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CHANGE IN THE LANDSCAPE
OF FIRST MILLENIUM AD MYANMAR

Elizabeth Moore & U Win Maung (Tampawaddy)

‘The pond disappears when the water is gone’

MAN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Environmental change was as much part of the ancient landscape as it is of the present. The landscape, however, is
often described as a static ‘other’ beneath our feet rather than the world which is all around us. In cataloging the
rivers and streams where sites and artefacts of first millennium AD Myanmar are located, we draw attention in this
paper to the constant alteration to both built and natural elements. Our understanding of these sites and the cul-
tures from which they emerged is distorted, for by and large only a small portion of the country’s river system has
been systematically surveyed. Nonetheless, eloquent testimony of human response to environmental inconstancy
remains in most regions of Myanmar.

Traces of this relationship can be seen in the ‘archaeological scars’ which are part of today’s landscape. Aung Myint, who coined this term, likened it to the process of scar tissue forming over to a deep cut when large
quantities of soil are displaced adjacent to natural and manmade features such as in-gyi or seasonal lakes and walls
made of earth, laterite and brick. We refer often to such features, but also to smaller signs, from stone implements
to terracotta urns and tiles. After an overview of the multiple water networks along which sites and artefacts have
been recorded, we detail a range of changes, beginning in Lower Myanmar and ending at Tagaung. We devote the
final section of the paper to this site, to highlight the use of the natural setting as well as the fresh scope offered by
artefacts for understanding patterns of interaction during the first millennium AD.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION

Much of the Myanmar landmass drains into the Ayeyarwaddy basin. The Ayeyarwaddy and tributaries and other
river systems have in most cases formed north-south valleys between similarly oriented ranges. Archaeological
exploration, however, has focused on a few major sites along the Middle Ayeyarwaddy recorded in traditional
chronicles.

We map out not one, but fifteen valleys where first millennium AD artefacts have been recorded. We show
boundaries of these on the accompanying map but in reality, the rivers, valleys and the peoples that occupied them
all changed. The ecologies differ greatly, from the high rainfall of the southern coast to the arid central plains. Walls
mark certain locales where peoples settled but at others it is only an accumulation of artefacts near a current village
that identifies them as ‘ancient sites’. Although diverse, all are keyed off a body of water, be it a river (myit), stream
(chuang), seasonal lake or pond (in-gyi). As we pointed out above, this simple description does not imply con-
stancy. Quite the contrary, as water bodies fluctuated radically from rainy to dry months, shifting within the con-
fines of the local topography. Man’s impact on these features likewise varied in relation the many different groups

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1 A summary of the Table at the end of this paper was originally presented at the Burma Studies Conference, Singapore, July 2006 by T. Tan. Elizabeth Moore is with the Department of Art and Archaeology, SOAS, University of London; em4@soas.ac.uk. U Win Maung (Tampawaddy) is a traditional architect, Tampawaddy, Myanmar. The authors would like to thank the anonymous referees for their useful comments and suggestions.

2 Gell 1998: 17; Ingold 1995:40

3 Moore and Aung Myint 1991, 1993


5 One notable exception, and thus absent in our profile, is the Upper Thanlwin (Salween) where swift and deep gorges have cut into the Shan Plateau but no valley has formed.
moving across and settling in the valley regions. Thus the valley landscapes were fluid, defined conceptually and physically in relation to a host of changes, natural elements and population changes, many of which continue today.

Fig. 1 Map 1 Valley Civilizations of Myanmar

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<td>Upper Chindwin</td>
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<td>Lower Chindwin</td>
<td>21-23 x 94-95</td>
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<td>Mu</td>
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<td>Inle (Inlay) Lake</td>
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<td>Kissapanadi (Kaladan)</td>
<td>20-21 x 92-93</td>
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<td>Delta rivers and canals</td>
<td>16 x 96-97</td>
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<td>Extreme North (Me Hka and Mali Hka)</td>
<td>25-28 x 96-97</td>
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There are four major river valleys of Myanmar, all in need of further archaeological survey: the Ayeyarwaddy (1130 km), Chindwin (644 km), Thanlwin (241 km south of the Shan Plateau) and Sittaung (322 km). The principal middle-sized rivers are the Myittha, Mu, Samon, Dotawaddy (Myit Nge), Panlaung, Zawgyi and Dawei. Notable among the streams or Chaung are the Mone, Man, Yin, Pin, Hsin TeWa, Hsin The, Bilu, Shweli and Tapein. Many small streams enter like veins into larger rivers flowing from north to south, their courses determined by the local topography. These streams and many others not usually discussed in relation to first millennium AD walled centers played a significant economic role, the effects of which are visible in the varied artefacts from each region.

