Edward Said’s Orientalism and Kipling’s Kim in higher level courses which focus upon European imperialism or the British Empire. The novel’s popularity, naturally, is not confined to the United States. While the number of British students who are forced to read Orwell cannot match the mass dragooning of freshmen and sophomores which takes place across the Atlantic, it is clear that in Britain Burmese Days remains as one of the essential novels of the 20th century. With respect to Southeast Asia, it is also clear that a healthy number of Singapore undergraduates have read the novel before they matriculate; some even manage to encounter it during the course of study at the National University of Singapore. Finally, one has only to travel to in Myanmar to see that Burmese Days can be purchased along with postcards, bottled water, and poor quality lacquerware in tourist spots.

Orwell was more interested in portraying the systemic abuses of imperialism than capturing the social life of the region, but his novel has come to serve all of these functions. Even if he did not write to portray Burma or Southeast Asia, Burmese Days is still quite suitable for such enterprises. It is a nice length, comes in paper, stays in print and contains accounts of drunkenness, violence and sex, all of which hold the attention of undergraduates and vacation readers. Many of the main characters in the novel--Flory, U Po Kyin, Dr. Veraswami, (British editions renamed them U Po Sing

1Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (editors), Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World (Berkeley, 1997), 163.
and Dr. Murkhaswami), Ellis, Ma Hla May, Mr. and Mrs Lackersteen, Maxwell, Verrall, Mr. Macgregor and Elizabeth--are memorable; no less striking is the way in which Orwell led his readers to view colonial Burma through the daily life of the Kyauktada Club. Orwell showed that this society was deeply divided along racial lines, with Europeans exploiting both the land and peoples of Burma, while finding that the cost of exile and isolation was to fight a continuous battle against despair. At the same time, there were clearly those (U Po Kyin and Dr. Veraswami) who both believed in and collaborated with colonial rule. While the novel is set around 1930, with the Saya San rebellion in the background, it offers a synchronic view of colonial realities: this is the way things have been and will be in the lives of these characters. *Burmese Days* derives its power from the intensity of the characters’ relationships; the hints of change in Burma remain only hints.

Historians and other scholars employ *Burmese Days* as a means to explore some of the more important features of modern history--colonialism, the British Empire, racism and nationalism--because they affirm or support its depiction of the reality of a specific historical situation. The utility of fiction in the hands of the public is a large question and when it becomes crystallized around the study and teaching of history it is probably inevitable that a series of mimetic issues--here defined by accuracy, fairness and comprehensiveness--govern any attempt to adjudicate the viability of the text in question. Maung Htin Aung, in his famous article on Orwell, claimed that *Burmese Days* was a `valuable historical document’ because it “recorded vividly the tensions that prevailed in Burma, and the mutual suspicion, despair and disgust that crept into Anglo-Burmese relations as the direct result of the Government of India Act leaving out Burma from the course of its reforms.” In contrast, Malcolm Muggeridge, who knew Orwell, evaluated *Burmese Days* as not offering a credible portrait of colonial life:

> the description of the Europeans in their club, of their discussions about electing a ‘native’ to membership, their quarrels and their drunkenness and their outbursts of hysteria, is somehow unreal. ...I was myself living in India at the same period as Orwell was in Burma. It was my first visit there. I was teaching at an Indian college in Travancore, and occasionally used to visit a neighbouring town where there was a little community of English living rather the same sort of life as the European community in Kyauktada. It is, of course, perfectly true the general attitude towards Indians was arrogant, and sometimes brutal, and that a European who did not share this attitude was liable, like Flory, to find himself in an embarrassing situation....it is equally true that Orwell’s picture is tremendously exaggerated.

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The very nature of fiction limits any attempt to critically assess the accuracy of a given novel, play or short story. Nonetheless, *Burmese Days* has been so widely read and therefore its ability to define a given reality must be interrogated. Possibly the most widely-used method of examining texts is to place them into contexts. Textual interpretation, as such, depends upon the employment, definition, construction and articulation of contexts. This paper will rely upon the examination of a number of specific contexts to analyze *Burmese Days*. To be more precise, it will exhibit the use of specific contexts—the critics’ immediate reaction to *Burmese Days*, the work’s status within the author’s canon, the manner in which George Orwell has been understood by historians of the British Empire, biographical factors and, last, the novel’s place in relation to British writing about Burma—in order to show that this last neglected context can indeed shed new light on the subject. It should be acknowledged that these contexts do not in any way exhaust the possible avenues open to scholarly investigation. Nonetheless, this paper is also an attempt to display some of the methodological issues inherent in what might be called ‘contextualism’. By employing a relatively small number of contexts—many of which might be regarded as paradigms for academic analysis—the discussion may well show both the strengths and limitations of the presupposition that texts can best be understood in context. This exercise proceeds on the assumption that texts do indeed ‘fit’ into contexts; but these contexts come into being only when we try to understand the text. That is, contexts do not exist in themselves, but are created and employed in order to serve a wide range of interpretative ends. Therefore, the debate about the autonomy of the text (especially ‘major’ or ‘hegemonic’ texts) and its surrounding context is misplaced; rather, the awareness that contexts are to be created leaves both the integrity of the text and the interpretative options for the scholar open. The example of *Burmese Days*, then, should raise a number of hermeneutical issues and suggest new avenues for textual interpretation.

For our immediate purposes, evaluating the accuracy or fairness of Orwell’s novel will always remain open ended, but this discussion aims to help us better understand the novel’s discursive status. By adding the previously unexplored (at least for students of Orwell) context of British writing about Burma, it becomes possible to regard *Burmese Days* in a new light. Accordingly, this paper will raise the possibility

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5 This is even more the case because Orwell’s literary reputation has at least partly depended on his honesty. For example of this see: Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (London, 1958), 287-294.
6 It is beyond the scope of this paper to directly address the status of contexts in the interpretation of texts. For a stimulating discussion of this and related problems see: Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts Contexts Language* (Ithaca, 1983) and James Tully (editor), *Meaning and Context Quentin Skinner and His Critics* (Oxford, 1988).
7 This discussion would have been better had it also employed “author-intention” as a critical (if problematic) context. However, both the lack of surviving sources and the spirited and complicated debate about the possibility of recovering the intentions of an author do not make this feasible.
that repositioning *Burmese Days* within the stream of discourse about Burma shows
that while it was an important work of social criticism, it also bore the biases which
some scholars prefer to label as ‘orientalist.’ Having said as much, it remains beyond
the boundaries of this discussion to decide whether Orwell’s novel warrants its
mythological reputation.

**The immediate context: the initial critics**

One of the most frequently deployed contexts involves the initial reception of a work
because it illustrates the ways in which a text might have been understood for its
intended audience. Orwell’s novels were certainly no exception and, in fact, the
novel’s publication history and early reviews themselves serve to illustrate the
intellectual vibrancy of both the 1930s and the period involving the Second World
War. Unfortunately, this topic is itself worth at least an article, but there is space here
to call attention to the fact that while *Burmese Days* has become a ‘classic’ which is
widely read in many parts of the world, its immediate publication and reception was
not without problems.

To begin with, Orwell sought to follow the success of *Down and Out In Paris
and London* (1933) which has been published to favorable reviews. However, Victor
Gollancz, publisher of Left Book Club, initially rejected the novel because colonial
officials feared that it would have a negative impact in India and Burma. However,
Harper published the volume in New York in October 1934, leading Gollancz to
change his mind and publish it the following year.8

The immediate ‘reception’ of the work did not in any way envisage the work’s
ultimate impact. Sean O’Faolain, the Irish novelist and biographer, reviewed Orwell’s
novel along with two other novels (*This Sweet Work* by D. M. Low and *Follow Thy
Fair Sun* by Viola Meynell) and found that it was “very heavy-handed...Mr Orwell
depicts the life of this misanthropic and unimpressive character. He gives incidentally
so grim a picture of Burmese life that while one fervently hopes he has exaggerated,
one feels that the outlines, at least, are true.”9 O’Faolain noted that the nasty picture
which emerged from the pages of *Burmese Days* “hangs together too well—the sweat
and the drink, the loneliness and the dry-rot, the birthmark and the misanthropy, the
misanthropy and the anti-social ideas, the anti-social ideas and the ostracism.”10 The
unsigned reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* also thought that Orwell had
been heavy-handed. However, he/she noted that *Burmese Days* could hardly be
considered typical of British writing about Burma:

*Burmese Days*, by George Orwell, is symptomatic of the reaction against conventional

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10Ibid, 50-51.
portrayals of Burma as a land of tinkling temple bells, gentle charming Burmans, and strong, silent Englishmen. The scene is the Kyauktada District during the rebellion period, but there is nothing heroic about it. The English...are too aloof, the Burmese too abject...The jungle Burmese are attractive enough, but those of the town seem to consist mainly of pimps, professional witnesses, and corrupt magistrates.\textsuperscript{11}

More important, the reviewer challenged the novel’s claim to realism, by suggesting that the picture it portrayed of colonial Burma was not accurate. Instead, the situation was not as pessimistic as Orwell sought to make his readers believe:

> The book has traces of power, and it is written with a pen steeped in gall. That gall is merited, for these people exist; but a little I see would have carried more conviction. The inaccuracies are no worse than in pleasant books which idealize the East—a Burmese husband does not talk with his wife as U Po Sing and his wife are made to talk...the author entirely ignored the newer type of Burman official, men of high character who resent the U Po Sings even more than we do. And when he writes of their English superiors, that few of them work as hard or intelligently as the postmaster of a provincial town, he shows that he can hardly have mixed with the men who really run the country.\textsuperscript{12}

Finally, G.W. Stonier in \textit{Fortnightly} found that it was a sound novel and one which recommended to all “who enjoy a lively hatred in fiction.”\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Canonical context: Burmese Days within the Orwell corpus}

The very fact that \textit{Burmese Days} is one of the pillars of the Orwell canon has ensured that the work remains subject to scholarly study. Students of Orwell encounter it along the road to \textit{Down and Out in Paris and London} (1933), \textit{Keep the Aspidistra Flying} (1936) \textit{Homage to Catalonia} (1938) \textit{The Road to Wigan Pier} (1938), \textit{Coming Up For Air} (1939), \textit{Animal Farm} (1945) and \textit{1984} (1949) and the less well-known pieces. This means that debate about the novel’s critical reputation is tied to its relationship with Orwell’s subsequent literary production. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to pursue these interconnections (e.g. Flory and Winston Smith), it remains useful to recognize that this set of contexts enables scholars to critically evaluate \textit{Burmese Days} as a novel; it does not, however, really address the way in which the novel may represent history. In fact, it is possible that canonical contexts are dangerous because they provide the literary legitimation for the mythologizing of particular texts.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid, 52.
Historical context: Orwell and the British Empire

Despite the fact that George Orwell clearly did not play a formative role in either the history of Burma or the British Empire, he has been regarded as significant. However, students of the history of the Empire have cited Orwell as evidence of crisis and imperial decline, linking both his career and writing to the growing disillusionment with British administration and policy which became increasingly evident after the First World War. *Burmese Days* is relevant because it provides a glimpse of what had been previously rare: imperial British dissent. Orwell inherited the legacy of W.S. Blunt, whose direct attacks upon British policy in Egypt, were at odds with many writers and intellectuals who celebrated the reality of Empire, by raising their voices in support of the Jubilees and durbars which were emblematic of imperial achievement.

Historians of empire, then, have found Orwell to be valuable because he illustrates change more profound than that associated with the difference in generation; instead, his writing signifies an entirely new perspective. If late Victorian and Edwardian writers had conceptualized the empire and its policies—which in extreme cases now are all the more striking for their brutality—in terms of progress and the propagation of modernity amidst prosperity, Orwell emphasized the extent to which it could be considered the very agent of systemic exploitation. As a result, he could be cited as the type of figure whose ideas prefigure both the decline of imperial power and its ultimate collapse. Writing in the mid-1960s, A. P. Thornton understood Orwell to be a typical case of someone who reflected the public school ethos without believing in either the imperial idea or the imperial mission.14 George Woodcock tied this picture to the Blair family as he argued in his *Who Killed the British Empire?* (1974) that Orwell is held up an example of someone who came from an Anglo-Indian family, but still ultimately rejected imperial service.15 More important, his writings “epitomized the complex feelings of those young educated British who found they could no longer justify involvement in the mechanism of Empire”16 Again, Orwell represented the growing criticism of the Empire on the eve of the Second World War.17

In his magisterial trilogy devoted to the rise and fall of the British Empire, James Morris regarded Orwell as an example of an imperial servant who no longer really believed in the system which he served. Furthermore, Orwell was an example of a “softened, perhaps weakened” imperialist.18 With respect to the ways in which the British understood themselves in relation to the Empire Sonya O. Rose saw Orwell’s

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16Ibid, 279.
17Ibid, 281.
significance to lie in his depiction of Britain as a land populated by decent ordinary people. More recently, W.M. Roger Louis located Orwell along with E.M. Forster (Passage to India, 1924) as figures might be displayed as more than emblems of disbelief; their two novels “contributed to the anti-Empire spirit of the times.” In other words, Orwell was more than a representative figure, but someone who actively influenced the formation of public opinion. The image of the alienated imperial servant was rendered even more iconic by Niall Ferguson’s Empire (2002). Orwell was included for his inability “play world policeman with a straight face.”

Biographical context: Orwell’s biographers

Orwell’s biographers have tended to treat Burmese Days and “Shooting the Elephant” as the major primary sources for his life in Burma. While students of Orwell’s life and work know a great deal about the last two decades of his life, they are comparatively less informed about the six years which the young Eric Blair served as a police officer in Burma. Nonetheless, given the immense interest in both authority which runs through his writings and the bitter tone of Burmese Days have ensured that his biographers would devote great energy in the attempt reconstruct his life and experience in Burma. While Orwell’s biographers faced a number of hurdles (including few surviving materials from his years in Asia) in presenting an accurate and sensitive portrait, they have been able to document that his life in Burma does not entirely match the experience of the characters in Burmese Days.

Eric Blair’s family background (his mother grew up in Moulmein) was probably the basis for his selection of service in Burma. We know that he arrived in Rangoon in November 1922 and that by April 1928 he would be living in Paris. Inside Burma, he was posted to Mandalay at the end of 1922 where he spent a year in the Police Training School. He then had a number of postings: to Myaungmya, Twante, Syriam, Insein, Moulmein and Katha. Orwell’s biographers have painted a picture of the young man as a loner: he does not appear to have made a powerful impression on his contemporaries.

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23 Future biographers of Orwell will always labour under the burden caused by the politics of the first biographies. Sonia Orwell was unhappy with the collective work of Peter Stansky and William Abrahams and later Bernard Crick. For more on this topic see: Sonia Orwell, letter to Times Literary Supplement (13 October 1972) and Michael Shelden, Orwell, 6-10.
The most famous exception, of course, is Maung Htin Aung’s memory of and articles about Orwell in Burma. However, more attention, much of it speculative, has been devoted to attempting to ascertain why Burma was so difficult for Blair. For instance, one line of enquiry as assumed that his experience as a police officer was purely negative; some have speculated that newly-minted Etonian suffered from being bullied by a bigoted superior. However, recent research has shown that in three of the districts in which Blair served he had three Burmese superiors: U Ba Thin, U Ba and U Maung Maung. These men were among the first to be admitted into the ranks of the Imperial Police and they were probably insecure about their positions; in other words, they hardly make candidates to be bullying the green Blair. While it may be difficult—if not impossible—to discover if Blair had been bullied, it is also clear that he was given positions which could not be considered unimportant. For example, after leaving Moulmein he was posted to Katha, where he served as headquarters assistant. The size of the district had the effect of making this an important position. Since Katha was a large district, it meant that his superior often traveled, leaving Orwell in charge of the headquarters.

Given Orwell’s writings, it is understandable that his biographers have looked at Flory as the best source for clues about his experiences in Burma. Consequently, they have portrayed the young Eric Blair as someone who was a loner, alienated from ‘the Club’ and all that it entailed; they have wondered about his relationships with women and following the path set by Flory whether he had significant interaction with prostitutes. At the same time, the biographers have even more interested in tracing his intellectual and professional development. The alienating experience of serving the Empire in Burma is regarded as a necessary step in the growth of Orwell’s critical perspective. To put the matter simply, in Burma the author of Animal Farm and 1984 is only Eric Blair; he would, however, return to Europe much closer to becoming George Orwell.

However, what the biographers have collectively shown is that Eric Blair was a shy, socially awkward police officer, making him closer, in some respects, to Maxwell, the “fresh-coloured blond youth of not more than twenty-five or six” and who was “very young for the post he held” rather than Flory. To make more of this speculative point, it might not be too much to argue that there are at least two Blairs is Burmese Days; the first is Maxwell (who is killed), who represents Blair’s direct, immediate experience of Burma; the second, is indeed Flory, as the protagonist of the novel suggests what Blair might have become had he not returned to Britain.

Nonetheless, the biographical context makes reading Burmese Days appear as a memoir about an embittering experience. It has the effect of textualizing the subject, shrinking the difference between the text and life of the author. In other words, it allows the text to define the lived reality signified by the context. Since much of

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24Michael Shelden, Orwell, 101-102.
25Ibid, 118.
26George Orwell, Burmese Days, 21.
Orwell’s critical reputation has been linked to his “frankness”, the life and text have become fused. In effect, to understand *Burmese Days*, then, requires the assimilation of life to novel; the text has invited the creation of a context.

**Newly created context: British writing about Burma**

We have seen that analyzing *Burmese Days* within the contexts of the book’s critical reception, its place in the Orwell canon, the novel’s historical setting in the British Empire, and the author’s life have enabled us to locate the text. *Burmese Days*, as such, appears as a reflection of Orwell’s growing disenchantment with Empire; it also stands as a roadmark on his way to becoming an ‘author’. While these contexts are central to textual interpretation, they are not exhaustive. Orwell scholars, for example, have not really addressed the ways in which Orwell’s writings about Burma fit into the larger pattern of British writing about the subject. This is actually a larger subject, one which can be divided into different periods, matching not only the pattern of British colonization and domination, but also connected with larger imperial trends. For example, travel writers such as V.C. Scott O’Connor, Mrs. Earnest Hart, and R. Talbot Kelly all regarded Burma in light of what they perceived to be the positive features of imperial rule. Seeking to communicate their affection for Burma and its peoples, they at once proclaimed that the Burman canvas to be ‘picturesque’; they implied as well that the country’s active history was now safely behind it, as the future lay with modernization under imperial rule. In effect, these writers portrayed the Burmans as picturesque and appealing, but passive.

Since this paper will introduce British writing as a new context for the study of *Burmese Days*, it will focus upon writing which came after the First World War. Since Orwell’s ability to understand Burma can best be measured against writings which were published at roughly the same time, *Burmese Days* will be contrasted largely with select works of Maurice Collis, a figure well known to students of colonial Burma, but hardly familiar to those who have built careers by interpreting novels such as *1984* and *Animal Farm*. Students of Orwell have instead focused upon his relationship to either contemporary British writers who wrote about interwar Britain (another context) or in the attempt to situate his work they have analyzed his works against some the giants of Britain’s literary pantheon. Unfortunately, Orwell’s works have never been compared with either the general theme of British writing about Burma or the particular example of Collis.

Collis, of course, wrote widely about both Burma and Southeast Asia. *Trials in Burma* (1938) and *Into Hidden Burma* (1953) are two autobiographical works which he devoted to his experience in Burma; like Orwell’s novel, these volumes contain a fairly vivid picture of colonial society around 1930. In addition, like Orwell who wrote from Britain, Collis also wrote retrospectively in 1937, after he had left Burma. To be sure, their situations were different. Orwell wrote as a novelist, keen to depict the worst features of colonial rule, but Collis who served as a judge, reflected
on controversial decisions which he had himself made. *Trials in Burma*, then, had two meanings, referring at once to some of the specific cases which Collis had tried and also the psychological toll which they had exacted upon him.

The works of both authors are inviting to the historian because each displays a detailed portrait of life under colonial rule. Taken together, *Burmese Days* and *Trials in Burma* and *Into Hidden Burma* exhibit a series of situations in which the British administration was at best uneven and at worst exploitative. Orwell’s review of *Trials in Burma* emphasized that the book’s value was the way it showed that the machinery of colonial government exacted a difficult cost on those who operated its parts:

> This is an unpretentious book, but it brings out with unusual clearness the dilemma that faces every official in an empire like our own...every British magistrate in India is in a false position when he has to try a case in which European and native interests clash. In theory he is administering an impartial system of justice; in practice he is part of a huge machine which exists to protect British interests, and he has often got to choose between sacrificing his integrity and damaging his career. ...Mr Collis grasps the essential situation clearly enough; he recognizes that the Burman has profited very little from the huge wealth that has been extracted from his country, and that the hopeless rebellion of 1931 had genuine grievances behind it. But he is also a good imperialist, it was precisely his concern for the good name of English justice that got him into hot water with his fellow countrymen on more than one occasion.27

It is also clear that the image of colonial Burma which emerges from the pages of Collis and Orwell was of a society which was fractured by racial tensions. Neither picture of Burma under colonial rule contained any of the redeeming forces of modernization which O'Connor, Hart and Kelley could easily--almost absent-mindedly--link to imperial rule. Nonetheless, Collis attempted to face the future with guarded confidence.

Points of contact aside, the texts are significant for their different representations of colonial Burma. Orwell’s Burma was a ghastly place; Collis’ vision was far more balanced as he did allow his readers the opportunity to see several sides of Burma. Collis might even be faulted for his piety about what he believed to be the emerging successes of British colonialism. For instance, in *Into Hidden Burma* he described the cultural and intellectual circles in which G. H Luce and the painter Ba Nyan interacted:

> Ba Nyan lived next door to Luce in one of the roads on the south side of the Old Racecourse, a residential quarter where each house stood in a garden. Not far away was Mrs Hla Oung, an Arakanese lady, elderly and a widow, well off and a patron of the arts. Kenneth Ward, the painter, has his studio and rooms in her house. A Cambridge man and Professor of Physics at the Rangoon College, he had taken up

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painting as a private resource and devoted all his spare time to it. His landscapes with figures were the best that had been done of Burma up to that date...there was also E.G.N. Kinch, a schoolmaster and boy scout leader, who besides being a friend of Luce’s, and much liked by the young Burmese who gathered round him, was one of Ba Nyan’s earliest admirers.28

Collis’ portraits of other Burmans, Shans and Indians is almost as affectionate as it was for Ba Nyan, but he did not deny that British racism was a huge obstacle for Luce and others. Luce’s interactions did not “soften the heart of the clubmen” and “when Sir Reginald Craddock called Luce pro-Burman, he was expressing, without undue malice, a contemporary British opinion, cruel and silly as it is now seen to have been.” Yet, in contrast to *Burmese Days*, Collis allowed his readers to see a range of positive Burman characters. At the same time, he was more sensitive to Burma’s place within the Indian Empire, recording some of the realities faced by the Simon Commission and by the local Indian reaction to the visit of Sen Gupta, who was mayor of Calcutta and prominent politician in India. More important, the shadow of Gandhi hangs over *Trials in Burma*, but it is absent in Orwell’s novel.

Collis’ treatment of the trial of an Englishman accused of murdering his servant would have fit into *Burmese Days*. In Orwell’s hands it would have been the occasion to exhibit the institutional power behind British injustice (the Englishman could not be found guilty). Orwell probably would have tied the formal proceedings of the trial to drunken discussions to of the unsympathetic characters at the Kyauktada Club. Collis also pointed to the peer pressure which he faced in trying to reach a decision. However, his narrative diverges from the unambiguous assault upon colonial society in that he wanted to show that there was, in fact, a mechanism for justice—however imperfect—which was available to the Burmese. More important, in Orwell’s novel the Burmans who do appear in court are represented from a cynical perspective: they have been ‘bought’ or ‘framed.’ The main action, in any event, takes place outside of the law: in the club, the Church (where Flory is humiliated) and in the public unrest which follows Ellis’ assault upon a Burmese student.

Moreover, the way in which Orwell and Collis represent public unrest is also vastly different. In *Burmese Days* there are two big events: the riot which the police eventually quell and the rumored peasant uprising which is actually the work of U Po Kyin. Rather than tie the novel to the Saya San rebellion, Orwell chose to connect it the machinations of U Po Kyin, ultimately reflecting his desire for greater inclusion into the system of colonial administration by becoming a member of the Club. As Maung Htin Aung observed, the riot is easily broken up and in “Shooting the Elephant” Orwell had complained that the Burmans did not have strength to raise a riot.30 The Burmans, then, are able to riot against Ellis’ act of rage, but they are not

29Ibid, 44.
30Maung Htin Aung, “George Orwell and Burma” *Asian Affairs* vol. 57 (New Series vol.1), February,
credited with the agency of challenging British rule itself. 

*Trials in Burma* reveals a very different picture by recording a riot in Rangoon in which the Burmans targeted Indians. Not only does Collis provide some sense of the fear and confusion which served to define the event, but he also admits that the British were quite aware of the fact that colonial rule was fragile. Far more than *Burmese Days*, Collis’ book allows the reader to sense the vulnerability of the Empire. Orwell is hardly as interested in any type of Burman point of view. For example, with echoes of some of the more deplorable passages from “Shooting the Elephant” Orwell captured the mood of the Club:

> the conversation veered back to the old, never-palling subject--the insolence of the natives, the supineness of the Government, the dear dead days when the British Raj was the British Raj and please give the bearer fifteen lashes....Living and working among Orientals would try the temper of a saint.  And all of them, the officials particularly, knew what it was to be baited and insulted. Almost every day, when Westfield or Macgregor or even Maxwell went down the street, the High School boys, with their, young yellow faces--faces smooth as gold coins, full of that maddening contempt that sits so naturally on the Mongolian face--sneered at them as they went past, sometimes hooted after them with hyena-like laughter. The life of the Anglo-Indian officials is not all jam. In comfortless camps, in sweltering offices, in gloomy dakhungalows smelling of dust and earth-oil, they earn, perhaps, the right to be a little disagreeable.31

The point here is not that student activism had emerged at the newly-founded University of Rangoon, but that colonial officers had utter contempt for the indigenous population. To put this in perspective, one of the major differences in the two author’s representations of Burma under Britain is that Collis’ memoirs credited the Burmans with a much greater ability to reshape their society. In effect, he understood them to be significant agents within the colonial world.

While *Burmese Days* is remembered as one of Orwell’s major novels, his reputation rests primarily with his treatment of European political and social problems. *The Road to Wigan Pier, Down and Out in Paris and London, Coming Up For Air, Homage to Catalonia, Animal Farm*, and *1984* all address problems which became manifest in Europe between the World Wars. In fact, his literary reputation has depended upon his capacity to record the ways in which these turbulent events were played out in the lives of ordinary men and women. Therefore, Orwell’s achievement has been to try to enable his readers to understand mass poverty, the appeal of fascism, the indifference of intellectuals to suffering and the impact of totalitarianism upon people, who were simply trying to `get-on’ with their lives.

In contrast, Collis wrote largely with Southeast Asia, especially Burma, in mind. He belongs to a tradition of British writing about Burma. That is, that Collis’

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work might be grouped with the likes of Scott O’Connor, Talbot Kelley, Mrs. Earnest Hart and Sir George Scott all who had lived in Burma and sought to portray the land and its peoples in sympathetic terms. With respect to the travel writers, these men and women sought to make their British and North American audiences see Burma as safely ‘picturesque’. Burma was exotic, interesting, but its people were now safely governed by British rule. In so doing, they often made them picturesque, but passive.

Using this context, British writing about Burma, to view Orwell’s text shows that he also tended to regard the Burmans as relatively passive or, at best, with indifference. Orwell’s Burmans are less active in pursuit of their own destiny than they are in Trials in Burma. Ironically, at least in this sense it is Collis that breaks away from the tradition of British writing about Burma more than Orwell does. With his emphasis on the flawed and wicked character of British administration, Orwell de-emphasized the agency of the Burmans. In so doing, he replicated the very opposite of what he hated: the sunny portrayals of colonial Burma which were common among British travel writers who wrote about the country during the high tide of the ‘new imperialism.’ Collis, who sought to represent some of the virtues of British rule, managed to display the Burmans as more active agents, who would one day control their own destiny. Burmese Days, then, appears to be a text which points away from its immediate historical and geographical context to the political problems which had engulfed Europe.

Conclusion

These different representations of Burma suggest that Orwell’s novel fits into a broader pattern of British writing about the country. As we have seen, with exception of U Po Kyin, Burmese Days tended to downplay the agency of the Burmans. U Po Kyin--arguably the most memorable character in the novel--comes across as much brighter than his British rulers. He is secretive, evil and his behaviour crosses the boundaries which define acceptable sexual practices. However, his plans exist to work within the Leviathan; in fact, raising the peasant rebellion had nothing do with Burma’s attempts to achieve self-government, but existed to further his self-aggrandizement. Between the often remote and relatively insignificant Burmans and the Machiavellian U Po Kyin, Orwell was able to portray the human abuses produced by imperialism. The real thrust of Burmese Days, after all, was not the attempt to fully capture the social realities of life in Burma; rather it was to show how British rule protected and promoted the systematic exploitation of the land and its peoples. In effect, Burmese Days is a political tract which is shaped by political and cultural criticism.

Yet, despite the fact that the book is often assigned along with those of Said, it is fair to ask whether it remains an ‘orientalist’ text. With its emphasis on the cunning of U Po Kyin and ultimate unknowable character of the Burmans Orwell’s novel
repeats the constructions of stereotypes which scholars have come to associate with ‘orientalism.’ To be sure, Orwell did not write to create categories of difference or to promote racial hierarchies, but his novel has the effect of supporting some of these patterns of discourse. Burma, both the land and its peoples, remains as ‘the other’; the main emphasis is on the presentation of the generic evils associated with imperialism.

Given the complexity of these issues, it would be a mistake to understand this paper to be a cautionary tale about the utilization of contexts. After all, ‘orientalism’ can itself be regarded as an essential part of any historical or literary context. The historical reconstruction of colonialism in Burma as well as the range of indigenous responses to it, can benefit from the deployment of both traditional scholarly contexts and the creation new avenues of academic enquiry. Having noted as much, this discussion should suggest that the attempt to reduce a text to a social context is vastly more difficult procedure than some might imagine. More important, it should also be clear that scholars have much to gain by regarding contexts as helpful tools, rather than entities in themselves. These problems cannot be resolved by easily, but it seems safe to say that the interpretation of texts can benefit from a re-examination of the employment of contexts. In short, taking another look at *Burmese Days* means seeing that it is a text for which we have yet to exhaust its contexts.
THE FLIGHT OF LAO WAR CAPTIVES FROM BURMA BACK TO LAOS IN 1596: A COMPARISON OF HISTORICAL SOURCES

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Introduction

In 1596, one thousand Lao war captives fled from Pegu, the capital of the kingdom of Burma, back to their native kingdom of Lan Sang. This incident is insignificant when compared to more cataclysmic changes like the founding or fall of dynasties, but it has attracted the attention of Western, Thai, and Burmese historians since the 17th century.

The incident is noteworthy and exceptional in several ways. First, the flight was to a remote destination: Laos. Second, the incident involved two traditional enemies: Burmese and ethnic Tai's. "Tai" will be used to emphasize that this is an autonomous history of pre-modern states ranging from Ayutthya in the South, through Lan Sang, Lan Na, Kengtung, and Sipsong Panna in the North, to the Shan states of Burma in the far north. Third, the entries covering the incident in the Ayutthya, Chiang Mai, and Lan Sang chronicles are short, ambiguous, and beg to be explained. All of this gives the incident great dramatic potential and two historians of note have made use of these exceptional characteristics to further their literary and ideological goals: de Marini, a Jesuit priest, in a book published in 1663, and Prince Damrong, a Thai historian, in a book published in 1917. Sections 2 and 5 will analyze the works of these historians.

In other ways the incident is unexceptional. The Burmese, Ayutthya, Chiangmai, and Lan Sang chronicles (Wyatt, 1995; Cushman, 2000; U Kala, 1961; Phothisane, 1996) are the primary sources that describe the incident, but there are gaps and inconsistencies in the record they provide. The socio-political background to the incident in the Burmese chronicle is in some ways more important than any single instance of flight itself. For Burma the 1590's were a period of dynastic decline and disorder similar to ones that had occured in the past and similar to ones that would occur again in the future (Lieberman, 1984). By 1600 a unified Burmese kingdom ceased to exist. Flight, rebellion and the realignment of loyalties between powerful patrons were all common responses to the disorder that reigned...
during periods like this. Sections 2 through 4 will reconstruct a basic historical narrative for the incident. Section 7 presents a broader socio-political background for war captives and flight in pre-modern mainland Southeast Asian history.

A Reconstructed Narrative from Chronicle Primary Sources

Chronicle sources provide the basic facts about the flight of the Laotians. According to the Burmese chronicle, shortly after a Burmese queen died in 1556 there was a famine in the capital and over 1000 Lan Sang people serving the Burmese king fled from there to Lan Sang. When the king found out about this, he followed them and captured them and those that he caught he killed (UKIII:78). Both the Chiangmai and the Ayutthya chronicles describe the fleeing Laos after they leave Burma. According to the Ayutthya Chronicle: “In 958 (1596), a year of the monkey, on Tuesday, the fourth day of the waxing moon in the sixth month, Lao fled and Khun Ca Muang battled Lao in the vicinity of Takhian Duan” (Cushman, 2000, p. 155). According to the Chiangmai Chronicle in the Buddhist year 960 (either 1598 or 1599) “the Lao retreated from Pegu to Chiangmai, / and [then] fled back to Lan Chang” (Wyatt and Wichienkeeo, 1995, p. 129). In the the chronicles of Lan Sang the fleeing Laotians are close to arriving back to their native land:

....in the year Kad-Khai [1599], Lao families fled from Meuang Hongsavadi to Meuang Lan Sang. [But] Chau Xiang Mai went out to capture the returning Lao [families] and took them back to Meuang Hongsa[vadi]. [Some] avoided [Chau Xiang Mai] and requested help from Meuang Lan Xang. [They] paid their respects to [both] Chau, father and son. [Both] Chau, father and son, ordered Phraya Saen Luang to march the troops [of Lan Xang] to Meuang Nan to join Phraya Luang Meuang Nan who had previously asked assistance from Meuang Lan Xang to become Chau Phaen Din Xiang Mai. [Lan Xang troops] attacked and won all the meuang, including Meuang Phae, Meuang Nan, Meuang Nakhon, Meuang Phra Yau, Meuang Soeng, Meuang Loh, Xiang Mai, Meuang Xiang Saen, Xiang Hay Meuang Phang, and Meuang Hang. Then Lan Xang troops surrounded Meuang Xiang Mai for a long time but did not succeed [in capturing the city]. Furthermore [some soldiers] died because of lack of food supplies. So [they] had to return to Lan Xang. (Phothisane, 1996, 279-80)

Only de Marini’s history, a European source, brings the whole incident to conclusion with the Laotians arriving back to their native land. The basic chronology of these chronicle entries is given in Table 1.
Table 1: Chronology for the Flight of the Laotians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chronicle</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burmese</td>
<td>There was a famine in the Burmese capital and people were starving there.</td>
<td>1596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burmese</td>
<td>Over a thousand Lao war captives attempted to flee from the capital.</td>
<td>1596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burmese</td>
<td>The Burmese king sent soldiers after the captives.</td>
<td>1596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burmese</td>
<td>The captives that were caught were executed.</td>
<td>1596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayutthya</td>
<td>Fleeing Laotians passed through Ayutthya territory and Ayutthya commandant Khun Ca Muang engaged them in battle near Takhian Duan.</td>
<td>1596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiangmai</td>
<td>Fleeing Laotians passed through Chiangmai territory on their way to Lan Sang.</td>
<td>1598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lan Sang</td>
<td>Laotians fleeing from Burma pass through Chiangmai territory and some are taken captive by Chiangmai.</td>
<td>1599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lan Sang</td>
<td>The fleeing Laotians request help from Lan Sang.</td>
<td>1599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lan Sang</td>
<td>Responding to this request for help, Lan Sang embarks on a military campaign with Nan to take all the minor states of Lan Na as well as Chiangmai. They take the minor states, but when food supplies run short they fail to take Chiangmai.</td>
<td>1599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marini</td>
<td>The fleeing Laotians return to their native Lan Sang and free it from its Burmese overlords.</td>
<td>No Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do these entries have enough in common to actually tie them to the same group of fleeing Laotians or do they refer to completely different incidents? Are they enough evidence to reconstruct a single historical incident from?

Several problems arise when reconstructing a historical narrative from these chronicle entries. There are problems with dates, with the completeness of information, and even problems with the word used to refer to people from Lan Sang. The dates in the Burmese and Ayutthya chronicle entries are the same, 1596, but the Chiangmai and Lan Sang chronicle dates are two years off in 1598 and...
1599. Is this an error in dating the incident, does it refer to a separate incident, or did the Laotians just travel slowly from Ayutthya to Chiangmai territory? The Ayutthya chronicle entry lacks essential information. Where the Laos are fleeing from is not given. They might just as well have been fleeing from patrons in Ayutthya or Chiang Mai as patrons in Burma.

In the Ayutthya chronicle the reference to Laotians passing through Ayutthya territory may not refer to people of Lan Sang origin at all. The term ‘Lao’ can have much broader applicability and reference and refer to a group from Lan Na or the Shan states instead of Lan Sang. There has always been a “habit of making no distinction among the major Tai-speaking ethnic groups who lived in the Mekong valley and the upper reaches of the Chao Phraya basin.” As with the term ‘Tai Yai’ it has always been common practice to use "the term 'Lao' indiscriminately when referring not only to the Lao of the Mekong valley but also to the Shan of Northeast Burma, the Tai dialect speakers of Chiang Mai and Sipsong Panna, the Phuan of Northern Laos, and others" (Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosrivathana, 2002, 98). In the late 1590's not so long after the 1596 Ayutthya chronicle entry above referring to fleeing Laotians, Ayutthya becomes involved in Lan Na politics and this usage of ‘Lao’ becomes very common in the Ayutthya chronicle to refer to the minor states of Lan Na (Cushman, 2000, 185). On a more positive note, the Burmese chronicle entry refers to the fleeing Laotians as ‘Lin-zin’ natives which is the Burmese name for ‘Lan Sang’ so there could be no confusion in the Burmese chronicle.

If the chronicle entries are viewed as evidence of a general trend of flight rather than a specific instance of flight the problems cited above disappear because there is no longer any need to connect the events into one unified incident. This is the solution adopted by the Thai historian Prince Damrong in his classic "Thai Fought Burma". As O'Donovan observes “Prince Damrong thought that this flight was part of a bigger movement of Lao war captive labourers out of Burma, Chiangmai, and Ayutthya and back to Lan Sang” (O' Donovan, 2002a, 238). With this explanation there is no heroic escape from bondage in a foreign land followed by an exodus back to one's native land. There is no exceptional act of human agency, just a general socio-political trend. The flight of the Laotians becomes a demographic or migratory phenomenon.

Prince Damrong's Thai Fought Burma ["Thai Rop Bama"] first published in 1917, redefined Thai history. This historical classic, almost one hundred after it was written, is still the best place to turn for a reasonable reconstruction and interpretation of historical sources for Thai-Burmese relations during the early modern period. Because of his high position within the government of King Chulalongkorn, Prince Damrong had access to almost every historical source imaginable including the Burmese chronicle. Prince Damrong's "Thai Fought Burma" presents both the primary source chronicle facts regarding the fleeing
Laotians as well as an interpretation within the broader context of the political disorder that reigned in mainland South East Asia during the 1590s.

The lack of citations to the historical sources it uses often makes this secondary source difficult to use. It is also important to separate fact from interpretation when using this secondary source because, as many scholars have recently pointed out, this historical classic was heavily influenced by the political ideologies of the age it was written in. Written in 1917 “Thai Fought Burma” was the first history of the modern nation-state, Siam, but the events it describes were local events. These local events took place in regions that were autonomous or at least within spheres of influence that shifted frequently passing from local autonomous rule to rule by more powerful states like Ayutthya or Burma and back again. There is an inevitable bias in interpreting local events in the history of a modern nation-state hundreds of years after the fact.

Lorraine Gesick (1995) and Thongchai Winichakul (1994) are two scholars of Thai history who have wrote extensively of this ideological effect in historical interpretation. With Prince Damrong the opposition of “Thai versus other nation” or “Thai versus Burma” becomes dominant in historical discourse:

The past is perceived as the life of the Thai versus other nations. From the early twentieth century onward, the most powerful and effective theme of Thai history has emerged. It is the history of Thai rop phama (“the Thai fought Burma”). Nationhood, patriotism, and the like become burdens compelling us to read the past in one way rather than another. (Thongchai, 1994, 163)

As this two-way distinction of ‘Thai versus the outside world gets established, national history comes to subsume and replace local history. As Lorraine M. Gesick has pointed out, as the history of the Thai nation state takes center stage, the history of the center is emphasized more and more, the periphery is ignored, and the voice of local history disappears:

Obviously, multi-vocal histories cannot give rise to ‘national history,’ which in the minds of the turn-of-the-century modernizing dynasts as well as of later nationalists, must speak with a single voice, telling the story of the nation....... Thus, the older multi-vocal kind of discourse had to be reworked and its many voices, in their embodiments as manuscripts, brought together to be acted upon by practitioners of modern, ‘scientific’ history until they all spoke together of a single linear ‘Thai history.’ In this process anomalies and contradictions, naturally, would be suppressed as ‘unhistorical’ (Gesick, 1995, 15).

Prince Damrong's narrative favors the chronicles of the major powers of the era, Ayutthya and Burma, and ignores the chronicles of smaller states when they contradict the larger states. As we will see, ‘anomalies and contradictions’ are rife in the chronicle primary sources for the era and a major line of fissure occurs between the way events are depicted in the chronicles of minor Northern Tai states.
and the chronicles of Ayutthya and Burma, the major states of mainland South East Asia.

Prince Damrong writes of the fleeing Laotians:

Phra Naw Keo [King Noh Meuang], the viceroy of Sri Satanahut [Lan Chang], after rebelling sent noblemen and high officials to go about and induce those people of Lanchang who were in countries other than their own, to come and reside in their own towns and villages. There were many people of Lanchang whom His Majesty of Hongsawadi had taken away to Hongsawadi, because they were taken away on many occasions. When it became known that Phra Naw Keo, the son of the dependent King Phra Chow Chai Chesatar (Sethathirat, r. 1548-1571), who was held in esteem by the people of Lanchang as a great king, had become independent, there was gladness all round, and they returned to their own country. (Prince Damrong, Our Wars, 180-181, my italics)

As section 6 will show, there is a lot of evidence to support Prince Damrong's change from a specific instance of flight to a general trend of flight. The Burmese chronicle says that people fled to remote destinations such as Chiang Mai, Ayutthya, and Rakhine in the disorder of the early 1590's (UKIII: 76). There are also several instances in both the Ayutthya and Burmese chronicles in which groups that had fled realigned themselves with a new patron or protector (UKIII:80). So you can imagine the two ends of the process of flight, the actual escape when conditions of famine or civil war made the continued existence of a group of war captives at their place of resettlement infeasible and the arrival at some place remote from the origin of flight where the group either voluntarily enters into the service of a new patron or is once again taken captive.

Whereas in the Lan Sang chronicles there is conflict between the fleeing Laos and Chiangmai forces, in Prince Damrong's narrative there is only the threat of conflict:

....But on the way they had to pass through Chiangmai territory. At that time Phra Naw Keo [King Noh Meuang of Lan Sang] and the viceroy of Chiangmai were on inimical terms. When Phra Naw Keo declared himself independent, he incited and assisted the governor of Nan to rebel against the viceroy of Chiangmai, as the latter was a brother of the His Majesty of Hongsawadi. On this occasion, Phra Naw Keo was afraid that the viceroy of Chiangmai would object to the people of Lanchang going back to their country through Chiangmai territory. Therefore, Phra Naw Keo collected a force to meet those returning to Lanchang and bring them out of Chiangmai territory. (Prince Damrong, Our Wars With the Burmese, 181, my italics)

So King Noh Meuang of Lan Sang prepares a military expedition into Lan Na territory to rescue fleeing Laotians. This military expedition is an important historical juncture in Prince Damrong's narrative. The Burmese prince who rules
Chiang Mai sees it as a threat, seeks protection from Ayutthya, and chooses to become “a subject of Siam.” (Prince Damrong, Our Wars, 181).

In their coverage of these military expeditions the chronicles break into two very different narrative threads. The events in both narrative threads run from 1595 to 1604. The Northern thread is found in the Lan Sang, Nan, and Chiangmai chronicles and emphasizes the dominance of Lan Sang and Nan over Lan Na. The Southern thread is found in the Ayutthya chronicle with some references in the Chiang Mai chronicle and emphasizes the dominance of Ayutthya over Lan Na. Lan Sang and Nan play a leading role in the Northern thread, whereas Ayutthya controls events in the Southern thread. The Northern thread barely even mentions Ayutthya, whereas Lan Sang is mentioned briefly as a threat in the Southern thread. Both narrative threads largely ignore each other, but Prince Damrong clearly favors the Southern thread in the narrative he constructs. Since the Northern thread of the story is found in some form in the majority of the chronicles we will address it first.

The Northern Narrative Thread: 1595-1604

The Northern thread of the narrative is the story of Nan and Lan Sang's joint military expeditions to Chiang Mai and the minor states of Lan Na during the late 1590's and early 1600's. The Nan chronicle (Wyatt,1994) has the most extensive record of these military expeditions and provides the backbone of the narrative. Lan Sang's independence from Burmese control can be dated from the first of these expeditions in 1595/96. The Chiangmai chronicle records that in 1595/96 (957) “the king of Lan Chang came to support the governor of Nan as the king of Lan Na, but unsuccessfully; and he returned to Lan Chang” (Wyatt and Wichienkeeo, 1995, 129). In the same year, Nawratasaw, the Burmese prince who ruled Chiangmai, defeated the ruler of Nan, Chao Cetabut, at the mouth of the Ngao river near Nan. Chao Cetabut then fled to Lan Sang and Nawratasaw appointed a new Nan ruler (Wyatt, 1994, 67-68).

The chronicle sources differ on the motive of the next joint military expedition by Nan and Lan Sang. According to the Nan chronicle in 1598/99 (960) Chao Cetabut “managed to gather a force of Lao soldiers” in Lan Sang, march to Chiangmai, and attack the town (Wyatt, 1994, 68). The Nan chronicle describes the Lan Sang army as mercenaries interested only in money. Chao Chetabut's “Lao army.... only took his money and did not fight” (Wyatt, 1994, 68). Contradicting the Nan version of events, in 1599 the Lan Sang chronicle has Lan Sang ask Nan to help it rescue fleeing Laotians who had been attacked by Chiang Mai. In 1595 Lan Sang had helped Nan, so now in 1599 Nan was being asked to return the favor (Phothisane, 1996, 279-80) (see quote in section 2 of this paper). In yet another
version, the Chiang Mai chronicle records that Lan Sang unsuccessfully invaded Nan in 1595/96 (957) (Wyatt, 1994, 70, footnote 12). So we can conclude that there was some sort of alliance and joint military operation by Lan Sang and Nan around 1598/99 (960) but the exact motive that each member of the alliance had in participating in it cannot be exactly determined. In the spirit of Gesick (1995) we may just have to allow the multi-vocal voice of local history reign here. Different parties to a historical event will have different motives for rendering the historical event in different ways.

While Lan Sang and Nan were attacking Chiang Mai, the new governor of Nan appointed by Chiang Mai to replace Chao Chetabut marched to Chiang Mai to offer assistance to Chiang Mai and the Lan Sang and Nan military expedition was not able to take Chiang Mai. The Nan chronicle puts the blame squarely on the shoulders of their Lan Sang allies. In 1599/1600 (961) a nobleman “Pana Doi Noi,” probably of Chiang Mai, caught Nan people so “the Lao fled Chiangmai” presumably out of fear (Wyatt, 1994, 68).

Although Chao Cetabut was not able to take Chiangmai he was able to overcome the newly appointed governor of Nan and reestablish himself as ruler of his native Nan. In 1601/02 (963) Chiang Saen attacked Nan but failed to take it. Once again in 1602/03 (964) Chao Cetabut tried to take Chiang Mai but failed (Wyatt, 1994, 68). In 1603 (965) the Burmese ruler of Chiangmai attacked Nan. Chao Cetabut's younger brother betrayed him and opened the gates of the city. Chao Cetabut was captured, taken to Chiangmai, and executed (Wyatt, 1994, 68). Nan and Lan Sang seem to have been eliminated as as a threat since the chronicle does not mention them again.

There are inconsistencies when the Nan chronicle is compared with the Chiangmai and Lan Sang chronicles. First, the Nan chronicle does not mention the minor states of Lan Na as the Lan Sang and Chiangmai chronicles do. In 1601/02 (963) the Chiangmai chronicle records that “Lan Chang came up to take Lan Na, with the exception of Phayao, Fang, and Chiang Mai, / which they did not capture,” implying that Lan Sang took most of the minor states of Lan Na. The Lan Sang chronicle provides a long list of minor Lan Na states taken during the expedition with Nan to help the fleeing Laotians. If Chiang Mai and Nan are taken off this list because they contradict the chronicle itself, this list includes: Phrae, Lampang, Phayao, Thoeng, Muang Lawa, Chaing Saen, Chang Rai, Muang Phang, Muang Hang, but the fact that this list does contradict what is recorded in the chronicle immediately before and after it would have to subtract from its veracity. The list may have been interpolated into the chronicle without much thought to elaborate on the phrase that precedes the list: “and won all the meuang.”

Second, the subsidiary role Lan Sang takes to Nan in the campaign contradicts the Chiang Mai chronicle which doesn't even mention Nan and isn't
consistent with the Lan Sang chronicles which, as mentioned before, makes Nan's participation in the second expedition the repaying of a favor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Chronicle - Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nan asks Lan Sang to send forces to help it to conquer Chiang Mai.</td>
<td>Lan Sang, Chiang Mai - 1595/96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lan Sang and Nan unsuccessfully attack Chiang Mai.</td>
<td>Chiang Mai - 1595/96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chiang Mai attacks Lan Sang natives fleeing back to Lan Sang from Burma.</td>
<td>Chiang Mai - 1598/99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lan Sang receives requests for help from Lan Sang natives.</td>
<td>Lan Sang - 1599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lan Sang sends forces to join with Nan in an attack against Chiang Mai.</td>
<td>Lan Sang - 1599, Nan - 1598/99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The joint military expedition fails to take Chiang Mai but succeeds in taking many of the minor Lan Na states.</td>
<td>Lan Sang, Chiangmai - 1601/02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lan Sang is also presumably able to round up Lan Sang natives from all over Lan Sang.</td>
<td>Marini</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Southern Narrative Thread: 1595-1604

The Southern thread of the narrative is the story of a ritual act of submission by Northern Tai states to the king of Ayutthya. The Ayutthya chronicle devotes a long and detailed episode to these events. Great emphasis is placed on the ceremonial act of submission and the state of peace and order among states large and small that follows from it. From the Buddhist scriptures there is the story of the Cakravartin monarch who conquers far flung states to establish a Buddhist regime of peace and order. The influence of this story can be felt throughout the episode. As (Chutintarond, 1990) describes it:

After each triumph, the king claiming to be a cakravartin usually imposed an official oath upon the defeated rulers in order to control their loyalty..... the ceremony of taking an oath, sometimes referred to as the ‘Drinking of the Water of Allegiance’....

SBBR 3.1 (SPRING 2005): 41-68
was basically arranged for all royal members and officials of rank and their wives; however, it was also organized for tributary rulers who owed loyalty to the Siamese court. (Sunait Chutintarond, 1990, 280, second italics are my italics)

According to Prince Damrong when Nawrat asaw the Burmese king of Chiangmai learns of the impending invasion of Lan Sang and Nan in 1595/96 that lies at the beginning the Northern thread of history he decides to seek protection from Ayutthya. (Prince Damrong, Our Wars, 181) The Ayutthyan king Naresuan sends prince Surasi (also known as Chaophraya Tenasserim) from Ayutthya to Chiang Mai. Surasi is said to have “restrained the inhabitants of Lan Chang” and then marched on to Chiang Rai and Chiang Saen to impose order there (Cushman, 2000, 178).

Although the Ayutthya chronicle does not elaborate on the reasons why this expedition was sent, Prince Damrong elaborates at great length. He holds that at an earlier date the Burmese king had requested that tributary rulers like Nawratasaw in Chiang Mai send members of their family to the Burmese capital to be held as hostages (Prince Damrong, Our Wars, 180). The Burmese chronicle is the source for this statement (UKIII:78).

Prince Damrong interpreted this statement to include all tributary states including Chiangmai even though it is not explicitly included in the Burmese chronicle. By not supplying hostages from his family as requested by the Burmese king, Nawratasaw effectively entered a state of rebellion. Moreover, good relations with the Burmese king would not have meant much anyway because “the Burmese had waged many wars against Siamese and suffered defeats, whereby the power of the Burmese was on the wane, almost exhausted, and not like formerly.” Finally, because he was a Burmese ruler of an ethnically Tai state Prince Damrong held that Nawratasaw probably felt his rule to be especially weak:

[Nawratasaw] was aware that the Burmese were governing the Siamese who were of a different race and of a different language, and occupied their towns merely because they were afraid of the Burmese... If an army from Ayut'ia or an army from the kingdom of Sri Satatanahanhat [Lan Sang] were to come up and attack Chiangmai, it was feared that the people would join the enemy or would not have the heart to fight (Prince Damrong, Our Wars, 181)

So Nawratasaw believed that it was “impossible to remain alone” and since he faced a threat from both Lan Sang and Ayutthya he chose the larger of the two sending “an embassy with a letter and presents” submitting and asking to become a subject of Ayutthya and requesting that Ayutthya send military forces to protect him against the threat that Lan Sang posed. (Prince Damrong, Our Wars, 181) According to the Chiangmai chronicle in 1598/99 (960) “the people of the South
attacked Chiangmai” meaning Ayutthya attacked Chiang Mai. This is a likely reference to Prince Surasi’s expedition to Lan Na.

Phra Ram Decho, an inhabitant of Chiangmai who had entered into the service of the Ayutthya king Naresuan was appointed by Surasi to organize the people of Chiang Rai and Chiang Saen and bring them into submission to Chiang Mai. Ram Decho was not only able to organize the inhabitants of Chiang Rai and Chiang Saen, he also gained the allegiance of all the minor states of Lan Na tributary to Chiang Mai as well. As the minor states and manpower that Ram Decho controlled grew, Ram Decho replaced Lan Sang as a threat to Nawratasaw’s rule in Chiangmai. Because of this threat, when Ayutthya requested troops to help in their campaign against Pegu and Toungoo in Burma Nawratasaw sent his son Tulong to fight with Naresuan instead of going himself.

The central episode of the Ayutthya chronicle in Lan Na during the 1590’s occurs several years later when Naresuan retreats from the siege of Toungoo 1600/01 (962). Naresuan sends his son Ekathotsarot to Chiangmai to put things in order there. Encamping near Chiang Mai, Ekathotsarot sent a message to Ram Decho ordering him to call together all the lords of the minor states of Lan Na and to appoint crown officials to govern them.

When he heard of Ekathotsarot’s arrival, Nawratasaw marched to Chiang Rai to attack and take it but as Nawratasaw marched towards Chiang Rai, the ruler of Fang having pledged to help Nawratasaw in Chiang Rai marched to Chiang Mai and “rounded up and carried off to the municipality of Fang all the retainers, soldiers, and small merchants and horses for sale who had come to sell in the Municipality of Chiang Mai.” When Nawratasaw arrived back in Chiang Mai and found out what had happened he requested that Ekathotsarot attack and take Fang as punishment, Ekathotsarot replied that he had already instructed Fang to come and submit to him and if that didn't work only then would he send an expedition to Fang. When requested, both the rulers of Fang and Nan promptly sent representatives with tribute to Ekathotsarot. They respondd that they would come themselves and submit shortly. Ekathotsarot in turn informed Nawratasaw of their submission. Because rice was very expensive where Ekathotsarot was encamped the prince's advisors suggested he move his headquarters to Thoeng which was located next to a river.

All the lords of Nan and Fang, including Ram Decho who ruled over Chiang Rai and Chiang Saen came and submitted to Ekathotsarot. Even lesser states came including Lawa, Chariang, Chiang Khong, Phayao, Phayak, and Muang Yong. Ekathotsarot sent a messenger to inform Nawratasaw that all these lesser states were now in submission. Nawratasaw was very pleased, according to the Ayutthya chronicle, because he would not have been able to resist the combined strength of all these minor states. (183) In contrast, the chronicle says
that Ekathosarot was safe even he was hardly protected by troops because the lords of all the minor states in Lan Na held Ayutthya's power in awe.

Nawratasaw then sent representatives including his son Tulong to submit to Ekathotsarot. Nawratasaw's queen passed away and Nawratasaw sent a messenger to call his son Tulong back. There was an outbreak of small pox in Chiang Mai and rice became very expensive, so Ekathotsarot had rice sent up from Ayutthya to feed the people of Chiangmai. An Ayutthya official who had been sent up to govern Fang was ambushed by local inhabitants, so Ekathotsarot sent Ram Decho and the ruler of Lampang to Fang to govern it.

Finally, Ekathotsarot advanced to Lamphun together with the rulers of all the minor states of Lan Na so they could participate in a ceremony of submission and demonstrate to Nawratasaw that a state of peace had been established and that he no longer had anything to fear. He then called Ram Decho and Nawratasaw to his presence to submit to him. Nawratasaw travelling to Lamphun, but when he learned of the many soldiers gathered there he became suspicious and decided it would be wiser not to go. Ram Decho making his way from Fang to Lamphun after a royal summons had been issued was ambushed by Tai Yai cavalry sent by Nawratasaw. Ram Decho returned to Fang.

In anger the king's advisors advised him to abandon Nawratasaw and leave him to his own devices against Lan Sang and the minor states of Lan Na, but the king thought this would not be wise and sent someone to talk to Nawratasaw instead. Nawratasaw realizing his error once again proceeded to Lamphun with an appropriate amount of forces to protect himself, begged forgiveness from the Ayutthya king, and submitted to him. The king then gathered all the rulers of minor states in Lan Na together and upbraided them, instructing them that Nawratasaw was a legitimate king and that rebelling in this fashion was wrong.

In the Ayutthya chronicle Ekathosarot's visit to Lan Na and Lan Na's submission appear to have taken place a little bit after 1600/01 (962). Peace does not seem to have lasted for long though. In 1601/02 (963) according to the Chiang Mai chronicle Ram Decho fled from Chiang Saen and Lan Sang took all the minor states of Lan Na with the exception of Phayao, Fang, and Chiang Mai. Ram Decho's power ends at this point and he is never heard of again. Nawratasaw and his heirs remain in power in Chiangmai as tributary lords of Ayutthya and then Burma again well into the next century.

The sheer bulk of text devoted to these ritual acts of submission is notable. They take up a full ten and a half pages, where one or two sentences are the norm for describing events in chronicle narrative. The amount of textual space devoted to these events seems to slow time (or historical narrative time) down. Normally administering the oath of allegiance would not take very long, but the unwillingness of Nawratasaw to actually come into the physical presence of the Ayutthyan prince Ekathotsarot and perform the oath of allegiance draws the
narrative out. (Gesick, 1994, 17) talks of ‘poetic’ elements in history, historical voices, sensibilities, or attitudes towards history that have been suppressed, "notions of time, of the past, of time passing, and of one's relation to, or one's society's relation to, or the world's relation to the passage of time." This chronicle episode reveals an attitude towards royal power and how it is established and perpetuated in history. The chronicle effectively slows itself down as the ritual act of submission approaches, effectively delaying it to fully contemplate and reflect on the consequences of the act of submission. One thing that almost gets lost in the ritual detail while reading is the fact that Ayutthya's king Naresuan is actually never personally present during these ceremonies. The text often reads as though he is because of the many ornamental royal epithets used to refer to his brother Prince Ekathotsarot sent by King Naresuan to act in his stead.

The story of Lan Na's submission to the Ayutthyan prince is really a self-contained narrative that has few connections to the chronicle world outside of it. Nawratasaw was in danger from the collective power of Lan Sang and minor Lan Na states especially Chiang Saen under Ram Decho, Fang, and also Nan. In the narrative Ayutthya establishes political order in Lan Na, but apparently not for long since Lan Sang promptly invades and challenges Chiangmai's sovereignty over Lan Na shortly after the Ayutthya prince leaves. When Ayutthyan forces under the command of Naresuan march through Chiang Mai heading for the Shan states in 1604 prince Ekathotsarot was to proceed via Fang to Burma whereas Naresuan was to proceed via Muang Hang. When Naresuan got sick and died in Muang Hang, the expedition returned to the capital. This spelled the end of far-flung military expeditions by Ayutthya, although the evidence suggests that Ayutthya maintained control over Chiang Mai until a resurgent Burma started to retake the area in 1615. Burmese control over the area was once again complete by the mid 1620s.

De Marini's 17th Century Narrative: An Oral History of Lan Sang Under Burmese Rule?

De Marini's A New and Interesting Description of the Lao Kingdom (1642-1648) (Marini, 1998) includes a short highly stylized history of Lan Sang under Burmese rule. The work was first published in 1663 even before the most important primary source for the flight incident, the Burmese Chronicle, was compiled. U Kala compiled the Mahayazawingyi version of the Burmese chronicle in 1714 (U Kala, Preface). de Marini's book was the first book on Laos published in Europe and for two centuries it was the most descriptive book on Laos available in a European language. Only Henri Mouhot's Voyage d'exploration en Indochine, published in 1864, would surpass it. (de Marini, vii, xviii; Mouhot; 1864) About one hundred years after its initial publication de Marini's book was translated into
English and included in an encyclopedia of the English Enlightenment published in 1759: *The Modern Part of a Universal History* (O’ Donovan, 2002, 2002b). This “universal history” documented the “historical interaction between Europe and mainland Southeast Asia” by synthesizing “a variety of earlier European travelogues and reports previously available only in French, Italian, and Portuguese” (O’ Donovan, 2002a, 151).

De Marini’s history is most likely an oral history (O’ Donovan, 2002a), a description of events during Burmese rule the way the late 17th century court of Lan Sang imagined them looking back on them a half century afterwards. De Marini even refers to his history as “this interpretation of history on their [Lan Sang’s] part.” The history must have been related to the Jesuit priest Leria during his six year residence at the court of Lan Sang (de Marini, 1998, 26). The history does not include many facts and mostly consists of very general descriptions of events with a lot of commentary in what would nowadays be considered a very nationalistic vein, but as Vansina, an expert in oral histories, points out oral traditions that record rebellion from a state of repressive rule are actually quite common:

...some kinds of testimony may be of more direct service to community interests than others. A *tradition of rebellion*, for example, is important to the community as a whole, for it provides its members with concrete proof that they are no longer dependent upon another community to which they used to pay tribute in the distant past. Those who preserve a tradition of this kind often do so by order of the community. Most group testimonies are official testimonies that reflect the basic interests of the society concerned. (Vansina, 1965, 78, my italics)

The plots of oral histories often undergo considerable change and embellishment over time transforming them into folktales in which fiction overwhelms fact. ‘Anomalies and distortions’ are quite common in oral histories. Discussing historical oral traditions similar to de Marini Vansina notes that “the purpose of these poems is to extol the kings, therefore they distort the events of the past in the sense that they *exaggerate the valorous deeds of the kings, and pass over their defeats in silence*” (Vansina, 1965, 76-77). Vansina holds that the value of oral history lies just as much in the distortions as in the veracities:

This example underlines how important it is that the historian should not regard himself as a detective who is out to find the right answer from a large number of false clues, but simply as someone who is trying to disentangle which aspects of reality relate to the various elements of which a testimony is composed; and the distortions a testimony contains can be just as revealing about past situations and events as an undistorted account. (Vansina, 1965, 77)

De Marini’s narrative creates one grand plot for 76 years of Lao history (1571-1647) from the subjugation of Lan Sang by the Burmese through liberation,
autonomy, and independence, and finally to a successful defense against a Burmese attempt to re-impose control. The flight incident is the climax at the center of the narrative, a turning point in Lao history that leads to the liberation of the kingdom of Lan Sang and the Lao people from Burmese tyranny.

De Marini’s narrative begins by relating how Laotians became war captives in Burma during the reign of king Bayinnaung (r. 1551-1581). After conquering Pegu and Siam, the “King of Ava” conquered Laos whose inhabitants “he removed and forced to go to Pegu to populate that country” (de Marini, 1988, 26). These Lao war captives escaped from their captors in a “well-led conspiracy:”

...the Laotians, some years later, not satisfied by that government and unhappy of being in exile, all with the same feelings and in great numbers formed among them a secret conspiracy which indeed had the success they envisaged. To be successful, they all agreed to rise up on a given day and, with sword in hand, they would force the Peguans into one place and kill them all. (de Marini, 1998, 26)

The rebellion was so powerful that it threatened to overthrow the Burmese state:

There is no doubt that, if the love for their fatherland and the impatience to return home had not extinguished the desire to reign in them, they could have become masters of the kingdom [of Pegu] and keep it as their possession. (de Marini, 1998, 26-27)

Although the notion that Laotians single-handedly instigated a revolt that threatened to topple the Burmese state may be far-fetched, the notion that Lao war captives participated in such a rebellion is perfectly reasonable and there are several precedents for it. The Mon rebellion that overthrew the Burmese king Tabinshweiti (r. 1531-1550) controlled the Mon area in lower Burma for several years before the Burmese king Bayinnaung reasserted control. The Mons often allied themselves with other ethnic groups in these rebellions. Both Mons and Shans participated in an uprising at the Burmese capital in 1565 while Bayinnaung was away on an expedition to Chiangmai (U Than Tun, 1995, 97-99). There were several Mon rebellions around the Burmese capital in the early 1590's before the flight of the Laotians (UKIII:76-78). In the Moulmein rebellion of this period the indigenous Mons even entered into an alliance with another state, Ayutthaya, giving them their first door into the region. According to de Marini, instead of participating further in the rebellions the Laotians chose to return to their homeland and overthrow its Burmese overlords:

....after such a hard task and such a wondrous success, they returned with their arms to their first Lao kingdom, where the Peguans who commanded there with insolence were entirely routed and they lost, together with their lives, the kingdom they had usurped... Thus the great city of Langione was repopulated by Laotians. Its natural
inhabitants, who had come down from the surrounding mountains and forests which had served as a retreat during the persecution, re-established the kingdom in her first splendor and they recognized their legitimate King again. (Marini, 1998, p. 27)

De Marini’s narrative ends as follows:

The King of Ava whom Pegu still considers today as her sovereign, surprised by all this news, was even more taken aback by it, as he was not in a position to show his resentment and revenge himself. Thus, he hid his feelings to divert the attention of the Laotians and to surprise them when they least expected it. He pretended to be friendly and after many years he did not mind the affront which he had suffered at their hands but he kept on thinking of the rights that he purported to have acquired over his kingdom. He even testified that he was very satisfied with a simple recognition on their part. Nevertheless, surreptitiously he was preparing for war on a grand scale—a war plan which his death, which came unexpectedly in 1647, entirely ruined and buried with him (Marini, pp 26-7).

Thus, after winning the kingdom of Lan Sang back from its Burmese overlords, de Marini’s chronicle continues in the same vein with its plot. The Burmese king is angry that he has been caught by surprise and tricked by the Laotians. He waits for several years to launch a major attack against Lan Sang. When he finally does in about 1647 the Laotians intercept the military expedition in advance and completely destroy it. By the 1620’s Burma had permanently won back most of the Tai states king Bayinnaung had conquered with the exception of Ayutthya and Lan Sang both of which remained independent. (Lieberman, 1984, 55) Unlike Leria’s oral history there is no record of a Burmese expedition to Lan Sang around 1647.

De Marini’s history confounds many independent events in its narrative, The return of the exiled prince from Burma, the flight of Laotians from Burma back to Laos, and the independence of Lan Sang from the Burmese, are all mixed together and combined into one grand narrative with plot overwhelming historical detail. The Lan Sang chronicle clearly shows that these were separate phenomenon. None of the chronicle primary sources mention a return to or liberation of Lan Sang by Laotian war captives, but the Lan Sang chronicle does describe the return to Laos by an heir to the Lao throne held in Burmese exile. In 1591 a Lao prince, a legitimate heir to the Lao throne, was allowed to return to Laos after living in exile at the Burmese capital for 17 years since 1574 (Phothisane, 1996, 276). The Lan Sang chronicle says that an embassy was sent to the Burmese king with all the monks of Lan Sang to request the return of the prince. Prince Noh Muang was the son of King Setthathirat (r. 1548-1571), the king of both Lan Sang and Chiangmai at their apogee of power before the Burmese started their program of conquest in the region in 1557. After Prince No Muang ascended the throne Vientienne was once again made the capital of Lan Sang and during his reign Lan Sang is said to have regained a measure of autonomy and independence from its Burmese
overlord. King Noh Meuang had a very brief reign and died in 1596 at age 26, but before he died he appointed a very young successor Vorawongsasa to the throne with his father acting as regent. The father and son travelled together to the Burmese capital to get permission for the son to become king, but the king of Burma said that “because Phra Voravongsa was too young, he could not protect the boundary [of Meuang Lan Xang]. So his father had to preserve [the throne] for his son” (Phothisane, 1996, 279).

In 1596, almost at the same time as Vorawongsasa becomes king, Lan Sang and Nan take military action against Chiang Mai, a tributary state of Burma, ruled by a Burmese prince, and effectively enter into a state of rebellion, clearly asserting their independence. The broader context of events in mainland South East Asia during this period is important here. The kingdom of Burma entered a period of dynastic decline that coincided roughly with the beginning of king Noh Meuang's reign and as a result Lan Sang regained a measure of autonomy. As Burma entered into decline all the states in mainland Southeast Asia that had been tributary to it regained their autonomy. The unilateral relations that had previously bound them to their Burmese overlord were replaced by the same multilateral relations based on the relative power of smaller Tai states that had existed before Burmese conquest and control in 1557. The slow movement towards larger political groupings which were to form the basis of later nation-states was temporarily in obeyance (Tarling, 1999, 58). Eventually the kingdom of Burma entered into a period of dynastic expansion but this re-expansion fell short of Lan Sang and Ayutthya. de Marini’s oral history skips over all these details and is written as if there was only king of Lan Sang and one king of Burma during all the events that some to pass.

War Captives, Flight, and the Socio-Political Background of the Era

The interpretation of a general trend of flight rather than a specific instance of flight is supported by the recent work of historians working on early modern mainland South East Asian history. Lieberman's work on early modern Burmese history and Grabowsky's work on Northern Tai history both support this interpretation. Lieberman in his study of Burmese administrative cycles (Lieberman, 1984) shows that the flight was an instance of a more general phenomenon: the extensive realignment of loyalties to states and powerful individuals during a period of dynastic decline and disorder. As Lieberman describes it, a string of military defeats was the prelude to the disintegration of the unified Burmese state. At the death of king Bayinnaung in 1581 Burma stood at its apogee. Shortly afterwards in 1584, Ayutthya invaded lower Burma and was forced to withdraw. The tide had already turned. During the next five years Burma launched five punitive expeditions against Ayutthya, none of which were
successful and all of which depleted royal manpower. In 1593 the Burmese crown prince died in battle and the expedition to Ayutthya ended in defeat. After this:

...the king sought to prepare fresh invasions, but men of arms-bearing age fled to the jungle or to neighboring provinces. Soon the country districts were thick with vagabonds. Other youths entered the Buddhist monkhood (sangha) to avoid royal demands...yet others mortgaged themselves as debt-slaves to important princes and officials who could shield them from royal exactions. (Lieberman, 1984, 41)

Attempts were made to stem the flow of manpower out of royal service by taking censuses and branding and tattooing people for identification purposes. Those found “wandering the roads were forcibly returned to their native villages, and military deserters were executed,” but the flow of manpower from the capital “up the Sittang and Irrawaddy valleys and into Siam and Arakan continued unabated (Lieberman, 1984, 42).”

Reading directly from the Burmese chronicle and paraphrasing what is said there, in 1593 the Burmese put down a Mon revolt in Mawbi near modern day Yangon. Many of the Mons there fled to different places within Burma including Rakhine state, Prome, and Toungoo. Those who fled and reached their destination were safe from harm, but the fate was quite different for the many Mons who remained in the Mon area. Many of them travelled to the capital at Hanthawaddy [Pegu] and were promptly taken prisoner and executed. During those days it became common to catch Mons and kill them. As a result Mons, afraid of being caught and killed, fled to even more remote destinations like Chiangmai, Ayutthya, and Rakhine state (UKIII:76). The next section of the Burmese chronicle relates how famine spread and how the prince who had gathered from 2000 to 3000 servicemen under him attempted to control the supply of rice. His father the king was angry at him for doing this and to right the wrongs of his son, he freed many servicemen who had been relocated from Northern Burma. (UKIII:77). These freed servicemen most likely returned to the North adding to the exodus that was already in motion as the Burmese state fell apart.

There is evidence that foreign war captives who were enrolled in the service of the Burmese king were quickly integrated into the Burmese social structure. The Burmese word used to describe the fleeing Lao war captives is amhu-dan which means “serviceman,” a person in the service of the king. In fact, war captives were traditionally taken to augment exactly this group. As Lieberman relates during the early 17th century military victories were followed by:

...deporting from lower Burma and the Tai highlands large numbers of prisoners whom they formed into platoons (asus), usually of fifty or one hundred men. Along with their wives and children, these men commonly inhabited the same village. ...The great majority of the deportees were settled within eighty or ninety miles of the
capital, often on irrigated land capable of supporting a relatively dense population. (Lieberman, 1984, 97)

Although the Laotians who fled in 1596 were deported from their country a lot earlier, probably between 1565 and 1571 during the campaigns of Bayinnaung in Lan Sang, there is no reason to believe their circumstances were a lot different than what these 17th century deportees faced once they arrived in Burma. The villages they were settled in most likely retained the foreign identity of the war captives, maintaining the customs and language of origin and thus also a measure of autonomy. In general, the more culturally similar war captives were to their captor, the quicker they were assimilated. If they were culturally similar then within a generation or two they would share “the language, lifestyle, and religion of the dominant population” (Reid, 1999, 193).

The actual event of being taken captive and participating in a forced march to a foreign land may have been the most traumatic part of the experience of being taken as a war captive. There is a vivid description of a deportation of Laotians to Central Thailand by a British official in Chiang Mai in 1876 during the Thai subjugation of Laos:

The captives were hurried mercilessly along, many weighted by burdens strapped to their backs, the men, who had no wives or children with them and were therefore capable of attempting escape, were tied together by a rope pursed through a sort of wooden collar. Those men who had their families with them were allowed the free use of their limbs. Great numbers died from sickness, starvation and exhaustion on the road. The sick when they became too weak to struggle on, were left behind. If a house happened to be near, the sick man or woman was left with the people in the house. If no house was at hand which have been oftener the case in the wild country they were traversing, the sufferer was flung down to die miserably in the jungle. Any of his or her companions attempting to assist the poor creatures were driven on with blows.... Fever and dysentery were still at work among them and many more will probably die. Already, I was told, more than half of the original 5,700 so treacherously seized are dead.” (Gould, E.B., Letter to Knox, 4.8.1876, Foreign Office (London), Vol. 69 #64, quoted in Grabowsky, 1993, 18)

War captives settled in villages around the capital very likely were no worse off than local Burmese inhabitants of "amhu-dan" class, in service to the Burmese king. Anthony Reid even coins a term "state slavery" to describe the typically onerous burden of service to the king in Burma, but then points out that it really isn't slavery at all, since a slave can be bought and sold: "If the state has an effective monopoly over bonded labour, the bondsmen cannot be considered property in the same sense." (Reid, slave, 201) Reid also points out that in Burma and nearby countries the royal corvee was usually worse than private bondage or slavery per se:
The extremely heavy burden of royal corvee in Burma, Siam and (at times) Cambodia put these states at one extreme of the Southeast Asian spectrum. For the ordinary men in these societies, there were really only three alternatives: bondage to the king through the corvee system, bondage to a monastery or religious foundation, and "private" bondage or slavery to a prominent or wealthy man. Of these three, bondage to the king was likely to be the most onerous, entailing one half of a man's labour in Siam. It is easy to see why the Siamese sold themselves cheerfully into slavery, particularly in times of hardship. (Reid, 1999, 200).

During times of famine the natural place to flee for a group of foreign servicemen in an alien land would be back to their native land, whereas Burmese servicemen would naturally flee to other areas within Burma most likely to the place where they were born and realign themselves with a state or individual with whom they shared a common linguistic and cultural heritage.

There is yet another sense in which the incident of fleeing Laotians is unexceptional. The flight of war captives back to their native state occurred within the orbit of Tai states themselves in periods both before and after the period of Burmese domination we've been looking at. Volker Grabowsky has devoted a whole long paper of almost monograph size “Forced Resettlement Campaigns in Northern Thailand During the Early Bangkok Period” (Grabowsky, 1993) to the taking of war captives in Northern Thailand during the early Bangkok period of Thai history from the late 18th century to the early 19th century. Before the Burmese conquered the Northern Tai states in 1557 and instituted a sort of Pax Birmanica over the region during most of the 17th century, the Northern Tai states existed in a state of flux and intermittent warfare much like the Burmese heartland during the period of disorder in the 1590's. Internecine warfare between the Northern Tai states as well as Ayutthya, the taking of war captives, and the occasional flight of war captives back to their native state within the Northern Tai states were all common. Grabowsky's extensive work on Lan Na history before the Burmese era begins in 1557 addresses the socio-political history of the region as well as traditional narrative political history. He devotes a whole section of his work to “Forced Resettlement During the Mangrai Dynasty” (Grabowsky, 2004, 58). He describes the movement of population southwards into Lan Na from the Shan states in the early 16th century and then makes the observation that:

...the influx of Shan was only partially based on voluntary migration, because at the beginning of February 1520, a part of the Shan, who came to Lan Na, returned to their homes on the Salween with the soldiers of the [Chiangmai] king in pursuit. (Grabowsky, 2004, 59).

Paraphrasing the Chiangmai chronicle, in 1517 23,220 Shans were relocated from the Shan states into Lan Na territory. Three years later in 1520 the Shans fled back
to their native states under the leadership of two local Shan rulers. Lan Na forces pursued them and fought with them, some of the Shans were killed, but most of them were able to cross the Salween river and return to their native lands. (Wyatt and Wichienkeeo, 1995, 111)

Certain conclusions can be drawn from this evidence. First, flight to destinations both inside and outside of Burma to places as far away as Ayutthya and Chiangmai were the norm rather than the exception during the period of dynastic decline and disorder of the 1590's. Second, summary execution was a common response when someone's identity and protector were not adequate or could not be determined. Third, native Mons suffered just as much or more than any group of foreign war captives. Fourth, as the Burmese historian U Than Tun has pointed out, famine is often a precipitating factor in rebellions and flight (U Than Tun, 1995, 105). Fifth, war captives are often well-integrated into the receiving society with only a traumatic event such as famine or the fall of a dynasty triggering flight back to a more familiar and safer cultural and linguistic environment by the war captives. Sixth, war captives were not only taken from the region of Tai states back to Burma by the Burmese. War captives were also taken from one Tai state to another within the Tai region and flight back to the home state of captives also occurred within the Tai region. These findings throw into question some of the common assumptions that other historians have made in interpreting and portraying the flight of the Lao war captives as exceptional.

**Conclusion**

Flight was very common during the 1590s in mainland Southeast Asia. It was part of a much larger trend towards the realignment of loyalties between patrons and clients at both the level of individuals and states during periods of dynastic decline and disorder. This broader context for the flight of Lao war captives in 1596 from Burma back to their homeland can only be derived from the Burmese chronicle because the kingdom of Burma held political control over the Tai states to its east for much of the late 16th century. Despite sometimes being portrayed as an exceptional act of human agency, the flight of Laotians back to their homeland in 1596 was actually fairly typical for its age.

The flight of the Laotians has been portrayed in historical classics for hundreds of years first with de Marini's history in the 17th century and then with Prince Damrong's “Thai Fought Burma” in the early 20th century. Both narratives were heavily influenced by the ideologies of the age, but this influence does not invalidate these classics. Hayden White claims that “history progresses by the production of classics” (White, 2001, 228) and that:
...a great historical classic cannot be disconfirmed or nullified either by the discovery of some new datum that might call a specific explanation of some element of the whole account into question or by the generation of new methods of analysis which permit us to deal with questions that earlier historians might not have taken under consideration. And it is precisely because great historical classics, such as works by Gibbon, Michelet, Thucydides, Mommsen, Ranke, Burckhardt, Bancroft, and so on, cannot be definitely disconfirmed that we must look to the specifically literary aspects of their work as crucial, and not merely subsidiary, elements in their historiographical technique. (White, 2001a, 234)

Insofar as their works are part of the intellectual history of the age they were written in, de Marini's and Prince Damrong's classics “cannot be disconfirmed or nullified” by new data or new methods. Both these classics have played important roles in the discourse community of indigenous Tai history (of the nation states Thailand and Laos) as well as what Said has termed ‘Orientalism’ or Orientalist history, the intellectual history of westerners studying and describing Asia and the ways they have portrayed historical events. Both classics are themselves valid subjects of historical study that require a thorough investigation into the circumstances and ideas used in their production and dissemination. The literary aspects of these works, the emplotment and figuration of important political events, second order or meta-history, also warrant investigation.

This is not a new dimension of historical analysis in Burmese history. In the discipline of Burmese history during the colonial era two major figures Hall and Harvey both made interpretations of the 17th century movement of the Burmese capital that at the time they were written had great immediate ideological relevance to the discourse community of British colonialism and are also instances of this second order history of ideas, Orientalist intellectual history. (Lieberman, 1993, 214-215)

The search for ideological influences in historical sources is consistent with and can take place alongside a more traditional and scientific search for “what actually happened” in the spirit of Ranke. This two-pronged approach could be especially fruitful in analyzing the early modern chronicle history of mainland South East Asia, an area that has traditionally been plagued by linguistic differences, national interest, and artificial divisions created by modern nation states, all problems that the discipline of European history has been able to overcome with time.
Appendix 1

Table 2: Composite timeline combining all the analyses

Below is a composite timeline that includes all the major events in the 1590s that bear on the flight of the Laotians:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Chronicle - Year (Page)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>After rebellion in Mawbi and famine, repressive measures are taken to control manpower and many flee to remote places within Burma, Rakhine, Chiang Mai, and Ayutthya.</td>
<td>Burmese - 1593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nan asks Lan Sang to send forces to help it to conquer Chiang Mai.</td>
<td>Lan Sang, Chiang Mai - 1595/96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lan Sang and Nan unsuccessfully attack Chiang Mai.</td>
<td>Chiang Mai - 1595/96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>There was a famine in the capital city and people were starving there.</td>
<td>Burmese - 1596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Over a thousand Lao war captives attempted to flee from the capital.</td>
<td>Burmese - 1596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Burmese king sent soldiers after the captives.</td>
<td>Burmese - 1596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The captives that were caught were executed.</td>
<td>Burmese - 1596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fleeing Laotians passed through Ayutthya territory and Ayutthya comander Khun Ca Muang engaged them in battle near Takhian Duan.</td>
<td>Ayutthya - 1596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ayutthya (the South) attacks Chiang Mai.</td>
<td>Chiangmai - 1598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Burmese king of Chiang Mai under threat from Lan Sang and minor states of Lan Na seeks help from</td>
<td>Ayutthya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table: The Flight of Lao War Captives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location/Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ayutthya which sends Surasi and Ram Decho to help.</td>
<td>Chiangmai - 1598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleeing Laotians passed through Chiangmai territory on their way to Lan Sang.</td>
<td>Chiang Mai - 1598/99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiang Mai attacks Lan Sang natives fleeing back to Lan Sang from Burma.</td>
<td>Lan Sang - 1599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lan Sang receives requests for help from Lan Sang natives.</td>
<td>Lan Sang - 1599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laotians fleeing from the Burmese capital pass through Chiangmai territory and some are taken captive by the Burmese ruler of Chiangmai.</td>
<td>Chiangmai - 1599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fleeing Laotians request help from Lan Sang.</td>
<td>Lan Sang - 1599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to this request for help, Lan Sang embarks on a military campaign with Nan to take all the minor states of Lan Na as well as Chiangmai. They take the minor states, but when food supplies run short they fail to take Chiangmai.</td>
<td>Lan Sang - 1599, Nan - 1598/99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lan Sang is presumably able to round up Lan Sang natives from all over Lan Sang.</td>
<td>Marini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Naresuan retreats from Toungoo in Burma he sends his brother Ekathotsarot to help Nawratasaw in Chiangmai who is threatened by Lan Sang and minor states of Lan Na under Ram Decho.</td>
<td>Ayutthya - 1600/1599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lan Sang and Nan succeed in taking minor Lan Na states but fail to take Chiang Mai.</td>
<td>Lan Sang, Chiangmai - 1601/02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma takes Mone and Hsenwi in the Shan states which Ayutthya considers tributary to it, so Naresuan leads an expedition against the Burmese.</td>
<td>Ayutthya - 1604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naresuan passes through Chiang Mai on his way to</td>
<td>Ayutthya -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SBBR 3.1 (SPRING 2005): 41-68*
Burma via the Shan States but passes away shortly afterwards in the Shan States. 1605
REFERENCES

Note on Burmese Chronicle Citations:

U Kala's Mahayazawingyi consists of three volumes each of which is organized into short sections ranging from a half a page to two pages in length. The sections are so short that they are the ideal unit of reference, so references to the Burmese chronicle will run as follows: “UKIII:34” which means: “U Kala - Volume Three - Section 34.”


Translator’s note:

This travelogue was published in Wachirayan, a semi-official journal whose contributors included King Chulalongkorn, his brothers and other senior Thai officials. The author of this work, Chao Fa Naritsara Nuwattiwong (Prince Naris), was a younger brother (aged 26) of King Chulalongkorn. He was the Director of Public Works in the Thai government and an officer in the Thai army. In November 1888, he set out on an official tour of Burma and went as far inland as Mandalay. Less than three years earlier, when King Thibaw was still on his throne, no Thai official could have imagined such a journey. Indeed, the author vividly describes the prevailing Thai view of the Burmese government as one of abhorrence and a lingering desire for revenge, in retaliation for the Burmese invasions of the eighteenth century.

For the amusement and edification of readers of Wachirayan, who were the élite of Bangkok in his day, he began to write an account of his journey. This article takes the reader to Rangoon and then up the Irrawaddy as far as Min-hla. Prince Naris planned to continue the narrative of his river journey from Min-hla to Mandalay and back, adding an account of recent political events leading up to the British annexation of upper Burma. After completing this first article, however, he apparently abandoned the project, and the full account of his journey never materialised. He may, however, have written an official but confidential military and political report when he returned to Bangkok, and that report may be in the archives of the Ministry of Defence.

This article was reprinted, together with four similar travelogues, in a volume entitled Doi san rüa me pai yurop khong krom phraya damrong thiao muiang phama phra khiao khong krom phraya nari pai muiang toeki khong krom phraya damrong thiao india khong krom phra nakhon sawan [A Voyage by Mailboat to Europe, by Prince Damrong; A Journey through Burma and a Journey to the Sacred Tooth Shrine, by Prince Naris; A Trip to Turkey, by Prince Damrong; and a Journey to India, by Prince Paribatra] (Khurusapha Press, Bangkok, 1961).

1. I have not consulted the original publication in Wachirayan and compared it with the reprinted version. This article was written between the author’s late-1888 journey to Burma and the opening of the Rangoon-Mandalay railway line (see paragraph 27). K.B.
Even though incomplete, it may be of some value to historians. It reflects the attitudes, prejudices and admitted ignorance of the Thai élite vis-à-vis the Burmese at the end of the Burmese monarchy. It may also contain some minor factual observations useful to historical research.

K. B.

A JOURNEY THROUGH BURMA [IN 1888]

H.R.H. Prince Naritsara Nuwattiwong
Translated by Kennon Breazeale

1 What is the landscape of Burma like? What all goes on there? What kinds of activities do the people of this national group engage in? Each and every one of my readers, if I correctly divine your minds, must want to know about the landscape of Burma, all that goes on there and the activities of the people in that country, because the Burmese are a large nation, and their homeland is contiguous with that of the Thai. The two peoples really ought to treat each other as friends and be supportive of each other—which would be greatly beneficial to both. But they have not acted in that way. To the contrary, they have been divided as enemies and have inflicted harm on each other in a variety of ways. These facts are recorded in many old writings, such as our royal annals.

2 The reason for the great abhorrence and desire for revenge that the Thai tended to feel towards the Burmese in general is that the Burmese attacked and captured Ayutthaya and caused widespread disorder throughout our homeland. Since an inborn passionate nature resides within each person, the Thai were of one mind in wanting to pay the Burmese back. But as it happened, the Thai found no opportunity to fulfil this wish and thus could not rid themselves of this abhorrence and desire for revenge. Subsequently, even the people who were born at a later time detested the Burmese, even though they themselves were never thrown into disorder because of what the Burmese did and even though they had no knowledge of what the Burmese looked like or how they acted. They did know what the Burmese had done to the Thai who were our forebears and fellow nationals, because the literate ones all read about the past and the illiterate ones all heard accounts of past times. This was what scratched at their hearts and always made them itch to pay the Burmese back. So long as this desire remained unfulfilled, the desire for revenge did not disappear.
It was this abhorrence of and vengefulness towards the very name of the Burmese nation that made me want to see what the Burmese look like, what goes on in that country and what the landscape is like. For these reasons, having been there myself in the Year of the Rat, tenth in the decade, the Lesser Era year 1250 [AD April 1888 – April 1889], and having observed what could be observed, during a single visit, of all that goes on in that country, I shall, in keeping with my readers’ desires, relate to all of you what I discovered and witnessed. The reading of this work, when you are at leisure, will provide you with amusement and enhance your knowledge about things you never knew.

It will be necessary for me to provide a somewhat lengthy description of the geographical features of Burma, so that my readers can clearly perceive the extent of the country’s population and what commercial goods it has. I fear that these descriptions will not be necessary for those readers who do not care to know about such matters. Were I to omit them, however, it would not be beneficial to the readers who do need to know them. For this reason, I must apologise to the readers who do not need detailed geographical descriptions. Please bear with me and skip across to what you do need.

Now I shall describe my visit to Burma and give an abbreviated account of my itinerary, starting out from Bangkok on Tuesday, the tenth day of the waning moon in the eleventh month of the Year of the Rat, tenth in the decade, the Lesser Era year 1250 [30 October 1888]². I travelled by sea on the mail steamer, arrived at Singapore on Saturday, the fourteenth day of the waning moon [3 November], and stayed there four days. I left Singapore on Wednesday, the fourth day of the waxing moon in the twelfth month [7 November], arrived at Pinang Island³ on Friday, the sixth day of the waxing moon [9 November], and stayed there for seven days. I left Pinang on Friday, the thirteenth day of the waxing moon [16 November], arrived at Rangoon⁴ on Tuesday, the second day of the waning moon in the twelfth month [20 November], and stayed there for two days.

Here I shall give a detailed account of my itinerary from Rangoon up to Mandalay, which is a Burmese capital. I started out on Thursday, the fourth day of

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² At the time of this journey, the lunar calendar was still the official calendar of the Thai government. It was replaced (beginning 1 April 1889) by the western calendar of twelve months, although with April still counted as the first month of the Thai year. Western-calendar equivalents have been added in brackets by the translator. K.B.
³ The author used the Thai name by which Pinang has always been generally known to the Thai: Kò Mak, meaning ‘Betelnut Island’. K.B.
⁴ Imitating the Burmese pronunciation, the author replaces the initial R in the name Rangoon with a Y. He adds parenthetically an amusing Thai equivalent of the name (yang kung), which appears in nineteenth century political documents and which in Thai literally means ‘to roast shrimp’. K.B.
the waning moon in the twelfth month [22 November]. At dusk I boarded the mailship Bilu, a side-wheeler steamboat with a flat bottom and shallow draught, which was moored at the company’s landing, and slept on board. At the third watch [about midnight to 3 o’clock in the morning] the boat left the landing and sailed down-river. It did not go down as far as the sea, but took a short-cut along a connecting waterway and moored at the river-mouth known as China Bakir. Some of my readers who have not seen the detailed map that has been made of Burma will be unable to understand what I am saying here. Maps that have not been made specifically in detail will be too small in scale to show the waterway along which I was travelling, thus making it difficult for you to understand my description. For this reason, permit me to give just a bit more explanation about the route, so that you can understand just a little more easily.

7 Rangoon and Mandalay are not on the same river. The Rangoon River lies to the east, and Mandalay’s river (which is called the Irrawaddy) lies to the west. The two river-mouths flow into the sea about 150 kilometres apart. Along the coast halfway between the two, there is another river-mouth called China Bakir. It is at the confluent of two waterways, one of which connects to the Rangoon River and the other to the Irrawaddy. The Irrawaddy is a great river. Even the upper reaches of the Rangoon River connect to the Irrawaddy, but that is not a suitable route for the mail boats to sail on. They must therefore back-track down-river and enter the Irrawaddy either by skirting the seacost or by passing along the connecting waterway, coming out at China Bakir and then entering the waterway that connects to the Irrawaddy. Since the mail boats are of shallow draught and cannot withstand the wind and waves on the open sea, they therefore divert their course along the short-cut into the connecting waterway and make a stop at the China Bakir river-mouth.

8 As soon as it was dawn on Friday, the fifth day of the waning moon of the twelfth month [23 November], the boat set out and went up along the waterway that connects to the Irrawaddy. The river is big and wide – about 40 leagues [1.6 kilometres] wide on average – along the stretch where I was passing that day. In some places sandbanks were protruding out from the shore. The river on average is only 8 cubits [4 metres] deep. On both banks there are villages, each of about twenty or thirty dwellings in the form of small huts. There is a village at every bend or two along the river. A few fruit trees are planted in these villages on the flat ground out at the edge of the river-banks. Most are mangos and bananas, although there are a few areca palms and coconut palms. Judging from their ages, they seem to have been recently planted – within the last four or five years. The

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5. The Irrawaddy Flotilla Company provided regularly scheduled transport by steamers on all the major inland waterways at this time. K.B.
local people along this stretch make their living as fishermen. I saw no trading boats. I saw only small boats belonging to villagers who were out cutting fuel wood. The mail boat that plies along here has to stop momentarily in each area to change pilots. At just after 5 o’clock in the afternoon, we reached the village of Yan-dun. The boat moored alongside the landing, and I spent the night on board.

9 It was after 5 o’clock in the morning, when it was light enough to see the way, that the paddle-wheeler set out from Yan-dun and went up along the waterway. On Saturday, the sixth day of the waning moon in the twelfth month [24 November], there were more large sandbanks along the stretch of river after departing Yan-dun than on the previous day. The river-banks extend about two arms-spans [4 metres] above the water. The countryside consists partly of paddy fields and partly of thickets of trees. The houses in the successive villages became more and more numerous—up to 100 or 200 dwellings in each. Some of the local people along this stretch grow tobacco, some grow cotton and some are fishermen.

10 We encountered about twenty Burmese trading boats that were 4 to 5 arms-spans [8-10 metres] in length. These large trading boats resemble our own lao-type6 boats, but the Burmese boats are just a little more spacious in appearance. The small boats for fishing and gathering firewood are the same as our very own royal processional boats for kathin [end-of-Lent bhikkhu-robe-presentation] ceremonies, only rather small. They are the size of our pha-ma boats and have a bulwark above the bow, the same as our pha-ma boats.

11 Our term pha-ma [pronouncing ma with a high tone] actually should be pha-ma [pronouncing ma with a falling tone and meaning ‘Burmese’]. In the past our pha-ma boats must have been the same type as these ‘Burmese’ boats I have mentioned, except that they gradually diverged from each other in construction and have thus become somewhat different in shape. One can none the less see that they are hardly very different.

12 Along this stretch after leaving Yan-dun, the boat had to stop and change pilots at every large village.

13 It was after 10 o’clock in the morning when we reached Henzada. The boat moored alongside the landing, discharging and taking on board passengers and cargo. This place has a monastery and about 500 dwellings for the local people. There are two strange wooden buildings with corrugated zinc roofs—probably the

6. The generic term ‘Lao’ was used by the central Thai well into the twentieth century in reference to the inhabitants of the upper Chao Phraya basin as well as the Lao of the central and upper Mekong. The author is not referring to a boat of the type used by the Lao people of the Mekong basin but to the native boats used by the Tai-Yuan (Miang or Northern Thai) on rivers such as the Ping. K.B.
homes of Europeans. All the others are houses of bamboo. There population here numbers about 3,000. After remaining at the mooring for about 30 minutes, the boat left the landing and went on its way along the waterway.

14 There were many large sandbanks from Henzada onward. They extended in some places as far as the eye can see. The banks everywhere are as much as 3 arms-spans [6 metres] or more in height. The dwellings are set apart at a distance, and there are twenty or thirty of them per village. There are many deserted monasteries. The villagers make a living primarily as fishermen. There are some fruit trees—a few of each kind—in the villages. Other than that, there is nothing but open fields or undergrowth. The paddle-wheeler stopped to change pilots for every stretch between large villages. At dusk we arrived at Mya-naung, and the boat moored there overnight.

15 On Sunday, the seventh day of the waning moon of the twelfth month [25 November], the paddle-wheeler left Mya-naung and went on its way along the waterway. Along this stretch of the route, the countryside is partly open fields, partly hills and partly mountains. In one place the cliffs drop precipitously straight down into the water. There is a Buddhist monument on the mountain top. Both large and small niches are carved into the rock in the face of the cliff, from the water’s edge upward, and each niche houses a Buddha image in one of the four mudras: that is, sitting, reclining, standing or walking. I would estimate that there are no fewer than 400 or 500 of them. The dwellings of the local people in this area are no different from the stretch that I already described. The villagers make their living partly by fishing and partly by growing tobacco.

16 It was after the noon hour when we reached Pye. The boat made a stop there, moving in and mooring alongside the landing. The name of this town is one that is familiar to us Thai, but we modify the pronunciation to ‘Prae’. Our pronunciation of the name, despite the modification, is still better than that of the English, who are actually in possession of the town. They call it ‘Prome’.

17 In the afternoon, I walked up to take a look at the town. Pye is laid out along the east bank of the river. The dwellings of the local people are in a long line extending about 80 leagues [3.2 kilometres] along the river and about 40 leagues [1.6 kilometres] inland. There are streets throughout. Some are old streets that have been improved, and others have been newly constructed. Most are covered with crushed rock. Farther on, behind the groups of houses, are the paddy fields. When Pye became British, the original palace structures were still in existence. I was told that the palace was surrounded by a wooden pallisade and that the palace buildings were all of teak wood – the same as our own wood-walled buildings.
They were old and in very poor condition, and none of them were actually of any use. The British administrators therefore divided off the whole palace area and sold it to someone who wanted to buy it. The new owner then pulled down the old structures and has built new houses there. It was thus not very long ago that the palace passed out of existence.

18 Along the river-bank road where I was taking my walk, the post office and a clubhouse are at the boat landing itself. Farther along are a school and then the government office building, which houses also the lawcourt. Beyond these buildings are a succession of brick houses and wooden houses in which Europeans reside.

19 My readers can probably imagine clearly what all there is in Pye, from what I have already stated, because the things that I have mentioned by name are the ones of interest. But anyway, I shall explain somewhat more in detail so that my readers will understand.

20 The boat landing where people go ashore and go aboard consists of a large and aged boat, which is fixed in position at the river-bank. Two wooden planks extend out from the boat to the edge of the bank. When the mailboat arrives, it moors alongside this fixed-position boat. Disembarking passengers go aboard the fixed-position boat and then clamber along two wooden planks to the edge of the river-bank. They then have to climb up another level, which is more than three arms-spans [6 metres] high. That is, they have to climb the river-bank itself. And if they stumble, they are going to get a bath and be hurt as well!7

21 The clubhouse that stands directly above this point is a wooden building with three rooms of smallish size. I cannot actually think of anything with which to compare the size of this clubhouse. It is just a bit larger than the pavilions at our Royal Chapel. Its floor is about a hand-span [25 centimetres] above ground level. When I peered inside, I did not see anything except torn mats lying in disorder. Anyone seeing the place with no one to tell him about it would never think it was the meeting place for some association. He would think that it was just a guardroom of some sort or other.

22 The waterworks structure stands on a site that has the appearance of an old monastery, including a bodhi tree, two leogryphs made of brick and a pile of broken bricks scattered about. The place is overgrown with some kind of vegetation or other, but there is a pathway leading inside. The waterworks

7. Most of the author’s readers were familiar only with the river-banks of the Chao Phraya, which are scarcely higher than the level of the water on the river. The much higher river-banks of the Irrawaddy must have seemed strange to them. K.B.
structure consists of tall brick walls surmounted by the watertank, which serves as the roof. It is a bit larger than the tall one at our Khun Nang Landing. Beneath it is the pumping machinery. To describe everything here would be rather tedious.

23 Other things besides these are much the same as what I have already stated, except for the government offices, which are spacious and a bit showy. The government office building is a long one without decoration. In appearance it resembles our Ratsadakôn Phiphat Hall before it was modified and expanded. I walked on as far as the telegraph office and then turned along the road that leads to the centre of town. The houses are in a thick cluster and all of bamboo.

24 When I reached the Shwei San-daw reliquary stupa, I went in to pay homage. This stupa is an important national monument. It stands on a small hill, the height of which, from the foot up to the base of the stupa, is about 20 arms-spans [40 metres]. The stupa is about 15 arms-spans [30 metres] high, from base to pinnacle, and the entire structure is covered with gold. The enclosure that encircles and surrounds the ambulatory terrace of the stupa is filled with various large and small Buddha images that have been placed there. At intervals round the front beyond the enclosure are columns from which the temple bells are suspended. There is a constant stream of people going inside to pay reverence and to strike the great bells, which sound forth, day in and day out, with deep reverberations. At both the front and rear of the monument, are staircases extending from the enclosure down to the foot of the hill. At the foot of the front staircase is a statue about 10 metres tall of a leogryphe—something that the Burmese are fond of building. The villagers come to the steps on the front side. Along the entire length at both sides of the staircase, they sell candles, incense sticks, gold leaf and a variety of items for paying reverence. Mostly everything within the precincts of this stupa is decayed and in poor condition. The pious villagers have collected funds for repairs but have not got enough money to make repairs throughout the precincts. They will probably restore only the stupa itself.

25 After taking a look all round the stupa precincts, we went out and along the road at the end of town and came to the railway lodgings. There are many buildings for both lodging and storing goods. One building has been converted into a fortified structure, with gun slits pierced through the walls. A trench has been dug, and defensive earthworks have been thrown up. This building provides the police with a stronghold for encounters with Burmese rebels, who tend to band together to cause various kinds of trouble such as destroying the railway trains.

26 Even nowadays the rebels are always snatching the belongings of passengers on the trains that run between Rangoon and Pye. Passengers have to be
very careful, and people are constantly complaining about things disappearing. Quite recently, one passenger aboard a night-time train was murdered by a rebel, who took away all the passenger’s belongings and covered the corpse with a blanket—as though it were someone asleep! During the period that I was in the country, I was told that they were still unable to find the culprit or make an arrest.

27 This railway line was built specifically up to Pye. The line that will go up to Mandalay is under construction northward from Rangoon by way of Pegu and Toungoo, while in the north it is under construction southward from Mandalay—each side converging on the other. When I was there, the construction work had not yet linked up. I was subsequently informed that it has been finished and that the line has been put in service.

28 I looked about Pye until the time was up. I then returned to the moored Bilu and spent the night on board.

29 On Monday, the eighth day of the waning moon of the twelfth month [26 November], the paddle-wheeler left Pye at 7 o’clock in the morning and went up-river. The land along both banks in this segment is mostly hilly and mountainous. The banks rise about 5 arms-spans [10 metres] above the level of the river. The houses of the local people are made of bamboo and are in groups of twenty or thirty, with distances of about 50-60 leagues [2.0-2.4 kilometres] between them. Some of the villagers in this area make their living by growing tobacco, some by growing beans or nuts and some by cutting a species of small bamboo.