Chaung valleys benefited not only trade and agriculture but also exploitation of natural ore, stone and clays. A range of pottery and other artefacts, for instance, have been gathered along the Kyaw, Salin, Mon and Man of the Middle Ayeyarwaddy coming down from western Chin uplands to the Ayeyarwaddy. Further east, silver coins and terracotta roof tiles, to which we return below, have been recorded along the Belu (Bilu, Nampilu) Chaung. This stream drains Inle Lake to the south towards Loikaw with rice cultivation noted in the early 20th century both along some of the lake banks and with the aid of drainage channels, along the Belu. South of Loikaw, the stream fades away into the limestone formation where it is thought to drain into the Thanlwin. These areas, west of the Middle Ayeyarwaddy and Inle-Bilu on the east, illustrate the importance of seeing places such as Bagan and Magwe or Taunggyi and Loikaw as points within the more amorphous and changeable framework of side or chaung valleys.

In Lower Myanmar, river-coast interaction either replaced or accompanied stream-river relationships. Particularly in eastern Delta and mouth of the Sittaung and Thanlwin, the exploitation of laterite, a reddish-yellow precipitate, is a defining element in understanding manmade changes. This is particularly the case in the distribution of walled sites in the Sittaung-Thalwin region, one traditionally associated with the arrival of Buddhist teachings during the late first millennium BC. In this area, the effects of a variable moisture cycle, erosion and a high water table relative to the substratum have fostered a series of remnant lateritic rises several centimeters to a meter in depth. Laterite is soft when dug, but hardens on exposure to make a durable construction material. While comparable archaeological documentation is not yet available for Lower Myanmar, at Iron Age walled sites in Northeast Thailand, laterite has been highlighted in relation to the increasing availability of iron implements in the early centuries AD.

Around the walled site of Kyaikkatha, with silver coins and terracotta plaques dated to circa the 7th to 9th century AD, laterite areas on the northeast are regularly used for construction material. Digging has also unearthed a number of polished stone implements but no excavation of this part of the site has yet been carried out. The eastern wall of Kyaikkatha contains a series of undated laterite cells (Mu-hsoe-ma-gu) associated in local legend with a Khmer princess pining after the local prince who founded the site. To the southeast at Kaw Bein, near Kyaikto, underground networks of tunnels are seen, possibly part of earlier military fortifications. A similar ‘key-hole’ feature is found at the centre of the walled site of Zothoke, south of Kelasa Mountain. Trenches such as these would have perhaps provided cover for attacking troops and also during longer sieges, in a manner not unlike later times: after the British victory at Yangon in 1824, some ten kilometers of trenches were documented from Kemmedine to Pooyadown. With these few examples of the close relationship of archaeological sites to the terrain, we return below to our tabulation of the main features in the water drainage pattern.

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6 Dobby 1950: 156
7 Scott 1901: 385, Stargardt 1990:45
8 San Win 1986
9 Higham and Thosarat 1998: 135
10 Charney 2004: 98; San Win has recorded further tunnels at Natkyizeik (Bawgabangu, Khalun, Muppalin) circa 3.2km north of Kyaikkatha; Hpaya-tataung (Kyaik-lane); Kawkadut (Zothoke) and Mayangon (Thaton) (Pers.comm. 04-06)
Fig. 2a-c Laterite cells Mu-hsoe-ma-gu, Kyaikkatha; Zothoke 'keyhole', Kaw Bein tunnels (right)
There are at least three significant regions in the southeast part of the central basin and the peninsula needing further study. First, in the Sittaung valley there is the Pyuu Chaung, Myo Chaung, Bago Myit and Ye Nwe Chaung. Second, along the Lower Thanlwin are the Belu Chaung and the junction of the Yun Salin Chaung and watercourses such as the Bilin River further south. The area includes Taungnoo south to Ye, with the southern coastal areas little explored. North of Ye, in the present day Mon State, is the first millennium AD walled site of Thaton. There are other first millennium AD walled settlements such as Winka and Ayetthema around Mt. Kelasa, Donwun to the east of the Bilin, and more sites in Mudon south of Mottama. In Tanintharyi Division, Neolithic tools and walled sites are found along the Dawei and Tanintharyi Rivers. Given the evidence for early occupation to the south near Krabi, exploration of the coastal caves is also merited.