30 It was past 11 o’clock in the morning when the boat reached Thayet-myo, where it moored alongside the landing to load and unload cargo and passengers. There are only a few Chinese- and European-style buildings here, and some other buildings are under construction. For the most part, though, there are only the bamboo-type houses that I mentioned already. At the northern end of this village is a large fort, which the British built after they captured lower Burma. They agreed on a division of territory between lower and upper Burma at this point, and hence built the fort as a stronghold for defence at the point where the territories met. I had thought that I would go up and take a bit of a look at the layout of this fort. But I was unable to go. After making enquiries, I found out that it is a long walk and that I would probably not return before the departure time of the boat. The boat remained there about 30 minutes and then left the landing and went up-river. When the boat got up to the northern end of the village, I saw the fort that I have described but had no way of knowing what it was like because of the distance. I could see only its white walls and the green grass planted there.

31 The geographical features of the route above Thayet-myo resemble those
of the stretch above Pye. It was after 3 o’clock in the afternoon when the boat passed the sandy bend at Sin-baung-we. In 1885 the British marched up to the pass in the hills above this sandy bend and attacked upper Burma. The Burmese troops were lying in wait and had their first engagement with the British soldiers there. Along the segment of the route above here, the larger houses of the villagers tend to be fenced in by sturdy enclosures made of wooden pilings, each the size of two clenched fists [about 40 cm in diameter]. These parts are infested with rebels, and the enclosures are therefore strongly built, to make it difficult to enter and pillage.

32 About 600 leagues [24 kilometres] above Sin-baung-we, one comes to the Bhaddanaga ['Magnificent Serpent'] Fortress, which was built by Italian engineers for a Burmese king named Min-don. It stands above the ridge on the east bank of the Irrawaddy. This fort appears to occupy a strategic site, and they say that it was very strongly built. When the British troops marched up and attacked [in 1885], however, the Burmese put up no defence. Instead, they abandoned the fort and fled. If no one had told me, I would never have known that it was a fort, because the British used explosives to demolish it completely. The only remnants are a couple of sections of whitish walls that can be seen from the boat. After 5 o’clock in the evening, we reached Min-hla, which is about 80 leagues [3.2 kilometres] beyond the fortress.

33 There is an old fort at the river’s edge on the west bank here in Min-hla. The brick walls enclosing it were built on a square plan, and there are earthworks in the interior. The walls are about 3 arms-spans [6 metres] high. Apparently there was no crenellation, but I cannot say for certain, because I saw the traces of openings pierced in the walls for guns. These apertures, however, are not cleanly cut, and one could even say that they had been gouged out. Also, the spacing between apertures is uneven. Actually, there is no need to conclude whether there was any crenellation. Even if there had been any, or even if there were not, the crenellation would have been useless in either case, because the parapet (or crenellation) was very low. It looks as though it would have shielded the soldiers who went up to stand on duty on the earthworks only up to their knees. The British soldiers who were posted to this fort had to erect a fence above the parapet and create an additional level, because it was so easy to fall off! The area of the fort is about 1,600 square arms-spans [6,400 square metres]. I saw the roofs of two insignificant little buildings inside. The Burmese put up a stiff resistance at this fort against the British the second time.

34 There are more than 300 houses here, all of bamboo. The boat stopped here, and I spent the night on board.

35 The accounts of the Burmese encounters with the British from Sin-baung-
we up to Min-hla are really rather amusing. But I must put these accounts off and not yet talk about them here, so that I can combine them with a later section, in which I shall discuss political affairs in Burma.8

36 At dawn on Tuesday, the ninth day of the waning moon of the twelfth month [27 November], the paddle-wheeler set out from this place and went up-river. The segment from Min-hla to the main channel of the river is about 120 leagues [4.8 kilometres], and there were lots of sandbanks extending out from the river-banks. The land is partly flat and partly hilly. The local people in this vicinity make a living partly by cutting consignments of bamboo and partly by building boats.

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8. Prince Naris intended to continue his narrative in subsequent articles in Wachirayan, but he never published any of the continuation. Judging from this passage, a report by Prince Naris on the 1885 Anglo-Burmese war and events in upper Burma during 1886-8 may be in the archives of the Royal Secretariat and the Ministry of Defence in Bangkok. K.B.
**Editorial note:**

The following account of the induction ceremony for Buddhist monks was included as Appendix V in Michael Symes, *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava, Sent by the Governor-General of India in the Year 1795* (London: W. Bulmer & Co., 496-500). Symes, then a major in the 76th Regiment, made numerous valuable observations on Burmese culture, society, government, and history. While it is clear that he did consult the accounts of other visitors to Burma, most of his material was derived from first-hand observation or from material provided by Burmese acquaintances, and the following account was likely derived from the latter.

M.W.C.

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**CAMMUAZA, or the ceremony used at the Induction of a Birman into the Order of Priesthood, called Phonghi, or Rhahaan (1795)**

Michael Symes

Previous to ordination the Sabiet¹ and the yellow garment of priesthood shall be delivered to the Candidate; he shall then be enjoined to repeat thrice, with a distinct voice, the following sentence to the Upizeê² that presides:

“Venerable father, I acknowledge you to be my Upizeê, my preceptor, and ghostly guide.”

Having spoken these words he shall approach the Cammuazara, or him who reads the sacred Cammuua, who shall say as follows:

“O Candidate, dost thou acknowledge this to be thy Sabiet, and these thy sacred vestments?” to which the Candidate shall audibly answer “Yea.”

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¹ Original footnote: A blue lacquered box borne by the priests when they perambulate to collect … provisions. See page 210.

² Original footnote: The chief or principal of the monastery.
The Cammuazara shall then command him to recede to the distance of twelve cubits, and turning towards the audience shall address them as follows:

“Let this sacred assembly of the professors of our holy religion attend to what I now impart. The Candidate who stands in your presence, humbly, and with due submission, implores of the Upizee to invest him with our holy function; and as the present time seemeth good for the purpose, and convenient unto this assembly, I will forthwith duly admonish the Candidate.”

“O thou who seest admission into our sacred order, be attentive unto my words, and beware lest on this occasion you utter an untruth, or criminally attempt to conceal aught from our knowledge: learn that there are certain incapacities and defects, which render a person unfit to receive the holy induction; moreover, when in this reverend assembly you shall be interrogated respecting such defects, you are to answer truly, and declare whatever incapacities you may labour under, of what nature soever they may be, and how they originated; nor ought you to stand silent, or decline your head when you are interrogated, through shame or fear. Now, even at this time, in the presence of this assembly, may any one of the brotherhood interrogate you at his pleasure.”

“O Candidate, art thou affected with the leprosy, or any impure disease?”

To which the Candidate shall reply, “From such complaints I am free.”

“Hast thou the scrofula, St. Anthony's fire, any scirrrous affection, cancer, or itch? Hast thou an asthma or oppression of the lungs? Hast thou any hereditary complaint arising from a tainted source of blood? Art thou sprung from dwarfs or giants, or art thou under the influence of sorcerers, evil genii or the Natt\(^3\) of the woods and the mountains?”

“From all these disqualifications I am free.”

— “O Candidate, art thou a man perfect in thy virility, and all thy members?”

“I am perfect.”

—“Art thou legitimate?”

“I am legitimate.”

\(^3\) Original footnote: Aerial spirits.
—“Art thou the bounden vassal of any lord, or the slave of any man in power?”

“I am not.”

—“Art thou free from debt?”

“I am.”

—“Have thy parents granted thee permission, and hast thou attained the complete age of twenty years?”

“My parents have consented, and I have attained the age of twenty years.”

—“Are thy vestments and Sabiet ready?”

“They are ready.”

—“O Candidate, by what appellation wilt thou be known?”

“By that of Naca (sinner).”

—“What is the title of thy Upizeê?”

“Assentriit (perfection).”

The Cammuazara shall thus proceed:

“Reverend Divines, I beseech you attend unto my words. The Candidate humbly intreats of his Upizeê admission into our holy order, and him have I duly admonished. Doth the present appear unto this assembly a meet and proper time that he should come forward?”

The Priests reply “Come forward.”

The Candidate having advanced twelve cubits shall then say, “Venerable and holy men, I, a lowly suppliant, with humility implore your aid. Oh! if pity dwell within your breasts, snatch me from the walk of death, from the ways of sinners, and place me in the Holy habitation, the seat of virtue and divine perfection.”

This intreaty shall be repeated three times, after which the reader of the Cammuaua thus proceeds:
"Reverend Fathers here convened, the Candidate in your presence, solicits holy orders from the venerable Upizee. It appeals that he is free from all defects, corporeal infirmities, and mental incapacities: he has likewise received the Sabiet, and the sacred vestments, and in the name, and with the sanction of the venerable Upizeê, intreats induction. Let those who assent to his admission keep silence, but let such as object, and deem the Candidate a person unworthy to be received, speak out and declare their motives in presence of this assembly."

These words shall be thrice repeated, and if no person dissent, and all are silent, the reception of the Candidate is determined on; when relinquishing his state of imperfection, he shall be translated into that of purity, and thenceforward be considered as one of the elect.

The Cammuazara shall then proceed:

— "Let the Reverend Fathers present note with precision, under what shade of the foot, what hour, day, and season this ordination has been completed. Let the Candidate attend to the four following duties which it is incumbent on him to observe; and to the faults hereafter enumerated under four heads, which he must carefully avoid."

"First, a principal duty of our holy function consists in procuring maintenance by perambulation; by laborious and incessant motion of the muscles of the legs. You must seek gratuitous sustenance by continual motion, and whatever superfluities you collect, shall be daily bestowed by you on those who are in want. Victuals that are offered to you in particular, given to the society in general, sent with letters desiring your prayers, or presented on the hebdomadal festivals of the increasing and decreasing moon, all such, gifts may be accepted and distributed."

To which the Candidate shall reply, "As I am instructed so will I perform."

The reader of the Cammua thus proceeds:

—"Secondly, It is part of the duty of a priest through humility to soil his garments with dust, and wear sepulchral vestments. But should the liberality of good men munificently reward your pious labours, it shall be allowed thee to wear cloth called choma; also silk or cotton yellow cloth; yellow woollen cloth; cloth made of the bark of certain trees, or the feathers of certain birds. Such vestments thou mayest use."

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4 Original footnote: See page 211 [in Symes 1800].
To which the Candidate shall reply, “As I am instructed,” &c.

The reader of the Cammuazara continues:

—“Thou shalt dwell as becometh our order, in houses built beneath the shade of the trees of the forest; in houses built of wood, or of masonry; houses having a pyramidal roof, of a triangular or quadrangular form, adorned with flowers and figures; houses raised on posts, or built on arches. Such dwellings mayest thou inhabit.”

Candidate:—“As I am instructed,” &c.

The reader of the Cammuazara:

—“Fourthly, Thou shalt turn to use such things as men cast away; and thou shalt search for healing qualities in simples, in which no virtue is supposed to exist. The following articles may be used medicinally; sweet and sour milk, oil, honey, sugar and syrups.”

Candidate:—“As I am instructed,” &c.

Cammuazara:

—“Being now admitted an associate of the virtuous and immaculate, thou shalt not indulge thyself in any gratification either social or solitary, after the manner of seculars; nor shalt thou frequent the company of laymen, or of women. He who acts thus can no longer be numbered among the elect: sooner shall the severed head be joined again to the neck, and life restored to the breathless body, than a Rhahaan, who commiteth fornication, recover his lost purity, and be received again within the sacred pale. Beware therefore lest thou pollute thyself with the knowledge of woman.”

“Again, It is forbidden thee to steal, or by any unjust means possess thyself of the property of another, even though the amount should not exceed the fourth part of a tackall; for whatsoever Phongi or Rhahaan sinneth even to that small amount, he shall be divested of his sacred character, and be expelled the brotherhood. He who is guilty of such a crime can no more be restored to his pristine state of purity, than the blasted tree can bud anew, and bear fresh flowers and fruit. Remember therefore, O Candidate, and through thy mortal journey beware of theft.”
“Again, Thou shalt not deprive any animal of life; such deeds are unlawful and profane. Thou shalt not take away life even from the smallest insect, or the vilest reptile. Sooner shall the cleft rock unite its severed fragments, and become whole, than he who destroys the vital principle in any animal be readmitted into our sacred institution. Avoid with caution this heinous transgression.”

“Again, The holy professors of our religion are strictly forbidden to arrogate to themselves aught on account of the sanctity of their profession, or pretend to be endowed with any supernatural gift or power, such as Meipo, or endeavour to obtain the offering usually given to persons so endowed. Whosoever is actuated by such culpable pride shall fall like the lofty mountain palm beneath the stroke of the wood-cutter. Through life therefore, O my brother, observe these precepts, and act as thou art now commanded.”

To which the Candidate shall with humility reply, “As I am instructed, so will I perform.” --He shall then withdraw.
Editor’s Note:

The following letters, and in cases extracts of letters, were reproduced by Alexander Dalrymple in 1808, published in London under the title Oriental Repertory, by William Ballintine for the East India Company. Relevant portions of Dalrymple’s commentary to some letters have also been included.

M.W.C.

Miscellaneous Letters on Burma, 1755-1760, I

Letter 1

13 April 1755

From Mr. Brooke to Governor Pigot

By the occurrences and Transactions of this Place, together with the General Letter, you will be a competent Judge of our present situation, as nothing is related therein but the simple truth, without varnish or evasion; To conclude with the King of Pegu on advantageous terms, I now despair of how can we expect it? when even now, though he wants our assistance, yet He will not assure us, that He will maintain our Soldiers, though they should fight, and lose their lives, in the defence of his Country; has He not used Us ill, on all occasions? has he not, as much as in him lay, underhand endeavoured to ruin us; by preventing the People to work for Us, and to bring Us Rice, &c. Victuals, though his Country might have supplied Us; There is much difference between soliciting and being solicited: we are pursuing the Man, who is unwilling to assist us, yet if he had it in his power He would not; and are courted by the King of Ava, who is ready and able to favour Us, to turn the deaf ear to his address, and tender of his Friendship, would in my opinion be an act of imprudence; but You cannot listen to him, without offending the other; What then is the Medium? had we a Force here sufficient to carry Weight, we could easily turn the Ballance of Power in favour of the Bûraghmahns: to accomplish this would require brisk Force, and a Vessel to lye at Dagon, In
Syrian River, would be absolutely necessary, and would not only prevent supplies of Arms, &c. from passing through Syrian River, but prevent all the King (of Pegu’s) War Boats from going up the Rivers towards From, then the Bûraghmahns, could come even to Syrian unmolested, with together with a junction of our Troops by these Rivers, would probably carry every thing before them, and settle the Affairs of this place in one Campaign; but should we not concern ourselves in this Affair, the French who have openly espoused the Peguers' Cause at Syrian may turn the scale against the Bûraghmahns, which now seems to incline to their side; what should we then expect from his Majesty of Pegu? or yet in case the Buraghmahns should meet with success in the next Campaign, without our assistance; We cannot then hope for those favourable Conditions we may at this juncture reasonably expect. I have thus candidly given you my Opinion of our Affairs here, that you may be acquainted with the most minute Circumstances, and though Troops are expensive, yet they are necessary, if you will think proper to spare any, October is the best Month for their arrival here; in the interim I shall, with the utmost Circumspection, give no just Cause of Offence to either Party, though our being on this Island, I believe is sufficient to the King of Pegu.


Letter 2

18 June 1755

Capt. Jackson transmitted the following copy...

To Capt. Jackson and the rest of the English Gentelmen.

SIRS,

As your are of the side of my Enemys, I am always a Friend to the English, I intend to send my Fleet of Ships and Ballongs to drive away my Enemys, I hope you will not stop or make any resistance against my fleet and Army, that you have no reason to fire at your friends, all the favours I have granted to the English Company, at Syrian. Negrais and Bassim, its a security, I hope that you will not make any Resistance at the Success of my Arms, and it you will come to the Port of Syrian, with all the Vessels of the English flagg, that I give you my word and honour, that I will receive you as formerley, that you may come and trade here without mollestation, I give you the word of a King, that I will receive you as
formerly, and sincere freindship, by this this same opertunlty, send me an Answer of yours and the rest of there opinions.

I am Gentlemen and Sirs, your assured freind,

(Signed W[i]th [h]is Signet)       Uppa Raja

Syrian, the 18th of June 1755


Letter 3

28 June 1755


SIR,

I am very much surprised, that you have not done mee the favour, to write mee an Answer for my former Letter, which I wrote to you dated the 18th of June.

I am of the same Sentiments now, as I wrote to you before, this is my second Letter, which I send to receive an Answer, for your good and my Acquittance.

I am with all emaginable respect
Your most assured Friend
Uppa Raja

Syrian June the 28th 1755

To Capt[ai]n Jackson, of the Company's Brj[igg]entien at Dagoon River

The true Coppy.

Letter 4

12 July 1755

Letter to the Upa Raja and Monsieu Bruno.

To his Highness the Upa Raja and Monsieu Burno at Syrian.

SIR,

Your Letters was delivered us by the Burramas who permitted us to read them, and sent them up to Prone with the two Lascars that brought them, to the King of the Burromers who left this place the 26th of June and with him is two Sons and the best of his Forces, likewise Mr. Craston and Monsieu Lavin.

You was so kind as to proffer your Service to help us out of this place which we shall sincerely embrace and in case the Buramers should Attack you, you may depend that we will assist you to the last drop of our Blood, for ever since the Peguers attacked the Burromas the have look'd on us as there Enemies and how far they may resent it GOD above knows, therefore as you are Christ[i]ans, we humbly beg your kind assistance to in order to gett out of this Place.

The Burmas has now Eighty Ballongs, nine of which [h]as great Guns, and the[y] have two mounted on the Short and a Dutch Briganteen is man'd with Burmahs, The Company's Snow as thirteen Guns on board and the rest of the Ships [h]as Six and Small Arms, and with your kind assistance wee think it no difficulty to gett out.

Wee are [,] Sirs [,] Your most obedient and Humble Servants,

Robert Jackson
Jno. Whithal [Whitehill]
Tho[mas] Swain
Edward Savage
Henry Stringfellow.

Dated on board the Honble Company's Snow Arcot in Dagoon River, July the 12th, 1755.

To Antony Burno Esqr. At Syrian.

A true Copy.
Letter 5

Extracts

26 November 1755

Dalrymple’s commentary: In a subsequent letter, dated 26th Nov. 1755, Mr. Brooke does justice to Capt. Baker's merits, whom he had, on the death of Capt. Hammond, appointed to the command of the Cuddalore, till the Orders of the Government at Madrass could be known; he says

"this Gentleman's Character has been unexceptionable since on this Expedition both in Mr. Hunter's time and since; he has transacted The Honourable Company's affairs; at their Factory of Persaim, with circumspection and prudence, and hope on those Accounts You will find him a person worthy of his present Station."

"Capt. Baker relates that the King of the Bilraghmahns has been very diffident of our conduct, and mistrustful of our Intentions, occasioned by the proceedings of the Gentlemen of the Shipping at Syrian, who have acted quite contrary to what we have done on this Island, in behaving offensively, and firing against the Bûraghmah Tope at Dagoon, in conjunction with the French and Peguers: How then, says the King (of the Buraghmans), can I have confidence in what You say, You come with a fair face, but your Countrymen join with my Enemies against me, and producing an Iron Shot, witness the truth of what I say, this came from an English Ship against my Ptdfh, But in his letter to me, he promises The Company a Place at Persaim, Another at Dagoon, and Liberty to enjoy this Island, but I cannot be assured whether H.e means that we shall erect Fortifications in his Country, so much however for the first Negociation: yet 'tis highly probable, that were it not for the unlucky and unaccountable affair of the Shipping at Syrian, we should have concluded every thing to our satisfaction. He seems strenuously to desire our assistance against the Peguers, yet would make us believe he does not want our help."¹

¹ Dalrymple’s note: “He seemed to want Arms and Ammunition but no other assistance.”
“Some French Gentlemen, now here, report that the Upoo Rajah (Apporazah) was determined to make another attack, in conjunction with all the Shipping, French and English, at Syrian; which Report also agrees with our last advices from thence, which further say that the Upoo Rajah sent for all the English Commanders and told them, in publick, to prepare to go against the Bûraghmahns, which they seeming to decline, he further said, it did not signify to raise objections; it was a thing determined they should go, and if not with free will, he would compel them, and send a force of Peguers on board their Ships, or words to that purpose; I have taken the Liberty to advise You of these things, that you may be the better able to proceed, but, with us here, it is the unanimous voice of this Place, that a Force is requisite to extricate the Shipping out of Syrian.”


**Letter 6**

**Extracts**

10 December 1755

Extracts of Letter from Mr. Whitehill, Negrais, to the Governor of Madrass

Dalrymple’s Commentary: Mr. Whitehill in a letter, to the Governor of Madrass, dated 10th December 1755 from Negrais, says:

"We are in a very bad state of defence, in case of an attack, which I must say, we may expect, from what I heard and saw, while I was with the Bûraghmahns and Peguers, which was from 3d June to 20th August, in this time I underwent vast uneasiness; The Company will never do any thing in this Country without drawing the Sword, and that must be in favour of the Bûraghmahns; and that soon if at all, for should the Peguers get head again, by the assistance of French, it is all holiday with us, for then you may be sure they will try to route you from this Place, and it they cannot do that, they will hinder you from an ounce of Trade, so that what good will this Island be to you."

[Dalrymple’s commentary]: Notwithstanding these opinions, of the propriety of assisting the Bûraghmahns, It appears by a subsequent letter from Capt. Jackson, that the King of Pegu had obliged him, as well as all the other English Ships at Syrian, to go with the Peguers, again to attack the Bûraghmahns at Dagoon,
promising they should, on their return, have liberty to depart: the Fleet consisted of three English and one French Ship, The King of Pegu's Snow, and three hundred of his Boats; an Army of 10,000 men marched at the same time to attack the Bûraghmahns by Land, who retired to their Fort, and defended themselves resolutely; and having set fire to a Jungodo\(^2\) of Boats, these driving down towards the Fleet, compelled them to weigh and fall down the River, by which means they avoided the danger, though the French Ship very narrowly escaped being burnt; Sometime after Capt. Jackson's return to Syrian, viz. 5th January 1756, he obtained the King of Pegu's leave to depart; but the King of Pegu obliged him to leave five of the Arcot's Guns behind, promising to return them as soon as the Troubles should be over.

Capt. Jackson, meeting with a violent gale of wind, was carried to leeward of Negrais, and bore away for Vizagapatam.

Mr. Brooke having, on account of his health, desired to be relieved from the Chiefship Negrais; Mr. Andrew Newton was appointed to succeed him; but Mr. Newton having declined on account of ill-health, Capt. John. Howes, a Military Officer, was on 28th February 1756 nominated Chief, and having received his dispatches the 15th March, proceeded thither in the Cuddalore, Capt. Baker, and arrived at Negrais the 12th April: Capt, Howes died in a few months after his arrival, and Lieut. Thomas Newton, as the Senior Officer on the Spot, succeeded Capt. Howes.


Letter 7

[no day] October 1760

The TRANSLATION of a LETTER, sent by the King of the Buraghmahs, to the Honourable Governor of Madrass. October 1760. By the Snow Victoria.

I the most high and mighty King of all Kings, the beloved Son of good fortune, and the most fortunate Master of all these my Dominions; Sole and Supreme Lord of the three Pegu Kingdoms, with all their Provinces; also Master of the Mines of Gold, Silver, Diamonds, Rubies, Sapphirs, Emeralds, Amber, and all manner of precious Stones, in these my Dominions; now at the Golden City, in a Golden Palace, under a Silver Canopy; Master of all good fortune, with a cheerful

\(^2\) Dalrymple's note: "Supposed to mean several Boats fastened together."
Countenance, and a free Heart, together with a good Will, towards the Governor of Madrass. Send this to acquaint him.

That Captain Hope, when Chief at the Negrais, did not behave agreeable to the Contract and Promises, made on the part of the Company, to the King, my Father who gave Negraise and Perseem to The Company, to trade and merchandize there, on condition, that they paid the customary duties, &c. to the King, my Father; and also assist him if required; but the Governors of the Negrais did not only trade, without paying any duties themselves, but hindered Merchant Vessels, that came to trade, and would have paid them, from entering the Port of Perseem, to my Father's loss and prejudice; also Capt. Hope, kept a Correspondence with the Peguers, my Father's Enemies, and supplied them with Provisions, Arms and Ammunition; with which they killed his Slaves, and robbed and destroyed his Country, whereat my Father being angry, ordered his Slaves to seize and destroy the Factory at the Negrais. The King, my Father, sometime since, being wearied of this World, went to Govern in a better; and I, his eldest Son, am now seated on his Throne; But I am far from believing, either the Governor of Madrass knew of, consented to, or approved of these actions of the Governors of Negrais, and as for the New Governor, that arrived the day; before the Negrais was destroyed, it was his ill fortune to be amongst those who were guilty, and his lot to be killed there; as when you put a piece of Wood in the fire, in which is a Worm you know not of, It is, for want of being distinguished, burnt in the Wood, so it happened to the New Governor.

But if you have a mind to trade in my Dominions, I will give you as much ground as you chuse, at Perseem, or any thing else that is in my Kingdom, that you desire; on Condition that you pay the customary Duties, and supply me with Arms and Ammunition, for which I will give you in return, the value in Timbers, Wax, Ivory, Amber, or precious Stones, for I am at present in want of both, Arms and Ammunition, as some of my Slaves have rebelled against me their Lord and King; I have released, according to your desire, the five Englishmen that were in my Kingdom, and, on the receipt of this Letter, I desire you will send me as under viz.

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A Horse and Mare, both four Cubits high, and a Male and Female Camel, These I want for Breed.
Great and small Shot of sizes, as much as you please, and Powder. Also send me a Man, that can cast Iron Shot, and for all these things I will give what you desire.

The Letter to the Governor of Bengal is an exact copy of this, only change of names. As also the four Vizier's Letter, which is wrote in the name of them all.


Letter 8

8 November 1760

Translation of a Letter from Mangee Norata, Prince of Persaim, &c.
To The Honourable George Pigot, Esq. President and Governor of Fort St. George.

By order and Oath of the powerfull Lord, the Lord and Head of all Kings of the Eastern parts of the World, and above all Crowns, Lord of the White and Speckled Elephants, Lord of the Mines of the Rubys, Topas, Gold, Silver, Iron, and Lead, &c King of Kings, and Lord of all Provinces of the East; whose Oath I have taken with a true heart, and by him appointed Prince of all the Lower Countrys of this Place, that belonged to three Places of Pegue, and Sea-port Town, Slaves of his Majesty, the inhabitants thereof are like the Children of my Breast, whom I take care to Judge as they behave, who am Mangee Norata, with five hundred and twenty-eight Loves, I send my Service to the Honourable Governor of Madrass, George Pigot, Esq. whose Country and ours was in Ancient Times as united together as a Tulip-flower in the middle of a Tank, so was also our friendship then; and I take it to be so now; between Strangers and my Nation, and hope it will last long; and you will please to come to Trade as formerly.

The Chief of Negrais interfered himself with the Peguers, who were Rogues, Runagadoes, Oath-breakers, and being against us, hid themselves in the Woods, and robbing our Towns and Villages, as Opportunity offered them; these People did the Chief of Negrais harboured, we was informed of, and have put a stop to it, that The Company should not harbour them for the future, but could not keep them under, for which reason The Company being found guilty, for acting in the manner which was not right, therefore mischief had befallen them, which you were informed of; and now what is past, is past ; now your Honour has been pleased to send, and advised us by Letters of your intent, and presents to the King by Capt. Walter Alves, which is come to us now, with a clear conscience Capt. Alves, did in behalf of the King of England and the Honourable Governor of
Madrass, Georgt Pigot, Esq. begged; which was accepted by the King, and has granted the Residing Place of Persaim, and the Island of Negrais, as before; but with this Conditions, that all Ships that comes there to Trade, both Company's and Merchant Ships, should pay their due Customs as before; at which time they will have free Liberty to sell and buy their Merchandize, without any molestation: This is the King's orders, and according to this order, you will please to Comply; and whoever you will please to send over as Chief, let him be a man of Confidence, and a man of great Sense, if you will send such a Person here, you shall not want whatever you shall desire; and recommend him to me, that I will assist him whatever lyes in my power to beg of the King. There is a man here whom Capt. Alves informed me, he believed was a man that has done something that was not right, on the Coast of Sumatra; which he desired me, I might call him to my house, and be examined, he being very well informed by several persons here, that this man had killed some English Commander, upon the man's coming to my house, he equivocated, but at last confessed, that he was in the same Vessel, where the People killed the Commander of the Vessel and three Soldiers; this man our Wariours took up at Merguy, in a small Vessel, at the time our People being there; and brought him here, in case your Honour will find this story upon this man to be true, please to send me advice, and I will execute Justice upon him. I now send your Honour by Capt. Alves one hundred Viss of Wax, which you will be kind to receive as a present from me.

Rangoon, November 8th, 1760.

First day of the New Moon.


**Letter 9**

24 November 1760

Antonio the Linguist, To the Honourable GEORGE PIGGOT, Esq. Governor of Fort St. George.

Persaim, 24th November, 1760

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3 Dalrymple's note: “So in the Original, for equivocated.”
Honourable Sir,

I am sorry to think, that your Honour should have reason to think, that I have been any way concerned in that unlucky affair, that happened at the Negrais, in the month of October 1759; but give me leave to assure your Honour, that I was no further concerned, than as a Linguister for the King's Officer, who commanded the Party; and so far I was obliged by the Order of the King, which Order was absolute, and would admit of no Evasion, for the King said, in the Order, that I must go to the Negrais, as a Linguister, and if by any means his Design discovered, he would look on me as the Author of the Discovery, and my Wife and every Man, Woman, and Child who had any dependence on, or connexion with, me, he would immediately put to death, to avenge himself of me. But that I have always had a very great regard for the English, as I am in Duty bound, and as Actions are always preferable to Words, I shall say nothing in my own justification; but refer myself first to Mr. Robertson, who saw how far I was concerned in the cutting off Negrais; and next to Capt. Alves, who well knows what pains I have taken to assist him, in Transacting the Business he was charged with, on Account of the Honourable Company; and especially as he has had the good fortune to succeed, in renewing the Friendship, which formerly subsisted betwixt his Majesty and the Honourable Company, which is a plain proof, that my Love is sincere; and Captain Alves is so sensible of my Advice and Assistance, on this Occasion, that he has promised to advise your Honour of my good intentions.

Please receive with this Fifty Viss of Wax, Twenty-five Viss of Ivory, being three Teeth; and a large Towel, which I beg you will accept of from

Honourable Sir, Your most obedient, and most humble Servant."


**Letter 10**

**Extracts**

28 December 1760

From Captain Alves, Calcutta, to Governor Pigot

Dalrymple commentary: Capt. Alves in his Letter from Calcutta, dated 28th Dec. 1760, transmitting these Papers to Governor Pigot, says,

*SBBR 3.1 (SPRING 2005): 87-98*
“I left at Dagon a Dutch Ship, belonging to the Governor of Negapatam, which, from the present situation of affairs in that Country, I know not whether or no they will be able to get away, for the principal part of their Cargo was carried up to Ava, to the Buraghmah King, by the Malabar Supercargo, and for what goods he had sold there, he could not get in the money; and at Dagon they took a new Cable out of the Ship by force, for the use of a Ship they have sent to the Nicobars.”

Editorial Note:

The following materials from Captain George Baker’s diaries and other records and notes were originally published in Alexander Dalrymple’s *Oriental Repertory* in 1808. Baker has left numerous other reports, many found in the Records of Fort St. George for the period. These latter materials will be published in later editions of the SBBR. Baker’s account is especially useful for being one of the few first-hand accounts written by a European, of Alaunghpaya, the founder of the Konbaung Dynasty.

M.W.C.

Observations at Persaim and in the Journey to Ava and Back in 1755

Captain George Baker

*Persiam 1755; Some Account of the Country Affairs this Year*

The Peguers having possessed Prone, for some Years past, made several successful Campaigns into the heart of the Bûraghmah Dominions, even to the taking, sacking, and burning of Ava, their Capital, in April 1752; they seemed then to be arrived at the summit of their Glory, for ever after they pursued their Conquests with less success, having been totally defeated near that place in April 1754, which obliged them to retire into their own Dominions, leaving a Garrison in Prone, which was soon after well fortified, after their manner, by the direction of Ponna Della: That being done, He left it in September and returned to Pegu, where the Captive King of Ava was put to death on the 13th October following. This so incensed the Bûraghmahns in Prone (who were by much the most numerous Party there) that they conspired against the other Party in the Town, and at an appointed

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1 Original footnote: The names of Places are differently spelt; I therefore follow the MS. As the varieties may tend to explain the true pronunciation; and shall at the end give a Table of those Varities. A.D.
time, in the beginning of November, put them to the Sword; and took the Government of the Place into their own hands. The Season of the year now permitting, they began to make Preparations of each side, one to retake, and the other to defend, this important Post of Prone; and accordingly Ponna Della left PEGU, for that Place, the 16th November; but, making little success in his Enterprize, was re-inforced by a strong Party, in the beginning of January, 1755, which altogether made up a numerous Army.
The Bûraghmahns, having received Notice of their Sovereign’s Death, immediately joined the New Kmg of Momchabue, who had now usurped the Government near AVA, to whose Assistance several of the neighbouring Nations sent Parties of Men, who were commanded by him, whom I now call the Bûraghmah King. He lost no time to come to the relief of Prone; for, by the best intelligence I get, he was there as soon as the party dispatched last to Ponna Della's Assistance, and, having a free Entrance, he reinforced it very considerably.

The River, fronting this Place, leads somewhat near North and South, and as the Town stands on the East side of it, the Peguers pitched their Camp on the West, something, below the Place; which the Bûraghmah King observing, pitched his Camp also below the Town, almost right opposite the Peguers, for some days together there passed frequent flight skirmishes between their boats.

On the 9th of February, at Night, the Bûraghmahns marched a little down, and crossed the River, unknown to, and unexpected by, the Peguers, and tell on them at Daylight, with such fury, as slaughtered great numbers, and routed the others: The Generals themselves escaped with the greatest hazard. This Defeat which had so dispersed their Troops, and was indeed compleat, made the Pegu Generals apprehend themselves unsafe, even in that Neighbourhood, for they immediately took their rout to Khoughn-Zeak, where they staid only to destroy the Country, and took the whole People with them to Sanyangon, (a Place about two days journey above Syrian) where they made a stand with the Army. This Affair had very extraordinary Effects on the whole People of both Kingdoms: The Bûraghmahns were so animated, that they talked of pursuing their Conquests, and making a push for Syrian: The Peguers, on the other hand, were struck with a panic that made them apprehend they might. At least the Government here, and all that Faction, was strangely intimidated; but at nothing so much as of a set of men (Bûraghmahns) who had been gathering together for some Months past, at Rhoughkhoughn; and who would not disperse themselves, notwithstanding they had frequent remonstrances from the King of Pegu, Rajah, &c. though they always took care to return palliative Answers to them. This Fear of theirs proved well grounded, for the Prince here, having sent Spies, they returned the 16th February, reporting that they had heard a Letter read, which came from the Bûraghmah King, to the Chief there, telling him that if he would make head against, and reduce this Place, He should have (under the King) the whole District as His Province: On this they called a General Council, and gave out as the Result of it, that they would transport their Families to Dalla, in order to be rid of that incumbrance, and so to be the better able to defend the Town with the Men: This, for the day, was generally believed to be the resolution taken, but on the 17th in the morning it was found the Prince, had left the Place; which, being done in so secret a manner, made People suspect some eminent danger, and put them into very great confusion: The Peguers thought the Bûraghmahns might have conspired against them; and some
Bûraghmahns thought the Peguers might have laid a scheme to massacre them; part of each Faction feared and hoped respectively, that the Government had received intelligence, that the Bûraghmah Troops were immediately at hand; Thus the Town being in an uproar; and none knowing justly what they feared; nor any steady hand to calm them, some ran to the Woods, but most to their Boats, Women big-bellied and those with Children at their breast, as also the Aged, of both sexes, were forced to exert themselves for their Lives sake, on this Occasion, though they could not determinately say what it was they had at that instant to fear.

By Noon there was not perhaps 20 Souls left in the Place, these set fire to several parts of the Town, and consommed great quantities of Grain; the Town being at last entirely evacuated, there appeared seven of the Bûraghmah Boats in sight, at 9 in the morning the 23d, which gave chace to a single Pegu Boat down the River, and having taken her, returned and landed here, they came to our house, and staid about, an hour, where I entertained them as I used to do the other Party: I desired them not to molest this Place, as it was on the Honourable Company's Ground, they declared they would not, nor did in the least; and in every other respect behaved humanely and decently, they were about 250 Men, well armed in their way, and people of good appearance; having left us, they set fire to the Town about Noon, which they entirely demolished, with a great part of the wooden Walls, and set out again for Rhoughkhough at 4 o'clock that Evening.

From the time that the Bûraghmahns demolished the Town, to the 2d March, there frequently came Pegu Boats for, and went with, Paddy; at least those that could get it, for it was become now very scarce. And again on this day the 2d March there arrived 4 Bûraghmah Boats with about 30 Men, only to see how things stood, at a time when there happened to be no Peguers here; they went away again about 11 in the morning, but had not been gone an hour, when the late Second of this Place, arrived with 12 or 15 Boats, and about 200 Men, and being every day after joined by more, he got together by the 5th about 400 Men, in order to settle here again and oppose the Bûraghmahns; but that day in the morning, between 10 and 11, there arrived in sight 21 Bilraghmah Boats, the Peguers, who were then mostly on shoar, repaired to theirs, and drew out in the middle of the River, as it were to receive their Enemy; whose number they then plainly saw to consist, as I said before, of 21 Boats, and they having but 12, immediately took to flight, and were pursued by the others, who passed down out of sight, and, in about 2 hours after, returned again with 5 Pegu Boats, of those prepared to fight, and 3 or 4 other small ones laden with Grain, &c. which I did not first reckon in the number, so that there was but 5 Boats escaped in all: However there was none of the People taken, killed or wounded, as they quitted their Boats and ran into the Woods.

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2 Original footnote: The number was said to be 12 or 15, and the number taken 5, so that the number of escaping must be more than 5; unless there is some mistake in the whole. A. D.
The Bûraghmahns, staid some time in the Town, and set out again about 4 that evening. The 12th there arrived again 6 Boats, who came then only to see how things stood; and if it might be safe for those, of whom I shall speak by and by, to come down; they returned again that evening, and, the next morning came back with 19 Boats more, in all 25, in which were two Armenians, two Moors, and two Bûraghmahns, Embassadors to Mr. Brooks, from (Momlabue) the Bûraghmah King, whom they left at Lundsey; He, having made himself Master of the whole Bûraghmah Dominions, has been declared and acknowledged King of all parts in it; from Him these Men brought a Letter to Mr. Brooks, desiring his Friendship, &c. and promising in return that nothing should be wanting in which he could oblige him; the Copy of which I sent that Evening to Negrais; and, as they did not think it prudent to go themselves, they went up the River again that evening, to wait there 'till an Answer might be had to the Letter, I sent; which being expected in four days, they promised to return in that period, which they accordingly did, and the Schooner from Negrais arrived the same evening, with Orders for me to accompany them thither on her; we set out accordingly the 19th in the morning, and arrived at Negrais at 8 PM the 22d. The Embassadors had their Audience the 23d; but their Business being not compleated, nor determinate Answers given, till the 26th, it was 6 that evening before we set out again for Persaim, and I o'clock in the morning the 30th before we arrived there; where we found then about 1800 Peguers, in about 60 fighting Boats, which, as we were then informed, had on the 26th past taken all the Bûraghmah Boats (being about 20) which waited for the return of the Embassadors. These Peguers insisted much on having the Embassadors surrendered to them, but this I absolutely refused, and as there remained no practicable method of conducting them up in safety, we determined to carry them back to Negrais; and, as I thought it absolutely necessary, for their safety, to go with them there, we set out the 31st in the evening accordingly, and at 6 PM on the 3d April arrived there. The 4th, the Embassadors went ashore, and staid to wait some favourable opportunity) whereby to return to their Master: which it appears was attempted some two or three days after. The 9th at 4 in the Evening I set out again on the Schooner for Persaim, where I arrived on the morning of the 12th. The number of Troops here at this juncture not exceeding 500, a part of them having deserted, though it appears not 'till they had made some Incursions in the Country above, and brought off good quantities of Grain, Buffaloes, some boats, &c. The 16th they received intelligence, that Chowbrah had been attacked by the Bûraghmahns in his Camp at Sinyangon, this gave them here much concern (or the Event, and made them readily suspect, what at last they were confirmed in, viz. that he might be defeated, and accordingly they received that Account the 21st in the Afternoon: and, having made preparations for that purpose, they all set out for Syrian that night, and were followed, the next day, by those which were sent up the Country to ravage it; so that on the 23d in the morning there was not a single
Peguer left here, being mostly retired to Syrian, where they had received information the Bûraghmahns intended to push their conquests, and 'tis whispered that in order to it, they are arrived in the neighbourhood of Dagon.

The 2d of May a Party of Buraghmahns from Khoukkhoughn, consisting of about 1000 Men, in 40 Boats, arrived here, (commanded by the same Man who was defeated at this Place the 26th March) who informed us that the Buraghmahns had attacked the Peguers in their Works, at Sinyangong and Panlang, and routed them thence; and that the King of the Bûraghmahns, with the body of his Army, was now encamped at Dagon. The 3d in the morning these 40 Boats set out again, down the River, in quest of what Peguers lay hid in the sundry Rivers and Creeks, between this and Dagon; and, if succeeding, to disperse them, with a resolution to go thither that way.

The 8th in the morning these 40 Boats, with 9 more, returned, having attacked the Peguers, on the 5th instant, in some of the Rivers, near the Sea side; and, as they say, defeated and taken from them 8 Boats, 7 small Guns, 8 Muskets, 10 Viss of Powder, killed many Men, and taken two Prisoners.

The 11th instant the Fleet set out again for Koukkhoughn, and the same time arrived Advices here, that a party of Bûraghmahns, who had been dispatched to reduce the Kerianers in Metra River, had accordingly effected it.

The 20th arrived here about 20 Families in as many Boats, mostly Bûraghmahns, who had abandoned the Peguers, and came to take protection of the Bûraghmahns, and for that purpose set out the same evening for Lower Conjong. Soon after which, about 9 PM, arrived here a small Party of Peguers, through the Woods, about 14 or 16 in number, they passed by our House, in such haste, that we had only time to ask them who they were? where the body of their People was? and what number they consisted of? to which they only answered they were Peguers, their Party was below, and that they consisted of about 500. Then asking if the Bûraghmahns were here? and, being resolved negatively, set out immediately.

The 25th arrived 5 Bûragmah Boats from Khoukkhoughn, and from that to the 28th about 35 more, which made the number amount to 40 righting Boats, and were manned with about 800 effective Men, besides these, a Party of theirs came by land of about 200 Men, and the same day arrived at their Camp, part of those 20 Families, which I have already said arrived here on the 20th instant, and set out again the same day for Conjong, who happening to be intercepted, the day after, by two Pegu fighting Boats, were many of them cut off, others taken, and those which came to the Camp escaped.

The 2d June, in the evening, 35 of the Boats went down the River (the others being dispatched on the look out) in order to meet the Honourable Company's Schooner, on board of which were expected to be the remaining two Embassadors, who had hitherto waited an opportunity to come hither; and the 3d,
at 9 PM, they returned again with the Schooner, and the two Embassadors, on
board her, as expected, and, on the 5th, these two Embassadors set out for the King
at Dagon, with the Chief of Negrais his Letter.

The 7th arrived here those Bûraghmahns (being about 16 Families) which
had since the Desertion of this Town, taken shelter at Negrais; they now entered
into the Party, and protection of their own Faction; and were received without
further molestation, than being each Family cessed 3 Tickle. From this time
forward the General suffered several of his Troops, those with their Boats as well
as others, to retire to their Homes; (perhaps on some pecuniary consideration made
him) to follow their necessary vocations, as preparing for Tillage, &c. insomuch
that on the 17th there remained but 7 fighting Boats, with which he that morning
went down the River, as he said, in quest of the Enemy: But it is probable he did
not go with that intention, since it is evident he did not go into that Quarter where
he well knew they lay, viz. about Pooloo; for on the 20th two stout Pegu Boats,
well manned, arrived here, and burnt the Buraghmah Houses, then set out again
immediately).

On the 24th there arrived from the Buraghmah King, at Dagon, two
Embassadors (one of them being one of those which came to Mr. Brooke from the
King in April last) designed for Negrais, to the Chief there, with a Present of two
Horses, 100 Viss of Wax, 100 Viss of Teeth, and a Ring; they were escorted with
about 20 fighting Boats, well equipped and manned, with about 600 Men. The 28th
arrived here the Party consisting of 7 Boats, which left this the 17th instant, but
brought with them no tokens of having distressed the Peguers: Their Chief now put
himself under Orders of him who commands the Party from Dagon, and is now
Chief of all ranks of the Faction in this Quarter.

This Chief sent his Orders into all parts of this Neighbourhood, commanding
the Seggees of the Villages, each to bring in his Quota of Men and Grain; which
being accordingly done, they made themselves ready for an Expedition, and set
out, with about 50 Boats, in quest of the Peguers, on the 5th July, but first of all to
escort the Embassadors, as far down the River, as they should think past any
danger from the Enemy.

The 6th in the evening we received News that the King, (as we have hitherto
called him) late at Dagon, had set out thence, some fifteen days since, to go into the
Ava Dominions, to oppose the late Bûragmah King's Son, who, it appears, has
invaded the Kingdom in that Quarter, from the side of Siam, and contends for the
Crown, of his late Father.

*Journal of a Joint Embassy to the King of the Bûragmahns*
Having received Orders, from the Chief of Negrais, to accompany the King of the Bûraghmahns two Embassadors to their Prince, Lieut. John North and myself set out, from Negrais, in company with them, the 17th July, as Embassadors from the Honourable Company, being provided by Henry Brooke, Esq. with a Present for that Prince; consisting of 4 Pieces of Iron Cannon, one a 12, the other three 9 pounders; 80 Shot and 4 Chests of Powder, together with some few things of less value; having Orders from the said Henry Brooke, Esq. for the concluding a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance., between that Prince and our Honourable Masters.

Arriving at Persaim, the 19th, and having prepared our Boats, in the best manner we could, proceeded on our Passage again the 21st in the Afternoon.

On the 23d arrived at the Quala of Coanjong, where my Colleague, Lieut. John North, was seized with an Aguish fit, which terminated in a continued Fever.

The 24th at 6 in the evening left this Place again and at 5 in the Afternoon on the 25th reached Koukkoun Creek, which we left again.

The 26th at 7 in the morning; and on the 27th, at 3 in the afternoon, arrived at Lameanah, where we continued 'till the 29th in the morning; and at 4 o'clock the same evening reached Bowchagang, where we were confirmed in the Truth of a Report, which we had heard some days before, viz. That the French and Peguers together, had both with Shipping and on shoar, attacked the Bûraghmahns at Dagon, and that they had made themselves Masters of the English, and other Vessels there, and pleyd all their Cannon on the Bûragmahn Camp, in so much that there then remained a probability of their being routed thence: This we thought a material affair, though it was not yet decided, and therefore forwarded a Letter to the Chief of Negrais, with the most circumstantial Account of it that we could procure. Now my Colleague's Fever began to intermit, having reduced him to a state of great weakness.

The 30th, in morning, left Bowchagang, and lay the following Night at Tombay, which we left again.

The 31st, at 2 in the Afternoon, and at about the same time of day, on Friday, the 1st August, got out into the Great River, leading from Ava, which, had the King been at Dagon, we should have gone thereby; But now the Bûraghmah Gentlemen. acknowledged themselves convinced that he was gone up, of which they hitherto pretended to doubt; we urged to them the necessity of our making all possible dispatch, which they promised to do, to the utmost of their power.

The 3d, at Sunset, we arrived at Lundsey, where we staid for the Boat, that carried the Guns, to get a Mast and Sail, the being the thing that so greatly prolongs our Passage.

At 10 in the forenoon, of the 6th, we left Lundsey, and having passed Saladan (a Place remarkable for the great quantities of Timber it produces) and three or four places of less note, arrived the 9th, in the evening, at Front: having
left the Boat which the Guns, something behind us, in order to procure a more commodious Boat for Mr. North, against the might come, he being not yet perfectly recovered, and attributed it chiefly, to the inconveniencies he suffered in that we now were.

The Weather proving remarkably calm, and the Freshes exceeding strong, it was the 11th ere the Boat with the Guns arrived; and, that no time might be lost, we prevailed on her to set out again the next day. Having now sufficiently experienced how tedious it was to go up this River, at this Season, and particularly informed ourselves (from such People as probably could have no Interest in misleading us) in how long a time we might perform the residue of our Passage; received such an Account, as by no means left us any reason to think we could return to Negrais, in Season for a Vessel to be dispatched thence to the Coast, and be able to return again before the NE Monsoon: On this we again remonstrated, to the Head-Man of the Boats of our Fleet, and the Governor of Prone, together with the two Embassadors, how great a disappointment to His Majesty, should be please to sign the Treaty, if we could not return to Negrais, in season for a Vessel to be sent to the Coast, and return from thence again before the NE Monsoon; to which they unanimously answered, we should be forwarded, with all possible dispatch; but, notwithstanding this, we foresaw how unlikely it was, we should arrive at Negrais again, time enough for this purpose, and therefore wrote to Mr. Brooke, advising him of the improbability of it; and at the same time informing him that the Bûraghmahns, had not only made a Sally out of their Works, and defeated the Besiegers, but also compelled the Vessels to withdraw from thence; and how much the People in general were irritated against Capt. Swaine, “whose conduct,” said they, “argued him (and consequently You) our Enemy.”

Being well assured of overtaking the Boat with the Guns, staid here for the benefit of Mr. North’s health (who was now seized by a Flux) ’till the 14th, and then set out in the Afternoon.

The 17th touched at Camma, and set out again immediately after.

The 19th, at Meachagang, met the Generalissimo of the King’s whole Troops, with about 50 Boats, and 4000 Men bound to Dagoon; to re-inforce and take the Command of the Army there; to whom on, consideration of the situation of our Affairs at Dagon and Syrian, we had, when we first heard of his coming down, resolved, when we should meet him, to procure an interview, and make him some Present, in order to mitigate, and cool, his resentment against our Shipping, in that Quarter; Mr. North being ill, I paid him my Compliments in his own Boat, and at the same time presented him with sundry things, to about 100 Rupees value; and after a little Conversation, in which he shewed great hopes of taking Syrian, and destroying the French Vessels, I took my leave, and we each proceeded on our respective Voyages. The 23d arrived at Mellone, where we stayed about an hour, and set out again. The 24th, at night, reached Yaynangong, or Earth-oil town,
where we staid the night, and set out the 25th, in the morning; and on the 27th, about 2 o’Clock in the afternoon, arrived at Youngoue, where having procured a House we carried my Colleague on shoar, who was, now reduced to a state of such weakness, as not to be able to walk, or even stand; and his distemper, still raging, indicated the approach of Death, which accordingly happened the 30th, at ½ past 9 in the morning; and he was interred the same evening, with all the Decency that the Circumstances of Place, and Necessaries, would admit of; the Ceremony being performed, I again remonstrated to the Embassadors, &c. the necessity I apprehended there was, of our making more dispatch than what we had yet done; to which they answered as they did before that all possible haste should be made; and indeed it must be confessed, that there could scarcely be any other method used to forward the Boat with, the Guns, (as she was full manned with Oars and provided with a very large Sail) except that of having People ready (for her Crew was changed at almost every Town) at each stage to go on board her, as soon as she should arrive at it, which I proposed to them, and in order to it, they generally sent a light Boat a-head, to get the People ready against she came; but I think it was not so well executed, as to afford all the advantage that might be expected from it. The 31st. at Sunrise, we set out from Youngoue, and after having touched at several small Places, of some 30, others 40 or 50 Houses, it was the 8th September, before we arrived at the late Seat of the Empire, AVA, which is now governed, under the King, by his Brother-in-law; on whom I waited, and was kindly received; at least in such manner as is, in this Country, generally esteemed so. The 9th at Sunrise we set out for Khounmeon, a Town, on the Bank of the River, where the King always lands, or embarks, going on, or coming from, any Expedition; and on the 12th, at about 3 in the afternoon, arrived there, when the Governor immediately dispatched notice thereof to the King. On the 13th, I waited on this Governor, by whom too I was kindly received; He told me, he had advised his Majesty of our Arrival, and expected an Answer that day; and, as I understood after, came accordingly to call the Head Man of the Party,’ which came with us, and the Bûraghmah Embassador, (the Armenian having no Orders to come, durst not repair to Court ’till he was called) the others set out on the 14th, in order, perhaps, to report the Event of their Embassy. On the 15th the Bûraghmah Embassador returned to Khounmeon again, with Orders to accompany us back to the King, and on the 16th in the forenoon set out, and, after having laid by considerably in the way, reached the Town about Sunset, and was lodged, by the King's Appointment, in a House, prepared for the purpose, just without the middle East Gate. When the Bûraghmah Embassador waited on the King, to acquaint him of our arrival, and soon after his Secretary came, by his Order, to take an Inventory of our Present; which being done, he returned with it directly to him. On the 17th, in the morning, I was given to understand, that he intended to admit me to a Publick Audience, in the evening; and, for that purpose (having disposed of every thing to the best advantage for the
displaying the grandeur of his State) I set out at 4 o'clock, accompanied by 10 or 12
of his Officers, the 4 Chests of Powder, some Shot, 2 Musquets, 2 Brass Carbines,
1 Gilt Looking Glass, 2 Bags of red Earth, and 6 Bottles of Lavender Water, being
carried, with the Governor's Letter, on a piece of clean Muslin, in procession
before us; and entering the Gate, passed through two ranks of Elephants and
Horses, promiscuously disposed of, and interspersed with Clouds of People,
(perhaps the major part of the inhabitants of the Town) until we came to a Street
leading to the Palace-Yard, where were disposed of in rows, about 200 Pieces of
Brass Patareros, and Cannon, and having advanced near the Yard Gate, where we
could view the King on his Throne, began our Compliments (Which were
performed on the Knees, bowing the Head three times low down; this was repeated
three separate times, from the Place, where it was first begun, to the Palace Steps.
It must be confessed it was an extraordinary Ceremony, as I had it in my power to
have refused, at least not voluntarily to have submitted to the performance of it. but
what would have been the Consequence? I conceive the preventing an amicable
Interview, breaking off the Treaty, and confirming them in the Opinion which they,
either real, or pretendedly, entertained, since our Ships firing on them, of our being
in a Combination with the Peguers, against them. But it may be objected perhaps,
that The Honourable Company's Dignity is not to be prostituted after such manner,
on any Condition: I answer, the Custom of this Country is well known, that some
such Ceremony has been always paid, and they that would reform the manners of a
Jealous Prince, or bigotted People, need much force or eloquence; I was master of
neither. Moreover I was possessed of no Instructions on that Head, and I could not
Justify myself to those who had an Authority to examine me. for interrupting that
friendship and good understanding which we might expect to ensue from this
journey, on a punctilio, which in a little time, by prudent management, I believe,
may in a great measure be got over), from whence to the Palace. Steps, we were
conducted by about 20 Musqueteers, headed by a Drum, In this part of the Walk,
were seated at little distances on each side, several Bands of various, sorts of
Musick, and Women Dancers, unto the Steps ascending the Presence Room, where
I entered in the midst of a Croud of Officers, in their Court Dress, the King's two
Eldest Sons, being seated on Carpets, one on each side the foot of his Throne
where their Father sat in State. Having paid him my Compliments, he looked at me
for some time, and at length said, How does your King do? I answered, he was well
when we had the last accounts from Europe. How old is he? seventy-two Years. Is
he at Peace with his neighbouring Princes? Yes, and has been since the last War
with our old Enemy the French, which is now about 6 Years. Having paused some
time, at length says he, Your Ships that were at Dagon with Mr. Whitehall, I
treated with kindness, and supplied them with what they wanted, and at my leaving
that Place, to come here to keep our fast, desired him that, in case it should be
required in my absence, on an emergency, to assist my People; or at least not to
join the Peguers against them; which though he promised to observe, yet was the
first that fired on them; I answered, I was heartily grieved at his being guilty of so
rash, and imprudent an Action; and that I was sure His Majesty himself could not
be more offended at him than Mr. Brooke would be for it; However hoped, that, on
due examination, it would in the event appear clearly to His Majesty, that, it was
either the force of the Peguers, or the fraud and device of our inveterate Enemies,
the French, which had compelled, or seduced him to it; But says he, had not Mr.
Brooke any hand in this; was it not by his Counsel? I gave him all the assurances to
the contrary, that I thought would be most likely to convince him, and concluded
that head, with averring, that I was sure no other Human Affair could give him so
great uneasiness, as the News of this would do. He then ordered the Letter to be
read, to which he gave a calm attention 'till coming to these Words,

“As you will, by this means, obtain an Alliance and Friendship with so great a
Power as the Honourable East India Company, who can send you such Assistance
as will support Your Majesty's Throne, against all future Rebellions, Domestick
feuds, and foreign Enemies.”

At which he affected a very hearty laugh, (and his Officers in attendance, like
tue Courtiers, joined in the Chorus) said, have I asked? or, do I want any
Assistance to reduce my Enemies to subjection? let none conceive such an
opinion? have I not, in three Years time, extended my Conquest three Months
journey on every Quarter, without the help of Cannon or Muskets? Nay, I have
with Bludgeons only, opposed and defeated these Peguers, who destroyed the
Capital of this Kingdom; and took the Prince prisoner; and, a Month hence, I intend
to go, with a great force, in person to Dagoon, where I have an Army now lying;
when I will advance to the Walls of Pegu; blockade, and starve them out of it, which
is the last Town I have now to take, to compleat my Conquest; and then I will go in
quest of Bourno, Then the Secretary proceeding on to these Words, “these
Gentlemen may be Witnesses to Your Majesty's placing your Signet to the
Contract on your Part, &c.”

[H]e again affected the same mirth (and was too again joined by his
Courteous attendance) saying, What Madman Wrote that (alluding to the
Bûraghmah who translated the Letter, for he thought, or pretended to think, it
strange, that one of his own Subjects should think, --in which he supposed the
Translator to agree with the Writer of the Original—that he who had recovered
most of all the Ancient Dominions, should want assistance to take the Last Throne,
as he called it)? the Letter being gone through, he says, Captain, see this Sword, it
is now three Years, since it has been constantly exercised in chastising my
Enemies; it is indeed almost blunt with use, but it shall be continued to the same,

SBBR 3.1 (SPRING 2005): 99-122
'till they are utterly dispersed; don't talk of Assistance, I require none, the Peguers I cart wipe away as thus (Drawing the Palm of one Hand over the other).

I told him I was convinced of his potency, but hoped at the same time our voluntary Offer would not be taken in bad part. He answers, See these Arms and this Thigh (drawing the sleeves of his Vesture over his Shoulders, and tucking the lower part up to his Crutch) adds, amongst 1000 you won't see my match. I myself can crush 100 such as the King of PEGU. I protest, and GOD knows the truth of my assertion, that State is a burthen to me, 'tis a confinement which I endure only on account of the necessity there is for it, towards the support of Government. I have carryed my Arms to the confines of CHINA; the King of which Country has sent me a rich Present of curious things, (several of which he shewed me,) on the other quarter, I have reduced to my subjection the major part of the Kingdom of CASSAY, whose Heir I have taken captive, see there he sits behind you: I have also some of the Princesses in my Court, they sit yonder (then says he to them) come forth, on which they passed before us;¹ I have upwards of 100 near Relations, amongst the rest an own Brother, there he sits, (pointing to him) and 9 children, two of them Men grown, there they are: they have behaved well in the late War, the third a Youth, here he is, the rest are but young. To all which I gave the most suitable, or what I conceived would be the most agreeable Answers, (for I thought that was the Avenue to his heart) admiring the success of his Arms, telling him it was the immediate hand of Providence; and declared his Presents from CHINA, rich and curious; hoping my Honourable Masters w ould have the opportunity of presenting to him some of the Produce of Europe, in their kinds equal to, if not surpassing, them; when it should be known to them, what sorts would be most acceptable to His Majesty, and hoped that his Royal Progeny would, to the end of all time, perpetuate the memory of their unparalleled Predecessor. After some time he asked me where the other Letter was, meaning the Articles, I answered him here, He asked me, in what Language they were, I told him, English, he then desired me to get them translated into Bûraghmah and bring them to him the next day; on which he gave the Signal for our withdrawing, which we did accordingly, going through the same Ceremony as I did at my Entrance.

The 18th translated the heads of the Articles into Bûraghmah, in order to have presented them to the King, but he being not disposed to receive them that day, desired they might be sent by Gregory (The Armenian Ambassador, which came with us, he was often employed afterwards by the King in bringing Messages to me, and was the Man who always introduced me to him, and which brought Apologies from Him, or perhaps either forged, or new formed, them himself, as

¹ Original footnote: Capt. Baker informed me, the Prince was about 21, and a Princess 17, who were as Hostages for the Fidelity of Cassay; They were fairer than the fairest of the Peguers, but not perfectly white. Her Feaures were very fine; a long face, and an air of grandeur in her appearance. A. D. 1759.
they were generally in exceeding kind terms, when His Majesty desired to be excused from granting me an Audience, at my request, on account of his Indisposition. I was ever dubious of the uprightness of this Man, yet deemed it imprudent to discover my distrust, and though it impossible to break with him, at this time, to advantage; as he had so much the King’s ear; But our most dangerous Enemy was Zachary, an Armenian by Nation, and an Accomplice and Intimate of his, of whom I shall say more hereafter), the next; which was accordingly done, being the 19th, and causing them to be read to him, said, what they want three Places, and will give me in lieu thereof an Annual Curiosity; and pray what is this Curiosity to be? Go ask the Captain, Gregory came accordingly and desired to know, what it was designed to be, or whether I could assure any particular thing. I told him the Honourable Company had expressed themselves in that manner, only because the King might have the opportunity of making known to them, what would, in the Product of EUROPE, be most acceptable to him. Gregory returned immediately with this my Answer, and the King sent word again by him in return, that Muskets and Guns were what he made choice of, could I assure his Present should consist at that: I returned for answer, that he might depend, it should.

The same night, though late, he sent Gregory back again with this Message, viz. that as he intended to begin the Siege of Pegu, some six Weeks hence, he chose rather to have a good Supply of Arms now, than an Annual Present, of them, and that he would grant the Negrais and Persaim to the Honourable Company, with a Place at Dagon, where he intended to build a Town himself (for he was determined to destroy Syrian, and suffer no body to inhabit there) if I would assure him he should be immediately supplied with 1000 Muskets, and 20 Pieces of Cannon. Thus ended all that passed material on the 19th, and on the 20th, in the morning, I returned for Answer by Gregory again, that 1000 Muskets was a quantity that I could not assure, however, that if His Majesty would please to sign these Articles, I would warrant that on my return to Negrais he should be supplied on the spot with 75 Muskets and six Pieces of Cannon, and that a Vessel should be sent to the Coast, to return again as soon as possible with 14 Pieces of Cannon, and 525 Muskets more; that being the utmost I could assure; however, I would use all my interest and Endeavours with Mr. Brooke, that the number of Muskets should be made 1000; and though I could not affirm it should be so, yet from the great respect I knew Mr. Brooke to have for His Majesty, and the strict attachment to the Bûragmah Interest in general, I had great hopes, I should be able to prevail on him to grant the full of His Majesty's request.

[Baker’s note]4

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4 This has been pulled up from Baker’s notes.
Here, it must be confessed, I took a very extraordinary step, but the Case appeared to me desperate; and, as I apprehended, must have had a suitable remedy; for this Armenian Zachary, of whom I spoke... had now arrived. Some two days since, he was one of the first of the Strangers who deserted Syrian, and came over to the King’s Party at Dagon, where, he accidentally met this other Armenian, Gregory; who was the only Stranger then in the Bûraghmah Camp; and who having followed the King in all his fortunes, since he was first attacked by the Peguers, after the destruction of Ava (of which he was then an Inhabitant) had gained much of his Esteem and Confidence; and making him to believe that he was intimately acquainted with the Manners and Interest of the English, French, and other Strangers; and that Zachary was Master of the two first, and several other Languages, the King employed them in bringing, what Strangers they could, over to his faction, in which they succeeded so well, that they, by that means, jointly engrossed His Majesty’s favour; and whosoever came, whether by their instigation or not, they made a merit of it; as was the case with all the Vessels which came to Dagon, particularly Bourno.

I having before had some acquaintance with this Zachary was well convinced from my Conversation with him, to what Interest, respecting the French and English he inclined; and being confirmed in it by a careful Examination of his Behaviour while, at Dagon, from sundry, Strangers, and even the Bûraghmahns themselves; found he had but too, much influenced the minds of the Kings and People, of the grandeur and strength of the French Nation; but, since, the Shipping attacking Dagon, he had entertained some fear of the King’s resentment, for what he had said in favour of them, but he found means to remove that, by declaring it a mad trick of Bourno’s, and that he would certainly be punished for it at Pondicherry. He moreover insinuated to the King, that he would undertake to reconcile the Affair, and make the French his friends, if His Majesty would send him, on that Embassy, to their President on, the Coast; and, I am well informed, that the King for a long lime designed it, and am not sure that he has yet dropt that Resolution entirely. Here methinks I foresee it will be said, how easy was it to convince the King of our sincerity, and the deceit of the French, particularly Since Bourno came over to them, and engaged to stay by them at Dagon, afterwards deserted them, and came again and fought against them; this indeed one would think were enough to convince them, but these Armenians (our Enemies) have taught them to say, did not, the English come to us, promised the King to stay by us, and we expected their help accordingly till the French and Peguers, attacked us, then, say they, when they, if they, had been friends, should have shewed themselves so, Suffered the Enemy to come upon us, without opposition; nay, though we esteem them as friends in our bosom, were the first that fired on us; and when they could not effect, what they intended, eloped with the rest; pray which shall we esteem our greatest Enemy? Notwithstanding this, perhaps, the King and
People, in general, believe the whole of that Affair to be a device of the French and Peguers; though they don't care to acknowledge it to us: However it has afforded a sufficient handle for this Frenchified Armenian, and he has not omitted to make the best use of it: Therefore finding the King wavering in his opinion; whether to send him to the French or not, I concluded something must be done to prevent it; for I make no doubt, when they know rightly the circumstances of Affairs, they would, if they could with the least shadow of Justice or Honour, have abandoned the Peguers; and nothing was more likely in my opinion to do it, than coming something near the King’s terms, especially as they were such as would not have proved more disadvantageous to the Honourable Company, than the presenting him annually with any tolerable Curiosity, which was their own Proposition, and more particularly so, as they were by this exempt from the obligation of assisting him against ait his Enemies, and this I do believe had its intended effect, for the next day when the Armenian waited on His Majesty he returned to the house, (for we live and eat together) something chagrined, and told me the King had been desiring him to go to Pondicherry with a Message for him, but that he had excused himself, and to be out of the way of further temptation he would leave the Place the next day, which he accordingly did; this, as I was afterwards informed, was actually the contrary of what had happened, so that 1 presume the making the King this Offer, was the principal thing which rendered the Armenian's Scheme abortive, though, as he never after Spoke of that affair, I was cautious not to urge it much, and only once after mentioned it; being loth to give any Assurance, for any particular thing, when the only reason which could justify me in doing of it, seemed to be for a time effectually answered; and indeed, whether that were sufficient to have vindicated me in it, or not, my Superiors can only judge of, to whose better knowledge, and impartiality, I appeal, for their approbation or reproof, in this unwarranted affair.

He [the king] then sent back word for us to wait on him on the Morrow, viz. 21st, and I went to the Palace Gate for that purpose, but he sent out an Apology, and desired that our Attendance might be postponed 'till the next day.

On the 22d accordingly, I waited on Him, at about 4 o'Clock in the Afternoon, when he happened to be busy with his Court, about other business; and therefore sat near an hour before he accosted me, which was again with the Story of the Shipping; how ill they (our English) had requited his favours, I answered him in such manner as at length he confessed, he believed Mr. Whitehill not guilty, but Swaine he affirmed to be resolved in a scheme with Bourno. However says he, you see my Army repulsed them, notwithstanding their force and treachery, but how can we trust you again? however, I am willing to try how far you will prove truely my friends, and therefore we will now live, as heretofore, in amity, and you may have a Place as customary of Persaim, and Dagon, (for we intend to destroy Syrian) but says he, with what Intention did you come to Negrais? and without staying for the Answer, went on again with Encomiums on himself, and success;
and ran on with a Narrative, of all his Actions, insomuch that I had not the opportunity to say any thing, but signifying my approbation of what he said; at length he concluded, with saying: now we shall see how far you will be our friends, and I will deal accordingly with The Company, then I told him if he would please to grant their Request, I would assure he would be supplied with the Arms, &c. I had before warranted; on that Condition, he said, I have granted them Negrais, and a Place at Persaim, and Dagon, but come again to-morrow morning.

The 23d in the morning I was desired to defer my attendance 'till the evening, between 4 and 5 o'clock, then I accordingly waited on Him, and having sat a little while, he called the Secretary and dictated to him Mr. Brooke's Letter, which was in our hearing; but I finding he tolerated The Honourable Company with liberty for Factories at Persaim and Dagon only, without any mention of Negrais, and all this without any form of security: I desired His Majesty, that he would please to make a Grant of that to them also, as Ships of Burthen could not be brought up to Persaim to repair; and because that it was particularly useful as a Harbour, which The Honourable Company often wanted to shelter their Ships, as it was at one Season of the Year dangerous lying on the Coast.

Why you are there, are you not? But I thought you had wanted to come all to Persaim.

[Baker's note:] To this I could give no determinate Answer; and, in several other respects, found the want of Particular Instructions, for had I known where The Honourable Company would have chosen to have had their Factory, when Persaim had been refused, I believe I might have had a Verbal Grant of it, for whenever that shall be asked again, as it must be if they chuse it, at any other Place than near Persaim, it will be esteemed by the King as another favour granted; and whosoever shall be hereafter deputed by You to treat with the King, will, I am persuaded, need Particular Instructions on almost every Head that can happen; of the Conclusion of his Business will in all appearance be put off 'till the next time, &c. &c. that being a hole which they never fail to creep out at. Though after all it must be confessed, the manner of your Proceedings with them is rather begging a favour, than coming to terms with them, on one equal footing; and therefore I believe the success of the whole affair depends upon the manner, and other Circumstances, of the next Embassy.

[King continues] However I don't tell you not to stay there, but let me see The Company's generosity, and then They shall see mine; we are yet but Strangers, this is the first time you have ever seen my face, I don't yet well know your Intention of staying there, for what instance have I had of your sincerity, I treated your Ships at Dagon, with singular kindness, and they proved traitorous to me after it; let me see how The Company will behave this time, let them show their
generosity, and mine shall not be wanting. I don't care if they bring all Madras to Negrais, if they behave kindly now; for this is the only time by which I shall judge of their friendship. Then he gave the signal to withdraw, and come again in the morning.

The 24th in the morning I went to the Palace Gate, to have waited on him, but was told he desired I would come in the evening, I went in the evening accordingly, but was told he was indisposed, and would have me come the next day (His Indisposition was excessive grief for a favourite Concubine, who then lay dangerously ill).

I went accordingly, viz. the 25th in the afternoon, but he being (as I was told) greatly indisposed; I was desired to come to the Rounday, the next day, where the Governor's Letter should be delivered to me by the King's Council, unless I had any particular desire to take my Leave of His Majesty in person, I told them, I was entirely devoted to the King's Pleasure, with respect to that: I then was given to understand the same night, that he would admit me to an Audience the next morning.

The 26th, I kept a person at the Palace the whole day, to know when it should be the King's Pleasure to admit me; but at night was told, as heretofore, that His Majesty's Indisposition had so much increased, that he could not grant an Audience, and therefore desired me to come again in the morning; hoping he might be better then, I went accordingly about 10 o'clock in the morning, on the 27th to the Inner Rounday, from whence a Messenger informed His Majesty of my coming, who returned for an Answer in Writing, don't take it amiss Captain, that I cannot grant you an Interview, my Indisposition will not admit of it (At this time his favourite lay at the Point of Death, and expired about two hours after. She was Daughter to a petty Prince, whose Dominions lay about 15 days Journey to the Northward of Momchabue, and whom the King has subdued; and taken this Princess Captive); I have therefore sent, by my first Minister, The Company's Letter, and ordered him to give you a Horse, return again with dispatch and meet me at Dagon, or in the way thither, then The Company shall not want what they would have; I have Elephant's Teeth, Wax, &c. &c. ready for them, this being read, and interpreted to me, the Minister delivered me the King's Letter, and ordered the Horse to be sent to my House, I then answered the King's Apology and said, I am far from thinking ill of His Majesty tor not granting me an Audience of Leave, at such Conjuncture; I am on the contrary heartily grieved for his Indisposition, and hoped his recovery would be speedy; for which I should not cease to pray; then paying my Compliments, took my leave and withdrew to my House, where I made ready tor setting out the next morning.

Sunday, 28th September, at 4 in the morning set out for Khounmeon, where arrived at 10 the same forenoon, and employed the residue of the day in preparing for our Departure.
The 29th, at 5 in the forenoon, left Khounmeon, and on the 30th, at 10 AM, arrived at Ava, where we staid 24 hours to get Rice, &c. and then on the 1st of October, at 10 AM, left that Place, and at Midnight, (for we went night and day) between the 2d and 3d, arrived at Pegang Youngue; Where, on the morning following, we were informed that there had a Boat passed that Place, two days before, with a Letter for us, on which I immediately dispatched a Man to Ava by Land, that being the shortest way, to order her back here, where I resolved to stay 'till her Return; expecting at the same time she might get information in her Passage, that we were come down, and that on that News she would immediately return hither; but it happened that she received no certain account of our being come down 'till she arrived at Ava; (Where she met the messenger I sent from Youngue).

It was the 10th, in the morning, before she arrived, when, finding the Letter to import no reason for our returning to the King, as at first was doubtful, we left that Place immediately.

On the 14th, in the evening, arrived at Front.
On the 16th, in the morning, set out from thence again; and
On the 17th, in the evening, arrived at Lundsey.
The 18th left Lundsey.
On the 19th, entered the mouth of the Negraise River; and
On the 20th, arrived at Khoukkoun.
The 23d left Khoukkoun.
The 24th arrived at Cowjoeng Quainla, where continued for an Escort of Bûraghmah Boats 'till the 27th, and then left that Place,
The 29th, arrived at Persaim, where staid about an hour, and set out again, and on the 30th, arrived at Negrais.

This is an Extract and true Account of our Passage to Momchabue, my transactions with the King there, in every respect (some Repetitions respecting his success in the Wars only excepted, of which he seemed to think he could hardly say enough) and Return from thence. As Witness my hand--George Baker.

A Short Character of the King of the Bûraghmahns

It being but ten Days that I resided at Momchabue, and either on account of His Majesty's real Affliction, or pretended Illness, had no very frequent access at Court; and not being able to speak the Language well, it can't be supposed that I can give a very full, or general Description of this Prince, or his Policy: However I will say a few words, such as has come to my knowledge, of his Rise, Wars, Person, and Government, and that as followeth.
At the reduction of Ava by the Peguers,\(^5\) and the taking the then King Captive, he was a Seggee, (i.e. the Head of a Village) over about 300 families, inhabiting a little Spot, where his Capital now stands, called Momchabue. Soon after the Rajah\(^6\) had made himself Master of Ava, he sent an Officer, with about 100 Men, to neighbouring Villages, to administer the Oaths of Allegiance, and amongst the rest to Momchabue; When they were told by the Seggee (now King) that he was not prepared for the performance of that Ceremony, after a manner that he could wish, to honour those with who were to administer it; and therefore begged they would please to make their tour to the neighbouring Villages first, and, by their return, he would make provision for the performance of it, suitable to the occasion: The Pegu Officer went his Rounds accordingly, and returning to Momchabue was kindly received by his Host, who was to be sworn the next day; but, pursuant to a premeditated Resolution, the Peguers were all set on, and massacred, in the night.

The news of the Peguers being cut off, at length reached the Rajah's ears at Ava, who sent a Party of about 1000 Men to chastise the Aggressors but he, in the Interim, had taken all necessary precautions for his Defence, got a good party of men together, and made himself a little Tenable Inclosure, in which he defended himself against this party of Peguers, and at length, in a skirmish, slaughtered many and dispersed the rest.

The Rainy Season being now commenced, he was attacked no more this Year, as the Rajah returned to Pegu, leaving a Garrison only in Ava. The Seggee, or as the People began now to call him, by the Grace of GOD the Great Man, began to be famous, and the fugitive Prince, the King of Ava's Son, who had quitted that Place before it was taken, about this time, took shelter under his Protection; on which all the neighbouring Country, united with them, and amongst the rest the Quois, who had been a sore thorn in the King of Ava's side during his Wars with the Peguers.

The fair Weather Season being now commenced again, the Peguers began their Campaign, and brought a great Body of Troops against Momchabue, and (not to descend to particulars) were again defeated, and retired to Ava. About this time, the Prince, Son of the Captive King, absconded from Momchabue, on suspicion of their having some treacherous design on his Person, and retired into the Siam Dominions; soon after, the same season, the Buraghmahn attacked Ava, and made themselves masters of it, and not long after that again, the Great Man, as I now call

\(^5\) Original footnote: Captain Baker informed me the King of Ava put to death in October 1753, was the 35 in a direct Line of that Family, in a period of 375 Years, which goes back A.D. 1378. Another Line before this, for time immemorial. I am doubtful if this year, on which he was put to death, was 1753, or 1754. A.D.

\(^6\) Original footnote: Apporazah, Brother to the King of Pegu, commonly, though erroneously, called Upper Rajah. A.D.
him, massacred all the Quoys, that were then at Momchabut, being about 700, alleging that they had laid a scheme, to have effected the same thing on them; he, having now no rival in his neighbourhood, and being possessed of a good posse of Troops, extended his conquest on every Quarter, and to the Southward as far as near Youngeoe.

This was the State of his Affairs, when in November 1754, on the Peguers having put the King of the Bûrahmahnns to death, the Bûrahmahnns, in Prone, massacred all the Pegu Officers, Soldiers, and common People of that Nation, then there, and as there was no Pegu Garrisons above that Town; they dispatched a Messenger to Momchabue, to beg the Great Man to come to their assistance; assuring him of their readiness to receive him as their Sovereign, on which he made as speedy preparations as possible, and after having sent a Body of Troops, under one of his principal Officers, into the Siam Dominions, to oppose the lineal Heir to the Crown, and Quois, both of which were now his Enemies, he departed for Prone; where he arrived very seasonably for the relief of that Place, it being then closely besieged by the Peguers, which siege however he found means to raise, after having killed and taken many of their troops, and caused the rest to retire down, within two days journey of Syrian, at a place called Panlang or Sinyangong.

Being thus successful in the Wars, he began now to take a Prince-like-state on him, and to receive the Compliments, and Courtesies usually paid to Sovereigns, in this Country; (which before he absolutely refused, saying, GOD would send the People a Prince, he for his part was only as an Introduction to a Revolution.)

Having now made himself master of this important Place, where he got many Boats, and had abundance of People flock to him, he resolved to push his Conquest, and accordingly attacked the Peguers again, at Panlang, which he carried by storm, and those which escaped of that Party retiring to Syrian, he followed them to Dagon, where he pitched his Camp, and here (as there had indeed many before) abundance of Bûrahmahnns, which were hitherto with the Peguers, deserted them, and came to him; here he continued 'till some time in June, 1755, when rinding it necessary to provide himself with more fighting Boats, and to collect the People together, many of which yet lay about in by-places where they, and their Families, had hid themselves during the Troubles; he resolved to go in person, and giveth the necessary Orders for it; and having appointed about 15,000 Men to maintain the Post at Dagon, set out accordingly; and as he passed by every Place, gave orders, for them respectively, to call in the former Inhabitants, and obliged them to build a number of fighting Boats, in proportion to the number of the People; many of which I saw in my way down, and all of which will probably be ready by the time he returns to Dagon, which he purposed to do in November, with, as he said, 1000 Boats and 100,000 Men, but by the best Information 1 can
get, his Boats will not exceed 500, nor his Troops, both by Land and Water, not above 30 or 40 thousand, which perhaps with the Army now at Dagon, may make the whole Body about 50,000.

Thus is the rise of the present King, of the Bûraghmahns, (for he is now generally allowed as such, all Officers taking their Oaths of Allegiance to him; and none now durst put him in mind of his having said, GOD would appoint another King) he is about 45 Years of Age, about 5 feet 11 inches high, of a hale Constitution, and sturdy, though clean, make, and of a Complexion, full as dark as the generality of Bûraghmahns, his Visage somewhat long, though not thin, nor prominent, and coarse features, a little pitted with the Small Pox, his aspect somewhat grave, when serious; and, when seated in his Throne, I thought he supported Majesty with a tolerable, grace; his Temper (if I have made right inferences from my Conversations with the People, for though he were a fiend from the lower Regions, his Subjects through fear, as a Conqueror, would extol his Virtues) is hasty; and disposition, severe, or rather cruel: I don't remember to have heard any instance of his Justice, (though he himself administers it in almost every case) that deserves to be more remembered for its impartiality than severity, though the former never fails to meet with Encomiums from them about him; for he always causes, and often sees, all corporal, or capital, Punishments to be executed, to the utmost rigour of the Sentence, which generally argues rather a barbarous than humane disposition.

As to his Courage, his actions have often proved it undaunted, and resolute; which, with that strictness of discipline he keeps in his Army, has won him his Crown; he has 9 Legitimate Children by one Wife, the three first Sons, the Eldest married, and is about 22 Years of Age, the second about 19 and is married also; He has also abundant Relations and Dependants, which he generally employs in Posts of trust, or consequence, and so many of the principal Men of the Country have lent a hand to his Cause, and are now become interested in it, that it he happens to compleat his conquest of the Peguers this Season, as (putting by the Assistance the French may render them) has certainly much probability in it, it will in all human appearance, be more than the fugitive Prince can do, to retrieve his Right, until some unforeseen contingencies may come to pass, or the hearts of the People, which is often seen to change, shall happen to be united, in a disposition to favour his Restoration.

[Table of ] Varities in spelling of Names in the MSS of Capt. Baker:

The names in his Map, being written in his own Hand, are placed first.

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7 Original footnote: The City of Pegu was taken in the end of May or beginning of June, 1757. A.D.
In Ava, Mellone, Meachagang, Prone, Saladan, Lundsey, (called also Yaoungmeoe) Persaim, and Negrais, there is no variety of spelling; the following Places are not in his Map.

Conjong, called also Coanjong and Cowjoeng Quainia; Khoukkhoughn, called also Koukkhoughn, Khoukkoun, and Koukkoun; Capt. Baker's K and R are so much alike, that it is difficult to distinguish the one from the other, and I suspect the Place named Rhouggkkhoughn, P. 135, and 136 [in the original] is the same as this; Lameanah, Bowchagang, and Tombay; these are on Persaim River: Dagon or Dagoon, Syrian or Syriam; Yaynangong, Sinyangon, or Sanyangon; called also Panlang, Pooloo, Metra River, Pegue (for Pegu). A.D.
TREATY of FRIENDSHIP and ALLIANCE, between The Honourable The United Company of Merchants of England, trading to the East Indies, Subjects of His most Sacred Majesty, George the Second, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Inland, King &c. &c. &c. of the One Part, and the Great King of Ava and Pegu, The greatest King upon Earth, Allaum Praw &c. &c. &c. of the Other Part.

Be it known, unto all whom it may concern, that the Parties abovementioned, wisely considering that the Riches of Kingdoms are derived from Commerce, for the Promotion and Prosperity whereof, it is necessary, that Security and a Free intercourse should subsist, between the Nations trading together, they the said Parties have, therefore, for their mutual Benefit and Advantage, Agreed on the following Articles

1st. The King of Ava and Pegu doth hereby, for himself, his Heirs and successors, freely and absolutely grant unto the said Honourable United Company, and their Successors, the Island of Negrais, which from henceforth for evermore they shall and may peaceably and quietly possess and enjoy, together with all Benefits and Advantages arising therefrom.

2d. The King of Ava and Pegu, for himself and his Successors, doth also hereby freely and absolutely grant unto the said Honourable United Companyy, and their Successors, a Spot, or Tract, of Ground situate on the Bank of Persaim River, opposite to the Pagoda Hill, and the Old Town of Persaim, of the following Extent, Viz. Two hundred Bamboos square, each Bamboo containing 7 Cubits, which said Spot, or Tract, of Ground at Persaim, The said Company and their Successors, shall and may henceforth, for evermore, peaceably and quietly possess and enjoy, together with all Benefit and Advantage arising thereby, and with full Liberty to build Fortifications, and erect such other Buildings thereon, as they shall think fit.

3d. The King of Ava and Pegu doth hereby further for himself, his Heirs and Successors, freely and absolutely, grant unto the said Honourable United Company, and their Successors, and the Servants of the said Company, the full and unlimited Privilede of trading, in what kind of Goods or Merchandize they shall think fit, throughout all his Dominions, without let or hindrance, and free of all Duties or
Customs whatsoever; provided that the Commander of every Ship, arriving at any of his Ports, and claiming the above privilege, do produce before he can be entitled thereto, Certificate signed by the Governors, Chiefs, Factors or Agents of the said Company, that the Goods onboard such Ship, are the sole Property of the said Company, or their Servants, but all Goods whatsoever belonging to Strangers, or Persons not actually in the Service, of the said Company, shall pay the accustomed Duties.

4th. The King of Ava and Pegu doth hereby give and grant unto the said Honourable Company, and their Successors, and Servants, the free Liberty of employing such Artificers, Workmen or Tradesmen of his Subjects, as shall be willing to engage in his Service, on paying them the usual and accustomed Wages, And the King doth also hereby promise, that he will publish to his Subjects, free Liberty of engaging themselves in the said Company's Service as aforesaid.

5th. The King of Ava and Pegu doth hereby promise, that in Case any of his Officers, or Subjects, shall at any time invade, or molest the said Company, or their Servants, in any manner of wise, or abridge them of any of their Privileges of Trade, herein before expressed, on due Complaint thereof made, he will, to the utmost of his Power, without delay, protect and defend the said Company, and their Servants, and support them in the exercise and enjoyment of the said Privileges.

6th. In consideration whereof, the said Honourable Company do hereby promise and oblige themselves to present unto the King of Ava, and Pegu, annually, one Piece of Ordnance to carry a twelve pound Shot, as likewise 200 Viss of good Gunpowder, as an Acknowledgement, that they bear in remembrance the King's Friendship, in granting the said Island of Negrais, with the Spot, or Tract of Ground, situate on the Bank of Persaim River, as before-mentioned, to the said Company.

7th. The said United Company do hereby, tor themselves their Heirs and Successors, fully and absolutely grant unto the King of Ava and Pegu, and his Successors, and his and their Sublets the full and unlimited Privilege of trading in what kind of Goods or Merchandize they shall think fit, at the said Company's Ports, of Fort St. George, Fort St. David, Deve Cotah, and Vizagapatam, on the Coast of Choromandel, or any other of the Company's Ports in India, without any Let or hindrance, and free of all Duties and Customs whatsoever, provided that the Commander of every Ship, arriving at the said Ports, and claiming the above Privilege do produce, before he can be entitled thereto, a Certificate, under the King' Chop, that the Goods on board such Ship, are the sole Property of the King, or his Subjects.
8th. The United Company do hereby, for themselves and their Successors, promise and oblige themselves to aid, assist and defend, the King of Ava and Pegu, and his Successors against all their Enemies by Sea and Land, and for that purpose to furnish such a number of Troops, with proper Warlike Stores, as the Occasion may necessarily require, and the said Company can conveniently spare, from the Defence and Protection of their own Territories; upon consideration, nevertheless, that the King shall defray the Wages, and all Charges whatsoever, of such Troops, during the Time they shall be in his Service, and pay for all Warlike Stores that shall be expended.

9th. The said United Company do further for themselves and their Successors, promise that in Case the King of Tavoy, should, at any time hereafter, take up Arms against the King of Ava, and Pegu they will not on any Account give him the least Aid or Assistance; but on the contrary they do oblige themselves to protect and defend the King of Ava, and his Dominions and Subjects, to the utmost of their Power.

In Witness whereof, I the Great King of Ava, and Pegu, &c. Allaum Praw, have hereunto affixed my Royal Signet, this 28th day of July 1757.

“The King of Ava & Pegu’s Royal Signet.” [seal]

Editor’s Notes:

Ensign’s Robert Lester’s account of his embassy to Ava in 1757 was originally published in Alexander Dalrymple’s Oriental Repertory. It provides one of the few first-hand accounts of Alaung-hpaya and thus remains a valuable source on the reign and the beginnings of the Kon-baung Dynasty. Dalrymple’s italicization has been removed and dates have been expanded to include the month and year in order to avoid confusion.

M. W. C.

PROCEEDINGS OF AN EMBASSY TO THE KING OF AVA, PEGU, &C. IN 1757

Robert Lester, Ensign

[ Begins with an opening letter from Thomas Newton to Robert Lester dated 24 June 1757 ]

SIR,

I have received a Letter from the King of Ava, wherein he has acquainted me with his Conquest of Pegu, and has desired I would meet him in his way to Prone, having some Matters of Consequence to communicate to me; at the same time he acquaints me, if I could not conveniently come myself to him, then to send some proper Person, in my stead, to confer with him.

As I believe it would be imprudent in me to leave the Honourable Company’s Settlement, being at this time much indisposed, so, on the other hand, I
believe it will be for the Interest and Safety of this Settlement, to comply, as far as we are able, with the King (of Ava's) desire; I do therefore, on mature consideration, look upon you to be the most proper Person at the Negrais, to proceed on this Embassy, and you are accordingly appointed by me to go as an Embassador Extraordinary to the Bûraghmah King on this Occasion; and you are to be furnished with such Presents as the Settlement affords at this time, which are to be delivered to His Majesty in the Name and Behalf of The Honourable Company.

I have given Orders for the Mary Schooner to attend you from this Place to Persaim, where you are to meet Antonio, who is ordered by the King (of Ava) to provide proper Boats for your Conveyance, and to conduct you safely to him.

I now send by you, two copies of an intended Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, between the King of Ava, and the Honourable United East India Company; one of which you are to use your utmost endeavours to get His Majesty's Signet affixed thereto, which done and compleated, you are then to present him the other signed by me, and sealed with the Seal of the Arms of the Honourable United East India Company.

And as it will be impossible for me to know, at this Distance, what Reception you may meet with from the King, or His Great Officers about him, so it is out of my Power to give you any particular Instructions, relating to your Conduct on that Head, I must therefore refer it to your own Prudence and Judgment, in acting according to the Treatment you meet with, which will be your best Guide on this Occasion, I have herewith enclosed an Account of such things as are now sent with you, as a Present to the King (of Ava) which I recommend to your peculiar care, until such time as they are delivered by an Order from His Majesty.
I must desire you to let me hear as frequently from you as Opportunities will admit of, I most sincerely with you Enjoyment of Health and a successful Embassy, and I am Sir, Your most humble Servant,

Thomas Newton

Negrais, June 24th 1757.

P. S. I have enclosed an Exact Copy of my Letter to the King of Ava, which I desire you will shew to Antonio, and endeavour, by all means, to get it well and fairly translated into the Bûraghmah Language.

[Journal begins]

June 26th 1757. This Morning at 7 o'Clock I received the above Letter, and at 8 I embarked on board the Honourable Company's Schooner, the Mary, the Wind and the Tide being then in our favour for Persaim, I ordered the Master to proceed for that place, he accordingly weighed [anchor], and sailed; and at 10 at night we [anchored] at the Entrance of Persaim River; I have with me one Gunner, one Matross and two Lascars; with the undermentioned things, as a Present for the King of Ava, in the Name and Behalf of the Honourable Company, viz.

1 Four Pound Gun and Carriage compleat.
1 New Carriage for a Nine Pounder.
2 Barrels of fine Europe Powder.
1 Pair of Brass mounted pistol Blunderbuss.
1 Fuzee brass mounted.
2 Pieces of ordinary Red Broad Cloth.
3 Do. of Perpetuanoes Popinjay.
2 Do. of fine China Carpets.
10 Do. of Red Silk Taffety.
2 Do. of Silk Grogram.
2 Do. of Cossimbuzar Handkerchiefs.
2 Do. of fine striped Soosies.
2 Do. of Seersuckers.
June 27th 1757. This evening at 9 o'clock we [anchored] at Persaim, and, according to my Instructions, I immediately enquired for Antonio, the Person who is to be my Conductor to the King of Ava, but was informed that he was at Koughkong, a Place Eighty or Ninety miles up the River, I then ordered a Boat might be dispatched, with all Expedition, to let him know I was arrived at this Place, as an Ambassador from the Chief of the Island Negrais (with a Present) to the King of Ava, &c.

June 28th 1757. Waiting for Antonio.

June 29th 1757. Waiting as above.

June 30th 1757. This night, at 9 o'clock, Nineteen Boats with a great number of Pegu Families arrived here, from up the Country, in order to settle at this Place, under Protection of the Bûraghmah. No news of Antonio.

July 1st 1757. This Day a small Boat came here from Koughkong, the Head Man of which tells me Antonio will be here in two Days.

July 2d 1757. At 10 at Night I was informed Antonio was on his way for this Place, and would be here to-morrow.

July 3d 1757. This Evening at 6 o'Clock Antonio came to this Place, and informs me he shall have Boats ready for my Conveyance to the King of Ava, &c. in six Days, or thereabouts, I then told him of a Copy of the Chief of Negrais Letter, which I have, to be translated into the Bûraghmah Language, which he promises me faithfully to assist in doing, before we get to the King; he likewise tells me that the Prince of Persaim and himself, with the Interest they have, he hopes shall be able to get our Treaty of Friendship and Alliance approved of, and the King's Signet affixed thereto. I have endeavoured, all I can, to bring Antonio to particulars, with regard to an English Ship, which the said Antonio wrote to the Negrais was arrived at Dagon with Presents from Madrass, for the King of Ava; but now he declares to me that when he was coming away from Dagon, he had only time to hear the Captain's Name was Bellam, the Ship from Madrass, but knows nothing further concerning her; but further says, that, since he left Dagon; there's arrived there, a Sloop, belonging to the King of Ava, from Fort St. George, and a French Brigantine, stranded near Syrian Bar, the Crew saved.

July 4th 1757. My Conductor is sometimes employed in getting the Boats in readiness for our Departure, other times torturing the Peguers, and collecting all the Money, &c. he can, from them, to carry to the King (of Ava).
July 5\textsuperscript{th} 1757. Antonio is employed as above.

July 6\textsuperscript{th} 1757. I this Day spoke to Antonio about getting Mr. Newton's: Letter to the King (of Ava) translated into the Bûraghmah Language, but he tells me he has such a multiplicity of Business on his Hands (collecting as above) that he shall not be able to do it here, but positively promises to do it when we get in the Boats.

July 7\textsuperscript{th} 1757. I am in waiting as above.

July 8\textsuperscript{th} 1757. This Day Antonio desired me to let the 4 Pound Gun be put in the Boat I am to go in, that the Men might cover the said Boat with Thatch, I immediately gave Orders to have it to be done, as likewise the two Carriages, to be landed, to put Matts about them, that they might look well, when they came to the King (of Ava).

July 9\textsuperscript{th} 1757. Antonio informs that he expects to meet the King (of Ava) at Dagon, or shortly after he leaves that Place, and that our Rout shall be by the way of Koughkong, and that he shall be ready in three Days, to leave this Place.

July 10\textsuperscript{th} 1757. Antonio is employed as beforementioned.

July 11\textsuperscript{th} 1757. At 6 this Evening Antonio came to me, and desired the things might be put in the Boat to-morrow, as he intends to go away soon the next Morning.

July 12\textsuperscript{th} 1757. This Morning I gave orders to Mr. Briggs, the Master of the Mary Schooner, to deliver to the Bûraghmah Boats the remainder part of the King (of Ava's) Present.

July 13\textsuperscript{th} 1757. I find the Boat that I am to go in is very badly fitted for the present Season, which I told Antonio of, this Morning, he seemed very indifferent about it, and told me that the Saggee of Persaim was just arrived with some Pegu Boats, which had Rice in, that they had bought at the Ntgrais, this seemed to make some disturbance amongst them, as there was a great number of them assembled together at that time; I then told Antonio that I was informed, by the Chief of Negrais, that the King (of Ava) had given Orders that I should have a proper Conveyance, and as I found I had not, it was at my Option to return or not, on which an English Mustee, in Antonio's Service, his Name William Pladwell, who is to be Interpreter from me to Antonio, made use of some very impertinent Language in Portuguese, such as “let them go to the Devil,” as I understand a little of the above Language, I was rising up to chastise the above Pladwell, for his Insolence, but on
Consideration I thought it best to let it alone, as it might embarrass The Company's Affairs on my present Embassy, and so I put up with it, on Antonio's promising that nothing of that kind should happen again, I meet with many things amongst these People that would try the most patient Man ever existed, but as I hope it is for the good of the Gentlemen I serve, I shall put Up with them and proceed; Antonio told me he was to go at Noon, on which I embarked, and left Persaim to go on this Embassy, by the way of Koughkong; I wrote to the Chief of Negrais by Mr. Briggs of the Mary Schooner, but as the Letter was delivered, and we were just going away, I made no mention of the above in the Publick Letter, but gave him a hint of their behaviour in private.

July 14th 1757. It being now the Rainy Season, the River is somewhat rapid, and no Flood Tide to assist us; we have four Boats, one that I am in, one Antonio has, with two others accompanying, and make but little despatch, by reason above, I had a meeting with Antonio to day, and put him in mind of his promising to get Mr. Newton's Letter to the King (of Ava) translated into the Bûraghmah Language, but he again put it off, by saying he had a good deal of business to transact before he got to Koughkong, and that he positively would do it before we got to the King (of Ava) he likewise told me, that they had evident proof, that the Negrais supplied the stragling Peguers with Rice, and other things, which hindered them from coming under the Bûraghmah Laws, and would somewhat enrage the King (of Ava) but he hoped it was in his power to make all easy on that head.

July 15th 1757. At 7 this Evening we got to Praggee, and Antonio informs me that he has had Intelligence that the King (of Ava) is at Dagon, he likewise tells me, that we are now half way to Koughkong, and the Boat that I am in will take three Days longer to get there, and that he thinks it is best for him to go away immediately, and get things in readiness for the remainder part of our Passage, to which I agreed; he left Orders with the Head Man of my Boat, to make dispatch, and went away, we have excessive hard rains with much Thunder and Lightning; this Afternoon see some Mountains to the left of us, which is the first I have seen since leaving the Negrais the Land being low, and encompassed with Woods and Bushes, on each side the River, and very little inhabited, at this time, but it appears to be a fine River, and I believe, navigable for Ships as far as I have come.

July 16th 1757. This Morning at 8 o'clock we left Praggee, and at 7 in the Evening the Men made the Boat fast to the Trees, which hang over the River, in order to go to rest, having been rowing all day, the River becomes much narrower.
July 17th 1757. Proceeding to Koughkong as above, at Noon we stopped at a small Town, and got four men more, we have now sixteen Men to row the Boat, at Night lay at the River side as before.

July 18th 1757. At 10 o'Clock this Morning got to the Entrance of Koughkong Creek, and at 6 in the Evening, Antonio told me he was ready to go, on which we embarked and left the above Place, he likewise told me he has received a Letter from the Prince of Persaim, who is with the King (of Ava) desiring him to make all the dispatch he can, and that he believes we shall meet the King of Ava after leaving Dagon.

July 19th 1757. The River is more rapid and our Men take but little time to eat or rest, but labour much in getting the Boats along, this Evening, At 5 o'clock, we joined Antonio, at a small Town, on the bank of the River, and he informs me that he has had intelligence, that the King (of Ava) has left Dagon, and that he expects we shall meet the King (of Ava) in three Days; he likewise promises me, he will come to my Boat to-morrow, and get Mr. Newton's Letter to the King (of Ava), as likewise the Treaty, translated into the Buraghmah Language, we have excessive hard Rains, which makes it somewhat disagreeable.

July 20th 1757. This morning at 8 o'clock Antonio, with William Pladwell, an English Mustee in his Employ, and a Buraghmah Writer, belonging to Antonio, came into my Boat, and translated Mr. Newton's Letter to the King (of Ava), as likewise the Treaty of Alliance, into the Buraghmah Language, in the following manner, Pladwell interpreted the above to Antonio, in the Portuguese Language, and Antonio dictated to his Writer in the Buraghmah Language; This. according to my instructions, is the best method I can find, to get the above done, when finished Antonio told me, that Mr. Brooh, as likewise Captain Howes, former Chiefs of the Negrais, had promised the Prince, of Persaim and himself, in case of getting the King of Ava's Signet, or Chop, affixed to the Treaty, that they should have a good Present, and as I was now here in the Name of The Company, if it was done, he hoped that they should not be forgot, on which I gave him my Word and Honour, in the Name of The Honourable Company, that if the above was compleated, the present Chief, at Negrais, would make them a genteel Present, he said he would leave it to the Prince, and went into his Boat, seemingly well satisfied; as the Prince of Persaim has all that Province, from Negrais to Persaim, Koughkong, &c. in his Jurisdiction, and Antonio being the next Man to him, and transacts all Affairs in the above Province, and as we have no other to apply to, to get the above finished, I have taken upon me to make them this Promise, but I fear that will not be sufficient, when we see the Prince.
July 21st 1757. The River is more contracted, and, of consequence, the Water more rapid; At 8 o'clock at night we came to that branch of the River which leads to Dagon, and had the Tide in our favour for the first time, at 10 ditto we stopped at a Town, on the River side, where there is a House built for the King's Reception, there is another branch of the River here, which leads to Prone, &c. &c.

July 22d 1757. This Morning, at break of day, we left the above Town, and now we are come into a wide River, we meet with great numbers of Boats, loaded with Plunder, belonging to the King of Ava, taken at Pegu, and I am informed going up to Prone, Ava, &c. &c. and that the King is not far from us.

At 3 this Afternoon, we came to a small Town, on the bank of the River, where we found the King, in his Barge, with great numbers of other Boats attending him: Antonio waited on the King, to acquaint him I was come, and, at 5 o'clock, a Messenger came from Antonio to acquaint me, that the King would give me Audience to-morrow morning and that it was the King's Desire I should send the Present by the Messenger, which I delivered.

July 23d 1757. This Morning, at 7 o'clock, Antonio came to me, and told me, that the King would give me Audience, at the same time he told me, that on going into the King's Apartment in his Barge, I must leave my Sword and Shoe behind, and on approaching near the King, to the Place appointed for me, I must kneel; I used all the Arguments I could, and told him as an Officer in the Honourable Company's Service, I could not consent to the above, he then, as likewise other Great Men with him, told me, that no Person, let him be of the highest Rank, could have Audience given them by the Great King of Ava, Pegu, &c. &c. (Allaum Praw, next to GOD) if they did not conform to the above, and that all Ambassadors, from the Negrais before, had done it.

As I hope it will be a means of getting the Treaty of Alliance, with the above King and The Honourable Company, settled, I agreed, and went with Antonio to the King's Barge, and after congratulating him, on his late conquest of so potent a Kingdom, with other Compliments on the Occasion I delivered him my Credentials, which was explained to His Majesty in the Bûraghmah Language, first Lieut. Thomas Newton's Letter, and after the Treaty of Alliance; this done, The King then said through the Interpreters, William Pladwell and Antonio, that he had fixed his Chop to a Plait of Gold, with Rubies set round it, as likewise to a Paper which were both sent by Mr. Dyer, I then desired the Interpreters to inform the King, that I believed those His Majesty was pleased to send by Mr. Dyer, were Letters, and not of the same kind with this Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, between His Royal Self and The Honourable East India Company; but Mr. Dyer
had this Treaty with him, and I believed His Majesty had approved of it, and promised His Royal Signet, or Chop, should be fixed thereto; and further that the English were strongly attached to His Interest; and if His Majesty would now be pleased to consent to the fixing His Chop to the above, it would be a means of uniting the two Nations together for ages to come.