All the water bodies in this region experience tremendous variation between the dry (November-April) and the rainy months (May-October). This includes rivers as well as the ponds 'that disappear when the water is gone' in the proverb cited at the start of this paper. Water levels change quickly during the monsoon periods, with regular warnings issued on sudden rises of 2-4 meters. The effect of this flood pattern can be seen in the meandering course of the rivers and in major alterations along rivers, streams and creeks.

Some of these are recent, with a major shift for example, along the Lower Sittaung in the early 20th century AD. In 1911, the Sittaung cut across a long bend northwest of Kyaikto to make a new channel. This brought erosion on the eastern Kyaikto area and additional sedimentation on the Bago side. Smaller river courses were also affected, so for example, just west of Kelasa Mountain at Winka great amounts of sand have been deposited in the Theh-phyuu-chaung, or 'white sand stream'. This has brought a combination of erosion and deposition to both banks of the outlet. As a result of changes such as these, the first millennium AD walled sites of Sittaung and Kyaikkath, for example, are now directly on the river and the Gulf of Muttama but Kelasa and Thaton are further inland than was probably the case two thousand years ago.

Fig 3a Map of the 1911 Sittaung change (After Chhibber 1933)

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11 San Win 2005
12 Chhibber 1933:32
13 San Win 1986
Change can also be seen further south of the Bilin River around walled sites such as Donwun, Mayangon and Hsinbyukyn near Thaton. In contrast to developments in the arid regions of Upper Myanmar, the focus in the south is control of excess water. For instance, the inauguration new Mayangon Sluice Gate, with 15 valves each measuring 1.8 by 3.6 metres will reclaim 10,000 acres of wetland.\textsuperscript{14} Documentation of these sites and others by San Win and his team has led to finds of a number of stone tools and rings as well as incised blackwares supporting a profile of Iron Age to mid-first millennium AD habitation in the lowlands lying between Thaton and the Bilin egress into the Gulf of Muttama.\textsuperscript{15} The meandering of not only the river but smaller west flowing canals characterizes this low ‘no-man’s land’. Thaton faces the coast on the west but on the east it butts against the Martaban Range along a fault line stretching south past Zingyaik peak to Paung. The terrain contrast in this region was made stronger during the colonial period with the construction of the railway along this edge running past Thaton seen on the map below.

\textsuperscript{14} New Light of Myanmar, 29.05.06

\textsuperscript{15} The wave-like and criss-cross design on the pottery is similar to pieces from Sanpannagon (16.15n x 97.20e) some 20km southwest of Thaton (San Win 1986: 167, 182, fig 15). In Thailand, similar sherds are seen at Ban Ku Muang, Amphoe Inburi, Changwat Singburi (Indrawooth 1985: 53, figs 17-21). The blackware has been noted at Taungthaman as well as sites in Thailand (Stargardt 1990: 22-23).
Due to the danger of flood, and in Lower Myanmar inundation from the sea, first millennium AD sites are rarely located directly on the coast or on the banks of major rivers or streams. Smaller and more easily controlled water-courses or in-āing, a range of ponds and lakes made suitable for fishing by putting up weirs, and where damming and bailing out of water is regularly carried out, were commonly tapped. Sites such as Taungthaman-īn on the

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16 Five rings or sections of rings, four made from slate and one from a fine-grained quartzite were found. In addition, more than a hundred stone tools were recorded including adze/axes, scrapers and sickles made from fine-grained and epidote quartzite, slate, microgranite, sandstone (greywackes), fine-grained sandstone, indurated mudstone, siltstone and rhyolite porphyry (Courtesy U San Win 04.06, Moore and San Win 2007).
northern tip of the Samon exploited these locales at least as early as the Neolithic, with expanded cultivation on its shores not only increasing agricultural surplus but as has been noted elsewhere in Southeast Asia, attracting a host of new insects, birds and small mammals to the area.\textsuperscript{17}

**SAMON: DESICCATION AND RESOURCES**

A different pattern of environmental change, one of desiccation rather than water control is seen along the Samon valley due north of the Sittaung. The Samon is short (161 km) and unlike other rivers, flows from south to north. The region is sparsely settled with villages along small streams flowing down from the west into the river, and others aligned along the ore-rich foothills of the Shan Plateau. From the late 1970's, Maung Maung Tin (Mahaweiza) began to study the Samon region to the south of Mandalay. This included the townships of Kyaukse, Thazi, Pyawbwe, Yamethin and many others forming a line along the Samon at the foot of the Shan Plateau.