The King then said, that he had sent a Sloop some Months ago to Madrass, with Goods to purchase Powder, &c, and he was informed by the Captain of another Sloop, now arrived at Dagon from the Coast, that the Governor of Madrass had detained his Sloop there, I answered that we had received no Letters, or News of any kind, from Madrass, but I was positive if the Sloop was detained, that the Governor of Madrass did not know that she belonged to His Majesty: As I had not room to stretch my legs out, and I was somewhat uneasy, I saw a small Stool behind me, which I took, and sat on, this caused a laughter among the Great Men about me, the King asked the reason, and was informed, on which he rose up and came close to me, and laughed very heartily, and asked me what was the reason that Englishman could not kneel?

I told him we were not accustomed to it; on which he pointed to the Yard of the Boat, which was close by, and told me I might set there, I told His Majesty I was not insensible of the Honour he did me, he then pointed to the Prince of Persaim, and told me he had given him a new Name (Mungee Narataw) on account of his good behaviour, the King then asked me several Questions, through the above Interpreters, viz.

Does your King go to the Wars and expose his Person as I do?

Do you understand the use of Ordnance, &c?

Could you point a Gun to kill a Man at a great distance?

Is there as much Rain in your Country as in this?

What is the reason you wear that at your Shoulder, (my Shoulder Knot)?

How much Money does The Company pay you [per] Month?

Why don't you black your Bodies and Thighs as we do (at the same time rising up, and shewing me his Thigh)?
Let me feel your Hand, feeling my Fingers and Wrist, and said we were like Women, because we did not black as above.

Is there Ice in your Country as in mine, small Creeks froze over?

I answered to all the above Questions, which seemed to please them, and to the last Question I told him that I had seen a River, as broad as this His Majesty is now in (meaning London River) frozen over, and an Ox roasted whole, upon the Ice; to which the King, as likewise all the Great Men about him, laughed heartily; the King then said if all the Powers in The World was to come, he could drive them out of His Country; he then asked me, if we were afraid of the French; I told him the English and French had no great liking for each other but there never was that Englishman born, that was afraid of a Frenchman; the King then told me, that he had taken great quantities of Guns, Bombs, &c. with all kind of Warlike Stores at Pegu, and that he was now going up triumphant (with the former King of Pegu, and his Daughter the Uppa Rajah, and other Great Men, Peguers, prisoners) to his great Cities, Prone, Ava, &c. and that he would put his Chop, to our Treaty of Alliance, and give us Liberty to trade in any part of his Kingdom; he then ordered me to follow him to the Mouth of the River, which leads to Ava, where there is a House, as above-mentioned, for the King's reception, and I am informed, he intends to stay two or three days, and he would send me Provisions and settle the above; I desired the Interpreter to return His Majesty my hearty thanks for the Honour done me, and as His Barge was getting in readiness to proceed, I was desired to take my Leave, which I did and came away; I have made Presents to the Prince of Persaim, Kind's Brother, Prime Minister, and other six Great Men, about the King's Person, of the following things, viz. Scarlet Cloth 30 Yards, 2 Pieces Seersuckers, 1 Piece Pullicat Handkerchiefs, 1 Kittysall, 1 Bottle Lavender Water, 1 Ring, Bristol Stone, with a Brilliant Spark on each side, 1 Black Feather, from my Hat, 1 Piece of Silk Handkerchiefs; this I have done, hoping it may be a means of getting my business done, on The Company's Account, the sooner; the remainder part of this day we have been following the King to the Place abovementioned, the Fresh in this River is excessive rapid, and we could not come to the Place where the King was, at Night, I believe, at a moderate computation, there's in Boats, on this River, on this Occasion, One hundred thousand Men, Women, and Children.
July 24th 1757. This Day we have been making the best of our way up the River, after the King; At 5 this Evening, I saw the Prince of Persaim and Antonio in their Boats, who informed me that the King was a little way above us; and that we should go to that Place, and stay all night; At 7 we came to the Place where the King was, and lay by the Bank-side of the River.

July 25th 1757. This Day we have been following the King, as Yesterday, and at night we stopped as above; the Rains are excessive severe, and I cannot lye dry, which makes it excessive disagreeable.

July 26th 1757. At 10 this Morning we came to the Place, where the House, beforementioned, is built for the King's reception; the King's Barge lay close to it, and numbers of other Boats all about it, there being four foot Water, all round it; occasioned by the swelling of the River since it was built; at Noon Antonio came, and told me that the King wanted me, I dressed myself and went with him to the said House, or Island but found the King was gone into His Barge, on which the Prince of Persaim let him know I was come, his answer was I must follow him to Lunzee, a Place much farther up the River, and the King went away immediately.

But now the Promise made to Antonio on the 20th instant (as I expected) won't do, he now tells me that Mr. Brooke, former Chief of the Negrais, promised the Prince, of Persaim, thirty Viss of Silwr, and himself twenty; if the King's Chop was fixed to our Treaty; and that I must give them from under my Hand, in the Name of The Company, that those Sums must be paid, otherwise no Chop should be affixed to our Treaty; I told them, The Company was at a great expence, and must be at a much greater, before they could bring the Negrais, and Persaim, to any Perfection, and this was a very large Sum.

Now, I am certain that nothing can be done without the Interest of the above Men; this Affair has subsisted a long time, and is of the utmost Consequence; there has been many Embassies before, on this head, and attended with a great Expence to The Company, and if I don't finish now, there must be another Embassy (with a Present) on the same Account, I therefore concluded, within myself, to make them an Offer, and put the finishing stroke to this long Affair, which I did of Twenty Viss, which was not accepted, and on their going into their Boats I made them an Offer of Twenty-five, which was likewise refused; so we parted: the remainder part of this Day we have been following the King, but did not come up with him at Night.

July 27th 1757. This morning. At 8 o'clock, we came opposite that narrow entrance which leads to Koughkong, I there saw the Prince of Persaim and Antonio, and as I
am positive nothing can be done, but through these Men, neither can I get Audience to the King but by Antonio, who is my Interpreter, I have taken upon me to offer them Thirty Viss, which they accepted, and promised that they would get the King's Chop affixed to our Treaty, and be firmly allied to our interest; this will, I hope, meet with the Approbation of The Honourable United East India Company, and Governor and Council of Fort St. George, &c. This day has been attended with a hard Storm of Wind, and Rain, I have nothing to eat but Salt Beef, which has been on the Island Negrais four years; the Buraghmah King has not been so good as his Promise, in sending the Provisions; our Men put the Boat in a very disagreeable place this Afternoon, and would not proceed any further, I believe through fear of the inclemency of the weather, this gives me some uneasiness, as we could not see the King's Barge this night, but as it is a conveyance found by the Country, and I could not speak the Bûraghmah Language, to the Men, to endeavour to make them go on, I was obliged to wait with patience.

July 28th 1757. We have been all this Day on our way for Lunzee, but have seen nothing of the King's Barge, neither the Prince of Persaim, or Antonio; at Sunset we passed a large Town, this River, all this Day, has been as wide as at the Negrais, and the Fresh very strong against us.

July 29th 1757. This Morning, At 9 o'clock, we came to Luunzee, and found the King's Barge here, and preparing to go away; Antonio came to me, and told me that the King was just going away, and that the King's Chop was affixed to our Treaty, and as the Prince of Persaim was going with the King to Ava, he had left every thing with him with regard to the Persaim Country; and that he would deliver me the Treaty at Koughkong, but if I chose to see the King, he believed we should have just time to see him and no more; on which I went with him, and found the King was just going away, so that I was with the King but a short time, the King told me, he would order the Men In the Boat that I was in, to be punished for their neglect, in not coming up sooner; he likewise told me, that he had been informed, the Negrais had supplied the stragling Peguers with Rice, &c. which had hindred them from being subject to His Laws, and that I must inform the Chief, that nothing of that kind must be done for the future; and, as he was just going away, he had left every thing, with regard to settling the Treaty, with Antonio; and his Chop was affixed thereto: and told me, we must come to Persaim and settle; I desired Antonio, in case the Ships at Dagon had Letters, or Stores, for the Negrais, to ask the King for an Order, that they might have the liberty of sending those things, which the King promised to grant; the short time I was with the King, he asked me several questions, of the same kind, as the last time I was with him; he likewise told me, that he would go to Madrass and carry a large, Chest of rich Stones, with all sorts of other Commodities, which his Country afforded; he
likewise told me if a nine pound Shot was to be fired out of a Gun, and come against his Body, it could not enter; with some other things of the same kind. As his Barge was just going to put off, I asked the King if he had any Commands to the Chief of Negrais, he told me he had given Antonio a Letter, which he would deliver to me; made me a Present of Eighteen Oranges, two dozen heads of Indian Corn, and five Cucumbers; so I took my leave of this Great Monarch, and came away; and on our coming to the Boat, Antonio told me, that the Boat I came in, must go to Ava, with the King, and I must remove to another Boat, shewing me a small inconvenient Boat, which was almost sinking; I was obliged to go into this Boat, or go to Ava with the King; so I agreed, as I could not help myself; but I advise any Gentlemen that should come on these occasions, before they leave the Negrais, to get a good Conveyance, for of all mankind, which I have seen, the Bûraghmah promises the most and performs the least; At 3 o'clock this Afternoon, we left Lunzee, and At 11 at Night, we got to that Branch of the River which leads to Koughkong.

July 30th 1757. All this Day we have been on our way to Koughkong, at Night we stopped at a small Town, on the Bank of the River, for the men to rest; this Day has been attended with constant rain, my two Europeans, with one Lascar, are sick, by being exposed to the inclemency of the Weather, Antonio is gone before.

July 31st 1757. This Day at Noon we came to Koughkong, Antonio sent his Writer to me, to let me know he had provided a House, for me, and that he was much indisposed with a Fever, I went and looked at the House, and found that there was about two foot Water underneath it, occasioned by it's being built near the Creek, but as the top seemed as if it would keep the weather out, I preferred it to the Boat, and landed, I find myself much disordered; the weather as yesterday; the Boat I came in sunk at night.

August 1st 1757. I am much Indisposed, as likewise my Men, Antonio, I am informed is the same, so that we cannot have a Meeting.

August 2d 1757. Antonio I am informed is very bad, the Saggee of Persaim died at this Place to-day, myself and men are as yesterday.

August 3d 1757. Constant rain, Night and Day, the Water under our House, rises much, Antonio is still bad, I am something better to Day.

Aug. 4th 1757. The Weather as yesterday, Antonio is so bad that I cannot speak to him, and I have no other Person here, that I can understand, as Pladmil is likewise bad.
Aug. 5th 1757. The Rains are excessive severe, this Afternoon, about 5 o'clock, we had a violent Shock of an Earthquake, which I took to last about a minute and a half.

Aug. 6th 1757. I this Day had a Meeting with Antonio, and settled the Treaty with him, in the following manner, viz.

That we are to have two hundred Bamboos square, (each Bamboo containing seven Cubits) at Persaim, and the King's Promise of more Ground, after our settling at that Place.

That we are to present to the King annually, for the Grant of the Island Negrais, and Spot of ground at Persaim, one Piece of Ordnance to carry a twelve Pound Shot, with two hundred Viss of good Gunpowder, as an acknowledgment, &c. &c. as specified [by] Article the 6th, in the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance.

After this we exchanged Treaties, he presented me the Treaty with the King of Ava, Pegu, &c,'s Chop fixed thereto, and done in the above King's Presence, I presented him with the other, to which Lieut. Thomas Newton, Chief of Negrais, had signed his Name, and fixed the Arms of The Honourable Company; and according to my Promise, made to the Prince of Persaim and Antonio, on the 28th of last Month, I gave him the undermentioned Note, in the Name of The Honourable, Company, but Antonio desired that he might be called Checado in it, which is his Station in the Country.

Koughkong, August 6th, 1757.

I Promise, in the Name of The Honourable United East India Company, that the Prince of Persaim (Mungee, Naratow) as likewise Checado, the next in Station to the above Prince, in that Province, do receive from the Chief of the Island of Negrais, thirty Viss of Silver between them, each Viss containing one hundred Ticals, on Account of their being the means of getting the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance between The Honourable East India Company and the King of Pegu, Ava, &c. settled, the Prince to receive Twenty Viss, the Checado Ten.

Robert Lester
I hope this will meet with the Approbation of the Gentlemen I serve, I am positive that it signifies nothing our continuing at the Negrais, or Persaim, without we are in the interest of the Prince of that Province; as likewise Antonio, who transacts all Affairs there; and as I could not have an Opportunity of writing to the Chief of Negrais, this is the best method I could think on; Antonio tells me I must stay here five or six Days longer, the River being now so rapid, that their Men think it too great a Risque to go to Persaim.

August 7th 1757. This Day the Weather has been more moderate.

August 8th 1757. Antonio tells me this Day that he would have Conveyance ready for me to go to Persaim in two days, but as he has not recovered his proper state of health, he cannot go with me, but will come shortly after.

August 9th 1757. This Day Mr. Buckley Hope, the Captain of a Ship which was stranded some Months ago on the Pegu Coast, came to this Place, and informed me, that he was come from Dagon, and that there were two English Ships at that Place, both from Bengal, last from Madrass; one, Capt. Lowes, the other, Capt. Bailey, which was called Bellam by Antonio before; and that Capt. Bailey had brought a Present, from the Governor of Fort St. George, for the King of Ava, &c, viz. One Brass Field Piece compleat, Eight Chests of Powder, and five hundred Shot.

August 10th 1757. I this Day wrote to the above Captain, at Dagon, desiring them to send all the Intelligence they can to the Chief of Negrais, with regard to the Company's Settlements at Bengal and on the Coast of Coromandel; I expect to go away to-morrow Antonio having two small Boats in readiness.

August 11th 1757. This Day, at Noon, I left Koughkong, having with me Captain Hope, Antonio being not quite recovered, he intends to follow me in a few Days, at Night we stopped at the Bank of the River.

August 12th 1757. This Day, at Noon, we passed Praggee; At Night we stopped at Sanguaine, a small Town. on the Bank of the River, very hard Squalls.

August 13th 1757. This Morning we left the above Place, and at midnight we got to Persaim,

August 14th 1757. As there is no proper Conveyance at this Place, to carry me to the Negrais, I landed, and wrote to the chief, to let him know I was come.
August 15th 1757. Very hard Rains, waiting for a Conveyance to carry me to the Negrais.

August 16th 1757. As Yesterday.

August 17th 1757. Waiting as above.

August 18th 1757. Waiting for a Conveyance to carry me to the Negrais.

August 19th 1757. As Yesterday.

August 20th 1757. As above.

August 21st 1757. As above.

August 22d 1757. This Morning I went on the other side of the River, and took Possession of the Spot of Ground, in the Name of The Honourable United East India Company, having the King, Allaum Praw's Liberty for so doing, I hoisted our Colours, and fired three Vollies of small Arms on the Occasion; at the same time, I measured, from High Water Mark, up to a fine Spot of Ground, and found it to be Eighty-four Bamboos to the said Spot, each Bamboo containing seven Cubits, so that according to my Agreement [by] Treaty, we have one hundred and sixteen Bamboos further in, on the Land from the above Spot, which is a fine Plain; this Evening the Schooner came to this Place, and I had the pleasure of receiving a Letter from the Chief of Negrais, acquainting me that there was a Sloop at the Negrais, bound for Bengal, and that the would sail the 25th Instant; on which I ordered my things to be put on board the Schooner, that I might reach the Negrais before the above Sloop sailed.

August 23rd 1757 This Morning I embarked on board the Schooner, the anchor was immediately weighed, and we sailed for the Negrais.

August 24th 1757. On our passage for the Negrais.

August 25th 1757. On our passage as above.

August 26th 1757. This Morning, at 3 o’Clock, we anchored at the Negrais, At 6, landed and delivered the above Proceedings, as likewise the Treaty, and a Letter from the King of Ava, &c. to the Chief.
**Editorial Notes**

The following account is derived from Alexander Dalrymple, *Oriental Repertory*, 1808: I.351-393. Dalrymple has left us the following succinct introduction to the account below (M. W. C).

Capt. Alves was sent back to Burma in 1760; and on his return to Bengal, transmitted to Governor Pigot, at Madrass, the following Diary of his Proceedings.

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**DIARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF AN EMBASSY TO BURMA IN 1760**

**Captain Walter Alves**

On the 10th of May, 1760, I sailed from Madrass, and resolved to touch at the Nicobars, in order to meet with a Dutch Ship, which I was informed was to sail from Negapatam, for the Nicobars and Pegu, about the time we sailed from Madrass; on her I intended to send notice to Gregory, the Armenian, at Dagon, that the Buraghmah King might the sooner get Notice of, our being sent to Negraise with Letters and Presents for Him, as I had reason to apprehend that the people about Negraise would be very shy of strangers (after what had happened there to the English) only those who might have a bad Design, and from them were not strong enough to be without apprehensions of Danger; for this reason I thought it best to touch at the Car-Nicobars, as it was nothing out of our way, at this Season of the year.

Accordingly on the 23d of May I arrived at the Car-Nicobars, and anchored there, and on the 25th, the Dutch Ship that I expected to anchor there also, she having sailed from Negapatam, on the 12th of May. I went on board her, and found one Coja Pocas, an Armenian who had been to the Coast, and was on his return to Dagon again; he undertook to deliver a Letter for me to Coja Gregory who he told me was Sea-Customer at Dagon, and had also some other Office under the Buraghmah King; but at the same time hinted to me, that it was a particular custom at Pegu, that if any Person desires another to do the least thing for him, to give a present of some kind, before the other can possibly understand him; as the Buraghmah King paid no Salary to his Officers, and what they got that way, was
what they principally lived on, and that as there was no Madeira Wine, to be procured at Negapatam, a Chest of that, with Some Cordials, and a Cast of Knives and Forks he thought would be most acceptable to Gregory, and engage him to use his Interest with the King of the Buraghmahns (which Mr. Whitehill and Capt. Dawson both told me was very considerable) to forward as much as possible any Business that was to be transacted, and the release of the unfortunate Englishmen, that were detained in Slavery by the Buraghmah King; On these considerations, and for fear if he (Gregory) should altogether be denied a Present, he should oppose what I was sent for, I complied in part with Pocas's request, and sent him some Medeira, some Cordials, and other little things; these with the Letter to Gregory I delivered to Coja Pocas, and the Dutch Ship sailed on the 28th of May for Pegu; and on the 29th we sailed for Diamond Island, after having taken in Water, and as much provisions as possible, as perhaps we might not be able to procure any at Negraise for some time.

Here follows a Copy of the Letter sent to Gregory:

SIR,

I take the Opportunity by Coja Pocas to acquaint you, that I am going to Diamond Island, or Negraise, immediately, having on board Letters and Presents, for His Majesty the King of the Buraghmahns from the Honourable John. Zephaniah Holwell, Esq. Governor of Fort William in Bengal, and from the Honourable George Pigot, Esq. Governor of Fort St. George, which I am ordered to deliver to whomsoever his Majesty thinks proper to appoint to receive them, at Negraise; The Prsnt from Bengal is as follows, Fifty Musquets, Twenty Brass Barreled Blunderbusses, One Hundred Pistols, Five Pieces Superfine Scarlet Broad Cloth, One Piece Europe Crimson Velvet, Five Pieces fine Broad striped Dureas, Five Pieces Narrow striped Do.; and the present from Madrass, is Superfine Broad Cloth, one side Red, the other Yellow, Twelve Yards, Do. the one Side Red the other Green, Twelve Yards; Superfine Morees Ten Pieces, Do. Betelhas, Three Cubits broad, five Pieces. There is also a Letter for the Vizier, and another for You, both from the Honourable George, Pigot, Esq. which with those for his Majesty, I will deliver to whoever is appointed to come for his; You will please to acquaint whoever may be sent to Negraise, to receive the Letters and Presents, that I shall lay at Diamond Island, and when the Boats arrive at Negraise, tell the People to make, if it is in the Night, Three different Fires, that can be seen from Diamond Island, and it in the Day, let them also make three different Fires, and shew a White Flag, as large as possible, that We may see it the better; on seeing either of these Signals, I will come off from the Harbour's Mouth, in the Vessel, and send the Boat in, to see what is to be done; I send you also by Coja Pocas, Three Dozen of Madeira, with some Cordials, and some other things; which I hope you will accept of, and shall esteem any favour you do tor any of the Englishmen who are at Dagon, as done for me, and if you can possibly forward the
Buraghmah King's good Intentions to release them, that they may go to Bengal with me, it will be gratefully acknowledged by them, and will be esteemed a favour by every Englishman, who hereafter may have the Pleasure of knowing you, I shall stay at Diamond Island, waiting his Majesty's Answers till the beginning of September, but longer I cannot possibly stay.

Dated at Car-Nicobar, 26th May, 1760

I sailed from the Nicohars, as I have said before, on the 29th May, and on June 5th, arrived at Diamond Island; where I intended to have lain with the Vessel, 'till I saw the Signal, on little Negraise, that I sent to Gregory, or got some Information by our own Boat, which I intended to send into the Harbour the first opportunity of fair Weather; but the Wind coming to blow very strong from the Southward, and a very large Sea tumbling in, which made the Vessel ride so hard, and occasioned her to make so much Water, as that it we had laid there, from appearances we had reason to fear the loss of our anchor, and also endangering The Honourable Company's Vessel, so on the 13th June, finding we could not ride any longer, for the aforesaid reasons, I weighed and run within Pagoda Point, which is about Three Miles without the Harbour of Negraise, where there was a little more shelter, for I did not care to go into the Harbour of the Negraise, 'till I knew the temper of the Buraghmahns in regard to us. On the 14th I went into the Harbour with the Boat, and met with some people belonging to a Chowky, a little way up ftrsaim River, who were come to gather Fruit and Limes in the Garden on Negraise, I spoke with them as well as I could, but not being able to understand one another fully, for want of a Linguist, I sent one of our People with the Buraghmahns up to the Chowky, where there was a Moorman, they told me, and they left one of their People in his room, and to go aboard and see the Vessel. In the morning of the 15th they returned from the Chowky, and hoisted a flag on Little Negraise, on which I went into the Harbour in the Boat, and found the Headman of the Chowky had come, and brought our Lascar again, also the Moor-man with him for an Interpreter, I told him We had brought Letters, and Presents from Bengal and Madrass for the Buraghmah King and asked him to furnish me with a Boat, to send up to acquaint Antony (who he told me was still Governor of Persaim) of our Arrival, This he said he would do, if I would send a Man up with her, so [354/355] I left him and went aboard to write a Letter to Antony, which I gave to Mr. Drysdale, who offered to carry it, so having sent him into the Harbour, He went up the River with the Chowky P[e]ople to Persaim.

Here follows a Copy of what I wrote to Antony:

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SBBR 3.1 (SPRING 2005): 143-168
SIR,

By my Chief Mate, I send this to acquaint you of our Arrival at Negraise, having Letters and Presents on board from The Honourable the Governors of Bengal and Madrass, for his Majesty the King of the Buraghmahns (then I wrote a List of the Presents as I did to Gregory) I should be glad you would forward this Advice to Coja Gregory at Dagon, for whom I have a Letter, and another for his Majesty's Vizier, I have already wrote to Gregory, by a Dutch Ship, that I saw at the Nicobars, which by this time, if no Accident has happened to her, should be arrived at Dagon, to convince you of the truth of what I wrote you, I have sent the Chief Mate with this, who. will satisfy you in any thing you want to know concerning us; I have sent you also a few Datts, and some little things, which please to accept of, and I shall esteem your forwarding Notice of our Arrival to his Majesty a favour, in case the Dutch Ship I sent to Dagon, by, should not be arrived.

Dated 15th June, 1760

On the 23d of June, Mr. Drysdale returned, and told me he delivered the Letter to Antony, and explained it to him, for he understands Portuguese., He seemed to be very glad of our Arrival, and very kind to Mr. Drysdale in his way; He came down the length of the Chowky to speak with me, and sent a Chit, that as it was very blowing Weather, He durst come no further, in his Boat, and desired I would come there and speak with him, but there was a stronger reason, for his not coming down further, which his fear suggested to him, than the bad weather, which he did not mention, and that was the Part he acted, or as, he said afterwards, was forced to act at the cutting off the Negraise.

However on the 24th in the Morning, I went up in our Boat to meet him, and after the first Salutations were over, He desired me not to be afraid of him, for the Part he had acted, at cutting off the Negraise, which he said no doubt I had heard of on the Coast, and at Bengal, in a worse light than it really was (he did not know me, or took no Notice if he did, though I dined with him the Day before Negraise was cut off) he told me, that all the Part he had, was that of Interpreter, which he was obliged to do, for the Buraghmah King had sent LAVEENE, the Frenchmen, with about sixty men to him, with a Letter, telling him he had sent these Men to cut off this Settlement, by any means, no matter whether by Fraud or Force, also ordered him to go along with them in quality of Interpreter, as they had a Letter from the Buraghmah King to Mr. Hope, in order to conceal their Designs the better, which He was to explain, the Buraghmah King, at the same time told, in his Letter to him, that it by any means, the Project was discovered, he should look on him (Antony) as the means of the Discovery, and would cause not only himself, but every other Person whatever, without Distinction of age or sex, that had any Relation to, or any manner of Connection with him, to be put to immediate Death; This Threat silenced him, and, he says, was the reason of his not discovering the
design to Capt. Inglis, or Mr. Southby, he says Laveene had orders to kill no body, without they resisted, and then to save as many as possible, especially Europeans (which, from what I have seen, was not done out of Humanity, but from a motive of Interest, thinking the more that were alive, the more Money would be got for their Ransom) then he told me the manner of their Executing the orders they had from the Buraghmah King, which was much the same, with the Account I gave in to The Honourable Board on my return from Negraise in 1759, only what follows, and is what, Mr. Robertson has since told, is true, that just as Dinner was to have come upon Table, nobody being above but Messrs, Southby and Hope, besides the Buraghmahns, Antony came down the Ladder, which led to the Hall, and as soon as He was down, Mr. Robertson. and three Soldiers, who were in the Godown below, heard the Shrieks and Groans of those that were murdered, both above and below; and looking out at a Window saw Antony running as fast as he could, into the Woods; then those who were in the Godown, to whom also Mr. Briggs had got in, after being stabbed in two or three Places, shut all the Doors and Windows, and. Went by a Trap-door to a Koom of the Hall, where, looking through the Key-hole, they saw the Buraghmahns in the Hall, sitting on the Couches, the feet of which were placed on the Bodies of Messrs. Southby and Hope.

Mr. Robertson and the rest, remained in this manner till about 4 or 5 in the Afternoon, when the Buraghmahns having plundered every other part of the House, came to the Door, and desired those within to open it, and they would save their Lives; one of the Soldiers understood a little of the Buraghmah Tongue, and asked for Antony, but was told, He was not there, and if the Poor was not immediately opened, they would force it, and murder every body they found there; on which the Door was opened, and the Buraghmahns took Messrs. Robertson, and Briggs, with the three Soldiers, and pinioned them, and about Sunsett they were ordered through the Woods to Antony's Boat; in going down the Ladder, Briggs, not going fast got a Blow from one of the Buraghmahns, which knocked him off the Top of the Ladder, about 14 feet high, to the Ground, he got upon his Knees, and endeavoured to rise, but one of Buraghmahns run his Lancet through him; Robertson and the others, when they got to the Boat, which was about Dusk, were immediately loosed, though in that short time, they were tyed, their Arms were all swelled and cut with the cords, they were bound with, Antony ordered them to be loosed when they were put into his Charge, and they themselves say, he used them better at that time, than they expected: The Boat was sent away with them that very tide to Dagon, where the Buraghmah King was.

This, as far as Antony knew of it, was the substance of what he said, but he interlarded his Account, with many Protestations of Sorrow for what had happened, and Encomiums on His own Humanity, and Disinterestedness in the whole affair; no Plunder had he touched; which, when I saw Mr. Robertson afterwards, I found to be false, for he took many things, and amongst the rest his Silver Buckles; under
pretence of taking care of them for him, but, to this Day, he has never mentioned returning them, however these things at that time I know not of, I asked what Reasons also the Buraghmah King, assigned for cutting off Negraise; after a great many Encomiums on the Buraghmah King, and Invectives against the Chiefs of Negraise; he told me, that Mr. Hope had given four or five Musqets, with some Powder and Shott also Provisions to the Peguers; and that Gregory, the Armenian, had represented this to the Buraghmah King, as if it had been, 400 or 500 Muskets that had been given, instead of four or five; and said that the English were a very dangerous People, and if not prevented in time, he would find, would act in the same manner, as they had done in Bengal, and on the Coast; where the first Settlements were made in the same manner as at Negraise, but that, by degrees, they had fortified themselves, and brought Men, and all manner of Military stores, in, under various Pretences, till they thought they were strong enough, then they pulled on the Mask, and made Kings whom they pleased, and levied all the Revenues of the Country at Discretion; This he said was the principal Reason, though there were others, which the Governors of Negraise, had given rise to, by hindering Merchant Vessels from going to Perseen by which the Buraghmah King lost his Duties.

However every thing that could in the least be made to serve as an argument against the English, was always aggravated and put up in the worst light possible, by Gregory, to the Buraghmah King; for then, Antony said, that the Settlement at Negraise, always undersold the Armenians, and spoiled their markets both in buying and selling; which he imagined was the Reason of Gregory's acting as he did, for there never was any quarrel between the Armenians, and any Inhabitants of Negraise, that ever he heard of; on the contrary it had served as an Asylum, to several of them, in the late troubles; and to himself also; when they could be safe no where else; but He told also, that the Buraghmah King was very sorrow for what he had done, and had given orders to him, to invite all English Ships, that should touch at Negraise, to come and trade on the same footing as before; and that, in particular, he would be very glad of our Arrival, in order to make friendship again with the English; but at the same time told me, as we had not come on the Score of Trade, but as an Embassy to settle a Friendship; that unless We came up to Perseen, the Buraghmah King would be suspicious of our Intentions; and he was sure the Armenians would take all opportunities of fomenting the Quarrel and representing us as Spys, and that unless we came into the River to Perseen, he for his own sake, durst have no communications with us; as it would be said he was carrying on some Plot with us; and as for the Letters and Presents, he could not receive them, till he had Orders, from the Buraghmah King, which would at the shortest time, be six Weeks before they could arrive: As he was at Muxabooe then, and as he must write, if we refused to come in, he knew not, how it might be taken; and that as the SW Monsoons was now setting in, we must
come into Negraise Harbour, he said, for shelter, and that if any ill was intended us, it could as easily be done there as at Perseen: On this I told him, I would consider of what he said, and left him, in order to go on board; but as it blew excessive hard at South, I was 24 hours in getting to the Vessel; though not above three in coming from her.

When I had got on board, I found the Vessel rode very hard, and made Water, as there was a large Sea from the Southward; and that on heaving in the slack of the small Bower-Cable, it was found stranded; on this, as it was not possible to lay where we were in Safety, and as we were obliged to go into Negraise Harbour, and had nothing on board which could induce or tempt the Buraghmahns to seize us, I thought it best to run up to Perseen at once, as I was well convinced, that it the Buraghmahns had a Design to seize us, they could do it at Negraise as easily as at Perseen; So on June 26th in the Morning, We weighed and run up the River, and on the 28th arrived at Perseen, where we moored, by this time there was a Letter come from Meergui Norrataw, the Prince at Dagon, for Antony, in which he informed him of our being to arrive at Negraise; and desired him as soon as he had Notice of our Arrival there, to go down and bring the Vessel to Perseen; and also he gave him a very strict order to take care that nobody molested us in the least, and to let us have every thing we wanted.

I had not the least Notice from Gregory about any thing, but that he was gone up in great haste to the Buraghmah King, I heard from the People that brought the Princes Letter to Antony; who sent an answer to the Prince, advising him of our Arrival, at Perseen, I immediately set about getting a Bankshall built, to put our Stores, and Provisions in, while we hawled a-shoar to stop our Leaks, on the 7th of July I received a Letter from the Prince at Dagon, desiring me to come along with Antony to him; and bring the Letters, and Presents with me, which he would forward to the Buraghmah King, to this, I sent an immediate Answer, that as soon as I could procure Boats, I would wait on him, as he desired; and bring the Letters and Presents with me. On the 13th I went up to Kiowk Kiow (which is the principal place here abouts, since the burning of Pwswn, and where Antony lives) in order to get a Boat to go to Dagon; Antony told me, there was only one Boat, fit to put the Presents in, at Kiowk Kiow, which he wanted for himself; but that he would send and hire one, at some neighbouring place, for me, after staying two days to no purpose, I came down again to Perseen, without a Boat; for nobody durst hire me a Boat, without Antony's order; which he told me he had given, though on putting it to the Trial, I found, he had not.

When I was at Kiowk Kiow, I heard a Report of the Buraghmah King being dead, and of his Eldest Son having taken the Government of the Kingdom on him, and that he had sent for all the Great Men in his Kingdom, to come to Muxabooe, his Capital, and swear Allegiance to him, on enquiring of Antony he told me he believed it to be true, for that the Buraghmah King, on his Expedition to
Siam, which Place he had been before, some time, was obliged to raise the Siege on account of a fever, and Flux he had himself; as likewise one half of his Forces; and return home: but he had no other authority for any thing he said, than common Report.

On my return to Perseen I got the Vessel hawled ashore, to see to stop some of her Leaks, and on the 28th July another Boat arrived from the Prince, at Dagon, with a Letter for me, desiring me to come with the Letters and Presents to him, as soon as possible, and the people that brought it, went on board, and took all the Arms for the Buraghmah King, by force, for I had refused to deliver them to them as I was obliged to go to Dagon myself; especially as the Prince had not mentioned it in his Letter to me neither; then; they went to KiowKiow to Antony, for whom also they had a Letter, and the next day Antony, and the people that brought the Prince's Letter, came down to Perseen again, and brought a Boat for me, and the rest of the King's Presents, to go in: Antony also told me to carry a Present for the Prince, and, two or three others, that were his Assistants, in the Government the Province; who very probably would give me the Englishman that were at Dagon, without waiting for any other order, as the Country was all in Confusion, which was the. Reason he did not go with me; He then told me that the late King died in his return from SIAM, about the middle of May, and that his Second Son, who was then with the Army, after his Father's Death, wanted to get himself acknowledged King, by the Generals and hading Men, but being opposed in his designs by them, who all declared for the Elder Brother, he separated himself, with what People would follow him, from the rest of the Army, and went to Tonghoe, a Province bordering on the King of Siam's Country, where he proclaimed himself King; however the Generals that kept with the Main Body of the Army, kept the King's Death private as long as possible, and sent Notice of his Death to his Eldest Son, whom they proclaimed the King, and sent his father's Body, with great Pomp, to Muxabooc, where it was burned, they also sent him word of his Brother's Behaviour, who, by this time, not finding that People joined him, as he had expected, had also sent to his Elder Brother, and, by the intercession of his Mother, was pardoned on laying down his Arms; the New Buraghmah King. now thinking he had nothing to fear, under some Pretence or other, sent for two of the Generals from the Army, who had disobliged him in his Father's life time; they not suspecting any Danger, after their late Behaviour, went accordingly to him; but without admitting them to an Audience, he made them be put to death; This proceeding of the Buraghmah King, was resented by the rest of the Army, in such a manner, by the management of one of the most popular of the Generals, who was with the Army, and apprehended the same fate with the Officers who had been killed, that they immediately proclaimed him King, on this he took Possession of AVA, with about 12000 of the best Troops in the Army, and commenced Hostilities
against the late King's Son, he also sent circular Letters to all the Great Men in the Country inviting them to Join him, and acknowledge him King.

As yet there was no knowing what turn affairs would take; however it would be a sufficient excuse for me, which ever Party prevailed, that the Prince at Dagon had taken the Presents from me by force; it would be of no signification to risque the disobliging him by refusals, and putting those things under his Care, might perhaps get the Englishman at Dagon, released without farther trouble, so I determined to go with a good grace to him, as I found there was no avoiding it; and accordingly on the 30th of July, I set out for Dagon, in company with the Boat that brought the Princes Letter to me, and on the 5th of August arrived at Dagon, and delivered the King's Presents to Mungui Narataw, the Prince; and took a Receipt from him, tor the Particulars; I also offered him the Letters, but he would not receive them; but told me I must go to the Buraghmah King, with them, and deliver them to him in Person, and that he would send the Presents along with me, under care of one his Officers. I told him, I had not brought Necessaries with me for so long a journey, and that it would be a great Inconvenience to me to go as I was: I said this, in order if possible to get off going, for in the present Situation of Affairs in the Country, I did not by any means like it; but he would not be put off, but told me, he would send the Presents to a Place called Ledgick (which is situated on the great River of Ava, and near the Month of that Branch that runs down. to Perseen) while I went another way, with one of his Officers, to the Vessel, to get what Necessaries I wanted, and leave Orders with the Officers of the Vessel, for their behaviour in my Absence; and that afterwards I should go and join the Boat, with the Presents, at Ledgick, and proceed up to the Buraghmah King: he desired me also to provide myself with an Interpreter, before I left Dagon; otherways I probably would not get one, when I wanted him up in the Country; which, as it was absolutely necessary, I did, though I was obliged to pay dear for one; I then asked what Advices he had received about the Rebellion up in the Country, and whether or not he could not release the Englishmen to me then? he told me, that he had, that very day, received a Letter from Muxaboobee, in which he had an Account of the General's forces, being defeated by the Buraghmah King's, and that he had shut himself up in AVA, in which Place he was besieged by the Buraghmah King's Forces, and that, as there was no great Guns in the Place, he expected every day an Account of his being taken: This, as I heard from every body else, was true; and, he said, as to releasing the Englishman then, though he had not the least doubt of their being set at Liberty, by the Buraghmah King, yet he could not presume so far on his favour (though the King was his Nephew) as to release them without an order, from Court, for that purpose; and, says he, as there is only those common Men here, and the Negraise Writer, meaning Mr. Robertson, you had better let it alone till the others arrive from Mergui, in the Ships we expect daily.
I then begged him to let Mr. Robertson go with me to Perseen, to stay there till my return from the King, when I should be certain whether or not he would be released; This he consented to; and said, that as he had committed no fault, either against the King, or any body else, if it had been in his Power, he would have released him long ago; that he had ever since his Acquaintance with the English, which commenced in Mr. Newton's time, when he was made Governor of all the Country below Prone, he had always lived in friendship with them, and never found reason to do otherwise; but that Mr. Hope had given some Arms and Provisions to the Peguers, which was represented to the late King, by Gregory, the Armenian with many aggravating Circumstances, on which he himself was sent some time before Negraise was cut off, to do it, though much against his Inclination, he was obliged to undertake it; that on his Arrival at Negraise he found so friendly an Entertainment from Mr. Hope, and Captain Inglis, that he went back to the Buraghmah King, with a Present, which Mr. Hope sent by him, and endeavoured to reconcile matters again; but Gregory, who had been sent to Negraise with him, did all he could to hinder the Buraghmah King, from dropping the Design of cutting off that Settlement; and at the same time represented him, as Confederate with the English, in the Designs they had, to bring the Country under Subjection, as they had already done, the Coast and Bengal; both which insinuations the Buraghmah King took so much Notice of, that he ordered Lavene the Frenchman, with a Party of Men, to cut off Negraise, and him to be put in Irons, and confined with other Criminals, and, for several Days, he was stretched at full Length on his Back, in the heat of the Sun, before the Palace Gate in Dagon, with three Timbers laid across his body, viz. one on his Throat, one on his Stomach, and another on his Thighs; till by the Entreaties of his Sister, who was the King's Head Wife, he was released, but, to this day, he has not recovered the Shock it gave him; also every Man that was with him at Negraise, except Gregory was Bamboed; I also heard when I was at Dagon, that as soon as Gregory had received the Letter, I sent him from the Nicobars, he immediately took Boat and went up to the Buraghmah King, in order to be the first, that carried him the News of our Arrival, and to take the Oath of Allegiance.

After having got an Interpreter, and a Boat, I set out on the 9th August, in the Morning, from Dagon, and on the 18th arrived at Perseen, where I found every thing as I left it; and on the 17th I was going to set out in Company with Mungui Narrataw's Officer, and Antony, for Muxabooe; when there arrived one of the Buraghmah King's Officer, who was sent from Court, in Company with Gregory, and another Officer, who had a Letter for me from the Buraghmah King, and told me I had best stay at Perseen, till I received it; this I determined to do, as there might be something in it, which might hinder me from going up to the Buraghmah

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1 Clearly, this date, or the one prior, is incorrect.—M.W.C.
King, and possibly an Order for me to finish what I came for, where I was; by which a great deal of Trouble and Expense would be saved.”

On this Mungui Narrataw’s Officer, without saying any thing to me, the very next Tide, went away up the River by himself; On the 18th, Gregory arrived also from the Buraghmah King; and sent to tell me, he had brought a Letter from the Buraghmah King, and desired I would come into his Boat, to receive it; To shew all possible respect for the Buraghmah King I went accordingly, and he told me he had delivered the Original to a Buraghmah Officer, who, he said, would arrive in a Day or two; but he delivered me a Copy, in English, which, he said, was a true Translation of the Buraghmah King’s Letter, if was as follows:

I the most High and mighty King of all Kings, the most fortunate, and above all good fortune, of all these my Dominions, Master of the three Pegu Kingdoms, with all its Provinces, Master of the Mines of Gold, Silver, Diamond, Rubies, Amber-beads, and all manner of precious Stems, in these my Dominions, now at the Golden City, in a Golden Palace, and Silver Canopy, Father of all good Fortune, and with a cheerfull Countenance, and free Heart, together with a Good-will, towards the Governors of Bengal and Madrass.

This to Captain Walter Alves.

My Shabander advised me, of your being at the Diamond Island, with Letters and Presents for me; as Negrais and Persaim are Sea-Port Towns, You may freely enter and land at any of these Ports, and Trade after paying the usual Customs; as I am sensible, as well as informed, of Your coming in behalf of The Company, to make friendship with the great King, my Father, who is now dead, He being informed of the Misbehaviour of Captain Hope, the Chief of Negraise, who had correspondence with the Peguers, built several Fortifications, and did not advise his Majesty then of his being there, neither came to pay a Visit, nor fulfill the promises and agreements made by The Company, his Majesty has also been particularly informed of the Fortifications that has been built there, and upon occasion to fight against him, sent People to demolish that place, and took away their Ammunition, stores, &c. Now as you are come to trade you have Negraise and Persaim (and after having paid your due Customs) You have free Liberty to trade, not only in those two Places, but in all my Dominions, and I will trade with you, and give you Merchandize, or any thing which you shall want, more than the Gnat King my Father has given the English Nation, formerly, with a good will and a free heart; that my Country and your Country may be one in a Golden Path; If the Company at Negraise, then had done no’ that both Negraise and Persaim would have been theirs, long before now, but now as Persaim is Inhabited you may freely come and live at Negraise, till Persaim is rehribated, for which purpose I had made my Shabundar, Prince of that Place, and gave him Power

\[2\text{ So in MS—Dalrymple.}\]
\[3\text{ So in MS.—Dalrymple.}\]
to act as he things proper, for the Benefits of The Company's Interest, should there be any hereafter, as also to prevent misunderstandings between me, and the English Nation for the future, I desire you will come up yourself with the Letters and Presents from the Gentlemen of Bengal and Madrass; I have ordered my Shabandar to conduct you: here, for I have somewhat of Importance to communicate to you; and shall have whatever your heart shall wish for. He has also begged leave of me for the Release of an Englishman one Robertson, formerly a Writer at Negraise, which I granted him; I desire you also to bring up all the Goods you have brought with you.

When I had read this, and came out of his Boat again, the Buraghmah Officer, that arrived before him, asked Antony the Contents of the Copy, (to him I had explained it in Portuguese) when he had heard them, he told me there were several things in that Copy, which he was certain were not in the Original, and that the original letter had been in Gregory's care. It was true he had solicited for it, very strongly, to be delivered to him, but was refused, for which reason, he bid me take care he did not lead me into a Scrape, and there leave me, and that I had better stay till I received the Original, before I set out for Muxabooe, and not go immediately with Gregory, as he would have me. I thanked him for his Advice, and resolved with myself not to go from Perseen, till I saw the Original Letter, which with what I have seen, would be something of a guide to me, in regard to whom I could most rely on for the future; whether Gregory, or the others sent from the Buraghmah King; and the improbable stories, and extravagant Promises of Gregory, helped to confirm me in that Resolution, after I had talked with him some time; Accordingly on the 21st the Officer who had the Buraghmah King's Letter arrived, which he delivered me, and read publicly on the 22d with much Ceremony, and as nearly as I could understand it, was as follows. The Buraghmah King's Titles, were the same as in Gregory's Copy, which for brevity sake I leave out.

In the Reign of the Great King, my Father, (who being wearied of this World is now gone to Govern a better) Captain Hope, who was then Governor of Negraise, did not shew the Customary Respects, nor perform the promises made by The Company to my Father, the Great King, but did just as he thought fit, built Fortifications where he pleased, and also held a correspondence with the Peguers, whom he supply'd with Arms, Ammunition, Provisions, &c. which being told to the Great King, my Father, he accordingly sent a Party of Men to Negraise, and Seized all the stores, Arms, Ammunition, &c. Now, as I am informed of your Arrival at Diamond Island, with Letters, and Presents for me, and if the Governors of Madrass or Bengal want to settle at Negraise or Perseen, they have free Liberty to do so, and Trade, after paying the usual Customs, or if you have any Merchandize, you may freely enter and trade either at Negraise or Persaim (after you have paid the usual Customs) but as Perseen is now uninhabited, you may stay at Negraise, till it is repeopled. In the mean time, I desire you will come in Person, and bring the Letters, and Presents you have brought from the Governors of Bengal and Madrass, as also every thing of your own, you have to
sell, that your Country and my Country may be one, and you shall have whatever you desire.

When I had got this explained to me, I found Gregory's Word was not to be depended on; however I took no Notice to him, but resolved to have no communications with him; but what I could not avoid, for the future; I was desired by the Buraghmah Officers to take all my Orders from Bengal and Madrass with me, also the Copy that Gregory had given me, for the Translation of the Buraghmah King's Letters; for that Gregory had told the Buraghmah King, I was come with orders to Settle Negraise again, and had brought three Ships, and great Quantities of Goods, and Stores for that Purpose; and that it would be necessary in order to confute Gregory's Story, to shew my Original Orders to the King, as also the Copy; for they were certain that the King, on seeing nothing of what Gregory had made him expect, would ask for what I came; and what Orders I had, from Bengal and Madrass; As there was nothing in either of the Orders that could be taken the least amiss by the Buraghmah King, I told them I would do so; they also, said, that Gregory told the Buraghmah King, that Mr. Pigot had wrote to him, to transact affairs for The Company, with him, and they also, desired me if I had not already delivered to him Mr. Pigot's Letter, not to do it, till the Buraghmah King had given me leave to do so; they also said the Reason of the Buraghmah King giving Mr. Robertson his freedom, was not because Gregory ask'd it of him, but because the late King, his Father, had promised to do so, the first Opportunity that offer'd of his getting to the Coast; which now offering by our Arrival, he gave him leave to go accordingly.

On the 22d. August, in the Evening, having finished any business I could do, I set out from Perseen, in Company with the two Buraghmah Officers, Antony and Gregory, for Muxabooe where the Buraghmah King usually resides; Two or three Days after I had left Perseen, I heard of the Arrival of some Ships from Mergui, in which I expected there was some English Officers, Nothing remarkable on our Passage, up the River, but at several Places, viz. Meam, Prone, Meloone, Yangoo, and some other Chokeys my Boat was searched, and People changed, which always cost me a good deal of Trouble, and a Present, before I got fresh People, for all that came from the Buraghmah King, not one stayed with me, as my Boat rowed heavy; but Antony staid close by me, and I believe saved me some trouble, in changing my Boats Crew so often; he also was searched, and served in the same manner, on Account of the Rebellion in the Country, only those, who came directly from the Buraghmah King, were exempted from Search; not one of whom staid by me, but took what things I had for Sale out of my Boat, under pretence she was too deep, and to make her row better, and made what haste they could to the Buraghmah King with them; as I found Mungui Narrataw's Officer had also done with the Presents, when I passed by Ledgick. On my way up the River, I found the Country People, in general, by their Discourse, which was interpreted to
me, both by Antony and my Linguist, were disaffected to the present Government, and always seemed pleased, when ever they heard of a Repulse, that the the Buraghmah King's Forces met with before Ava, which were frequent; and in every attempt they made to enter the Place (though there was no Cannon in it) were always worsted, in one of which Attacks Laveene, the Frenchman that commanded the Party that cut off Negraise, was killed; I have already mentioned that one of the late King’s Generals had shut himself up in Ava, with some of the best Troops of the Kingdom, for fear of being assassinated, as two others were, before they were admitted to see the Buraghmah King; they also talked publickly, that the General, in Ava, had sent to Siam, for the Son of the last King of Ava, whom the Peguers dethroned and killed, about Ten Years ago, to come to Ava, and he would put him in possession of the Kingdom; and by their discourse, and manner of telling these things, they all of them wish'd it might turn out so; and every thing in the Country seemed to be in great Confusion; After a very tedious journey in the Boat.

On the 22d of September, I arrived at Siggeyn, a Place directly opposite to Ava, on the other Side of the River, and where the Buraghmah King had been sometime, in order to & forward the Reduction of Ava, which he had besieged, then for two Months with 100,000 Men, as I was told, and whose Batteries were within fifty Yards of the Walls, arid though there was no Cannon in the City, nor a Ditch about it, yet the Bestieged kept them off with Musketry; and when they endeavoured to scale the walls, the Besieged plyed them so with boiling Dammer, mixed with Oil, that they always fled with Precipitation; some Poor Creatures, that were miserably scalded in these Attacks, I Saw in Hutts on this side of the River.

On the 23d, in the morning, I was se nt for to the Buraghmah King, but, before I could get admittance, I was ob liged to send a Present before me (as Mungui Narrataw's Officer had carried those I brought from Bengal and Madrass to the Buraghmah King, and delivered them some Days before I arrived, and was gone to Dagon again;) after making Obeisance to the King, in the Buraghmah manner, I delivered him the Letters, he broke the Seals, opened them and sent me to his Secretaries to get them translated; but before they would set about it, I was obliged to give a Present, to a man that could read the Persian Language for his Trouble, I found this was very necessary, or he would perhaps have translated them, in such a manner, as that I should have been no Gainer by saving it. There was a Copy of the Madrass Letter to the Buraghmah King in Portuguese, which they made me read, and had it translated and compared with what the Persian translated, and being found to agree, when the others were done also, I was sent for to the Buraghmah King to hear them read, He said he was surprised to think how the Governor of Madrass, as he said in his Letter, could have the face to demand any Satisfaction, which he would not give; for that he looked on all that were killed at Negraise, whether guilty or innocent, as born to die there, and in that manner; and that he never would give himself any trouble to enquire farther about the affair;
His Soldiers were not obliged to know who were guilty, or who were not, neither did he expect they would enquire, but, in such cases, generally killed Men, Women, or Child as they pleased; for instance says he, as soon as ever they get into Ava, I have given them Orders to spare nothing, that has Life; and to burn, kill and destroy every thing in it; though I knew that Nittoon (meaning the General) and the Soldiers are to blame; as for these People, that were not killed, you may take them with you to the Coast; the Timbers, you may also have, but as your Governors at Negraise, and the Masters of Ships, that were seized, were the Offenders, they must stand to the loss; for Restitution, I will make none; I then asked him what Crimes the Governors of Negraise had committed, for which the King, his Father, had been so much offended? He said, that Captain Heft, while Chief at Negraise, had supplied the Peguers, who were his Enemies, with Arms, Ammunition, and Provisions; and was in Contract with them, for when they took any Buraghmah Boats, the Plunder they carried to Negraise, and Captain Hope took one half, and let them keep the other; and that not till after many repeated messages to him to desist from such Practises, the King his Father, had ordered Negraise to be destroyed; I answered, if that could be brought to proof, the Laws of England would punish him with Death, if his Father, had left his Punishment to the English; I then asked him what Crime the New Governor, that arrived the Day before, or any of his People had done, for there was no difference in their Punishment;

He said, “he was born to die there;” and laughed,

for, I suppose you have seen; that, in this Country, in the wet Season, there grows so much long useless Grass and Weeds, in the Fields, that in the dry Season, we are forced to burn them, to clear the Ground; sometimes it happens, there is some useful Herbs among these Weeds and Grass, which as they cannot be distinguished easily, are burned along with them; so it happened to be the new Governor's lot.

Then the King asked me, what I came to his Country for? I told him I was sent by the Honourable the Governors of Bengal and Madrass, with Presents to His Majesty, and Letters in which were mentioned every thing desired by their Honours; which, if it was his Pleasure to grant, I was ordered to return as soon as possible, with his Majesty's Answer, but had no Authority to ask for any thing, besides what was mentioned, in the Letters to his Majesty; he told me, that if the English wanted a Settlement, for trade, in his Country, notwithstanding they had behaved so ill, he would yet allow them to trade where they pleased; but that the Principal Settlement, must be at Perseen, and not at Negraise; for when at that Place, as we were at War with the French, they might come and plunder the Island, before He could hear of their being there, or send us any Assistance; which could not be done, if at Perseen. Says he,
The Governor of Bengal requires Satisfaction for what The Company lost at Negraise, and for Mr. Whitehill's Vessel, but that I will never give; as the Governors of Negraise, and Mr. Whitehill himself, were the Offenders; let him look to them for the Losses sustained; Indeed there is a good many of the Company's Timbers at Perseen and Negraise, them you may take freely.

But, says he,

You must leave somebody to look after them; to whom I will give you an Olio, or a Permission in writing, to buy, sell, or do any kind of Merchandize at Perseen,” (after paying the proper Duties).

[He continued] As He knew, that if was for The Company's Interest, that they should have a Settlement in his Dominions, he would give them as much Ground about Perseen as they wanted, and I must have somebody there to hoist Colours, or else he would think that the Governor's expressions of Friendship, were only wrote to amuse him; and me sent to his Country with some other Design than was avowed; the success of which, it was his Business to prevent; I told him, I could not possibly stay myself, neither was it in my power, to give any other Persons Authority to act for the Company, but as his Majesty insisted so strongly, that somebody should stay at Perseen, if he would be pleased to release the Englishman in his Dominions, I would leave two of them as a token of Friendship, and to look after the Timbers, as he desired, till the Honourable the Governors of Bengal and Madrass signified their Pleasure: This I was obliged to say, well knowing, that if I had not complied, it would have served as a foundation for them to have quarrelled, and might be attended with the loss of my Liberty, at least, by what the distant threat of the Buraghmah King seemed to insinuate.

The Buraghmah King said that he wanted Arms, Ammunition of all Sorts, Men and Implements, to make Gunpowder, and to cast Iron, Shot; also he wanted a Horse and Mare, each four Cubits high, and a Male, and Female Camel, for to breed; that if the Governors of Bengal and Madrass would supply him with those things, he would give them, in return, the full Value, in any Commodities they pleased, that his Country produced; I told him, I did not doubt but the Honourable the Governors of Bengal and Madrass would supply him with those things, it in their Power; but at present, I as there was a War with the French, Arms and all kinds of Ammunition, were so scarce that they could not be got, or they would perhaps have sent him, a larger Quantity of them; and as for a Man to cast Iron Shot, there was none made, only in Europe; Those they have at Bengal and Madrass being brought from thence ready made, and as there was nobody, there, knew now to make Iron Shot, it would take at least three or four Years, before a Man could be brought from Europe for that Purpose; then he asked me, if I could engage, in the Name of The Company, to furnish him with those things, viz. Arms,
Ammunition, &c. and he would give them as much Ground, or any thing else they wanted, in the Dominions, I said, that I could [not] enter into Engagements on the Part of The Honourable Company; and, as I had no Authority, it I did, they would not be valid; but that I would inform The Honourable the Governors of Bengal and Madrass, of what He said, and desired he would give Orders, to his Secretary, to mention in his Letter to them, any thing he wanted; he said he would so, and then desired again, that as I was obliged myself to go away, I would leave two of the most Sensible Men among the Englishmen, at Perseen, in the Name of The Company, 'till the Governor of Madrass should send a proper Governor, otherwise, says One of his Counsellors, “We shall imagine you are come as a Spy, and [not], to renew friendship;” on which I answered, that Spys came always privately, but that I had always said, and done every thing, in publick; which might convince His Majesty, that I had no private Orders, or any thing to execute, but what was openly professed; and told the Buraghmah King I would do as he desired, and he said He would give Orders for Olios to be made out for the delivering of what Englishmen were in his Kingdom to me, as also an Olio, signifying it was his Pleasure, that the English who resided at Perseen, should (after paying the proper Customs) have free Liberty to trade; and that no Person whatever should molest them: and that if any English Ships arrived at Negraise, they should have Liberty to trade on the same terms; I was then ordered to withdraw, and told, that, when I had any Business, I might again wait on the Buraghmah King; and if he wanted me, he would send for me: This Day Gregory was Master of the Ceremonies, and helped to interpret, what I said to the King, but the Letter to him, and the other to the Vizier was not read in my hearing.

On the 24th, in the morning early, the Buraghmah King sent me word, that he wanted the Boat, I came up in, immediately, and that he would order me another; I was obliged immediately to land every thing I had, on the Beach and make a Tent for the Present; but afterwards as I saw no likelihood of a Boat for some time, I was obliged to build a Bamboo House, to shelter me from the Weather, 'till I could get a Boat, from a Man that had the Care of all the King's; and as I could not hire one there, before I did set one from him, it cost me more Trouble and Expence, than if I had hired one anywhere else, for all the Buraghmah King gave Orders, in my hearing, to get me one the same day he took the other from me; on the forenoon of the same day, viz.. the 24th, I was sent for to the Palace, to see what things I brought for Sale, opened before the Buraghmah King; and if he wanted me, he would send for me: This Day Gregory was Master of the Ceremonies, and helped to interpret, what I said to the King, but the Letter to him, and the other to the Vizier was not read in my hearing.

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pretence of Presents, sell Goods, and so defraud the Buraghmah King of his duties)" then he took for the Chop, Godown-hire, &c. at the rate of five Per Cent more, He would not except these very things, which I had given as a Present to the Buraghmah King, but took duties for them, the same as if I had sold them; there was some white Cloth, damaged, in the Buraghmah Boats, after they had taken it out of mine; for that Gregory took Customs, &c. out of the Good, which; when I objected to, as I could not sell it, was silenced, by being told in a very peremptory manner, that the Buraghmah King had occasion for more than the whole; and stood to no losses. Afterwards what things the Buraghmah King wanted were picked out, and then the Ministers took what they liked best. When I asked what price, they would give me, was answered, that on that Head, I had best say nothing, for the Buraghmah King was not to be dealt with as a Merchant, but always gave what Price he pleased, which I found, afterwards, was not half, what I could have got from other People, and the Ministers took care to follow his Example in that, and every thing else they got any thing by; I saw it was in vain to complain, so told them I relied on his Majesty's Pleasure, in that, and every thing else; at which the Buraghmah King seemed pleased, and told me that next time I came, I should bring more Goods, for that the Duties of these, were scarce worth taking the trouble of counting them; and said I might take away the Remainder of the Goods, and sell them to whom I pleased; on this I went away to my Tent.

On the 25th, early in morning, the Buraghmah King sent for me, and desired me to shew him, my Original Orders from Madrass and Bengal; which, when I did, after a great many Questions, which were asked to see if they could touch me in any Contradictions, I was ordered to read them, and when they were explained to the Buraghmah King, he called to Gregory, in a surly manner, that there was no mention of settling Negraise, either in his Letters, or my Orders and asked him where the three Ships, and great Quantities of Goods were, that he told him of; Gregory made no Answer, and the King asked me, where the Letter, Gregory had given me at Perseem, as a Copy of his, was; I had got it translated into the Buraghmah Tongut, in coming up the River, and gave it to Him, he ordered one of his Secretaries to send it, when he had heard it read, he asked me, if I was certain, that this was a true Translation, on which I appealed to the Buraghmah Officer, and Antony, to both of whom Gregory had explained it, in the same manner on his Arrival at Perseem, who both affirmed the truth of the Translation; on which he said to Gregory, that he had once designed to make him Sea-Customer at Perseem, as a Copy of his, was; I had got it translated into the Buraghmah Tongut, in coming up the River, and gave it to Him, he ordered one of his Secretaries to send it, when he had heard it read, he asked me, if I was certain, that this was a true Translation, on which I appealed to the Buraghmah Officer, and Antony, to both of whom Gregory had explained it, in the same manner on his Arrival at Perseem, who both affirmed the truth of the Translation; on which he said to Gregory, that he had once designed to make him Sea-Customer at Perseem, according to his Desire; but as he was so expert of making himself a Prince, and an Agent for The Company, that to-morrow, or next day, he expected to hear him give himself the name of a King; and told him to go with his Comrade, on the other side the River, (meaning the General in Ava) on which Gregory pleaded his Letter from Mr. Pigot, as something to countenance what he had said, about The Company (having appointed him to transact affairs on their Part, and the
Buraghmah King) then the King asked me, if Mr. Pigot, or the Governor of Bengal had told me to apply to Gregory for any Assistance, I answered, they had not; on which Gregory was ordered out of the Palace that Instant; and he, seeming a little tardy, was dragged out in the Street: after this the Buraghmah King would never suffer an Armenian, to interpret any thing to him, but always called for Antony, who, to do him Justice, was of great Service to me, by telling me whose Interest with the Buraghmah King was strongest, and the mariner of insinuating into some of the Great Men's favour, whose disposition he knew; also to whom, and the manner, to apply for the soonest dispatch of my Business.

But notwithstanding all I could do, I could [not] get my Dispatch till the 9th of October, for though I made all the Ministers Presents, through whose hands Business passed, on my first Arrival, as I was told, by every body, I would be much sooner dispatched for it; yet always when I went to ask, when the Letters would be ready, and when I should go away, I was put off with Delays, and evasive answers; there was some things of greater Consequence, which would take up so long a time, and must be dispatched first, but that the Letters and Dispatches for me, should be the first Business, they would do afterwards; I was put off in this manner for Ten, or Twelve Days, when one Evening, one of the Secretary's Servants, that used to come to my house, and to whom I was complaining of the Delays, that I was almost every day put oft with, told me that it was done on purpose, and thai without I gave all the Ministers, a considerable Present, each, I might be six months before I got away; for says he, the Letters want only to be fair-copied, and the Olios to be made out, all may be done in half a day, if they pleased to dispatch You.

I told him that was an Imposition, and I would complain of it to the Buraghmah King, but replied he,

What Linguist dare, or will, carry a Complaint to the Buraghmah King, against the Vizier Secretaries, &c. or if they did tell him what you desire, he would only laugh at it, and say that it was what everybody else did; and why not a Stranger; for the Presents the Ministers get, in that manner, are what they live by; The Buraghmah King pays them nothing, for which Reason he will give no heed to a Complaint of that Kind; However if you please, you may try the Experiment, but take my word you'll wish you had let it alone; for to tell you a Secret, the Buraghmah King, in the present posture of his Affairs, will not quarrel with them for a Trifle; as they are all leading Men in the Country, and can be of great Service, or Prejudice, to his Interest at this time; but says he if you do give any thing, the sooner you do so, the better, and the more easily they will be satisfied; it will not be above three hundred Tekals to each of them; and there is eight in Number; besides, if you have made any remarks on the Present Situation of Affairs, here, or have any Papers you would not have seen, you had best destroy them, for I have heard that there is a Design to search your House, to look for Pafws, in order to discover, it possible, whether or not you have any Designs,
but those you publickly profess, but take no Notice to any body of what I have told you, or it may cost me my Life[.]

I thanked him for his Advice and told him I would consider of what he had said, and would see him next Day. This was the 7th of October, and that Night I destroyed the Diary, I had kept since my Arrival at Perseen, though there was nothing in it, it rightly understood, that could be of Prejudice to me; but as I found that every frivolous pretence, served to squeeze money from People in this Place, I thought it most prudent to destroy it, and run no risque. Next Morning I heard that there were two leading Men, in the Army, imprisoned, for holding a Correspondence with the Central in Ava, and that there was a Letter taken from one of their Servants, from the General to them, telling them, that he had certain Advises from the late King of Ava's Son, at siam, being on his March to Ava, at the head of an Army of Siamese, to come and take on him, the Title of King of Ava; which he was born to; whom, as soon as near enough, he did not doubt to fight his way to, through all opposition, that the present King would be able to make; I had also heard of a Conspiracy, to place the present King's younger Brother on the Throne, which it was said was ripe for Execution, the first opportunity; these things, and what the Secretary's Servant told me, in regard to Complaints against the Ministers (which I found to be true for I asked my own Linguist and Antony both, but not one of them would utter a word of Complaint against the Ministers) obliged me to comply with their exhorbitant expectations, also I found very true what he told, with regard to searching my Papers; for the Day afterwards, Two of the King's servants came, and brought a Moor with them, for an Interpreter, and under Pretence of looking for Nick-Knacks, which they said the King's Women had desired them to ask me for, made me open [every] lock I had, and every bit of Paper, that any thing was wrote on, asked me what it was, and under pretence of shewing the King's Woman, the European writing, carried away several Papers, for there was a Dutchman, that understood a little of English, and could read some words (that they had taken with Mr. Bornean) to him, I heard afterwards, they shewed them, in order to find out, whether or not I had told them truth, with regard to what was wrote on them; but his Story and mine agreeing, they were returned to me, the Papers were my sailing Orders from Bengal and Madrass, also a Europe Letter from a Relation, and the other happened to be a Copy of the Letter, I sent to Gregory from the Nicobars; I was told, that when either the Governer of Madrass or Bengal wrote again to the King, he desired that the Letters might be wrote in English, for as neither I nor the Buraghmahs understood the Persiam Language, the People that did, and were employed to read the Letters, had it in their Power to keep the Governors of Bengal and Madrass from being rightly understood by his Majesty, whereas if they were wrote in English, as most of them understood Portugese, as also many of his subjects, it would not be in the Power of these People to make misunderstandings so easily.
On the 9th of October, in the Morning, I carried Presents to all the Ministers, in proportion to their Stations (that if possible I might get away before any new Disturbances happened, which might probably effectually hinder me getting away at all) I was then told, that my Olits for the release of the Englishman, Chokeys, &c. as also the King's Letters would be ready the next day, and they desired me to carry a Present on the morrow forenoon to the Buraghmah King, when I would get his Letters, &c. but was told that I must pay for writing and gilding the King's Letters, and also for their Cases, likewise forty Tikals, a head for the Englishman's Olits, or that, as this was a Perquisite of the Under-Secretary's, that they could not possibly be finished without, as I was well convinced of the truth of what the Principal Secretary told me, with regard to the delays that would be occasioned, by not complying with these Demands, I thought it best to make no hesitation; but immediately paid the money, and next day in the forenoon, viz. 10th October, I went to the Palace with a Present to the Buraghmah King, and received his Letters, got all the Olis, and took leave of him also, and in the Evening set out for Perseem in Company with Antony, who was included in this Passport I had for the Chokeys. I had forgot to mention, that on my way up the River, when I was at Prone, I saw the Noqueda of the Fame, that was seized at Dagon about two years ago, he told me the Buraghmah King had also given him his Liberty on the news of our Arrival, and a Letter from the English Chief at Surat, which he shewed me, but on my way down the River, I heard, on my Arrival at Prone, that he died a few Days after I had seen him, and that every thing that belonged to him was seized for the Buraghmah King; this his Servant told me, who had also obtained his Liberty, at the same time his master did, and came from Prone to Bengal with me When at Siggeyn, two days after the feast of the Candles, which was about the 27th of September, it is customary for everybody to carry a present and congratulate the Buraghmah King as in England at the new year; I also went according to the Custom, at which the King seemed much pleased, and told me, he would make me a present of any thing I asked him for, whether an Elephant, a Horse, or what else I liked best: I had seen at Pagan, when there, (which I had forgot to mention) three Dutchmen that were Slaws, one a Surgeon, and two Soldiers, that belonged to a Settlement the Dutch had at Siam, and which the Buraghmahs took and plundered (in the same manner they had done Negraise) in their late Expedition, there were in it thirteen Europeans in all, which were killed, only these three, who were at Dagon in a very miserable situation.

When I saw the Buraghmah King wanted I should ask something of him, I begged that he would release these three Men, and let them go with me to Bengal, from whence they could go to their own countrymen again; this the King without Hesitation consented to, and gave Orders that an Olio, for their Release, should be made out, and given to me with those for the Release of the Englishman, but a Dutchman, who was formerly Captain Sutherland's mate, and run away from him,
on being detected embezzling his Effects, and had been with the Buraghmahs ever since, what his Reasons were I know not, but he went to one of the Generals and told him, that those Dutchman, the King was giving their Liberty to, could be of more Service to him, than all the Europeans in the Kingdom, for they understood making of Gunpowder; this the General went immediately, and told the King of, who afterwards sent for me, and said that he was in great Want of Gunpowder, and had nobody that could make any good, tor which reason he could not be so good as his Word, in releasing the three Dutchman, as he was told that they could make Gunpowder, better than any body he had in his Kingdom; and then immediately ordered them to be sent for, from Dagon, this Message and order the Dutchman begged leave to execute, and was accordingly sent away to Dagon for them; but on my going to Dagon, for what Englishman were there, I heard that two of them, the Surgeon and one of the Soldiers, were dead, and that the Prince of Dagon had put the other on board a Ship, he was fitting out to send to the Nicobars.

All the Englishmen I could hear of in the Country, which were only five, I got an order for their Release, by name they were; Mr. Robertson, and one Lewis, who belonged to the train, of the Negraise People, Mr. Helass, the chief mate, and Richard Lee, a Quartermaster of the Fame, and one Richard Battle, that belonged to Mr. Whitehill's Vessel, all the rest died, in the late Expedition with the Buraghmahs to Siam, at least none of those mentioned, nor any body else I saw, know to the contrary; and according to the Buraghmah King's earnest request, I pitched on Messrs. Robertson and Helass to stay at Perseem till the Honourable the Governors of Bengal or Madrass signified their Pleasure to the contrary; and got on Olio for them, by Name, for that purpose; signifying that it was his Majesty's pleasure, that nobody should in the least molest them, while they conformed to the Customs of the Country; also that they might take any of the Honourable Company's Timbers, wherever they found them, in order to have them in readiness, if the Honourable the Governors of Bengal and Madrass should think proper to send for them, and continue in Friendship with his Majesty.

On the 13th October, I arrived at Yangoe, on my way down the River, where I met with two of the Englishmen, viz. Lewis, and Lee, who were on their way to the Buraghmah King, being sent by the Prince, at Dagon, in order to assist at the Siege, of Ava, I shewd the Buraghmah King's Order for their Release, to the man in whose charge they were, but he could not deliver them to me, he said, as the order was directed to the Prince at Dagon, who had not seen it, and had given him a strict order, to carry them to the Buraghmah King, so finding I could make nothing of this fellow, I determined to send up my Linguist again to Siggeyn, to procure an Order for this man to deliver them to me, accordingly on the 14th I hired a boat, and wrote three Letters, one to the principal Secretary, one to the Vizier, and another to a relation of the Buraghmah King, letting them know the reason of my troubling them again, and begging they would procure an Order for this man's
delivering the two Englishman to me, if he should not be arrived at Siggeyn when
my Linguist left it; with these three Letters, I was obliged to send a present with
each, as, by Experience, I knew, that nothing could be done without; and on the
15th the Linguist set out accordingly for Siggeyn. As my interpreter was gone up, I
dropt down the River, with the Stream, in order to give him time to overtake me
again, before I passed Prone, having resolved to go to Dagon first, rather than
Perseem, in order to get the Englishmen that were there, for fear they should be
sent up to Ava, as Lewis and Lee, were, which would put it out of my power to get
them released at present, and to send a Boat with a Letter from Prone, to Perseem,
to advise my Officers of my coming, and to desire them to take in as many of the
Honourable Company's Timbers, as the Vessel would carry.

On the 20th of October, I arrived at Prone, and on the 23d. the Linguist,
with Lewis and Lee, arrived; he having got an Order, and taken them out of the
boat from Dagon, before she arrived at Siggeyn, however I was obliged to stay at
Prone, till the 25th. on account of Antony's being sick, who was included in the
passport for the Chokey's with me, and which he took care to keep, for fear I
should leave him; Antony being a little better, on the 26th, in the morning, I
prevailed on him to set out, and about 5 in the Evening, of the same day, were
much surprised to see a large town called Meam, all in Flames, and a Crowd of
People on the Shear at a Village, about 5 Miles above it, calling to us to come
ashoar; we went accordingly, and they told us, that the Governor of Meam, who
was at Siggeyn when I left it, and who had assisted my Linguist to procure an order
for the two Englishman I sent him back for, had fled, from Court with three others,
one of whom was a General and had arrived at Meam the night before, to which
they immediately set fire, and fled into the woods, what their intentions were they
knew not, but they had spread a Report, that one of the Buraghmah King's Brothers
had rebelled at Siggeyn, whether true or false they could not tell, but they called to
us,. to advise us of the Danger, this information made me lay aside my Design of
going to Dagon first, and proceed for Perseem, as fast as possible, not knowing
what might follow the burning of Meam, so I gave the boat people extraordinary
pay, and made them row Night and Day, till I arrived at Perseem, which was on the
28th at Night. Having given orders to rigg the Vessel, and get her ready to drop
down as fast as possible, the next Day I went up to Kiowk Kiow to procure rice and
provisions for our passage, and finding by the report of every body, that those who
had burnt Meam, had not in the least molested any body else, but concealed
themselves in the Woods, I hired a Boat to go to Dagon, for the other two
Englishman that were there, as I knew I could be back before the Vessel would be
loaded, and, Provisions procured, which might be done in my Absence; and set out
from Perseen on the 31st October, and on the 4th November arrived at Dagon; the
same Day I delivered the Buraghmah King's Order for the release of the
Englishmen the Prince, which he immediately complied with, and desired me to
stay a Day, or two, for some Letters, that he would write to the Governors of Bengal and Madrass; he then asked me to give a Pass for the Ship that was fitting out for the Nicobars, I told him I had no authority to give a Pass; and that if I took upon me to do so, it could not be of the least service to them, but rather hurt: and besides, a Thing of that kind would be of great prejudice to me, as I had not the least authority for it, then says he you must give a Certificate, that the Buraghmah King has released all the Englishmen his Kingdom, and wants to live in friendship with the English, for in all probability they may meet with some English Ship, who may take them to the Coast, and detain them till the News from you arrive, by which means, we shall at least lose a Voyage to the Nicobars, before the dry Season is done; as this could not well be refused, I accordingly gave him a Certificate as he desired, and he got a Mastese that understands English to tell him what I had wrote in it.

When at Dagon I was informed that there was a Portuguese Man who had put into Mergui (when the Buraghmahs were there, in a Malaye Proa, he had no Pass, but said he came from Padang) on the West Coast of Sumatra, and on his passage into the Straits of Malacca he fell in with some Malays Prows, who attacked him, and his Stern taking fire in the Engagement, occasioned the loss of all his papers; he had on board a very handsome sett of Silver handled Knives and forks, with table and tea spoons, marked with a crest of a Hart's head, about 4000 Dollars, in Specie, also some Gold, several suits of laced Cloaths, with Linnen &c. in proportion, several En[g]lish Musquets and other things, the Shirts were marked TC. and some PS. there was also several English books, on some of which was wrote the names Ricksby, and on others, Charles Mears, 1759, none of which he could read, nor any body else he had on board, he had also a Hadley's Quadrant, and a set of French Charts, the uses of which he knew not; the Buraghmahs had not troubled him with many Enquiries, but siezed him and his Vessel, and brought them to Dagon with them; where he now was, the Effects were sent up to the Buraghmah King, before my Arrival there, on hearing this I went to the Prince, and desired he would be so good as to send for this man, and let me examine him before him, as I had reason to think from the above account, (which I told him) he had robbed some English Vessel, where he got those things, and possibly had also murdered the Owners; he was accordingly sent for, and the Prince desired me to make what enquiries I thought proper, he told me his name was Joseph de Cruz, but that he generally went by the Name of Jansy, and, after a good many contradictory Storys, he confessed that he was in an English Sloop, on the West Coast of Sumatra, and sailed from Negapatam the last Place she left on the Coast sometime in 1759, and the Captain's Name was Ford or something like it, they had been at Tapfanooly, and had carried Mr. Hall, who was Chief there, down to Natall; Mr. Hall and the Captain went ashoar immediately on their arrival there, and in the Evening three European Soldiers came off, with an order to the officer.
on board, informing him that there was Four French Ships on the Coast, which they
hourly expected, and ordering him to weigh as soon as possible and proceed to
some place on Pulo Nias, and there lay for further orders, this was immediately
complied with; and at that Place, the Lascars, that were on board, took an
Opportunity to murder the Officer and two of the Soldiers, the other was a
Frenchman whom they spared, then this Fellow carried the Sloop along shoar to
some of the Islands off Achin Head, where they took some Malays Prows, and
divided the Effects, that were on board the Sloop (which they sunk or burnt) into
three Parts, viz. one for this fellow, who was Gunner, one for the Serang, and
another for the Tindal, each of whom put their Plunder into a Prow, and went
where their Inclinations led them; this Fellow intended for Junksielon, but fell into
Margin, in April last; where the others went to he said he knew not; the Soldier
they had not murdered, and who came with this fellow, was sent up to Ava, on his
arrival at Dagon, I did not see him or I would have enquired of him also about this
Affair; these were all the Circumstances I could get from this fellow. When he had
done his Story, and it was explained to the Prince, I desired, as this fellow had, by
his own Confession, murdered the Commander of an English Vessel, and ran away
with her, that he would be pleased to deliver him to me, to carry to Bengal, that he
might be tryed by the English Laws, and punished accordingly; the Prince, said he
could not comply with my request, without first acquainting the Buraghmah King,
which would take up much time before he could get an answer, but that he would
detain him Prisoner, till he acquainted the Buraghmah King, and till he heard from
the Governor of Bengal or Madrass, to whom he would write about it.

On the 7th November, Gregory arrived at Dagon from Siggeyn, with a
Letter from the Buraghmah King, informing the Prince, that he had appointed him
to act under the Sea-Customer, when he should be made at Perseem, and to let him
have one hundred Families from Dagon, to clear away and rebuild Perseem; but the
Prince did not give the least Notice to it, and told Gregory, that he might go again
and tell the Buraghmah King, he would not let him [have] one Man from Dagon;
neither would he suffer him to carry any of his Effects out of the Town, as he
expected the Peguers would be coming that way soon, as it would discourage those
that staid behind; that he did to thwart Gregory, I believe, for on my falling sick
there, and applying to him for a more convenient boat, he immediately sent one of
his people to hire one for me, and gave orders that I might have as many People as
I warned.

On the 9th November, having got the Prince's Letters, for the Honourable
the Governors of Bengal and Madrass, I set out for Perseem, with Mr. Helass and
Richard Battle in Company with me, in the boat, I came from Perseem in, when I
arrived on the 14th, I found that as yet there was not Rice enough provided for a
two months passage, which we might probably meet with, at this Season of the
year, to Bengal, so having procured that and every [thing] else proper that we could
get, we left Perseem on the 22d, and having got safe down the River, we sailed, from Negraise, on the 30th November, and as, at this Season of the Year, we must be obliged to work up in anchor ground, could not hoist the boat in, she being leaky I was obliged to keep two profit in her, to throw the water out, and on the 3d of December in the night, an unexpected gale of wind coming on from these, and increasing with great Violence, so that at 8 in the morning, not thinking the People safe in the boat, tried to haul her up to take them out, but at that time, an excessive hard squall coming on, and a Sea breaking on the boat, filled her and washed the two People out of her, and as we durst not bring the Vessel to them, and could not haul the boat up, was obliged to cut her away: nothing else remarkable happened on the Passage from Negraise.

On the 7th December, we met with the Calcutta Snow, Captain Baillie, from Madrass, who kept us Company into Ballasore Road, where we anchored on the 10th December. I left at Perseem Messrs. James Robertson and John Helass, to stay there till the Honourable the Governors of Bengal or Madrass, or either of them, should give Orders to the Contrary, for I could not possibly avoid leaving them, as it was urged in such a manner to me, that I thought I had reason to apprehend bad consequences if I refused it, and if not approved off by their Honours, any Vessel passing that way, by only anchor off Negraise, may very easily and without trouble bring them away; as they will always be prepared for going at a Minute's Warning, and will be sure to be on board any Vessel that anchor near that place, as the Buraghmhaps will desire them to go, in order to bring Ships to Perseen.

With regard to disturbances in the Country, as there is nothing to be gained by molesting them, and all Parties want assistance, they will certainly be full as safe, if not safer, than I was in going up to the Buraghmah King, when I was sent for; at that time all the common people wished earnestly that there was an European Settlement that was able to protect them from the present Oppressions they suffer in the Country; and if I may judge from appearances, every Body of Figure, I had any Conversation with, and has no Dependance on the present reigning Family, would be glad of a change of Government; and for that Reason, as they imagine that the English has it more in their Power to be of Service, or Prejudice, to them than any other Nation, as there is no profit to be got, they will not openly hurt them, and privately none but the Armenians will, whose Interest in that Country is very low at present.
Editor’s Note:

The following account, written by the surgeon, William Hunter, relates his experiences in Pegu in 1782-1783. The observations were made on a voyage that had been ordered by the British East India Company. The account was originally printed at Calcutta in 1785 by John Hay under the title of *A Concise Account of the Kingdom of Pegu; Its Climate, Produce, Trade, and Government; The Manners and Customs of its Inhabitants. Interspersed with remarks Moral and Political.* The additional appendices, one on “An Enquiry into the cause of the variety observable in the fleeces of sheep, in different climates,” and “A Description of the Caves at Elephanta, Ambola, and Canara” are unrelated to Burma and are thus not included in the text below.

M. W. C.

A CONCISE ACCOUNT OF THE KINGDOM OF PEGU

William Hunter

Preface

As the subject of the following pages was begun to be digested two years ago; and some changes in the state of the country which they describe, have, since that time, come to the author’s knowledge; the reader will observe a few anachronisms, which it would have been difficult, and perhaps, not very material, to guard against. Indeed, to delineate exactly the present state of a country where revolutions are so frequent, and so sudden, as they are in Pegu, is next to impossible. Suffice it, then, to remark, that what is contained in the sequel relates to the state of affairs as they were in August and September 1782, except where the contrary is expressly mentioned.

Introduction

The country we are about to describe is one of those which we have but a
superficial knowledge of; and the reason is that it is very little frequented by Europeans. The three great motives that have, hitherto, led us to form a more intimate acquaintance with the remoter regions of the globe, have been, the rage of conquest, zeal for propagating religion and the spirit of commerce. Pegu has never become the object of the first, with any European power; and, though a few Missionaries may have been sent there, for the purposes of the second, they never were able to gain such a footing as to be able to give us a distinct account of the country, or of its inhabitants. Besides, even when they had an opportunity of knowing the truth, a prejudice in favour of that religion whose interest they came to promote, and a desire to render the professors of every other as odious as possible, has led them into frequent misrepresentations. Lastly, the trade to Pegu has never been esteemed a national concern; it has been, always, very limited, and carried on by a few private adventurers; who were, in general, such as had not a capital sufficient to begin any other branch of commerce. Any man, who could find money enough to purchase a small vessel, on the Coast of Coromandel, might, by carrying a little tobacco, some blue cloth, and a few iron nails, to the island of Carnicobar, get, in exchange for those articles, which had cost him almost nothing, a ship-load of cocoa-nuts; for these, he could procure at Pegu, a cargo of wood, which he afterwards sold, to great advantage, either on the Coast, or in Bengal.

That the commerce of Pegu has not yet become an object of greater attention, will, I hope, appear, from the following pages not to be owing, so much to its wane of importance, as to other accidental circumstances; and I do not despair of convincing the impartial reader, that it is both worth our while, and practicable in itself, to remove these obstacles, and from putting our intercourse with Pegu on a more respectable footing, and extending it on a larger scale, to derive great national advantage.

Viewed in this light, the information we have been able to collect, with regard to this country, is a matter of some importance to the politician; but, differently considered, the philosopher may, perhaps, find something in it not unworthy of his attention, as furnishing materials for compleating the history of human kind. Since an emulation arose, among the nations of Europe, for making discoveries in countries before unknown, this most noble of all sciences, as well as almost every other, has received great improvements. The moral philosopher has been furnished, by those uncultivated nations, with facts, which he would have looked for in vain among people whose minds have been made, by habitual intercourse, to deviate from their natural bent, and conform themselves to the artificial rules, prescribed by custom.

It is curious, and a pleasing task to trace a resemblance between some of the customs that prevail in those remote and uncivilized countries, and those of nations to whose manners we have been more habituate, and it is, also, a task, from the prosecution of which we may derive no contemptible improvement. There are
many things established by custom, nay, in some instances, stamped with the sanction of law, and practised every day, among us, which, in the eye of an impartial observer, are unreasonable and absurd: having been accustomed; from our infancy to see them, we become totally insensible of their impropriety; yet, place before our eyes the practice of a distant, and barbarous people, which agrees with our own in every essential point, and only varies in a few inconsiderable circumstances, the absurdity strikes our sense at once, and is thence reflected on that custom of our own which we had formerly looked on without any disapprobation. It is also in the history of those nations where society is yet in its infancy, that we must look for the natural and undisguised operation of the human passions; for, in vain should we expect to find the genuine effect of those emotions in a race of men among whom refinement has introduced a studied uniformity of conduct, on all occasions.

Having thus endeavoured to show that his subject is not altogether void of importance, the author hopes it will not be deemed impertinent to add a few words which the subsequent relation is collected. And, first, a great many of the facts he learnt by actual observations; having been in July 1782, on a passage, from Bengal, on the service of the Hon. East India Company (to join the Detachment in the Carnatic), on board a ship (the Success Galley) which was totally dismasted, and obliged to put into the river Syriam, to refit; and secondly, he was informed of others, by conversation, both with the natives, who are very communicative, and many of them, speak the language of Hindostan, and with foreigners, of different nations, who have been settled in that country, for many years. From the short time he resided there, his information, with respect to many circumstances, was, unavoidably, imperfect; but, where this was the case, he has always frankly confessed his ignorance, and never ventured to assert, as a fact, any thing which he was not, either, an eye-witness of, or informed about, on enquiry, from the most unquestionable authority. He hopes that his having communicated the little information he has been able to collect, will induce some person, who has had better opportunities of being informed, to give to the world, a more complete account of the matter; and, in the mean time, he will lie under the greatest obligations to any Gentleman, whose observation has been more accurate, or more extensive, than his own, if he will condescend to correct him where he has erred; or communicate any certain information, with respect to those points, where the author has been able to give nothing better than doubt, or conjecture.
Chapter I

Situation and extent of Pegu; A Short account of the Revolutions in its Government; Description of the Capital; of the Coast; Face of the Country; Climate

Pegu is a kingdom of the farther India, situated on the E. side of the Bay of Bengal, between the 15th & 24th degrees of N. Lat. It is bounded on the west and south-west, by the sea; on the south-east, by the kingdom of Siam; on the north, by that range of mountains which bounds the empire of China to the south-west; and on the north-west, by the kingdom of Ava. Its extreme length is, from S. by W. to N. by E. about six hundred miles; and its greatest breadth, about three-hundred and fifty miles. These, at least, are the limits described by the generality of Geographers, and represented in our maps; but, I must be confessed, that the boundaries of this country, except on the sea-coast, where it has been frequented by navigators, have never been ascertained with any tolerable degree of accuracy.

This country was formerly subject to a prince of its own, who did not acknowledge a dependence on any other power, but about forty years ago, there happened a great revolution, by which, this once powerful kingdom was reduced to the state in which it now remains, that is to say, nothing more than a province of the kingdom of Ava, governed by deputies sent from thence, who may be removed at the pleasure of their sovereign. The particulars of the revolution I have not been able to learn; only, there was once remarkable circumstance attending it, which it is worth while to mention, as it gives us a higher idea of those people’s abilities, in the art of war, than we should, otherwise, be disposed to entertain. At the time, when the people of Ava, after having defeated the Pegu army, penetrated to the capital, there was a French frigate lying in the harbour. The Commander and his crew took some steps to oppose the invaders, but without effect; the city was taken, and all who made any resistance were put to the sword. The victors next turned their arms against the ship. Those haughty Europeans, secure within their wooden wall, and trusting to the dormant thunder that lay behind it, thought all the power of Ava unable to hurt them; how great, then, must have been their surprise, to behold innumerable boats; filled with armed men, who, not in the least deterred by seeing many of their companions sunk, and their boats dashed to pieces, persisted in their attempt, surrounded, and boarded them on all sides! The officers were put to death without mercy, and the others condemned to perpetual slavery. Some of them remain there at this day. However, we shall lower our ideas about the military prowess of the troops of Ava, if we give credit to another account which is given of this affair, and which indeed appears to me the more probable one of the two. They say, that a great number of firerafts were sent down the stream; that the ship, to
avoid them, was obliged to get under way; that she soon after ran aground, was boarded in the confusion, and so became an easy prey. However this may be, the people of Ava made this country their own by right of conquest; and the first use they made of that right, was to remove the capital from the spot where it stood, on one branch of the river Syriam, to another branch of the same river. The old metropolis had the same name with the river on which it stood; the new one got that of Rangoon, which it retains to this day. It consists of two parts, the one of which is enclosed by a high stockade, and furnished with gates; but without a wall, or any place where guns can be mounted, and this is called the fort. The other part extends a considerable way down the river, and is entirely open. The houses are all constructed of wood, and raised on pretty high pillars, which is a necessary precaution, as the flowing of the tide lays most of the town under water. The streets are not paved; and are only passable by means of a plank, which is laid along from one end to the other, so, that when two persons meet, one of them is often obliged to step into the mire.

The whole country is low, and the land can only be seen at a very small distance from sea. Add to this, that the water is shallow, a great way off from the Coast, so that one gets into three or four fathoms, before one is within sight of land. Thus a person who is unacquainted, is much at a loss, and a circumstance which, unless he is aware of it, will encrease his confusion, is this, that the chart published in our English directory, in even the latest editions, lay down the entrance of the river twelve miles too much to the southward. Hence it comes, that, after a man has got into the latitude of the place, by the chart, he is surprised to find no land within the reach of his eye. This error is rectifie in a new chart of Pegu, which is inserted in the last edition of the French Neptune Oriental. The tides, near the bar, at the new and full Moon, rise about twenty feet perpendicular, and their flow is amazingly rapid. When the Success Galley came out of the river Syriam, in September 1782, she gradually shoaled her water, ‘till the man at the lead called out two fathoms and one foot, which was less, by two feet, than the draught of the ship; She was, consequently, aground, but the mud is so soft here, that it gives no resistance for a fathom under its surface. She deepened, by degrees, into three fathoms, when an anchor was let go; and, the flood coming in, the ater rose, in a very short time, to six fathoms and a quarter.

From what has been said concerning the situation of this country; and, still more, from the prospect one has, in going up the river, which is lined on both sides, with thickets and marshed; one is naturally led to suppose, that it must be very unhealthy; and yet, there are the strongest reasons to believe, that the person who should suppose so would form a most erroneous judgment. The natives are, perhaps the most robust and muscular race of men that we meet with anywhere in India; they are seldom attacked by diseases; and, what is still more to the purpose, Europeans, who have lived here many years, enjoy an uninterupted good health. A
person that has resided, even for a short time, in Pegu, would also join the testimony of his own sensations to all these other proofs of its salubrity. Even during the rains, which all over India make the most disagreeable and sickly time of the year, the air, in this place, is temperate, and has an elasticity, unknown at the corresponding season, in any other part; which gives vigour to the whole animal system, and enables it to support a great deal of fatigue. Perhaps the rapid motion of the times may account, in some measure, for this unexpected healthiness of the climate; at least, I know of no other cause to which it can be ascribed.

Since the above account was written, a ship arrived at Coringa, from Rangoon, brings accounts of another revolution having taken place there; antient Peguers have risen against the Birmah Government and expelled them from the place. The town is said to have been almost totally burned down, in this commotion, which thought to have happened between the 5th and 15th of September, 1783. This is not the first attempt the Peguers have made to receive their independence, but they were never so successful before. There can be no doubt that the king of Ava will endeavour, with his whole force, to bring them again under subjection, and what the result of the contest may be, time only can determine. In the mean time, it may deserve the consideration of Politicians, how far it may be for the honor, or the interest, of an European power, to interfere in the dispute.

By later information. I find that the Peguers only kept possession of Rangoon for three days; the Birmahs having, at the end of that time, reduced them, and recovered their authority.

Chapter II

Description of the Inhabitants; their Persons; a remarkable Badge worn by the Birmahs; Dress; Manners and Disposition; Military Character

The inhabitants, as I have observed, are of a muscular make; their stature is about the middle size, and their limbs, in general, well proportioned. Their complexion is swarthy, being a medium between that of the Chinese and of the Inhabitants of Bengal. In feature they resemble the Malays; their face is broad; the eyes, large and black; the nose, flat; the cheek-bones, prominent; and the mouth, extremely wide. They wear, on the chin, a tuft of hair, of unequal lengths; and shave the rest of the face. Their teeth are always of a jet-black, which is, however disgusting it may be to an European-eye, is, among them, esteemed a great ornament; and accordingly, they are at very great pains to accomplish it. I could not learn at Pegu the method...
of dying the teeth practiced there.¹

They wear various ornaments in their ears, many of them in common with other eastern nation; but one that appears to be peculiar to this people, is a thin plate of gold, rolled up in the form of a quill, about the thickness of a finger, which is thrust into a hole made in the usual part of the ear, large enough to receive it. The foregoing description is chiefly applicable to the Birmahs, that is, the natives of Ava, or their descendants, who are now very numerous here, as the Government is entirely in their hands. The original inhabitants of Pegu, have faces more nearly approaching to the oval form, their features are softer, more regular, and seem to express greater sense and acuteness, than those of the Birmahs, with whom, in other respects, they nearly agree. The Birmahs, however, who pique themselves on being descended from the conquerors, and wish to be distinguished from the nation they subdued, use a badge for that purpose, which we must conclude they value very highly, from the sufferings they undergo to obtain it. The thigh of every Birmah, including the hip and knee, is of a jet-black, which has a very singular appearance; and this mark they receive in their childhood. It is made by the repeated application of an instrument with a great number of sharp points, placed close together, something like that used in carding wool, ‘till the part is entirely covered with drops of blood. After this, they apply a liquid, of which galls is a principal ingredient. This excites a considerable degree of fever; and it is computed by the natives themselves, that about two children out of five, perish, in consequence of the operation. Some persons of a higher rank, have, instead of this, their thighs covered with the representations of tigers, and other wild beasts, imprinted by a process similar to the former. I would not be meant, by any thing that has been said, to insinuate that this practice was first instituted on the conquest of Pegu, by the Birmahs; on the contrary, I believe it to be of much greater antiquity; and all I mean to say, is, that the accidental circumstance of its preserving a separation between them and the original natives of the country, has undoubtedly enhanced its value in their esteem. It is not easy to conjecture what has given rise to an operation, which occasions so much pain and danger to the person who undergoes it; but it is not altogether peculiar to this people; for we meet with practices similar to it among other nations: That which resembles it the most, is the operation of tattooing, used by the natives of Otaheite.

The men have long black hair, tied on the top of the head; over which some wear a white handkerchief, in form of a turban, others go with their heads bare and decorated with flowers. They wear about their loins, a piece of party-coloured silk, or cotton cloth, which is afterwards passed over the shoulder, and goes round the body. Those of higher rank have this cloth so long as to hang down, over their thighs and legs; which, among the lower class of people, are bare. The women have

¹ This line is pulled up from the author’s note. He follows it with an account of how teeth was blackened in India, which we do not include here. M.C.
a kind of short jacket, to cover the upper part of their bodies; and the remainder of their dress is a piece of cloth, which is fastened round the loins, and hangs down to the ankles. This is doubled over, a few inches, at the fore part, where it is open, so that the thigh is discovered, in walking, thro’ its whole length. This mode of dress, they tell us, was first introduced by a certain Queen of Ava, who did it with the view of reclaiming the hearts of the men from an unnatural and detestable passion, to which they were at that time, totally abandoned; and succeeded so well, that she is remembered at this day, with gratitude, as a public benefactress to the kingdom.

In their behaviour to strangers, they are obliging, and show a degree of frankness that one would by no means expect to meet in a nation, whom we have been accustomed to look upon as barbarous. They express a great curiosity to see the manners of strangers, which makes them often come into their houses, and observe all that is doing, without appearing to be under any constraint. They also take pleasure in imitating the dress and behaviour of those whom come among them, and appear highly delighted when a stranger imitates any of theirs. In return, if you go into their houses, you are received with great hospitality; the people are eager to find something that may give you satisfaction, and seem very happy when you show any marks of being pleased. They have none of that strictness which distinguishes the other eastern nations; but will themselves conduct you, with the greatest alacrity, thro’ every part of their dwelling. The merit of their complaisance is so much the greater on this account, that it cannot in any degree, be ascribed to fear, as a stranger is here entirely in their power, and the people have a very high idea of their own military force and prowess.

And not without reason; for they are in reality, a formidable nation: Numerous, brave, possessing great strength of body, and capable of sustaining fatigue; they only want a regular discipline to render their power truly respectable. Their principal weapons are the spear and scimitar, both of which they handle with great dexterity. But the use of gun-powder is not unknown to them, for they often employ muskets with match-locks. They are frequently at war with the Siamese, over whom they have been often victorious. The prisoners taken in the expeditions they detain, and employ in the occupations to which they were brought up. Many of the ship-builders at Rangoon are Siamese, who have been taken in war. For carrying any desperate enterprize into execution, they have a set of people, who, very probably have been criminals reserved for the purpose, to whom it is death to return without having effected the business that they were sent on. This appears a strange piece of policy, as one should imagine, that those men, whom we cannot suppose to be bound by any principles of honour, or actuated by any affection for the state to which they belong, lie under great temptations to join the enemy. What means are used to prevent so probable a consequence, whether they are accompanied or commanded by men, who are more worthy of trust, and able to restrain them; or encouraged by the hope of rewards on their return with success, I
have not been able to learn. Be this as it will, it is very well known, that the Birmahs are not singular in his practice, which is adopted by many of the other despotic powers of the East.

Chapter III

Of the Religion of Pegu; Its objects; Of the Priests, or Talapoys; Of their Places of Worship; Anniversary Festivals

Their Religion bears some analogy to that of the Gentooos; particularly in the adoration which they pay to certain consecrated bullocks, and in their abstinence from eating beef, or, to speak more properly, from killing cattle in order to eat them; for they differ from the Gentooos in this, that they will sit down to table with any one, and partake of whatever is set before them, without excepting that species of viand we just now mentioned; and if one goes into their houses, they never fail to request he will eat amlong with them.

The Objects of their Worship are numerous, and among the rest, they pay adoration to an evil deity, to whom they make presents, after any thing unlucky has happened, in order to appease his resentment, to which they ascribe the misfortune.

The Priests, the ministers of this worship, are called Talapoys, and are easily distinguished by their dress, which consists of a yellow cloth, negligently thrown over their bodies. Their heads are shaved and constantly bare. This order is not, like that of the Bramins, confined to any particular cast, or tribe, but any man who will confine himself to the rules of the society, may become a Talapoy. He is thereby bound to celibacy; but to compensate for this, he is abundantly supplied with all the other enjoyments of life, without any trouble or care of his own. Every morning before the rising of the sun, the Talapoys walk in procession thro' the streets carrying in their hands a box to receive the contributions of the people; and many of them are attended by servants, with baskets, for the same purpose. All the inhabitants wait at their doors, and put into these boxes the finest rice, and provisions of various kinds, while the Talapoy takes no notice of them, but walks slowly on with his eyes turned upwards, like one whose thoughts are employed on concerns of a higher nature, and who looks on sublunary things as unworthy of his attention. This body of men is very numerous, and has a considerable influence in the state. If a man who is in danger of prosecution from the laws of his country, flies to the Talapoys, and they chuse to give him an asylum, the ministers of justice dare not touch him there; and even when a criminal is condemned to death, if those priests interest themselves in his favour, they can prevent the execution of the sentence. Thus, among those unenlightened nations, where superstition reigns with unabounded sway, and where this great truth, that God is a lover of order and not
of confusion, is either totally unknown, or which is equally bad, is neglected; the persons who as ministers of his worship, and interpreters of his will, hold in subjection the consciences of the people, have always been found to obstruct the administration of justice; and thus give encouragement to vice, instead of conducting men into the paths of virtue. That the impunity which the Talapoys sometimes ensure to crimes must have these bad effects, cannot be doubted; and yet, where the Government is so rigorous as it is in Pegu, we must allow, that such a lenient power, if lodged in proper hands, and used with moderation, may often be the means of preserving a useful member to society, by affording an asylum to those who may have offended against the laws, or incurred the capricious displeasure of a tyrant, more thro’ ignorance than from any ill intention. But, at any rate, let us not trespass against the impartiality which is required of ever person, who undertakes to relate matters of fact, by leaving the reader impress’d with an idea that the Talapoys extend their protection only to the guilty: No! be it ever remembered to their honor, that they have often received into their houses, and treated with the greatest hospitality strangers, who have suffered shipwreck on their coasts. Besides these, there is also a society of Priestesses, or female Talapoys, who undergo the same tonsure, wear the same habit, and are enjoined celibacy as well as the others. It is curious to observe the agreement which subsists, in many circumstances, between those priests, and the clergy of the Romish church, especially when they were in the plenitude of their power, two or three centuries ago. It would be superfluous to trace the particular instances, as they must be obvious to the reader.

Their places of worship, as well as those of the Gentooos, are called Pagodas; but they differ in form from those that we meet with in other parts of India. To give an idea of the whole, it will be sufficient to describe, in a few words, the Golden Pagoda, which is the most remarkable, and stands about three miles from Rangoon, on an eminence, to which you ascend by a flight of stairs. The Pagoda is a round building, or rather a Polygon with a great number of sides, about thirty feet high, terminated above by a round spire of a very great height, which ends in a point, but differs from a cone in this respect, that a line drawn on its surface, between the apex and the base, is not a straight one, but forms a curvature inwards, so that the whole approaches to the form of a speaking trumpet. This spire is covered with gold, from which the Pagoda takes its name; and at the top is a ring, round which are hung a number of bells, that make a continual jingling noise, by the agitation they receive from the wind. The building below is hollow, and there is one passage which leads into it; but this is shut up by an iron gate, which is only opened when some religious ceremony is to be performed within. Round the building are placed, on the ground, a number of figures, cut in stone, representing wild beasts, of enormous size. Close to this Pagoda is another, similar to it, but inferior in size; and no person is allowed to come within a certain
distance of these, without pulling off his shoes. In the neighbourhood of the eminence on which the two large Pagodas stand, there are many small buildings of the same form, enclosed with iron rails, and the roofs of these also are covered with gold. We at first supposed them to be tombs, from their number, and the smallness of their dimensions; but the inhabitants assured us of the contrary, and said, they were servants, or attendants to the great one. The houses of the Talapoys are also, most of them, at a small distance from the Pagoda. Two great festivals are annually solemnized at this Pagoda; the first and principal one is on the day of the full moon immediately following the vernal equinox; and the other, on that full moon which happens in the month of August. Multitudes of both sexes flock from all quarters to the celebration of these, particularly of the first, to which they tell us, there often come visitors even from the confines of China. Close to this place is a pond, the water of which, the natives believe to have a great efficacy in the cure of diseases.

Chapter IV

Of the Government of Pegu; Its form; Regulations of the Police; Of the four principal Magistrates; The Meoon; The Reoom; The Cheekaw; The Shabundar; Of the dignity and power of the King of Ava; History and Character of the present King

In the Government of this country, we see despotism prevail in its full extent, and despotism too of the very worst kind; for the inhabitants are under the absolute power of a set of petty tyrants, who are themselves nothing more than slaves to the King of Ava. As they have little or no emolument, except what they can raise by extortion, it is exercised in the most unlimited manner. They take cognizance of all disputes between individuals, that come to their ears, without the case being laid before them by either of the parties; and on whatever side the cause is determined there is a never failing charge brought in against both, for justice. As they express it; and this price of justice, is often three or four times greater than the value of the matter in agitation. An instance of this kind fell under my own observation, in a trivial dispute, which happened between two English Gentlemen, when the Judges condemned each party to pay tripple the sum contested, for justice, which neither of them had ever thought of seeking at such a tribunal. Yet, however absurd this may appear, it is, perhaps, nothing more than a prejudice, arising from the force of habit, that makes us look with contempt and indignation on those mercenary retailers of justice, and yet feel no similar emotions, when we see, in a country famed for the wisdom of its Government, a poor man, by appealing to the laws of that country, in a cause where equity is plainly on his side, reduced to ruin; merely because his antagonist is rich. But the inconveniences that this Government labours
under are not only those of despotism, the unhappy subjects feel those of anarchy too. There are about twenty persons concerned in the Government of Rangoon, who, though one is subordinate to another, and though matters of the first consequence are determined in a council of the whole, can yet act separately; and any one member of this body can, by his own authority, give out orders, which no inhabitant of Pegu dares to disobey. These orders may be contrary to the sense of the whole body, in which case they are, indeed, reversed in council; but then, there are instances, and I myself observed one, of such orders being, notwithstanding, repeated, more than once, by the same person, and obeyed, each time, till they were again reversed; nor was any redress obtained by the party aggrieved, or any effectual measures taken to prevent such a contempt of authority for the future.