Figure 5 Samon Valley site map

\textsuperscript{17} Higham 1998:67
Kyaukse, on the northeast edge of the Samon valley, occupies a prime place in Myanmar history as a centre of 9th to 13th century AD Bagan rice production. Despite the general presumption that cultivation in this area supported first millennium AD walled sites, little 20th century AD archaeological investigation was conducted on the region’s prehistoric cultivation. A few bronze celts had been collected from the Shan Plateau by Morris and others in the colonial period. Although Aung Thaw did support prehistoric excavations at Taungthaman and Shwezayan, work south of Mandalay in the Samon was limited to excavations at Badi-gon near Beinnaka, mentioned again below. In the late 1970’s, Maung Maung Tin began to follow up reports of new finds and a picture of the ‘Samon valley’ civilization emerged. Among the artefacts were a number not recorded before, such as kye doke or bronze packets, a variety of bronze axes and vessels, and a range of bronze ornaments thought to have been used on coffins, including ’mother-goddess’ figures and floral ornaments. The high-copper, and in some instances with a measurable silver content, of the few bronzes that have been analyzed indicates a range of trade contacts oriented towards the mineral resources of the north and northeast along the edge of the Shan Plateau.

Fig 6a-b Drawing of ‘Mother-goddess’ from Nyaungyan (80 cm) and Kye doke (circa 6 cm) from Shaw Bin; Drawing and artefacts, Win Maung (Tampawaddy) collection

The Samon is arid today, with new irrigation projects over the last twenty years beginning to counter the 20th century desiccation and subsequent pattern of crop failure. The construction related to these projects and subsequent excavations have brought to light varied bronze and iron artifacts in a region seemingly ill-suited to support such prosperity. Many major first millennium AD cultures, however, have arisen in apparently marginal ecological niches, with the main explanation centering on resource control. Water excess is generally more difficult to harness than too little water, with an area’s other advantages often more than compensating for a dearth of water. These pluses include several factors where the Samon scores well - proximity to trade routes and major ore sources plus small-scale localized resources. On the first, the Samon is adjacent to major routes leading to the Shan Plateau and Yunnan on the east and the Chindwin and regions beyond on the west. These offered trading opportunities and ores. Among the small-scale resources, semi-precious stones are foremost, with one of the most attractive objects of

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18 E.g. Morris 1933
19 Win Maung 2003.
20 Pautreau et al. 2005, 2006
the Samon culture being highly polished beads made of carnelian, fossil wood, agate and other stones. Glass making also appears to have been abundant, with beads, discs and rings recorded. In the late 1970’s, Aung Myint’s work with aerial photos and his discovery of Maingmaw unfortunately also prompted bead digging in the area. Sadly, ‘bead-fever’ is still adding to the non-systematic excavation of many grave sites. Since 2001, however, a French team working on cooperation with the Department of Archaeology has carried out excavations at Hnaw Kan, Ywa Htin Kon, Myo Hla, Ohn Min and Hta Ta Pin. Other survey and excavations monitored by the Department of Archaeology and interested scholars have somewhat diminished the looters but given the growing prosperity of the Samon and the richness of the finds, more research is needed.

The most significant of the Samon centers, where one site is called ‘Badi-gon’ or ‘bead mound’, may have been around Beinnaka, in Pyawbwe Township, Mandalay Division. Chronicles state that the name Beinnaka is derived from the last king of Tagaung, a lineage of mythical origins tied into the rise of Sriksetra and then Bagan. Survey and excavation around Beinnaka, however, has yielded not only proto-historic and Bagan period artefacts but also an earlier wall along with stone and bronze implements. There are more than 60 villages forming a radial array around Beinnaka with a similar record of habitation. All are particularly rich in bronze-iron artefacts and in many cases the silver coins and other artefacts associated with first millennium Pyu peoples. At Wadi, a circular walled site, silver coins, finger-marked bricks and elephant beads have recorded, with the nearby village of Payagyi in recent years having been a centre for the manufacture of ‘Chin beads’ made from the abundant fossil wood in the area.