The case was this: A black inhabitant of Madras, several years ago, had contracted debts, to such an amount as obliged him to leave that place; and he chose to retire to Pegu, where he was resident when the author arrived there. On his absconding, a sentence of execution was past, in the Mayor’s Court, against his goods, and among these, a ship then lying in the roads, which was accordingly sold for the benefit of the creditor’s. She became the property of an English Gentleman, who made a voyage in her to the eastward, and on his return, put into Rangoon, a little before the author’s arrival there, to purchase a cargo of wood, and give the vessel some necessary repairs. The man, to whom she had formerly belonged, laid claim to her, and on application to one of the Magistrates, (I believe the Cheekaw) procured an order to stop from working, the artificers, who were then employed in refitting the ship. The owner of the vessel, on representing the case to the Council of Rangoon, got this order immediately reversed, and the artificers were again set to work; but very soon obliged to stop, by a repetition of the former order, which was again reversed by application to the Council; and this farce was acted over and over, about six or seven times in the course of a month, to the great detriment of the owner, who had the mortification to see vessels, that had arrived after his, dispatched long before her. It is true, the allowance of these vexatious proceedings may be ascribed, less to the wants of power in the Council of Rangoon to prevent them, than to their desire of extorting money, or some such corrupt motive; but this will make no material difference in the condition of the subject, to whom, if he suffers oppression, it is exactly the same, whether the oppression arises from the impotence or the corruption of the Government, under which it is his misfortune to live.²

² This paragraph was pulled up from the footnote.

Yet, bad as the Government of this country is in many respects, we meet with some circumstances in the regulation of their police, which may deserve the attention, perhaps the imitation, of more enlightened nations. There is here a body of men always ready to appear in arms on the least alarm, so that if any tumult
arises, it is quelled immediately. They are also useful for another purpose: From the
nature of the materials of which the houses in Rangoon are constructed, accidents
from fire are very common; and when ever this happens, the people above
mentioned (who from this have got the name of Fire-men) are instantly assembled
to extinguish it. In short, their office is much the same with that of watchmen
among us, but with this difference, that the former execute their office more
effectually than the latter: For we have never heard of rioters being able to
overpower and beat the watch at Rangoon, though nothing is more common with us
than such adventures. We shall presently have occasion to speak of the strictness
with which the laws are enforced in Pegu, and of their great efficacy in restraining
the inhabitants, even from vices to which they had contracted the strongest
propensity, from long habit, before those laws which prohibit them were made.

But it may not be amiss just to mention here an instance, that places in a striking
point of view, the vigour, with which all measures regarding the Police are carried
into execution in this country. It is well known how incorrigible and impatient
of restraint an English seaman is, especially when just landed, with his pockets
full. In such a case, we know, it is no easy matter to restrain him from excesses,
even in Europe, where he is perfectly aware that the laws will be put in execution
against him. It must then be still more difficult where he thinks he has got among
naked savages, and has been for some time accustomed to a country where the
inhabitants are terrified at the very sight of a European; which is literally true with
regard to those parts of India, where our principal settlements are formed. Yet, as
we have seen, at Rangoon, that the crew of an English vessel (The *Earl of
Dartmouth*, Indiaman; left on the island of Carnicobar, on her passage, from
Madras homeward), in number about fifty, who were carryed there after having
suffered shipwreck, notwithstanding they had treated their own officers with
contempt, and, totally disclaiming their authority, had plundered the wreck of many
valuable jewels, were very soon taught to behave themselves quietly; and from that
time, while they continued there, which was for the space of about two months,
they never were the authors of any riot or disturbance.

The principal magistrate in this place is the Meoon, who presides in
Council, and is, indeed, in great measure arbitrary there; as I believe, there is
hardly an instance of any point being carried against him. He can give absolute
orders about public works, or the employment of public stores. The present one is
of the blood royal of Ava; but whether this is a necessary circumstance or not, I
cannot pretend to determine. The inhabitants look up to him as to a deity; and such
is their veneration for his person and office, that no one is permitted to come into
his presence without taking off his shoes. If you are permitted to sit, it is on the
ground, where you must keep your face turned towards this petty monarch, and
above all things, be careful not to present to him the sole of your foot; so that your
posture is not a little inconvenient. Yet, this man, when he goes to the Court of
Ava, which he is obliged to do once a year, is treated by the sovereign with no more regard than the meanest slave; and must, if required, perform the most menial offices about his person.

The person next to him in the Government of Pegu [sic], is the Reoon. His particular office, independantly of his being the second in Council, seems to be the administration of justice; as complaints are generally laid first before him; though when doubts arise, or the matter is of greater consequence than usual, the other members are called to give their sentiments upon it.

The third Officer is the Cheekaw, of whose particular department, if he has any distinct from his seat in Council, I know nothing; and,

The fourth is the Shabundar, who presides over the customs on goods exported or imported, and over every thing that relates to shipping, arrived or sailing from the Port. When a vessel comes off the bar, it is usual to send a boat up to town for a pilot, and the Shabundar is the person applied to for that purpose. When she arrives, it is required to deliver a list of her cargo and stores to the same person; his officers are put on board to prevent any contraband trade; and when she is ready to depart, he orders a pilot to conduct her down the river. A pilot who should carry a ship out without this order, would expose himself to the severest punishment. The present Shabundar is an Armenian; and indeed, a foreigner is generally pitched on for this office, because, most probably, none of the natives are qualified for the task. All public orders are made out in the name of these four principal Officers.

From what has been said of the respect that is paid to these men, and of their inferiority to the King of Ava, we may judge of the high veneration which that monarch is held in by his subjects. And indeed, they look on him as the greatest of men, or, perhaps, something more than human. But, it is a truth, established both by reason and experience, that an arbitrary throne is far from being the most secure. There are no laws to give it stability, no constitution to guard its rights; The pillars which support it are mere brutal force, and the dread of a tyrant’s vengeance. When these prove unable to resist the torrent of indignation that takes its rise from the distresses of an injured people, the whole fabric is overturned in an instant. Another reason why a despotic crown totters on the head of its owner, more than any other, is this, that if a competition arise, the body of the nation has neither interest in the dispute, nor any certain rule to determine its choice. This we see exemplified in the kingdom of Ava; which, in the seven months immediately preceding our arrival at Pegu, had been subject to three different sovereigns, two of whom were deposed and murdered, by their relations, who aspired to the throne. The present King is uncle to the former, whom he has put to death from these ambitious motives. He has banished from his Court all those who held any office under his nephew; in the number of whom is the Reoon’s eldest son, who filled a place of great honor about the person of he late King; After being wounded
fighting in his defence, he was obliged to seek his own safety, for a while, in concealment; is now rendered incapable of any employment, and reduced to a level with the meanest of the people. His father sided with the usurper, and came down with a body of armed men to establish his authority in Pegu; for which service he has been rewarded with the important office he at present holds in that province: And though the eldest son is now restored to his father’s house, yet all the train of attendants, and all the respect, that he was naturally entitled to, by his birth-right, are become the portion of his younger brother.

The usurper, since his accession to the throne, has established some new regulations, or rather reinforced some old laws, which had fallen into disuse, of such a nature as would lead one to think that he has turned devotee, or, at least, finds it convenient to wear the mask of hypocrisy, to palliate, in the eye of the world, the violence he has done to the rights of loyalty, of nature, and of humanity. One of these prohibits the killing of beef, which is founded on the religious worship paid, by the Gentoos, to the Ox; and it is the only circumstance in which we can trace a resemblance between their religion and that of the Birmahs. The second forbids the use of wine, or spiritous liquors of any kind, under no less a punishment than death itself. This last regulation has been attended with very good effects, as the Birmahs were formerly very much addicted to drunkenness; but with such strictness are punishments inflicted here, that not an instance of intoxication is now to be seen; if any one of them is prevailed on to taste liquor, he is at infinite pains to remove the smell from his mouth, by every means in his power.

Chapter V

Some Account of the Laws; Of Punishments; Trial by Ordeal; Laws regarding Marriages; and Debtors

Here we are naturally lead to speak of the laws, but this is a subject which it is impossible for any person, from a short residence to obtain much knowledge of; and besides, the only law, properly speaking, that exists here, is the will of the prince. However, there are certain ancient customs, which are observed as general rules, when they do not come in competition with this sovereign will; and I shall endeavour to communicate whatever knowledge I have been able to pick up concerning these.

The end of all laws is the prevention of crimes, but among the means which may be used for attaining this end, there are some, which, though very powerful in themselves, have so much injustice in their nature, that the more civilized nations have rejected their use. I means, those punishments, which, altho’ the offender himself may have got beyond the reach of the law, yet taught him in

SBR 3.1 (SPRING 2005): 169-193
his nearest concerns, his family, and relations. This principle has its influence, at present, even in our own laws; by which a young person, born and brought up in affluence, is reduced, without any crime of his own, to the lowest ebb of misery and want, because his father has been guilty of high treason. But among us, however much the crime of one person may affect the fortune of another, it can expose to personal suffering no one but the delinquent himself; but, in Pegu, where the nicer principles of justice and humanity are less attended to, the mode of punishment we have been talking of is exercised in its greatest extent. If a person commits a capital crime, and escapes before he can be brought to punishment, his wife, his children and his nearest relations are put to death without mercy.

When a case occurs where the evidence is so equal on both sides that the judges cannot determine which party is in the right, there is a kind of Ordeal prescribed, for discovering the truth. This kind of trial is founded on the belief that a just and all-mighty being, who will, they think, certainly interpose in such doubtful cases, for the protection of innocence and the discovery of guilt. The earliest instance of it that we meet with in history, is the practice ordained in the Mosaic Law, for determining the guilt or innocence of a woman suspected by her husband of adultery, and very minutely described in the book of Numbers, chap. V. In this case, there was a particular interposition of Providence for the discovery of guilt, as the water which was given the woman to drink, could not, from any natural cause, have produced the effects that are there related. In many cases, on the other hand, the supernatural power was supposed to be exerted in the behalf of innocence, and the laws of nature to have their usual course, if the person suspected was guilty. Of this kind is the story of the vestal who dragged a ship up the Tiber, to prove her virginity; and in the same class we may place the trial used among our ancestors, in which the party accused was to walk, blind-folded and bare-footed, across a number of red-hot plough shares, laid parallel to one another, at unequal distances, and the proof of innocence was his escaping un-hurt. But there are other cases, where it is certain that a crime has been committed, and we only want to discover the author of it. Where there were no circumstances that limited the suspicion to a small number, the ancients used, for coming at the truth, a method, which depends on the same principle with all the others; I mean the casting of lots, which we see exemplified in the 7th chap. of Joshua. Of nearly the same nature is a practice in use, at this time, among the natives, in many parts of Hindostan: When something has been stolen, and the thief cannot be discovered, all the persons suspected are made to chew a quantit of raw rice; when from their method of doing it, or its effect on their teeth and gums, their guilt or innocence is supposed to be discovered: And, the persuasion, which the persons themselves, who are suspected, entertain of its efficacy, has often, in reality, betrayed their guilt. Either of these methods might also be used, where the suspicion lies only between two persons; but, in these cases, we find mention made of several others. In particular, we must
refer to this head, the practice so frequent a few centuries ago, of judicial determinations by single combat; and of the same kind is the trial now used in Pegu. The two parties are obliged to dive into a pond set apart for that purpose; when he who can remain the longest under water is pronounced innocent, and sentence past in his favour. The practice appears to be, and certainly is, in itself, absurd; as the proof of innocence is rested on a man’s ability in an art which depends on his corporeal powers, and is to be acquired by frequent exercise; but yet, were we to grant the principle before-mentioned, on which it is founded, it would be perfectly just; and it is, undoubtedly, quite as much so as the method that was used, all over Europe, in the days of Chivalry. For is an expert diver may now easily prove his innocence at Pegu, a vigorous combatant enjoyed the same advantage, not long ago, in Europe.

Theft is always punished with death. The most common way of executing a capital sentence is beheading, which they perform, very dextrously, with a sabre, while the criminal is in a standing posture.

A Foreigner may marry one of the natives, on which occasion, he pays a certain stipulated sum to her parents; but, if he leaves the country, he is not permitted to carry his wife along with him: So strict is the law, in this particular and so impossible it is to obtain a dispensation from it, that some men who have had a great affection for their wives, have been obliged, on their departure, to carry them secretly away in jars, which were supposed to be filled with water. However, if the stranger, on going away, leaves a sufficient allowance to maintain his wife, and returns in the space of three years, he can claim her again; but if he prolongs his absence beyond that period, she is at liberty to marry another.

When a man is unable to pay his debts, the creditor acquires a property in his person, and may sell him for a slave, detaining from the price as much as the debt amounted to. Hence it comes, that a man, when he purchases a wife, is obliged, besides the original price, to pay all her debts, unless he would choose to resign her person into the possession of her creditors.

Chapter VI

State of the Arts in Pegu; Language of the Birmahs; Their Manner of Writing; Their Music

There is no circumstance that enables us to judge of the advances that a nation has made towards civilization, better than a knowledge of the progress which the arts have made among them; nor is there any thing that has a greater effect on the manners and customs of a people. However, a very short discussion will suffice for this part of our subject, for it must be owned that all the arts, except one or two,
which have probably owed their improvement to Europeans, since they began to
visit this country, are in a very rude state in Pegu; and we may venture to say that
this will long continue to be the case, as the cultivation of arts is not esteemed an
honorable employment; every idea of that kind being annexed solely to the
profession of arms.

The first employment of mankind, in every age and country, that could be
called an art, has been the culture of the earth. As soon as societies began to be
formed, and men, tired of the wandering life they had formerly led, looked out for
fixed habitations, they quickly found that the sources from which they had before
derived their subsistence, that is, the flesh of wild animals killed in the chase [sic],
and the spontaneous fruits of the earth, were insufficient to maintain them, now
that their numbers were increased, and their situation more confined. Hence they
were obliged to have recourse to the breeding of tame cattle (the pastoral life) and
to the increasing of those productions of the earth which they found best suited for
nourishment by Agriculture. But, through necessity made this the first art which
employed their attention, yet it has always been among the last in being brought to
perfection. For this requires an intimate acquaintance with the operations of nature
in the production of vegetables, which cannot be obtained but by long and accurate
observation; a multitude of facts must be collected, and the reasoning faculty must
have been improved by long exercise, before those facts could be applied to useful
purposes. Besides, it has happened, unluckily for this art, that it has been very late
in becoming the object of attention with men who are capable of improving it on
rational principles. Even among the enlightened nations of Europe, after
philosophy had been applied with success in almost every other art, we see it was a
long time before men of science turned their enquiries to the improvement of
agriculture. Of its state in Pegu very little can be said: It is entirely confined to the
culture of rice; but yet, in this single branch of the art, we cannot observe without
some degree of surprise, that those people, however ingorant we may esteem them,
have long known and practised an operation, to the good effects of which we have,
till very lately, been strangers; I mean the transplanting of grain. As soon as the
rice is sown, they take care to cover the ground three or four inches deep with
water, through which the blade springs up, and it is soon after transplanted into
another field, where it is suffered to grow and ripen. The same method is practised
in all other parts of India.

The next article that comes to be considered is that of cloathing. The
materials employed in Pegu for this purpose are silk and cotton. Though hemp and
flax are produced in several parts of India, yet I have never heard of either being
employed as article of cloathing; and as to wool, it is not a product of any of the
warmer climates. This covering, so comfortable and so necessary to animals in the
frozen regions of the north, would be a burden insupportable in the Torrid Zone;
and therefore nature, like an indulgent parent, ever attentive to the exigencies of
her children, has cloathed the sheep in those countries with hair. This is evidently the final cause of the difference we observe in the cloathing of sheep in different climates, but it is also worth while to enquire for the efficient cause of this appearance, for it is a certain fact that the change under consideration is the natural and necessary effect of removal from one climate to another. The enquiry is curious and may be useful, but as it would lead us too far from our subject at present, I shall resume it in a dissertation by itself.

The natives of Pegu, have not only the art of making cloth, which has a firm texture, of each of these materials separately, but they often combine them both in one piece; and they dye the thread used for weaving, of various colours, so that the cloth made in this manner very much resembles that worn in the highlands of Scotland, usually known by the name of Tartan. And of this kind of cloth those garments are made which are worn by the men over their shoulders. But the only cloth manufacture in Pegu that is valued by foreigners is that of towels, which are esteemed for a roughness, a kind of knap, that is peculiar to them.

After men have provided for their food and cloathing, their next object is to secure a habitation that may defend them from the inclemency of the weather. Hence the next art that calls our attention is Architecture. From what we before said of the houses in Pegu, it may be concluded that this art is yet in its infancy there, and likely so to continue for a long time; for it never makes a rapid progress in a country where wood is the principal material for building. In Pegu there are no buildings of stone except those consecrated to their worship; and these are of that form which appears to me to have been the most ancient of any, that of a pyramid or cone. The simplest idea, and that which would most naturally occur to mankind, just emerging from the savage state, for the construction of their first huts, is that of three or four sticks fixed with one end in the ground at some distance from one another, so as to include a square or triangular area, tied together by the other ends, and covered with straw, leaves, or some other materials of that kind. This would form a pyramid; and the same shape would naturally be given to the first buildings of stone, before the properties of the arch, or the use of pillars in architecture, came to be known. And accordingly, we find that this was the form of the most ancient edifices we know, which were built while the art was yet in its infancy, I mean the pyramids of Egypt. For I cannot agree with a certain learned autho (Goguet), in thinking that buildings so incommodius in their construction, can afford a proof that the art had arrived at any great perfection; though their size and solidity are monuments of the power of the monarch by whose orders they were erected. What knowledge of this art the natives of Pegu actually possess may be collected from the description formerly given of the Golden Pagoda, which is the only considerable edifice we meet with in the country.

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3 A long footnote was originally included here on a topic superfluous to the account of Pegu and is thus not included here.
In the same Pagoda, and the smaller ones round it, we find a specimen of the skill which the natives have in Metallurgy, at least in one branch of it, the working in gold. As this is generally found in its metallic state, it must have been the first discovered of any; and we see, in the instance before us, that the natives of Pegu are no strangers to its wonderful ductility, nor to the application of that property to useful purposes: For, from the great extent of those buildings, the roofs of which are covered with this metal, we must naturally conclude that covering to be very superficial; and according to the best information I could obtain, those roofs have only a very thin coat of gold. They also know very well how to work in Silver, and they have the art of covering utensils made of a particular kind of earth, however irregular their form may be, with thin plates of that metal, so as to be taken for solid silver, till their lightness discovers the mistake. They are no acquainted with the method of working in Iron, but as that metal is not obtained from any mines in the country, I must look on this as one of the arts that have only been introduced at Pegu since the arrival of the Europeans there.

They are very well acquainted with the arts of Ship-building, and Navigation; but in what measure they are indebted to strangers for their knowledge in these respects, it is hard to determine. As the wood proper for the construction of ships is found here in greater plenty than anywhere else, Europeans often repair to this place, for that purpose. But, from whatever source the inhabitants have derived their skill, it is certain that they have now among them excellent carpenters; and that their own ships, managed by crews who are natives of the country, visit all the ports in India. The only peculiarity about their vessels, is the substance of which the rigging, of every kind, is made. This is the bark of a tree, and the ropes made of it are very strong, but much less flexible than those made of Coir, or the fibrous substance that incloses the cocoa-nut, which is well known to be used for this purpose in all other parts of India.

The language of the Birmahs abounds with a nasal sound, which has a disagreeable effect on the organs of one who hears it for the first time; but this gradually becomes familiar, and then, you can perceive that the frequent occurrence of liquids and vowels produces a degree of softness, which is by no means unpleasing. They seem to be fond of compounding words, in which, I doubt not, one thoroughly acquainted with the language, would perceive a great deal of regularity: For example, in these words, Lay-a, hand; Lay-maa, thumb; Lay-chnew, fore-finger; Lay-Lay-a, middle-finger; Lay-pfegua, ring-finger; Lay-pfan, little-finger; the radical words seems to be Lay-a, and the others to be compounded from it, by the addition of words, which probably relate to the situation or use of the different fingers.

The characters are written from left to right, contrary to the practice of most eastern nations, and have all a circular form, some being confined within the limits of the line, while others project above or below it, or both. This writing was
commonly performed on Cajans, the leaves of the toddy-tree, by means of an iron-pen with a sharp point, and in this way all public orders are written: But, besides this, they have a black paper made from the bamboo, on which they form the characters, with a pencil, made of a stone of that kind called steatites, which has exactly the appearance of white bees-wax; and these characters may be rubbed out with a wet cloth, leaving the paper fit to be used again in the same manner.

They are fond of Music, which makes a great part of their entertainments; and there is a sweetness in their’s, that one would hardly expect to meet with among a people who have made so small a progress in civilization. Their instruments are principally the stringed kind; one is like the guitar in form, and is used in the same way; another has four strings, and is played on with a bow, like a violin, which, except that it is narrower, it resembles in shape.

Chapter VII
Of the Product and Commerce of Pegu; Trade of Teak-wood; Tin; Bees-wax; Gold; Nitre; Areca; Cachow; Petroleum; Grain; Animals; Fruit; Money

The principal object of Europeans who frequent this port, is the trade of Teak-wood, which is produced in greater plenty, than in any other part of India. This is a tree which grows to a very considerable size, and in its texture, excepting that it is more flexible and not quite so hard, resembles the Oak. It is of the most universal use, all over India, not only in making of furniture, but, more especially, in the construction of ships; and it has this advantage over every kind of woode employed in Europe for that purpose, that it is much less corruptible in the water. Accordingly we find that vessels built of this wood last much longer than any others. But, altho’ this timber abounds more, and is cheaper, here than in other places, yet it is not of the best quality; for, from the moisture and richness of the soil, it grows up faster, and consequently acquires less solidity than in parts which are dry, bleak, and exposed to the force of the wind. And this is the reason why ships built at Bombay, where they are supplied with wood from the Balagate mountains, are less subject to decay than those constructed at Pegu.

Tin and Bees-wax are also articles of commerce. The former, in particular, is a very considerable one. Gold is produced in no contemptible quantity, but the exportation of it is not allowed, nor is it used, among the people, for money. A little is employed for adorning their persons, but the only great consumption of it is in the decoration of their places of worship. The same prohibition is extended to salt-petre, which might be prepared in abundance, if permission could be got to export it. The country produces, in plenty, the Areca Nut, and Cachow, which is prepared from a plant of the Mimosa kind (by a process very minutely described in the
London Medical Observations and Enquiries by Mr. James Kerr, Surgeon in the Company’s service) and, as well as the former, is chewed by the natives of India, along with their Betel. There is found here, swimming on the surface of the water in certain wells, a kind of Petroleum, or Naphtha, which is used, like oil, for burning; and also for making unctuous compositions, for paying the sides of vessels.

This country is very plentifully supplied with all the necessaries of life. Rice is produced in abundance. The fruits are much the same with those in Bengal; such as pine-apples, water-melons, plantains, &c. they have great quantities of honey, but of a strong taste, which is not very agreeable; and it is said, if used too freely, to produce intoxication. They have plenty of poultry and game, particularly deer and wild hogs. The forests abound with wild elephants, buffaloes and tigers; but, if we may believe the report of the natives, there is not a single jackall to be found in the country, which is a singular circumstance, when we consider in what numbers they are found in all other parts of India. They have a small breed of horses, which are much esteemed for their hardiness and patience of fatigue. Their head is somewhat large and thick, their mane and tail bushy. The natives from habit, manage them with ease, tho’ they are naturally hard mouthed, and the bridles they use are but indifferently calculated for the purpose. Their method of riding appears to us ungraceful; they use stirrups, which are so short, that the thigh is nearly horizontal, or rather, the knee a little elevated, and the calf of the leg is applied to the horses side.

The principal money of this country is silver, which is not coined, but paid in weight. The smallest denomination is the Tycal; one hundred Tycals make one Viss; and these are used in weighing goods as well as money. But, another circumstance to be attended to, is the purity of the silver, of which there are three degrees, established by law, or by custom; the 25 per cent. The 50 per cent. And the 75 per cent. The first has one fourth part; the second, one half; the third, three fourths, of alloy: And one Tycal of twenty-five per cent. silver, is esteemed equal, in value, to the Bengal Sicca Rupee. This diversity in the fineness of the current money, renders it impossible for a stranger to receive it in payment, without being subjected to continual imposition; and therefore, all money matters are conducted by a particular set of men, who are answerable for the quality of the silver, which they receive on account of their employer, and are thereby entitled to a certain allowance per cent: For the payment of smaller sums, they use money of lead, which is weighed in the same manner as the former.
Chapter VIII

Of the Treatment of Foreigners who Trade to Pegu; Reasons for the Conduct of the Birmahs in this respect; Proposal for putting the Commerce on a better footing than at present

Ships that frequent this port, on purpose to trade, meet with a treatment, which, in many circumstances, is extremely mortifying. As soon as they come to anchor, the guns and rudder are carried on shore, and not delivered again, ‘till the business is concluded, and the ship has obtained permission to depart. It frequently happens that difficulties are throw in the way, by some individual in power, which detain the trader much longer than would be necessary to finish all his commercial transactions; and besides, he is often obliged to bear, with patience, because without any prospect of redress, the most shocking personal indignities. As this begaviour has rendered the trade of Pegu much less considerable, than it otherwise would have been; and retarded the advancement of the country, both in richness and civilization; it will, doubtless, appear to be very impolitic; and yet, if independence is the greatest good that a nation can enjoy, we must confess their present conduct to be the wisest they could have pursued, as being the best calculated to preserve that invaluable possession. Any man who is acquainted with the means by which the European powers have obtained their establishments in Hindostan; will be convinced of the truth of this assertion. Under the pretence of trade, they obtained permission from the sovereigns of the districts they visited, to build factories and forts, and to keep in pay a body of troops, both which they strengthened, and augmented by degrees, under various pretenses, ‘till they reduced to a state of dependence those very princes, to whose indulgence they were indebted for all their possessions. Is it then at all surprising that the Birmahs should be unwilling to encourage an intercourse, which they have seen to produce such fatal effects, and rather chuse to resign the advantages they might derive from an extensive commerce, than endanger their existence as an independent people? Happy nation! Who are contented to enjoy the wealth which nature has, with liberal hand, bestowed on your foil, and know not the desire of foreign riches, and foreign luxuries, which has tempted others to relinquish the more substantial blessings of liberty and independence. May you long continue to preserve, with jealous care, this your most precious birth-right, and reject, with disdain, the most splendid allurements, if they tend, in the least, to put it in danger. Such may be the language of the philosopher, who stiles himself a citizen of the world; but the member of a commercial state, has different sentiments: And juster sentiments his certainly are, in the present instance; for though the Birmahs may boast a national independence, yet personal freedom is a stranger to every individual, except the King, if indeed he can be accounted free, who is in continual apprehension, from
the cabals of his nobles, and the just resentment of his people. Our citizen, then,
will enquire what advantages his nation may derive from an intercourse with this
people; what sources of wealth may flow from their trade; and whether, in time of
war, his country can strengthen herself by their alliance, or procure from their
stores, for the equipment of her fleets and armie. He will next examine the
probability there may be of overcoming their repugnance to the commerce of
strangers, and endeavour to find the best means for effecting this end.

Let us now consider the subject a little in this view. And here, the
circumstance that presents itself first to our attention, is the trade of wood, which is
so much the more important on this account, that it is not only a considerable
branch of commerce in itself, but is absolutely necessary to the carrying on of all
the others. Pegu is the only source, to the eastward of Cape Comorin, from which a
regular supply of this commodity can be obtained; and consequently, if the scene of
a naval war should be laid in the Bay of Bengal, that nation which could procure
wood from Pegu, would have the great advantage of being able to refit her ships
much sooner, and more effectually, than the enemy could do. But, to be properly supplied with this valuable article, it is not sufficient to send
our ships to purchase it at the port; this method is very uncertain; and, by it, we can
never be sure of having stores of the quality that may be wanted; for the wood is
not produced within many miles of Rangoon: The great nurseries from which it is
brought are among the mountains in the very heart of the country; The wood which
is cut there is floated down the river Syriam, and often consumes several months in
making the voyage. It is put up, for the sake of a better conveyance, in the form of
rafts, and a great number of these generally arrive together. As the time of their
arrival is uncertain, it is evident that persons on the spot must be the best supplied;
and consequently, we see the propriety there would be in having Agents appointed
to reside here constantly, and to choose from among the wood, on its arrival, that
which is of the best quality, and of the dimensions that may be wanted. This end
would be still more effectually answered, if permission could be obtained, to send to
those parts, in the neighbourhood of which the wood is cut, proper persons, who
might receive their instructions from those who reside at the port.

If these people could be prevailed on to permit the exportation of their
gold, it would, no doubt, become a valuable branch of commerce; as the Malay
coast is, at present, the only part of India, from which it is procured, and this is in
no considerable quantity. We should thus be able to extend our trade with China;
and the balance of that trade would be less against the mother country than it is on
it present footing. The exportation of tin, from Pegu, is already great, but it might,
undoubtedly, be much increased.

But, to what purpose, it may be said, are we told of the benefit that would
result from a connection formed with these people, if their aversion to an
intercourse with strangers is so great as has been represented? To this I reply that
their aversion, it is true, is great; but that yet, there is reason to think, it is not insuperable. In the first place, from the fondness that is shewn by the natives for observing and imitating the customs of strangers, we may judge, by analogy, that they might soon be brought to form to themselves new wants, which they would be obliged to supply by a commerce with their neighbours. Next, we know, that Opium, which is already become a staple commodity in the trade to this country, and will, in all probability, be still more in request, if the law against the use of spiritous liquors continues in its present force, is entirely furnished by our territories in Bengal. But, setting aside all theoretical reasoning, let us confine ourselves to real examples; and we shall find that there is, at present, a factory actually established at Rangoon, belonging to the Imperial Company: It is surrounded by wall, on which the colours of that Company is hoisted. Nay, the English Company has also had a settlement in the territories belonging to Pegu; I mean, at Negrais. It is true, we were obliged to relinquish it, but this appears to have been more the fault of those entrusted with the administration of our affairs at that place, than of the inhabitants, who had suffered many instances of oppression, before they resolved to assert their rights by violent means. And although the behaviour of our first settlers may have inspired the natives with prejudices to our disadvantage, yet there is every reason to believe, that such a uniform moderation of conduct as has distinguished the later transactions of the British Government with the natives of India, would soon remove them all. The present Government of Pegu express sentiments of the highest respect for the English East India Company; and they gave an example of it in the treatment of the Success Galley which, because she was loaded on account of that Company, enjoyed much greater indulgences than any other foreign vessel that ever entered the port of Rangoon. Here, it is sufficient to hint, that a skilful management between the two nations that now inhabits this country, the original Peguers and the Burmahs, might make the nation that should undertake the office of a mediator highly respected by both parties.
Editor’s Note:

The following two entries appeared in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* in December 1826. They offer some useful information both on Burma’s looted textual heritage and on the confusion among the population after the war.

M.W.C.

Gleanings on Burma, December 1826

St. Andrew’s University

Lord Visc. Melville, the Chancellor of the University, has presented to the university library, a splendid Burmese sacred record, written on a leaf. Also a specimen of the Burmese character, found in the stockade of Donahue [sic] soon after Bundoolah’s death, and on the spot where he was killed, and supposed to be his last orders to his hordes.

*The Gentleman’s Magazine* 96, December 1826.

News

From all accounts it appears that the Burmese dread the final withdrawal of the British troops exceedingly. A Calcutta paper states, that fines had been levied on all who had lived on friendly terms with out army during the war, more particularly on females, and if the unhappy individuals on whom the fine was imposed could not immediately pay it, they were mutilated in a most barbarous way, sometimes having their ears and noses cut off. At Prome, no sooner was the protection of the British flag withdrawn, than a fine of fifty rupees was laid on every male, and of one hundred upon every female. It is further stated that the native inhabitants of Rangoon had emigrated and continued to do so, to our settlements of Mergui, Tavai,
Martaban and Amherst-town, in great numbers. The Raywoon, who is only waiting for the total evacuation of Rangoon to re-assume his authority, requested Mr. Crawford to interfere, and put a stop to so draining an emigration. His request was not attended to.

*Source: The Gentleman’s Magazine* 96, December 1826.
Editor’s Notes:

This abstract of Captain Hannay’s 1835-1836 journal appeared in several places in the late 1830s. This particular version was published in Selection of Papers Regarding the Hill Tracts Between Assam and Burmah and of the Upper Brahmaputra (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1873).

M. W. C.

Abstract of the Journal of a Route Travelled by Captain S. F. Hannay, of the 40th Regiment, Native Infantry, in 1835-36, from the Capital of Ava to the Amber Mines of the Hukong Valley on the South-east Frontier of Assam.

R. Boileau Pemberton
Captain, 44th Regiment, Native Infantry

From the termination of the Burmese war to the present period the spirit of inquiry has never slept, and the most strenuous exertions have been made by the officers employed on the eastern frontier to extend our geographical knowledge to countries scarcely known but by name, and to acquire some accurate information regarding the manners, customs, and languages of the various races of men by whom they are inhabited.

The researches of Captains Bedford, Wilcox, and Neufville, and of Lieutenant Burlton in Assam, dispelled the mist which had previously rested on the whole of the eastern portion of that magnificent valley; and the general direction and aspect of its mountain barriers, the courses and relative size of its rivers, the habits of the innumerable tribes who dwell on the rugged summits of its mountains, or, on the alluvial plains at their base, were then first made the subject of description, founded, not on the vague reports of half civilized savages, but on the personal investigations of
men whose scientific attainments enabled them to fix with precision the geographicalsite of every locality they visited. The journey of Wilcox and Burlton to the sources of
the Irrawaddy river had proved the absence of communication between it and the great
Tsanpo of Thibet, but they were unable to prosecute their examination further east;
and though their researches had extended to a point not more than twenty miles distant
from the meridian on which the labours of the Jesuit missionaries in Yunan had been
abruptly terminated, the intervening space and great valley of the Irrawaddy still
remained closed against them, and every attempt to enter either from Assam or
Manipur was defeated by the jealous vigilance of the Burmese authorities.

It is generally known that the course of the lower portion of the Irrawaddy river, or
that part extending from Rangoon to Ava, had been delineated by Lieutenant Wood of
the Engineers, who accompanied Captain Symes on his embassy to that court; and that
the features of the surrounding country, the size of the towns, its natural productions
and population, had at the same time been investigated by the accurate Buchanan.
Charts of this portion of the river, extending to Monchabu, the capital of the great
Alompra, had at a far earlier period been constructed, but the surveys were avowedly
made in a manner not calculated to inspire much confidence in their accuracy, and the
attention of Europe was first extensively drawn to this field of inquiry by the
publication of Symes, whose exaggerated views of the civilization, power, and
resources of the Burmese empire were generally adopted, while the more accurate
estimates of his successor, Coxe were treated with comparative disregard.

In the very infancy of our intercourse with the Burman empire, and when the most
persevering attempts were made to obtain settlements at various points of the coast, the
more remote stations oh the upper portion of the Irrawaddy river were not forgotten;
and Bamu or Bamo was even then known as the emporium of a trade between the
Burmese and Chinese, in which our aspiring merchants were most anxious to share. It
is asserted that at the commencement of the 17th century factories were established in
that neighbourhood, but the permission to remain was shortly afterwards withdrawn,
and the information which it is supposed was then obtained of the surrounding country
has never been rescued from oblivion. This is the less to be regretted, as the loss has
been fully compensated by the results of recent research; and the journey of Captain
Hannay, of the 40th Regiment, Native Infantry, from Ava up the Irrawaddy river to the
frontier towns of Bamo aad Mogaung, has at length rendered this hitherto inaccessible
region almost as well known to us as the more southern districts through which this
noble river directs its course. Many geographical points of extreme interest have been
determined by the personal observation and inquiries of this meritorious officer. Bamo
has for the first time become accurately known; from the same source much valuable
information has been gained respecting the trade carried on between Ava and China in this remote corner of the Burman empire. The habits and localities of some of the principal tribes occupying the 'mountainous tracts bordering on western Yunnan have been successfully investigated; the position of the very remarkable valley of Hukoug has been determined; the pyenduren or amber mines have for the first time been examined by the eye of European intelligence; the latitudes of the principal towns between Ava and Mungkhong have been ascertained by astronomical observation with a degree of accuracy sufficient for every purpose of practical utility, and they may now be regarded as established points, from whence inquiry can radiate in every direction with a confidence which the most zealous and enlightened investigators have been hitherto unable to feel in prosecuting their researches from the want of a few previously well-determined positions at which to commence or terminate their inquiries.

To an act of aggression on the part of a Singfo tributary of Ava against a Chieftain of the same clan residing under our protection, are we indebted for the opportunity of acquiring the information now gained, and the feud of two insignificant borderers may prove the immediate cause of a more intimate communication than had ever previously existed between our recently acquired possessions in Assam and the northern provinces of the Burman empire.

The Bisa and Dupha Gams are the heads of two clans of Singfos, occupying the northern and southern faces of the chain of mountains, which forms a lofty barrier between Ava and Assam. The former Chieftain, on our conquest of the latter country, tendered his submission, and was admitted within the pale of that feudatory dependence which many other tribes of the same clan had been equally anxious to enter. He was uniformly treated by the local authorities with great consideration, and was located at the northern foot of the Patkoi pass leading from Assam to the Hukong valley. Between this Chieftain and the Dupha Gam a feud had existed long previous to our assumption of the sovereignty of the country; and the latter, at the close of the year 1835, headed a party, which crossing the mountains from the Burmese province of Hukong, entered Bisa, the residence of the Chief of that clan, and after ravaging and plundering the village, sealed their atrocity with the indiscriminate murder of all the inhabitants that fell into their hands. The circumstances were made known to the British Resident at the Court of Ava, inquiry was demanded, and security required against the recurrence of similar acts of aggression. A deputation from the capital was ordered to the Burmese frontier for the purpose of instituting the necessary investigation, and Colonel Burney, the enlightened representative of British interests at that Court, failed not to avail himself of the opportunity thus unexpectedly afforded of
attaching an officer to the mission, and Captain Hannay, who then commanded his escort, was selected for the duty.

The party, consisting of the newly appointed Burmah Governor of Mogaung, of Captain Hannay, and several Burmese officers of inferior rank, with a military escort, left Ava on the 22nd of November 1835, in a fleet of 34 boats of various sizes, for a part of the country which had been uniformly closed against strangers with the most jealous vigilance. “No foreigners,” says Captain Hannay, “except the Chinese are allowed to navigate the Irrawaddy above the Choki of Tsampaynago, situated about seventy miles above Ava, and no native of the country even is permitted to proceed above that post, excepting under a special license from the Government. The trade to the north of Ava is entirely in the hands of the Chinese, and the individuals of that nation residing at Ava have always been vigilant in trying to prevent any interference with their monopoly.”

The mission was detained the two following days near the former capital of Amarapura to complete the quota of troops by which it was to be accompanied, and whose discipline, when they did join, was very soon found to be on a par with their honesty.

“They work their own boats,” says Captain Hannay, “some of which are covered in, and others are quite open. Their muskets (if they deserve the name) are ranged here and there throughout the boat, and are never cleared either from rust or dust, and wet or dry they are left without any covering. Each man carries a canvas bag, which is a receptacle for all sorts of things, including a few bamboo cartridges. He wears a black Shan jacket and a head-dress or goung-boung of red cotton handkerchief, and thus equipped he is a complete Burman militia man. They appear on further acquaintance to be better humoured than I at first thought them, but they are sad plunderers, and I pity the owners of the fields of pumpkins or beans they come across. I have remarked that whatever a Burman boatman eats in addition to his rice, is generally stolen[“].

Except at Kugyih, where there are said to be several Christian villages, of which, however, no satisfactory information could be obtained, the progress of the mission was unmarked by any circumstance of interest until its arrival at Yedan, where they entered the first kyouk-dwen, or rocky defile, through which the river directs its course. Lower down the extreme breadth of the stream had varied from one to two and a half miles, but here its width was contracted to less than a quarter of a mile, with a proportionate increase in the depth and velocity of the current. During the rainy season of the year, boats shoot through these narrow passes with terrific velocity, and the numerous eddies caused by the projecting rocks add greatly to the danger of the passage. In this part of their course the mission frequently met large rafts of bamboos
descending from the Shueli river, and upon them small baskets of pickled tea, brought from the hills to the south-east of that river. This tea was said to be manufactured by a race called Palong Paon, who are under Momeit. At Tsingu, Captain Hannay saw three native Chinese from Thengyichu or Mounyen, and several others in the service of the noblemen of the Court had accompanied the expedition from Ava with the view of proceeding to the kyouk-tsein, or serpentine mines, near the source, of the Uru river, west of the Irrawaddy. On the 30th of November the party left the village of Yedan Yua, where a perceptible change takes place in the character of the country and river. “The latter,” says Captain Hannay, “from covering an extent of miles, is sometimes confined within a limit of 150 yards, without rapids or torrents, as I had expected, but almost as still as a lake. In some places its depth is very great, being upwards of 10 fathoms. It winds through beautiful jungle, in which the pipul, simul trees, and bamboos, are conspicuous, and it has, generally speaking, a rocky bed and banks, which last rise to a considerable height, and composed of sandstone, which varies from dark to a white and yellow colour.” At the next stage, or Thihadophya, Captain Hannay mentions a very remarkable instance of the tameness of the fish, which are not allowed to be killed, and are found from about a mile below the village to an equal distance above.

“If rice is thrown into the water from the boat, a dozen fish, some of them as much as three and four feet long, come to the surface, and not only eat the rice, but open their mouths for you to put it in, and they will allow you to pat them on the head, which I and some of my followers actually did. Some of these fish are apparently of the same species as those called in India guru and ruta, indeed the Hindus who are with me called them by these names. The breadth of head is remarkable, and the mouth very large; they have no teeth, at least so the people told me whom I saw feeling their mouths.” This spectacle, strange as it must have appeared, was hardly more so than the adventure of the following morning, when Captain Hannay “was awoke by the boatmen calling to the fish to participate in their meal.”

On the 1st of December the expedition arrival at Tsampaynago, which has been before mentioned as the limit beyond which even natives of the country are not permitted to proceed without an express order from the Government. The custom house or thana is on the right bank of the river, and Malemyu, which is close to it, contains about 800 houses, with many very handsome gilded temples.

The Myothagyi, or deputy governor of the town, is also the custom officer, and a tax of 15 ticals per boat is levied on the Chinese coming from Bamo. Old Tsampaynago Myo is situated at the mouth of a small river which flows from Mogout.
and Kyatpen, and falls into the Irrawaddy immediately opposite the modern choki of that name.

The sites of Mogout and Kyatpen, where some of the finest rubies of the kingdom are obtained, were pointed out to Captain Hannay as lying in a direction N. 80° E. of Tsampaynago, and about thirty or forty miles distant, immediately behind a very conspicuous peak called Shueu Toung, which he estimated at 3,000 feet high. The Madara river, as well as that of Tsampaynago, flows from the same mineral district, which must greatly facilitate communication with it. The inhabitants of the country were unwilling or afraid to communicate any information regarding these secluded spots, and their exact locality is still a subject of conjecture. The mines are described as in a very swampy situation, and surrounded at a trifling distance by lofty hills. The three places at which the gems are principally sought are Mogout, Kyatpen, and Loungthe, and the principal miners are Kathays or Manipuris, with a few Chinese and Shans. The other most celebrated spot is Momeit, the site of which Buchanan found some difficulty in determining, but which Captain Hannay learnt was not more than two or three days' journey, or between twenty or thirty miles north of Mogout and Kyatpen. While at this place Captain Hannay says “they heard the people who were cutting bamboos in the hills rolling bundles of them down the face of the steep. Having made a road by felling the trees, the woodmen allow bundles of 150 and 200 bamboos to find their way to the bottom, which they do with a noise that is heard at the distance of eight miles. They are then floated down the small river into the Irrawaddy, but tins operation can only be effected during the rains.” The party now began to feel the cold excessively, and its severity was greatly heightened by a strong northerly wind, which seldom subsided until the afternoon, and was particularly keen in the narrow passes or kyouk-dwens.

Tagoung Myu, which was reached on the 5th of December, is an object of peculiar interest, as it is said to have been built by a king from Western India, whose descendants afterwards founded the kingdoms of Prome, Pagan, and Ava. Captain Hannay found the walls of the old fort dwindled away to a mere mound, and hardly discernible from the jungle with which they were covered, but adds “that enough is still seen to convince one that such a place did formerly exist. The fort has evidently been parallel with the river, and is on the left bank, which is high and composed of sandstone. About half a mile inland, the remains of the inner walls run north and south, with an opening or gap to the east, in which there is an appearance of a considerable ditch, which I was told is filled with water in the height of the rains.

The whole has more the appearance of an old brick fort than anything I have seen in Burmah, and I should say it had been built by a people different from the present
race of Burmans.” About a mile to the south of Tagoung are the extensive ruins of Pagan, which stretch as far as the eye can reach, and here Captain Hannay discovered impressions of Hindu Buddhist images, stamped upon a peculiar kind of brick composition (*terra cotta*), and with inscriptions which he imagined to be written in some variety of the Deva Nagri character.

The Burmese on the spot were unable to explain their nature or origin, and the learning of an aged priest proved equally incompetent to the task of deciphering them. They were subsequently, however, submitted to some Burman antiquarians at the capital by the Resident, whose paper on the subject, and a drawing of the images, appeared in the fifty-first number of the Journal of the Asiatic Society.

At Shnuzi Goung a large pagoda among the ruins of Tagoung, Captain Hannay obtained an extensive view of the subjacent country, and more accurate information of the site of the celebrated mines of Momeit than had been practicable at an earlier period of his voyage. From these accounts it appears that the locality which is said to produce the finest rubies in the kingdom is about forty-five or fifty miles east of Tagoung Myu, from whence it can be readied by a foot traveller in three or four days, and by a laden bullock in ten. A drove of these animals was just about to leave Tagouug for Momeit on Captain Hannay’s arrival, and from the owners he learnt “that after selling their ngapee (potted fish) at Momeit, Mogout, and Kyatpen, they proceeded to the country of the Palougs, which bounds the district of Momeit on the east, and purchased tea, both pickled and formed into balls, a part of which is brought to Ava.” The fish, which apparently forms the staple of the trade, is said to be of a remarkably fine description, and is dried in a manner peculiar to Tagoung.

On the left bank of the river, between Henga Myo and Tagoung, the teak tree first begins to appear, and at Kyundoung, on the opposite side, it is said that timber is found sufficiently large to form a boat from a single tree; it grows principally on the western face of the hills, at whose eastern base Kyundouni; stands. A delay of two days at this village enabled Captain Hannay to ascend to the summit of the first range of hills by the road which leads across them to the valley of the Mu river. He found it a well-beaten track and great thoroughfare, by which the inhabitants of the country, as far west as Wautha Myu, are accustomed to convey their supplies of fish, salt, and oil from Kyundoung, a place apparently of some trade. The bazar contained fifty shops, which were large and supplied with British piece-goods, uncleaned cotton, silk, and cotton Burman dresses, coarse white cloth, and other articles of country manufacture. Besides these," adds Captain Haunay, "I saw three Chinese shops, where spirits and pork were sold. The streets were crowded with people from the interior who had come to make purchases, and amongst them were several Kadus, a race of people of a...
different origin from the Burmahs, and scattered over the tract of country between this and Mogaung.

They are most numerous in the districts of Mauli and Mankat, situated on the Meza river, which comes from the north and west, and runs between the Kyundoung range and that called the Thegyain range, still seven or eight miles north of our present position. Rice, being the staple of the country, is an article of barter, and is sent in considerable quantities to Ava. Cotton, brought from the interior, is also an article of barter, and a good deal of it is sent to Bamo, but a part of it is made into cloth on the spot, as I saw several looms at work. Yellow and red cotton handkerchiefs of British manufacture sell here for two ticals a-piece, which is about 100 per cent. beyond the price at Ava."

To this point of their progress no diminution in the volume of the Irrawaddy was perceptible, and the channels proved sufficiently deep for the passage of large boats, from which we may infer that all the principal feeders or affluents which pour their tributary streams into the Irrawaddy were still further north, and had not yet been reached. The first of any importance noticed is the Shuei Khyoung, on the left bank, the northern branch of which flows from the Chinese frontier town of Santafu, called by the Burmahs Mola Santa, and a southern branch from Momeit, the site of the celebrated ruby mines already noticed. The confluence of these streams is represented as occurring at the village of Laha, about 40 miles from the Irrawaddy. Neither branch can be of any magnitude, for Captain Hannay remarks that at the point of junction with the Irrawaddy the breadth of the Shuei is not more than 300 yards, and that it contained but little water,—a satisfactory proof that this stream can have no connection with the Tsanpo of Thibet.

At Yebouk Yua, a day's journey above the Shuei Khyoung, two boats passed the party with Chinese in them from Bamo. "They work their, boats which are of the Burman round-shaped flat-bottomed description, and seem to be of a tolerable size, as there must have been at least twenty men in each. These boats are particularly well adapted for the navigation of the Irrawaddy, as they do not draw more than 18 inches of water."

On the 13th of December the party reached Katha, a town of some extent on the right bank of the river, containing about 400 houses, and a population whose numbers appear to be annually increased by large parties who come from the interior, and take up a temporary abode on the right bank of the river, and on the numerous islands and shoals in its bed, for the purpose of fishing and traffic. At the close of the season they return to their respective homes in time for the resumption of agricultural labour, and a

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1 Original footnote: A small stream not more than fifty yards broad, with but little water.
traveller ignorant of this nomadic custom, which appears to be very general in the upper part of the Irrawaddy, would form an exaggerated estimate of the population of the towns and villages in which they are thus temporarily congregated.

"The bazaar of Katha was well supplied with good native vegetables of various sorts, fresh and salt fish, pork sold by Chinamen, dried cocoanuts, sugar-cane, and rice, from the coarsest to the best quality, the latter selling at 15 ticals a hundred baskets." Captain Hannay also saw a small quantity of stick-lac in the bazaar, but it was dear, and of a description very inferior to that which is procurable at Rangoon, and is brought from the Shan territory east of Ava. Even at this remote spot there was a "tolerable display" of British piece-goods, but not nearly to the extent noticed at Kyundoung. Captain Hannay mentions a kyoung or monastery recently erected by the Myothagi of Katha as one of the most remarkable objects of the place. "It is a large wooden building covered with beautiful carved work, and situated near the river. The grounds surrounding it are extensive, and very tastefully laid out with fruit trees and flowery shrubs, amongst which I saw the Chinese rose in great plenty." The river is here confined by lofty banks not more than two furlongs apart, but the stream is very deep, and the spot appears to be a particularly favorable one for obtaining a good section of the river, the velocity of which at Wegiyih, a village above Katha, Captain Hannay estimated at one mile and a half an hour, with an average depth of 18 feet. This would give a discharge of about 52,272 cubic feet per second, while that of the Ganges at the same season may be assumed on Rennell's authority at 80,000 feet per second, giving for both a proportion of 1 to 1.53. No satisfactory comparison can, however, be yet instituted between these magnificent rivers, for up to the present moment we are without a single section of the Irrawaddy which could be safely assumed as the basis of a calculation sufficiently accurate for such a purpose.