Sites of other periods are also seen in the Samon, the most well known being the 11 Ledwin or ricefields of Kyaukse (A to K). One of the authors has additionally documented fifteen ‘Fort Wall City Sites’ (L to Z) where the wall at least appears to date to the post-Bagan era. In contrast to the clustering of Samon bronze-iron sites in the southern part of the valley, the 11 Ledwin are in the northern part of the Samon, along the Panlaung and Zawgyi. These two rivers run parallel to the Samon but flow down from the Shan foothills. To the north of the Zawgyi is the Myit Nge (Dotawaddy), coming down from the Yunnan border at Muse to enter the Ayeyarwaddy east of Mandalay. This juncture marks a new array of valleys and sites. Some, such as Halin (Hanlin), also have yielded abundant bronze-iron implements like those of the Samon. Artefacts in others, however, such as the Upper Ayeyarwaddy Valleys and the Chindwin, are distinct.

CHINDWIN VALLEY CULTURES

The Tanaing-kha and many other streams enter into the upper reaches of the Chindwin (Than La Waddy) valley. This valley as a whole can be divided into two sectors of circa 241 km: the Uru Chaung from Upper Homalin to Kalehwa, and the Myittha River to the junction with the Ayeyarwaddy. Included in this region are Myingyan and Pakkokku. Given the importance of the Chindwin and the abundant Neolithic and Bronze Age artefacts from areas such as Nyaungggan, Budalin in the Lower Chindwin, this area is a priority for further research. Opposite Budalin, on the other bank of the Chindwin, Salingyi area has a rich variety of rock and ore sources. Volcanic craters on both

21 Moore and Aung Myint 1993
22 Pautreau et al. 2006
23 Win Maung 2001
24 The relationship of the Samon and Pyu-associated sites remains an open question. Elizabeth Moore tends towards a pattern of disruption and possibly new intrusive elements, while Bob Hudson (2004) has hypothesised that the Samon sites were the precursor region for the Pyu cities. Win Maung (Tampawaddy) has aptly noted that until further excavation has been carried out that it is like the blind men feeling the elephant – all suggestions may be possible.
25 As we indicate in brackets, some of these appear to be fortresses linked to other sites: Myin-saing (14th to 15th century AD), Hpwar-bet-san (Pinle fort), Myaung-hla (Pinle fort), Pauk-myaing (Pinle-Wadi fort), Pyin Si (Pinle fort), Saw Hla (Ywa Khaing Gyi) (Pinle fort), In-gan (Pinle fort), Sagara (Anawrahta 11th century AD), Hlaing Det (Maingmaw fortress), Nyaungyan Magyi (Anawrahta 11th century AD), Yin-daw (Beinnaka fort), Yanaung (Beinnaka fort), Wadi II (Beinnaka fort), Yamethin (Beinnaka fort) and Wadi (Payagyi).
banks offered additional sources of stone and copper. Megalithic remains are abundant in the Lower Chindwin, with studies of Chin use of large stones in village founding pointing to the potential of ethno-archaeological research in this area.\textsuperscript{27} To the east of the Chindwin, running parallel to it and the Ayeyarwaddy, is the Mu valley stretching from Three Mountains (Taung Thone Lone) to just south of Halin. As we noted earlier, the rich bronze-iron finds we discussed in relation to the Samon are also abundant at Halin. Recent excavations south of the Shwegyigyi site have yielded cultural deposits of more than nine metres, with finds seen as diagnostic of both the Samon and Chindwin bronzes. In the map of Ancient Settlement Circles below, it can be seen that the conjectured domain of Halin extends from the Mu to the Ayeyarwaddy.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{27} Sakhong 2003:25

\textsuperscript{28} Win Maung (Tampawaddy) based on a manuscript of the Myo ywa nehbeh thamaing.
UPPER AYEYARWADDY VALLEYS

The course of the Ayeyarwaddy can be divided into three sectors, each *circa* 322 km in length. The Upper Ayeyarwaddy (*Anya*) starts at the Mehkha and Malika River junction north of Myitkina and ends in Letpandan Township, going from Myitsone to Mandalay. Streams (*Chaung*) and rivers (*Myit*) meriting particular archaeological attention along the Upper Ayeyarwaddy include the Moe Kaung Chaung, Tapein Myit, Shweli Myit and Chaung Ma Kyi Chaung (Mattaya). For example, bronze-iron age artefacts including Heger I type bronze drums are found at the villages of Hsin Bo, Hti Kyaing, Yan Bo, Ma Bein, Tagaung and Mattaya. These are described by Calo’ as being within the ‘Dian sphere of influence’, where the earliest bronzes date to *circa* 700 BC but the most well known are *circa* 400 BC to 100 AD. In addition, many ‘later’ groups not yet documented archaeologically inhabit the Upper Myanmar Mehkha-Malikha valleys. These include Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples such as Marhu, Azi, Lashi, Rawan and Phun. The many fluctuating groups this mixture implies are sketched out the Ancient Settlement Circles map.

To the east of the Upper Ayeyarwaddy is Muse Township just west of the Thanwlin where it crosses the border with China. There are many other rivers and streams in this area, notably the Shweli coming from southern Yunnan down to Bhamo. In Northern Shan State, given the absence of a valley, there is a break until the many streams come together at the Dotawaddy (*Myit Nge*) area and down to the Ayeyarwaddy around Mandalay. To the southeast is Inle Lake, of interest both for its ancient history and the mixture of ‘ethnic groups’ presently occupying the area. Aung Thwin has effectively argued that perceptions were more of place than ethnicity but such perceptions persist particularly in relation to first millennium AD ‘groups’ such as the Pyu, Mon, Thet and Khadu. To this geographical orientation can be added the Kanyan and Sakyaw, groups that Luce linked to Karen languagespeaking peoples but whose names in the *Za-bu-kon-cha* simply refer to their dwelling along the bank and along the water.

The Middle Ayeyarwaddy begins at Mandalay and ends south of Magwe at the Yin valley near Beikthano. There are eight notable streams along this sector: Hsindehwa Chaung, Chaung Ma Kyi Chaung, Yaw and Kyaw Chaung, Salin Chaung, Mon Chaung, Man Chaung, Pin Chaung and Yin Chaung. In the northern part of the Middle Ayeyarwaddy, documentation is needed of the streams around the Popa crater where the topography has been greatly altered. Finds further south along this sector include those at Beikthano (Vishnu), as well as abundant stone, bronze, iron artefacts. The Lower Ayeyarwaddy (*Khe*) begins from the Yin and goes south to near the town of Letpandan. There are four major streams flowing into this sector: Pani Chaung, Mindon Chaung, Bwet Chaung and Nawin Chaung. The region includes Srikssetra and continuous occupation at sites near Hsin-baung-veh to Letpan village. While there has been excavation at Bagan and the walled sites associated with presumed Pyu-speaking peoples, there are also many sites with bronze-iron artefacts needing study.

We turn in the second half of this paper to a more detailed look at the continual need for change evident in the first millennium AD walled sites of the Upper Ayeyarwaddy. After considering the question of when the walled perimeters were ‘finished’, and the varied defensive roles the walls may have filled, we return to the environment in surveying the breadth of manmade interactions in the landscape of Tagaung.

WALLS: RESPONDING TO CHANGE

At the first millennium AD walled sites of Tagaung, Halin, Pinle (Maingmaw), Beikthano and Srikssetra, artefacts from non-walled contexts parallel those excavated within the walls. The clear demarcation sometimes inferred from the walled enclosures is additionally blurred by structures built immediately inside and outside the walls. The placement and various forms of these suggest that apparently ‘complete’ enclosures in fact record on-going construction. The buildings and walls reflect constant efforts to cope with the change as trees were felled, rains failed, ponds dried up, and rivers and streams shifted course. This profile differs from those put forward for Srikssetra with, for instance, completion of concentric gravity-controlled water circulation. If indeed the roughly circular pattern of the present day watercourses was all in place some 1500 years ago, one rationale suggested was to main-

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29 Calo’ 2007

30 Aung Thwin 2005

31 U Win Maung (Tampawaddy) from *Za-bu-kon-cha* manuscript
tain physical links with ancestral remains.32 The fractured lines of inheritance noted by Tun Aung Chain in the royal stone urn inscriptions from Sriksetra, however, indicate that new lineages appeared often.33 Perhaps more data will one day verify a symbolic wheel, but at present, the proposal self-admittedly suggests a model that may or may not have been distinguished by the inhabitants of Sriksetra. Where it is most useful, however, is in highlighting the micro-topography of the site and in considering alternative explanations for land use not sitting easily within empirical framework of land use.