At Kyouk Gryih, which the party reached on the 17th, they had fairly entered the remarkable curve in the Irrawaddy which had been previously represented in all our sketches of the river, and served, in the absence of more accurate information, as a point of reference, generally well known to the Burmahs and Shans. Here there is a ledge of rocks, over which the stream passes with so great a degree of rapidity as to render it very difficult of navigation during the rains. The rocks are serpentine, and the sand collected amongst them appeared to be a mixture of small garnets and iron sand. The right bank of the river, for two miles below Kyouk Gryih, is composed of small round stones and sand, and Captain Hannay was told that the natives wash the soil for gold.

No circumstance throughout this voyage afforded a more gratifying proof of the friendly feeling generally of the Burmese authorities, than the attentions which
Captain Hannay received at every place at which they halted. Houses were erected for
his accommodation at the various stages of the route, differing in no respect from
those intended for the Myuwuan of Mogoung; presents of fruit, rice, and vegetables,
were daily made to himself and followers, and the supposed tedium of his evenings
was relieved by a band of singers and dancers, who are found at almost every town
and village in the Burman empire.

At Kyouk Gyih these attentions were shown to a very remarkable degree by the
Woon of Munyen, “whose civility,” says Captain Hannay, “was the subject of
conversation with every one in the fleet.”

"Every individual has received sufficient rice and fish for two days' supply, and
my boat was filled by him with all sorts of provisions, enough certainly to last myself
and my followers for a week." The house of this liberal Woon, Captain Hannay
describes "as a very neat and comfortable dwelling, with a remarkably clean
compound, in which there is a garden laid out with a great deal of taste, and besides
many articles of costly Burman household furniture, he has a number of very fine
muskets and other arms." The party had now approached within a comparatively short
distance of Bamo, and the vicinity of this celebrated mart was shown in more
numerous villages than had been seen for several preceding days. From Shuegu My to
Balet, distance of three miles, the houses appeared to extend in an uninterrupted line,
and Kywundo, the name of a celebrated island in the river, covered with 100 pagodas,
is most conveniently situated between these towns, the inhabitants of which hold their
principal festivals upon it at particular seasons of the year.

Near this spot is the entrance to the second Kyouk dwen, the scenery of which
appears to be very magnificent, and is thus described by Captain Hannay:— “The river
passes directly through the hills, which rise perpendicularly on both sides to the height
of 400 feet; they are rocky and of irregular and singular forms, having at the same time
a sufficient number of trees on them to render the scenery very striking. One part of
the range, on the right bank, rises as perpendicularly as a wall to the height of 500 feet,
forming a grand and terrific precipice. This Kyouk dwen extends for four miles, and
the hills which form it are throughout of a rocky nature. The upper part of them
appeared to be sandstone, resting on a base of blue-coloured limestone, mixed with
veins of beautiful white marble; and at one spot I saw large masses of compact and
foliated primitive limestone, along with calcareous spar in large pieces.”

Koungtoun, which the mission reached on the 20th, is said to contain about 200
houses, and is noted for the defence made by its Burmese garrison against a large
invading force of Chinese during the last war between these two nations. A ditch
surrounds the town, and the remains of a brick redoubt, loop-holed for arrows or
musketry, are still perceptible encircling a pagoda. “This is now all that is to be seen,” adds Captain Hannay, “of the old fortification, but the town is still surrounded by a double palisade of bamboos with sharp stakes placed between them.” These defences are intended for the protection of the inhabitants against the Kakhyens, a tribe occupying the hills to the east, who frequently come down in small bodies for the purpose of carrying off cattle. Captain Hannay saw a great number of this tribe at Kounhtoun, where they barter their rice and cotton for salt and gnapee (potted fish), and describes them, with few exceptions, as perfect savages in their appearance. Their cast of countenance forms a singular exception to the general rule, for it is not at all Tartar in its shape, but they have, on the contrary, “long faces and straight noses, with a very disagreeable expression about the eyes, which was rendered; still more so by their lanky black hair being brought over the forehead, so as entirely to cover it and then cut straight across on a line with the eyebrows. These people, though surrounded by Shans, Burmese, and Chinese, are so totally different from either, that it is difficult to imagine from whence they have had their origin.”

On the 20th of December the fleet moored at a village about five miles below Bamo, which being a town of great importance and the residence of an officer inferior in rank to the Mogoung Woon, some previous arrangements were necessary to enable the latter to land with the éclat due to his rank. On reaching the town late on the following day, they found the left bank on which it stands so precipitous, that they were compelled to cross to the opposite side of the river, and a feeling of jealousy having arisen between the two Woons of Mogoung and Bamo, the former resumed his journey on the 22nd, which compelled Captain Hannay to defer the inquiries he was so anxious to make until his return in April, when he found the people far more communicative than they had ventured to be in the presence of the Mogoung Woon. The information obtained on both occasions will be more advantageously shewn in a connected form than in the detached portions in which it necessarily appears in his journal, and Captain Hannay’s first remark solves a difficulty, which, like the Adria of ancient history, has proved a stumbling block to modern investigation. In the course of inquiry into the sites of the principal towns on the Irrawaddy river, that of Bamo naturally held a very prominent place, and some of the native Shans who were questioned on the subject affirmed that it was on the bank of the Irrawaddy river, while others, whose opportunities of acquiring information had been equally good, positively denied this statement, and fixed its position on the left bank of a small stream which flows into the Irrawaddy about a mile above the present town. Captain Hannay reconciles the conflicting statements briefly but satisfactorily, in the following remark:—
"I find that this is a modern town erected on the banks of the Irrawaddy for the convenience of water carriage between it and Ava. The old Shan town of Manmo, or Bamo, is situated two days' journey up the Tapan river, which falls into the Irrawaddy about a mile above the new town of Bamo or Zeetheet Zeit, or new mart landing place."

"This modern town," says Captain Hannay, "is situated on high unequal ground, and the bank towards the river is from 40 to 50 feet in height, and composed of clay. With the exception of Ava and Rangoon it is the largest place I have seen in Burmah, and, not excepting these places, I certainly think it the most interesting. The novelty of so large a fleet as ours passing up (and no doubt having heard that a European officer was of the party) had attracted a great crowd of people to the river-side, and on landing I felt as if I were almost in a civilized land again, when I found myself amongst fair complexioned people, wearing jackets and trowsers, after being accustomed to the harsh features and party-coloured dress of the Burmans.

The people I saw were Chinese from the province of Yunan, and Shans from the Shan provinces subject to China. Bamo is said to contain 1,500 houses, but including several villages which join it, I should say it contained 2,000 at least, 200 of which are inhabited by Chinese.

Besides the permanent population of Bamo, there are always a great number of strangers there,—Chinese, Shans, and Kakhyens, who either come to make purchases or to be hired as workmen. There are also a great number of Assamese, both in the town and in the villages immediately connected with it, amongst whom are several members of the Tapan or Assam Raja's family. Bamo is the jaghire of the Tapan Raja's sister, who is one of the ladies of the King of Ava.

"The inhabitants of this district live in large comfortable houses, which are thatched with grass, and have walls made of reeds. They are generally railed in, and all the villages have bamboo palisades surrounding them. The Palongs of the Chinese frontier are, I am told, remarkably industrious. They are good dyers, carpenters, and blacksmiths, and all the dhas or swords used in this part of the country are made by them." "I received," adds Captain Hannay, "great attention from the Myuwun of Bamo, and also from the head Chinese there. They sent me tea, sugar, dried fruits, and vegetables, for which I of course made a suitable return. The annual caravan from China had not arrived, and the supply of Chinese articles in the shops was very small."

The people of Bamo were so strongly impressed with the idea that Captain Hannay's only object was to find a road by which British troops might penetrate to China, that he found it extremely difficult to obtain any information from them regarding the routes into that country. The Chinese themselves, however, proved more
communicative, and from them he learnt the existence of several passes from Bamo into Yunan; but as one of these presents far greater facilities of transit than the others, it is generally adopted for commercial intercourse, and the mode of carrying it on is thus described: "At the distance of two miles above Bamo the mouth of the Taping or lap an river is situated. This river has a direction N. 70° E. for about two days' journey, when it cuts through the Kakhyen range, and under these hills old Bamo or Manmo is situated. To the latter place the Chinese take their merchandise from modern Bamo by water, and then proceed overland to the chold or ken of Loailong near Mowan, which they reach in three days, and from thence to Mounyen or Tengyechen in the province of Yunan, at which place they arrive in eight or nine days. The road from Bamo to Loailong is through the hills, which are inhabited by Kakhyens and Palongs, after which it passes through the country of the Shans, called by the Burmans Kopyidoung. The road is described as being very good, and quite a thoroughfare. The Tapan Khyoung is not navigable for large boats, in consequence of which the Chinese use two canoes tied together with a platform over them for the transport of their merchandise to Manmo or old Bamo, and for the remainder of the journey it is carried on ponies or mules."

This description of the size of the Tapan Khyoung, which is also called by the Shans Numtaping, completely sets at rest the keenly agitated question of its identity with the Tsanpo of Thibet, and the theory of Klaproth (who on the authority of Chinese writers calls it the Pinglankhyoung, and maintains it to be the prolongation of the Tsanpo,) is shown to have no better foundation than his unauthorized change in the position assigned to the latter river in that part of its course which passes through Thibet. Captain Hannay describes the Taping as not more than 150 yards broad, and with only sufficient water to float a small boat. The Singfos affirm that it is a branch of the Shueli Khyoung (the Lungshue Kiang of the Chinese), from which it separates above Momein, but the accuracy of this report appears highly questionable.

The principal article of trade, which is cotton, is entirely in the hands of the Chinese, who arrive at Bamo in the months of December and January. The greater part of their imports is taken to Ava, as neither the natives of Mogaung nor Bamo could afford to purchase them.

"What they dispose of here," says Captain Hannay, "are copper pots, carpets, and warm jackets." These articles are also taken all over the Burman territories, as far west as the Khyendwen. There are several cotton godowns here belonging to the Chinese, and these are constantly residing in the town—500 of these people—which, with the numerous arrivals from different parts of the country, gives the place a very business-

2 Original margin note: In another place it is mentioned as only one mile above Bamo.
like appearance, and there is of course a good bazar." There is a very neat temple built by the Chinese of Bamo, which Captain Hannay visited, and was most politely received by the officiating priest. "On entering his house," says Captain Hannay, "he rose to meet me, saluted me in the English fashion, asked me to sit down, and ordered his people to bring me tea, after which he sent a person with me to show me the curiosities of the temple. Most of the figures were carved on wood, and different from what I have generally seen in Chinese temples; one of them represented the Nursinga of the Hindus. The Chinese of Bamo, although different from the maritime Chinese in language and features, have still the same idea of neatness and comfort, and their manners and mode of living appear to be much the same."

"Their temple and all the houses, which, are not temporary, are substantially built of bricks stained blue; the streets are paved with the same material, and the grounds of the temple are surrounded by a neat brick wall covered with tiles."

"Besides the trade carried on at Bamo by the Chinese, the Shans, Balongs, and Singfos under China, are great purchasers of salt, gnapee, dried fish, and rice, but particularly salt, which is in constant demand, and to procure it numbers of the above-named people come to Bamo, Sambaungya, and Kountoung. The salt, which sells here for twenty ticals of silver for 100 vis, or Rs. 28 for 150 seers, is brought principally from Sheinmaga, above Ava, and from Manbu, which is situated two marches west of Katha. The Shans here are distinguished by their fair complexions and broad good tempered faces. They wear turbans and trowsers of light blue cotton cloth; they greatly resemble the Chinese, and from living so near that nation, many of them speak the Yunan Chinese language. They inhabit the country to the east of Bamo, and their principal towns are Hotha, Latha, Santa, Sanla, Moongsye, Moong Woon, Moong Man, Moong La, and Moong Tye. The people are generally designated Shan Taroup or Chinese Shans."

"Although the Palougs speak the Shan, their own native language is a distinct one. The men, though small in stature, are athletic and remarkably well made. Flat noses and grey eyes are very common amongst them. They wear their hair tied in a knot on the right side of the head, and dress in a turban, jacket, and trowsers of dark blue cloth. They are a hill people and live in the tract of country situated between Burmah and China, but those to the east of Bamo pay no revenue to either country, and are governed by their own Tsobuaa. The Singfo traders I saw at Bamo were very different from those under Burmah, and according to their proximity to either Shans or Chinese, they assimilate to one or other in dress and language."

"The whole of these people," says Captain Hannay, "pay for everything they require in silver, and were it not for the restrictions in Burmah on the exportation of
silver, I think an intelligent British merchant would find it very profitable to settle at Bamo, as besides the easy intercourse with China it is surrounded by numerous and industrious tribes, who would no doubt soon acquire a taste for British manufactures, which are at present quite unknown to them.”

The revenue of the district is estimated by Captain Hannay at three lakhs of rupees per annum, and he adds: “If appearance of comfort may be taken as a proof of its prosperity, the inhabitants of Bamo show it in their dress and houses. I have seen more gold and silver ornaments worn here than in any town in Burmah.”

On leaving Bamo the appearance of the country became much more hilly, and great precautions were taken to guard against surprise by the Kakhyens who inhabited the different ranges in the vicinity of the river.

At Hakan the escort was reinforced by 150 soldiers from Bamo, and a number of families who were proceeding up the river joined the fleet to enjoy the protection afforded by so large a convoy. The Shans who composed the quota from Bamo were a remarkably fine set of men from the banks of the Tapan Khyyoung, and formed a striking contrast in dress and appearance to the miserable escort which had accompanied the party from Ava.

At the village of Thaphan Beng they entered the third Kyouk Dwen, from which a very beautiful view is obtained of the fertile valley of Bamo, bounded on the east by the Kakhyen hills, which are cultivated to their summits. Serpentine and limestone were the principal rocks found in this defile as well as the preceding one; and as the river was here in some places not more than 80 yards broad, with a depth of 80 feet, and its rise is in the rains 50 feet above the present level, the rush of waters must at that season be terrific. The natives indeed declared that the roar at that time was so great as to prevent them from hearing each other speak, and that the defile could only then be traversed on rafts; now, however, it coursed gently along with an almost imperceptible motion.

At Thabyebeng Yna they found a new race of people called Phwons, who described themselves as having originally come from a country to the north-east called Motoung Maolong, the precise situation of which could not be ascertained. Their native language, which they speak only in intercourse with each other, differs altogether from the Shan and Burmese, but they have no written character. There appear to be two tribes of this race, distinguished by the Burmahs as the great and small; the former are found only at Tshenbo and in the vicinity of the third Kyouk Dwen, while the inferior tribe is scattered all over the country; the only difference apparently between them consists in some trifling varieties in the dialects they speak. Their extensive cultivation proved their agricultural industry, and four Chinese Shans
were constantly employed in manufacturing their implements of husbandry. Their houses were of a construction totally different from any that had been previously seen, and consisted of a long thatched roof rounded at the ends and reaching almost to the ground. Inside of this, and at the height of eight or ten feet from the ground, the different apartments are formed, the walls of which are made of mat.

“From the outward appearance of these houses,” says Captain Hannay, “it would be difficult to imagine that they were habitations; but inside they are very comfortable, and from the great thickness and peculiar form of the roof, the inmates cannot be much affected either by heat or cold.” The same description of house is built by the Shans occupying the valley of Kubo, and it is probable that the Phwons have adopted this style of building from some tribe of that widely scattered nation.

On the 26th the fleet reached a part of the Irrawaddy, which is considered the most dangerous point in its navigation; it is called Pusku, and the stream is there confined to a breadth of 30 yards, but with no less than nine fathoms of depth in the centre. The rocks bore every appearance of fierce and irregular volcanic action, varying in colour “from brown, yellow, red, and green, to a jet black which shone like a looking glass.” The strata also presented a scene of great confusion, some being vertical, some horizontal, and others twisted, “the whole having exactly the appearance of having been poured out from a furnace.”

The navigation of the Irrawaddy river up to this point had been unmarked by difficulties of any magnitude, and, with the exception of the passes through the Kyouk Dwens, the channel appears to have afforded even at that season of the year an abundant supply of water for the largest class of boats which ply between Ava and Bamo.

Above the village of Namhet, however, they first met a succession of rapids extending for a mile and a half, which were even then considered dangerous; and Captain Hannay remarks that he had seldom seen in the worst season and worst part of the Ganges a stronger current, or more turbulent water, than at the rapids of Shuegyain Man, a short distance above the village of Namhet. On the arrival of the fleet at Tshenbo, which is about ten miles below the mouth of the Mogaung river, the boats by which the party had been conveyed from Ava were exchanged for others of a smaller description, better adapted for the navigation of so small and tortuous a river as that of Mogaung. The one prepared for Captain Hannay’s accommodation was of the kind called by the Burmese “loung”; it was paddled by twenty-five men, and formed of a single tree, with the addition of a plank ten inches broad all round the upper part of it.

Before quitting Tshenbo Captain Hannay had a visit from the head priest, whose curiosity to obtain Borne knowledge of European customs and habits could only be
satisfied by the display of the contents of his trunks, and the sight of his watch, sextant, and thermometer, all of which he was permitted to examine by Captain Hannay, who regrets that he had not brought some missionary tracts with him from Ava “to give this inquisitive priest some idea of the Christian religion.” Tshenbo, on the authority of this priest, is said to have been formerly a principal city of the Phwon tribe, who were dispossessed of it about sixty years ago by the Burmahs. On the last day of December the mission reached the mouth of the Mogaung river, which Captain Hannay ascertained by observation to be in latitude 24° 56' 53". Here they were to quit the Irrawaddy which, says Captain Hannay, “is still a fine river flowing in a reach from the eastward half a mile broad, at the rate of two miles an hour, and with a depth varying from three fathoms in the centre to two at the edge.”

The Mogaung river, on which the town of the same name is situated, is not more than one hundred yards wide, and the navigation is impeded by a succession of rapids, over which the stream rushes with considerable velocity. The smallest boat in the fleet was an hour and a half getting over the first of these obstacles, and the Shan boatmen, who are thoroughly acquainted with the character of the river, “pull their boats close to the rocky points, and then, using all their strength, shoot across to the opposite side before the force of the stream had time to throw them on the rocks.” The Burmah boatmen adopted the apparently easier method of pulling their boats up along the edge of the stream, but this proved both difficult and dangerous, one boat being upset and a man drowned. The banks of the river were covered with a dense and impervious jungle, which extended nearly the whole way to Mogaung, and no village served to beguile the wearisome monotony of this portion of the journey until they reached Akouktoung, a small hamlet on the right bank, inhabited by Phwons and Shans. Here they met a Chief of the Laphae Singfos, who had taken up his residence in this village with a few followers in consequence of a feud with Borne neighbouring tribes in his own country to the north. Between Akouk Yua and Tapoh (the nest village seen) the bed of the river is filled with rocks and rapids, which render the navigation exceedingly dangerous, the stream shooting over them with such velocity as frequently to rise above the bow of the boat, which, in case of unskilful management, would be instantly upset. The way in which Phwons and Shans overcome these difficulties formed a striking contrast to the conduct of the Burmah and Kathay boatmen. The former, working together with life and spirit, still paid the strictest attention to the orders given by the head boatman; while the latter, “who think,” says Captain Hannay, “that nothing can be done without noise, obey no one, as they all talk at once and used the most abusive language to each other.” He thinks the Phwons and Shans greatly
superior to the Burmahs or Kathays, meaning by the latter those Manipuris resident in Ava who are Burmans in every thing but origin.

After passing the last rapids at Tapoh the river expands in breadth to two hundred yards, the stream flows with a gentle current, and “the bed is composed of round stones, which are mostly quartz. Amongst them, however, there are found massive pieces of pure crystal stone, partaking of the nature of tale, and also pieces of indurated clay of different colours. The banks are alluvial on the surface, but towards the base and near the edge of the river the soil becomes gravelly, and in some places has a stratum of beautiful bright yellow-coloured clay intersecting it.”

On the 5th of January the party disembarked from their boats, and as the Myo Wun was installed in his new government, the landing was effected with considerable state. “Arrangements,” says Captain Hannay, “had been made for our reception, and on first landing we entered a temporary house, where some religious ceremony was performed, part of which was the Myo Wun supplicating the spirits of three brothers who are buried here, and who founded the Shan provinces of Khanti, Assam, and Mogaung, to preserve him from all evil. After which ceremony he dressed himself in his robe of state, and he and I proceeded hand in hand through a street of Burman soldiers, who were posted from the landing place to the Myo Wun's house, a distance of nearly a mile. We were preceded by the Myo Wun's people carrying Spears, gilt chattas, &c., and at intervals during our walk a man in a very tolerable voice chaunted our praises and the cause of our coming to Mogaung. Several women also joined the procession, carrying offerings of flowers and giving us their good wishes.”

The Myo Wun appears to have lost no time in availing himself of the advantages of his situation, for on the very day after landing he commenced a system of unsparing taxation to enable him to pay for his appointment. A rapid succession of governors within a very few years, all influenced by the same principle, had already reduced the inhabitants of Mogaung to a state closely bordering on extreme poverty, and the distress occasioned by the exactions now practised was bitterly complained of by the wretched victims of such heartless extortion.

The Shan inhabitants of the town were employed by the Burmese officers to enforce this excessive payment of tribute from the Singfos and Kakhynes of the surrounding hills, which had led to much ill will on the part of the latter, by whom they are stigmatised “as the dogs of the Burmans.”

“The town of Mogaung,” says Captain Hannay, “is situated at the junction of the Namyun or Namyang and the Mogaung or Numkong rivers, and extends about a mile from east to west along the bank of the last-named river, the west end of the town being bounded by the Namyeen Khyoungh, which comes from the district of Monyeen.
in a direction S. 43 W. The town of Mogau, strictly speaking, is confined within what is now only the remains of a timber stockade. Outside of this, however, there are several houses, and within a short distance a few small villages are scattered about, but even including all these there are not more than 300 houses. Those within the stockade are inhabited by Shans, and those outside by Burmans, Phwons, Assamese, and a few Chinese. The latter, to the number of 50, reside here, and are under the authority of a Thoogyee of their own nation. They derive a profit from their countrymen who come annually in considerable numbers to purchase serpentine.

Amongst them I saw both blacksmiths and carpenters, and for the first time since leaving Gangetic India, I saw the operation, performed of shoeing horses. The Shans inside the stockade reside in large houses, such as I formerly described having seen amongst the Phwons; the Burmans and others live in the same description of houses as are to be seen in every part of Burmah proper, but all bear signs of great poverty, and if it were not for the Chinese, whose quarter of the town looks business-like and comfortable, I should say that Mogau is decidedly the poorest looking town I have seen since leaving Ava. There is no regular bazar, all supplies being brought from a distance, and the market people are with few exceptions Kakhyens and Assamese from the neighbouring villages.”

The arrival at so remote a spot of a European officer was soon bruited abroad, and Captain Hannay's time was fully occupied in answering innumerable questions put to him by a crowd of visitors, who examined his sextant with great care under the firm conviction that by looking through it he was enabled to perceive what was going on in distant countries; nor would they believe that the card of his compass was not floating on water until to satisfy them he had taken it to pieces. The paucity of inhabitants and poverty of the town plainly indicated the absence of extensive trade, and Captain Hannay learnt that, including the profits derived from the sale of serpentine, the revenues of the town and neighbouring villages did not amount to more than Rs. 30,000 per annum, and the Bunnah authorities can only enforce the payment of tribute from the Shans of Khanti and the Singfos of Payendwen by the presence of an armed force. In their last attempt on the latter, a Burmah force of 1,000 men was detached from Mogau, of whom 900 were destroyed, and for ten years they had been held in salutary dread by the Burmah governors of the frontier. During his stay at Mogau Captain Hannay obtained specimens of the green stone, called by the Burmahs kyughtsein, and by the Chinese yueesh,3 and which he supposes to be nephrite. [“]The

3 Original note in margin: Monsieur Abel Remusat, in the second part of his history of Kotan, is said by Klaproth (Mem. Rel. a l'Asie, tome 2, P. 299) to have entered into a very learned disquisition proving the identity of the yu or yueesh of the Chinese with the jasper of the ancients.—R. B. P. The yu is a silicious
Chinese," he says, “choose pieces which, although showing a rough and dingy-coloured exterior, have a considerable interior lustre, and very often contain spots and veins of a beautiful bright apple-green. These are carefully cut out and made into ring stones and other ornaments which are worn as charms. The large masses are manufactured by them into bracelets, rinses, and drinking cups, the latter being much in use amongst them from the idea that the stone possesses medicinal virtues. All the yueesh taken away by the Chinese is brought from a spot five marches to the north-west of Mogaung, but it is found in several other parts of the country, although of an inferior quality. Serpentine and limestone are the prevailing formations of the base of the highest ranges of hills throughout this part of the country. Steatite is also abundant in the bed of the Irrawaddy below the valley of Khanti.

One very important object of Captain Hannay's mission was to cross the Patkoi mountains into Assam, and on his arrival at Mogaung he waited some days in considerable anxiety for the Kakhyen porters, who were to convey his baggage and supplies during the remaining portion of the journey. He soon found, however, that the authority of the Burmans, when unenforced by the presence of a large military detachment, was held in the most sovereign contempt by those hardy mountaineers, and after many fruitless attempts to induce the Mogaung Woun to allow him to proceed with even a small party, he was constrained to limit his further researches to the Hukong valley and amber mines. Repeated remonstrances were necessary to induce the governor to proceed even so far, and it was not until the 19th of the month that an advanced guard crossed the river and fired a feu de joie after performing the ceremony of sacrificing a buffalo to the Nhatgyee (or spirits of the three brother Tsanhuas of Mogaung), without which no expedition even marches from the town. Even then the dogged obstinacy of the governor induced him to delay his departure, and it was not until Captain Hannay threatened that he would instantly return to Ava if there were any longer delay, that the wily diplomatist could be induced to move.

On the 22nd they crossed the river, and the camp was formed on the northern bank in strict accordance with Burmese custom. Captain Hannay's tent (a common sepoy's pal) was the admiration of every one but its owner, who now for the first time marched with an undisciplined rabble. “The soldiers' huts,” says Captain Hannay, “are composed of branches of trees and grass, and if they wish to be particular, they cover them with a piece of cloth, which is generally some old article of dress. The Myo Wun's station is in the centre of the camp, and in front of him are his own immediate followers, whose huts are formed into a street marked by a double line of spears. At

mineral, coloured with less intensity, but passing into heliotrope. It is therefore prase rather than jade or nephrite.
the head of this street the flags are placed, and also the two small cannon (one-
pounders), which are seat with the force, I believe, for the purpose of firing three
rounds morning and evening to frighten the neighbouring Kakhyens, and which
ceremony, I suspect, will be gone through with as much gravity as if it would have the
desired effect. My position is in front and a little to the left of the Myo Wu, and we
are completely surrounded by the soldiers, whose huts are in distinct lines, the men of
each district keeping together.”

On the 22nd they at length set out, and the style of march was as little in
accordance with the military experience of our traveller as the previous encampment,
“The men, to the number of 800, march in single file, and each man occupies a space
of six feet, being obliged to carry a bangy containing his provisions, cooking pots,
&o., besides his musket, which is tied to the bangy stick. This is the most common
mode of marching, but some of them carry their provisions in baskets, which they
strap across their forehead and shoulders, leaving their hands free to carry their
muskets; but as to using them it is out of the question, and I should say the whole party
are quite at the mercy of any tribe who choose to make a sudden attack upon them.”
On reaching the encamping ground, however, these men gave proof bow well they
were adapted to this mode of travelling, for in an hour after their arrival every
individual had constructed a comfortable hut for himself, and was busily engaged
cooking the rice, which, with the addition of a few leaves plucked from certain shrubs
in the jungle, forms the diet of the Burman soldier on the line of march.

The tract of country through which the party passed on the first two days was
hilly, and abounded in a variety of fine forest trees; but on approaching Numpoung,
the second encampment, the country became more open, and the pathway led through
a forest of very fine teak trees. The principal rivers all flowed from the Shuedounge
Gyi range of hills on the east of their route, and are at this season of the year mere
mountain torrents, with so little water in them that the path frequently passes over their
rocky beds. The whole route from Mogaung to the Hukong valley may be described
generally as passing between defiles, bounded by the inferior spurs of the Shuedoung
Gyi range on the east and numerous irregular hills on the west. These defiles form the
natural channels of numerous streams, which flowing from the heights above, and
struggling amidst masses and boulders of detached rock, make their way eventually to
the larger stream of the Numkong, which unites with the Namyen at Mogaung. The
only traces of inhabitants perceptible in the greater part of this route were a few
cleared spots on the hills in the vicinity of some scattered Kakhyen, villages, and a few
fishing stakes in the mountain streams. Near the mouth of the Numsing Khyoung the
party met with a few Kakhyen huts, which appear to have been constructed by that

*SBBR 3.1 (SPRING 2005): 197-227*
tribe during their fishing excursions, and at Tsadozant, an island in the bed of the Mogaung river, on which the force encamped on the 28th of January, they passed the sites of two Kakhyen villages and found the ground completely strewed with graves for a considerable distance, the probable result of some endemic disease which induced the survivors to desert the spot. The finest lemon and citron trees Captain Hannay had ever seen were found here, and the tea plant was also very plentiful. The leaf is large, and resembles that sold in Ava as pickled tea; the soil, in which it grew most luxuriantly, is described as of a “reddish-coloured clay.” Thus far a considerable portion of the route had passed either directly over the bed of the Mogaung river or along its banks; but at Tsadozant they crossed it for the last time, and at this spot it is described as a mere hill stream, with a “bed composed of rolled pieces of sienite and serpentine, with scales of mica in it.” The navigation of the river even for small canoes ceases below this spot, and those which had accompanied the party with supplies were left from inability to convey them further.

About four miles north of Tsadozant “the road ascends about 100 feet and passes over a hilly tract, which seems to run across from the hills on the east to those on the west, and is called by the natives Tsambu Toung (the mount Samu of the maps). This transverse ridge evidently forms the southern limit of the Hukong valley, and streams flow from it both to the north and south, the former making their way to the Khyendwen, and the latter to the Mogaung river. “Tsambu Toung,” says Captain Hannay, “is covered with noble trees, many of which, I think, are sal, and are of immense height and circumference. The tea plant is also plentiful, besides a great variety of shrubs, which are quite new to me. The rays of the sun seem never to penetrate to the soil of Tsambu Toung. It may therefore be easily imagined how damp and disagreeable it is, more particularly as there is a peculiar and offensive smell from a poisonous plant which grows in great abundance in this jungle, and the natives tell me that cattle die almost immediately after eating it.”

On the 30th the party descended from the encampment on the northern face of this ridge to the Singfo village of Walobhum, and finally encamped on the left bank of the Edikhyoung, about three furlongs distant from Meinkhwon or Mungkhum, the capital of the Hukong valley, “where,” says Captain Hannay, “our journey must end for the present, as besides having no provisions, the men composing the force are so completely worn out with fatigue that I am certain they could not proceed further without a halt of some days.” This interval Captain Hannay assiduously employed in collecting information regarding the valley, which had from a very early period been an object of great geographical interest as the site of the Payendwen or amber mines, and at no very remote era probably formed the bed of an Alpine lake, which, like that
of the Manipur valley, has been subsequently raised to its present level by long continued alluvial deposits and *detritus* from the hills which encircle it on every side. The tendency of every such deposition is to raise the level of the water and facilitate its drainage until it becomes so shallow that evaporation suffices to complete the process and render the soil a fit abode for future races of men. The numerous and extensive lakes in the mountainous regions of Thibet and Tartary are doubtless undergoing a similar change, and no great stretch of imagination is necessary to anticipate the period when they will become the sites of extensive towns and villages and present a striking contrast to the rugged magnificence and solitary grandeur of the snowy regions which surround them.

“The valley of Hukong or Payendwen,” says Captain Hannay, “is an extensive plain, bounded on all sides by hills; its extent from east to north-west being at least 50 miles, and varying in breadth from 45 to 15 miles, the broadest part being to the east. The hills bounding the valley to the east are a continuation of the Shuedoung Gyi range, which is high, commences at Mogaung, and seems to run in a direction of N. 15 E.” The principal river of the valley is the Numtunae or Khyendwen, which flows from the Shuedoung Gyi range, and after receiving the contributions of numerous small streams quits the valley at its north-western corner and again enters the defiles of the hills, beyond which its course is no longer perceptible.

On the western side of the valley there are but few villages, and these thinly inhabited, the capital itself containing, not more than thirty houses; but the north and eastern sides are said to be very populous, the houses in those quarters being estimated at not less than 3,000, nearly all of which are situated on the banks of the Towang and Debee rivers. All the low hills stretching from the western foot of the Shuedoung range were under cultivation, and the population is said to extend across to the banks of the Irrawaddy, in numbers sufficient to enable the Singfos, when necessary, to assemble a force of nine or ten thousand men.

“With the one exception,” says Captain Hannay, “of the village of Meinkhwan, which has a Shan population, the whole of the inhabitants of the valley are Siugfos and their Assamese slaves. Of the former the larger proportion is composed of the Mrip and Tisan tribes, with a few of the Laphei clan, who are still regarded as strangers by the more ancient colonists, and can hardly be viewed but with hostile feelings, as this tribe have frequently ravaged Meinkhwan within the last six years, and were guilty of the still greater atrocity of burning a priest alive in his kyaung or monastery.

Formerly, the population was entirely Shan, and previous to the invasion of Assam by the Burmese, the town of Meinkhwan contained 1,500 houses, and was governed by the Chief of Mogaung. From that period the exactions of the Burmese
officers have led to extensive emigration, and to avoid the oppression to which they were hourly exposed the Shans have sought an asylum in the remote glens and valleys on the banks of the Khyendwen, and the Singfos among the recesses of the mountains at the eastern extremity of the valley. This state of affairs has led to general anarchy, and feuds are constantly arising between the different tribes, which the quarrel of the Bisa and Dupha Grams has greatly contributed to exasperate. No circumstance is more likely to check these feuds and reclaim the scattered population of the valley than the establishment of a profitable commercial intercourse with the more equitably governed valley of Assam, with which communication is now becoming more intimate than at any previous period.

Of the mineral productions of the Hukong valley enumerated by Captain Hannay, the principal are salt, gold, and amber. The former, he informs us, is procured “both on the north and south sides of the valley, and the waters of the Namtwonkok and Edi rivers are quite brackish from the numerous salt-springs in their beds. Gold is found in most of the rivers, both in grains and in pieces the size of a large pea. The rivers which produce it in greatest quantity and of the best quality are the Kapdup and the Namkwun. The sand of the former is not worked for this mineral, I am told, but large pits are dug on its banks, where the gold is found as above mentioned. Besides the amber which is found in the Payentoung, or amber mine hills, there is another place on the east side of the valley, called Kotah Bhun, where it exists in great quantities; but I am informed that the spot is considered sacred by the Singfos, who will not allow the amber to be taken away, although it is of an inferior description.” Specimens of coal were also found by Captain Hannay in the beds of the Namblhyu and Edi rivers, and he learnt from the natives that in the Numtarang a great quantity of fossil wood was procurable. In its relation to Assam and China, the trade of the Hukong valley naturally attracted a share of Captain Hannay's attention, and from his account it appears that “the only traffic of any consequence carried on in this valley is with the amber, which the Singfos sell to a few Chinese, Chinese Shans, and Chinese Singfos, who find their way here annually. The price of the common, or mixed amber, is 2 ½ ticals a vis, or Rs. 4 per one and a half seer; but the best kind, and what is fit for ornaments, is expensive, varying in price according to its colour and transparency.”

“The Chinese sometimes pay in silver for the amber, but they also bring with them warm jackets, carpets, straw-hats, copper-pots, and opium, which they give in exchange for it. They also barter their merchandize for ivory and gold-dust, but only in small quantities. A few individuals from the Burman territories likewise come here

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4 Original footnote: Specimens in matrix are deposited in the Society’s Museum.
with cloths of their own manufacture, and also a small quantity of British piece-goods for sale; but as they are obliged on their way hither to pass through the country of the most uncivilized of the Kakhyen tribes, they seldom venture to come. The greatest part, therefore, of British and Burman manufactures which are used in this valley are brought from Mogaung by Singfo merchants; but I understand that within the last few years several of them have gone to Assam with gold-dust, ivory, and a little silver, for which they receive in return muskets, cloth, spirits, and opium. The following is a list of British piece-goods now selling at Meinkhwon:—Common book muslin, used as head dresses, Rs. 14 a piece; coarse broadcloth, worn as shawls, 2 ½ yards long, Rs. 18 each; good cotton handkerchiefs, Rs. 4 a pair; and coarse ones, Rs. 2 ½ a pair. These are the prices of goods bought at Ava, but what similar articles from Assam may cost, I cannot ascertain. The broadcloth, however, that I have seen from the latter place is of a very superior quality. The merchants who come to this valley from the Barman territories are natives of Yo, and the man who is now selling goods here has frequently visited Calcutta. The dress worn by the Singfos of this valley is similar to that of the Shans and Burmans of Mogaung, but they frequently wear jackets of red camlet, or different velvets, which they ornament with buttons, and those who can afford it wear a broadcloth shawl. The arms in common use amongst them are the dhu (or short sword) and spear. The women wear neat jackets of dark coarse cotton cloth, and their thamines or petticoats are full, and fastened round the waist with a band, being altogether a much more modest dress than that worn by the Burman women. Those who are married wear their hair tied on the crown of the head, like the men, but the younger ones wear theirs tied close to the back of the neck, and fastened with silver pins. Both married, and single wear white muslin turbans. The ornaments generally worn by them are amber ear-rings, silver bracelets, and necklaces of beads, a good deal resembling coral, but of a yellowish colour, and these are so much prized by them that they Bell here for their weight in gold.”

During his stay at Hukong Captain Hannay was visited by many Singfos from the borders of China, from whom he learnt that the Sginmackha river rises in the mountains bounding the plain of Khanti to the north, and is inclosed on the east by the Goulang Sigong mountains, which they consider the boundary between Burmah and China. This river is, on the same authority, pronounced not to be navigable even for canoes, and the most satisfactory confirmation is afforded of the accounts of Captain Wilcox. Several smaller streams fall into the Sginmaekha from the Shuedoung Gyi

5 Original footnote: Although Captain Wilcox (as Res. Vol. XVII, p. 463), relying on the accounts given by Singfos of this river, appear to have formed rather an exaggerated estimate of its size, his conjectures as to the position of its sources are fully verified by the statements made to Captain Hannay.—R.B.P.
hills on the west, and the name of Situng is given to the tract of country through which they flow. In this district gold is very plentiful, and it is found, says Captain Hannay, “over the whole tract of mountainous country above the Sginmaekha. The Chinese visit this locality for the purpose of procuring the gold, and give in exchange for it warm clothing, carpets, and opium.”

Of the several routes by which communication is kept up between the inhabitants of Hukong and the countries around, the principal appear to be one leading across the Shuedoung Gryi range to the eastern Singfos; a second, called the Lye gnephhum road, winds round the base of the mountain of that name, and leads in sixteen days to Munglung, the capital of the Ehanti country, which was visited by Captain Wilcox.

The most important one, however, with reference to trade, lies in a south-east direction from the Hukong valley, from which the district of Kakyö Wainmo is not more than eight days’ march distant. By this route the Chinese frequently travel, and it affords a very satisfactory proof that intercourse may be held direct with China without the necessity of following the circuitous route by Mogaung. Among the several races of people inhabiting the valleys through which the principal rivers flow, the Khantis or Khumptis hold a very conspicuous rank. They are represented as a fine, brave and hardy race of men, and are held in great apprehension by the Burmahs, who, about three years ago, attempted to raise revenue amongst them. The force detached on this duty, however, met with such determined resistance, that it was compelled to return, and no subsequent attempt has been made on their independence. They are in constant communication with the Khunungs, a wild tribe inhabiting the mountains to the north and east, from whom they procure silver and iron. “The former is found in a mine, said to be situated on the northern side of the mountains, to the north-east of Khanti.” All the information Captain Hannay could obtain led him to suppose that this mine was worked by people subject to China, and from the description given, he thinks they are Lamas, or people of Thibet. The part of the Chinese territories north-east of Khanti is known at Hukong by the name of Mungfan, and the Khantis have no communication with it but through the khunungs.

From Meingkhwon Captain Hannay obtained a view of the hill near which lie the sources of the Uru river, one of the principal affluents of the Ningthi or Khyendwen: it bore south 35° west from Meingkhwon, and was about 25 miles distant. It is in the

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6 Original footnote: In the second volume of Du Halde’s “China,” p. 385, the Pere Regis thus describes the tribe by which this tract of country is inhabited, and its geographical site:—“The most powerful among the Tartar Lamas are those called by the Chinese Moongfan, who possess a wide territory in Thibet, north of Li-kyang-lu-fu, between the rivers Kincha-kyang and Vu-lyanglio. This country was ceded to them by Usanghey (whom the Manchews made king of Yunan) to engage them in his interest.”--R.B.P.
vicinity of this spot that the most celebrated mines of serpentine are situated, and their position is thus described by Captain Hannay.

“A line drawn from Mogaung in a direction of N. 55 W. and another from Meingkhwon N. 25 W. will give the position of the serpentine mine district. The Chinese frequently proceed to the mines by water for two days' journey up the Mogaung river, to a village called Kammein, at which place a small stream, called Engdan-khyoung, falls into the Mogaung river. From thence a road leads along the Engdan-khyoung to a lake several miles in circumference, called Engdan Gryi, and to the north of this lake, eight or nine miles distant, are the serpentine mines, the tract of country in which the serpentine is found extending 18 or 20 miles.” There is, however, another more direct route from Earn Mein which runs in a north-westerly direction. The whole tract of country is hilly, and several hot and salt springs are reported to exist near the Engdan Gryi lake, which is said to cover what was once the site of a large Shan town called Tumansye. The natives affirm that it was destroyed by an earthquake, and from the description given of a hill in the vicinity, the catastrophe may have been produced by the immediate agency of volcanic action.

On the 21st of March Captain Hannay visited the amber mines, and his description is the first that has ever been given of the locality from whence the Burmans obtained this mineral.

“We set out at 8 o'clock,” he says, “in the morning, and returned at 2 P.M. To the foot of the hills the direction is about south 25 west, and the distance three miles, the last mile being through a thick grass jungle, after which there is an ascent of one hundred feet, where there is a sort of temple, at which the natives, on visiting the mines, make offerings to the ngats or spirits. About a hundred yards from this place the marks of pits, where amber had been formerly dug for, are visible; but this side of the hill is now deserted, and we proceeded three miles further on to the place where the people are now employed in digging, and where the amber is most plentiful. The last three miles of our road led through a dense small tree jungle, and the pits and holes were so numerous that it was with difficulty we got on. The whole tract is a succession of small hillocks, the highest of which rise abruptly to the height of 50 feet, and amongst various shrubs which cover these hillocks, the tea plant is very plentiful. The soil throughout is a reddish and yellow-coloured clay, and the earth in those pits, which had been for some time exposed to the air had a smell of coal tar, whilst in those which had been recently opened the soil had a fine aromatic smell. The pits vary from 6 to 15 feet in depth, being, generally speaking, three feet square, and the soil is so stiff that it does not require propping up.”
“I have no doubt,” Captain Hannay adds, “that my being accompanied by several Burmese officers caused the people to secrete all the good amber they had found, for although they were at work in ten pits, I did not see a piece of amber worth having. The people employed in digging were a few Singfos from the borders of China and of this valley. On making inquiry regarding the cause of the alleged scarcity of amber, I was told that want of people to dig for it was the principal cause, but I should think the inefficiency of the tools they use was the most plausible reason, their only implements being a bamboo sharpened at one end, and a small wooden shovel.”

“The most favorable spots for digging are on such spaces on the sides of the small hillocks as are free from jungle, and I am told that the deeper the pits are dug, the finer the amber; and that that kind which is of a bright pale yellow, is only got at the depth of 40 feet under ground.”

A few days subsequent to this examination of the amber mines, Captain Hannay visited the Numtunaee or Ehyendwen, which flows through the valley about five miles north of Meingkhwon in this part of its course, and at this season of the year the stream, as might have been anticipated, is small, but in the rains Captain Hannay estimates that its breadth must be 300 yards from bank to bank, and it is navigable throughout the year for large canoes. An island in the centre of the bed was covered with the skeletons of large fish, which had been destroyed by the poisonous quality of the fallen leaves of overhanging trees; the natives eat the fish so killed with impunity.

After waiting several days at Meingkhwon in anticipation of the return of some messengers who had been sent into Assam, and suffering extreme inconvenience from the difficulty of procuring adequate supplies for the force, the Myowun began seriously to think of returning to Mogaung. All expectation of prosecuting the journey into Assam had been relinquished, and the Dupha Gaum having voluntarily come into the camp, was received by the Burman governor with a civility and distinction extorted by his apprehension of the numerous Singfos ready to support their redoubtable Chieftain, whose influence is said to extend to the frontiers of China. On the 1st of April the ceremony was performed of swearing in the different Tsobuas (tributary Chiefs) to keep the peace, which is thus described by Captain Hannay:

“The ceremony commenced by killing a buffalo, which was effected with several strokes of a mallet, and the flesh of the animal was cut up to be cooked for the occasion. Each Tsobua then presented his sword and spear to the spirits of the three brother Tsobuas of Mogaung, who are supposed to accompany the governor of the above-named place, and to inhabit three small huts, which are erected on the edge of the camp. Offerings of rice, meat, &c., were made to these ngats or spirits, and on this being done each person concerned in taking the oath received a small portion of...
rice in his hand, and in a kneeling posture, with his hands clasped above his head, heard the oaths read both in the Shan and Burmese languages. After this the paper on which the oaths were written was burned to ashes and mixed with water, when a cup full of the mixture was given to each of the Tsohuas to drink, who before doing so repeated an assurance that they would keep the oath, and the ceremony was concluded by the Chiefs all sitting down together and eating out of the same dish.” The Chieftains to whom this oath of forbearance was administered were the Thogyee of Meingkhwon, a Shan, the Dupha Gaum, a Tesan Singfo, the Panwah Tsohua, a Laphae Singfo, the Situngyen Gaum, and Wing Kong Moung, Mirip Singfos, and Tare-poung-moung, a Tesan Singfo, all of whom by this act virtually acknowledged the supremacy of the Burman authorities and their own subjection to the kingdom of Ava.

The new governor having succeeded by threats and the practice of every art of extortion in raising as large a sum as it was possible to collect from the inhabitants of the valley and surrounding hills, announced his intention of returning to Mogaung, and on the 5th of April no intelligence having been received from Assam, Captain Hannay left Mingkhwon on his return to Ava, with a very favorable impression of the Singfos he had seen, who appear to possess great capabilities of improvement, and whose worst qualities are represented as the natural result of the oppressive system of government under, which they live. One of their Chieftains, in conversation with Captain Hannay, furnished a clue to the estimation in which they held the paramount authorities around them by the following remark:— “The British,” he said, “are honorable, and so are the Chinese. Among the Burmans you might possibly find one in a hundred who, if well paid, would do justice to those under him. The Shans of Mogaung,” he added, “are the dogs of the Burmans, and the Assamese are worse than either, being the most dangerous back-biting race in existence.”

On the 12th of April Captain Hannay reached Mogaung, and some boats arriving shortly afterwards from the serpentine mines, he availed himself of so favorable an opportunity of acquiring some additional information regarding that interesting locality. He found the boats laden with masses of the stone so large as to require three men to lift them. The owners of the boats were respectable Chinese Mussalmans, who were extremely civil, and readily answered all the questions put to them by Captain Hannay, who learnt “that, although the greater number of Chinese come by the route of Somta and Tali, still they are only the poorer classes who do so; the wealthier people come by Bamo, which is both the safest and the best route. The total number of Chinese and Chinese Shans who have this year visited the mines is 480.”
“I have made every inquiry,” adds Captain Hannay, “regarding the duties levied on these people, both on their arrival here and on their purchasing the serpentine, and I am inclined to think that there is not much regularity in. the taxes, a great deal depending on the value of the presents made to the headman, formerly the Chinese were not allowed to go to the mines, but I understand the following is now the system carried on in this business.

“At particular seasons of the year there are about 1,000 men employed in digging for serpentine; they are Burmahs, Shans, Chinese Shans, and Singfos. These people each pay a quarter of a tical a month for being allowed to dig at the mines, and the produce of their labour is considered their own.

“The Chinese who come for the serpentine, on their arrival at Mogaung, each pay a tax of from 1 ½ to 2 ½ ticals of silver for permission to proceed to the mines, and 1 ½ ticals a month during their stay there. Another duty is levied on the boats or ponies employed in carrying away the serpentine, but this tax varies according to circumstances, and on the return of the Chinese to Mogaung, the serpentine is appraised and a tax of 10 per cent. taken on its value. The last duty levied is a quarter of a tical from every individual on his arrival at the village of Tapo, and there the Chinese deliver up all the certificates they have had, granting them permission to proceed to the mines.”

On the 9th of April no intelligence having been received of the messengers sent into Assam, Captain Hannay determined to return to Ava, and embarking on a small boat, he reached Bamo in eight days and arrived at Ava on the 1st of May. The time occupied in returning from Meingkhwon to Ava was only eighteen days, while the journey to that frontier post was not completed in less than forty-six of actual travelling—a very striking proof of the extreme difficulty of estimating the distance between remote points, by the number of days occupied in passing from one to the other, unless the circumstances under which the journey was made are particularly described.

That portion of the route between Meingkhwon and Beesa in Assam which Captain Hannay was prevented visiting, will probably in a short time be as well known as the territory he has already so successfully explored, and the researches in which he is now engaged, extending from Beesa in Assam to Meingkhwon in the Hukong valley, will complete the examination of a line of country not surpassed in interest by any which our existing relations with the empire of Ava have afforded us an opportunity of visiting. His labours have filled the void necessarily left in the researches of Wilcox, Burlton, and Bedford, and have greatly contributed to dispel the doubt and uncertainty which they had not the opportunity of removing. While the
officers of the Bengal presidency have been thus successfully engaged in geographical inquiries on the north of Ava, the south and western districts have been explored with equal zeal and intelligence by those of the Madras presidency; and the spirit of honorable competition, which has already stimulated the researches of Drs. Richardson and Bayfield, and Lieutenant MacLeod, with such marked advantage, bids fair in a comparatively short time to render the whole empire of Ava better known than the most sanguine could have ventured to anticipate. Did the results of such journeys and investigations tend only to an increase of our geographical knowledge, they would even then be most valuable; but to suppose that the consequences of this intercourse between intelligence and ignorance are so limited, is to take a most inadequate view of the subject. The confidence inspired by the visits and conduct of a single individual has already opened a communication between Yunan and Maulmein, and the caravans of China have commenced their annual visits to the British settlements on the coast. The journey of Captain Hannay will in all probability lead to a similar result between Assam and the northern districts of Yunan, and the time may not be very distant when British merchants located at Bamo will, by their superior energy and resources, extend its now restricted trade to surrounding countries, and pave the way for ameliorating the condition and enlightening the ignorance of their numerous inhabitants.

7 Original margin note: Dr. Richardson of Madras.
**Editor’s note:**

This notice was originally published as “Diary of a Hill-Trip on the Borders of Arracan. By Lieutenant T. H. Lewis” in *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* 11 (1867): 52.

M.W.C.

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**Brief Notice on T. H. Lewin’s Visit to the Arakan Hills in 1865-1866**

THIS paper consisted of extracts from a report, by the author, of a hazardous journey he and his party had recently performed, in the course of their police duty, amongst the wild hill-tribes of the borders of Bengal, Arracan, and Burmah. The diary commences on the 15th November, 1865, and terminates with the arrival of the author at Chittagong on the 11th February, 1866, after a narrow-escape from a hostile party of the Shindoo tribe, who forced them to take refuge for two nights in the jungle.

MR. CRAWFURD explained that this paper was a portion of the diary of one of a number of officers called “Superintendents of Police” on the eastern frontiers of Bengal, where the two Eastern types of people, the Hindoo and the Mongolian, meet. Lieutenant Lewin was engaged in this duty, and towards the conclusion of the diary gave an interesting account of his adventurous attempt to penetrate the territory of these wild tribes. Between Burmah Proper and Pegu lies a district peopled by the Arracanese and a number of other tribes, all speaking different, languages. In attempting to penetrate into the country, Lieutenant Lewin and Lieutenant Monro and their party were surrounded and pursued, and they saved their lives with the utmost difficulty and with the loss of all their property.

The President, in expressing the thanks of the Society for this communication, said Lieutenant Lewin had displayed in this journey that gallantry common to British explorers, of which they were much accustomed to hear in the rooms of the Geographical Society.