It is not only at Sriksetra where variable natural water courses are seen inside the walls, and in all cases, we cannot be certain that the present hydrology is that of earlier periods. For instance at Halin, if in reality the walls seen today were all in place, it is doubtful whether the Halin Chaung ran across the centre of the ancient city in the first millennium AD. In addition, the water flow of the surrounding area substantially changed with colonial-period canal constructions. At Beikthano, the Yanbe and Yin Chaung flanking the site on the north and south probably attracted Neolithic habitation, but the streams within its walls and the large in-gyi on its western flank show evidence of considerable and constant alteration. At Maingmaw today, the Nat Hlyeh Chaung runs through the centre of the site, and periodic survey of the site and surrounds have recorded extensive change even over the last thirty years.34

Fig.8a-b Plans of Sriksetra and Maingmaw (after U Aung Myint)

At Sriksetra as well, the advantages of settlement south of the Nawin Chaung and north of a series of in-gyi at the foot of an upland zone on the southwest probably prompted village-based cultivation long before walls began to be built. However, the narrow wall on the east of Sriksetra appears to have been erected as a quite separate undertaking, perhaps in response to changes in the large in-gyi bordering its eastern face.35 An additional and significant factor may have been warfare, with water bodies an important element in siege fortifications. Stockades, for instance, could only be built on the inner edge of a moat, with palisades and redoubts constructed to make use of rivers, moats and marshland. In the dry season, moats could be home to bamboo stakes and thorny bushes, the latter as effective as barbed wire.36 Daw Thin Gyi long ago highlighted the defensive character of Sriksetra’s multiple

32 Stargardt 2002: 154-156, 165
33 Tun Aung Chain 2003
34 Ito 2000
35 Stargardt 1990:86
36 Charney 2004:92
walls and forts. Although not all scholars concur, three walls and moats, some 30 metres in width have been noted on the south and west “where danger threatens over the low ridge”.\footnote{Aung Myint 1998: 67,68, Thin Gyi 1965}

Some walls were made of bricks, others were earthen ramparts or laterite blocks, and in Lower Myanmar, stone was also used. For example at Kelasa, a line of stone fortifications reaching from the village of Winka and up over the peak of Mya Thabeik has been recorded. This pattern continued in later centuries, with the walls of Bago at the end of the 17th century AD reportedly made of stacked, unmortared iron-stone walls some three metres in height.\footnote{Dijk 2004: 1,38 cited in Charney 2004: 79 ftn.17; San Win 2005. The sedimentary iron-stone has a lower iron content than haematite.} These structures were augmented with perishable materials, at times timber fortifications and at others formidable barriers created by thorny bushes and bamboo hedges. When combined, a barrier could be massive. For example, a Cham fortification with a six meter high brick base was surmounted by a three meter brick palisade and topped by wooden walls to a total of twenty-four meters.\footnote{Charney 2004: 80}

None of these defences of course remain standing at Halin, Sriksetra, Kyaikkatha or Winka but it is important to consider the dimensions that these may well have reached. In addition, all of these activities would have altered the local ecology, from felling of trees to providing new habitats with the planting of hedges. A similar nesting is seen at Bagan and Tagaung, both with seasonal cycles of cultivation and resource use of zones located east and south of the walled site.\footnote{E. g. Bagan’s reliance on Kyaukse, Popa, Tuyin Taung and Minbu and Tagaung’s on the low-lying land of the ‘Old Ayeyarwaddy’, Mogok, Thaung Hwet Taung, and cultivation areas to the south around Hsin Hynat village}

As these patterns continue today, dating completion of built features such as walls and dikes is as problematic as the cases we discussed above. In addition, the location of both Bagan and Tagaung on the Ayeyarwaddy can be related to wider patterns of regional exchange.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{tagaung_diagram}
\caption{Tagaung’s 9-quadrants (Scale in yards, conjectured layout by Win Maung (Tampawaddy))}
\end{figure}
Fig 9b sketch of Tagaung-Kyan Hynat topography (Scale in miles, after San Win 1997)
TAGAUNG

The lack of a western wall at Tagaung has been attributed to a number of factors. The most debated of these is a westward movement of the Ayeyarwaddy in the geologically recent past from the bed of the ‘Old Ayeyarwaddy’ east of the present site to that of the Meza Chaung. Working within this premise, one of the present authors has suggested that not only the location but also the layout may have conformed to a tradition that first millennium AD walled cities associated with Pyu-speaking groups had nine quadrants. There are today three walled areas at Tagaung: Wall 1 (19 hectares) around a low hillock on the north, Wall 2 (62 hectares) known as Anya Bagan and Wall 3 (204 hectares) which encloses the other two walls. All three, however, are missing the western wall. When the nine quadrants are plotted to form an oval-shaped city plan, site TG31, excavated in 2003-2004, falls in the northeast quadrant of the old city. As the finds from TG31 and Hsin Hynat to the south support our note above of links beyond Myanmar, in this case to Yunnan, we will return to TG31 and Hsin Hynat. First, however, we discuss Bagan and the natural resources of Tagaung that together with its location ensured continued patronage from its founding to the present.

Tagaung and Bagan are closer to the Ayeyarwaddy than Halin, Maingmaw, Waddi or Beikthano. While the west wall of both is currently the Ayeyarwaddy, each may once have been farther from the bank and the threat of flood. At Bagan, Daw Thin Gyi concluded from aerial photographs that the west wall has been gradually lost to the Ayeyarwaddy through erosion and flood. A jutting out of the river at the village of Myit Khe (‘lower portion’) north of Bagan also supports its gradual eastward shift. Beyond this, however, comparison weakens, for Bagan’s setting may have obviated the need for fortification on the immediate east while the ecology and location of Tagaung may have required it. The site’s strategic position on the Yunnan frontier is evident in the array of Tagaung artefacts attributed to its use by the 11th century AD Anawrahta as part of his east flank fortification. Ores may additionally explain Anawrahta’s interest in Tagaung, with silver continuing in use at Bagan for land and slave purchases. Tagaung afforded access to the silver mines of Bawdwin and Yadanatheingyi at Namtu in around Mogok. It is also via Mogok and the Shweli and Taping (Tabein) rising in the uplands that Tagaung linked to Yunnan via Muse and Bhamo. Other resources including jade, copper and iron were reachable by the Meza and Uru watercourses to the north and northwest.

Chit San Win 2004; Win Maung 2005

Drawn by Win Maung (Tampawaddy) based on accounts in the Myo ywa nebbeh thamaing

Chronicles date the founding of Bagan to Abhiraja prior to the time of the Buddha Gotama. Repeated excavations before the TG31 had yielded Bagan period artefacts, with evidence of earlier habitation restricted to surface finds. The TG31 excavations yielded material commonly attributed to the pre-Bagan (pre 9th century AD) period from stratigraphic contexts, 1.8 meters below a schoolyard ground level and perhaps at least three below the earlier mound reported by villagers. However, no radiocarbon dates were obtained. One result, from circa one meter below ground level at the site of the new museum, was associated with a burial urn and a gourd-shaped goglet. The AMS date (OZH 969) obtained was 1200 plus/minus 30 BP, which is 770-900 AD at 87.7% probability (OxCal). The test was carried out by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation and provided to the authors courtesy of Bob Hudson.

Sriksetra, linked in chronicles with Tagaung and Bagan, ranks next.

Thin Kyi 1965

Ernelle Berliet recently completed a field-check of thirty-three of the forts in Upper Myanmar, presented as Territorial planning in Burma during the Pagan period (1044-1287), the foundation of an empire, Euraseaa 11th International Conference, Bougon France, September 2006

As we noted above, this pattern is repeated further south with Samon-Halin access to and from Yunnan via the Dotawaddy (Dutthawaddy, Myit-Nge), a route that also provided access to copper and gold on the edge of the Shan Plateau.

Hudson 2004: 57, Figure 5, Resources and Distribution
Other watercourses are seen on the east, a critical area in our interpretation above of Tagaung’s ‘missing’ western wall.\(^50\) One is a series of remnant streams on low-lying land east of the walled area, all aligned east to west, linking the present and suggested past courses of the Ayeyarwaddy. Another is the site’s location on a fault-related linear sector of the Ayeyarwaddy bounded on the west by the Minwun Range (391m). Other elements are the prevalence of earthquakes, most recently in 2000 and 1989, and erosion and deposition along the river and feeder streams. Rainfall is also relatively high at Tagaung, some 1176 mm per annum versus 870 mm at nearby Halin. This in part relates to the higher elevation of Mogok whose timber, elephants and mineral resources were shipped down to jetties at Tagaung, Hsin Hynat just south of Tagaung and Kyan Hynat 30 km further south. Sedimentation along the Ayeyarwaddy may have affected preservation of the west wall, but also has had benefits, including gold washing.\(^51\) This practice is also seen at the sandbars around Ton Ngeh, 10 km north of Tagaung.\(^52\)

Tagaung additionally profited from the seasonal lakes (ingyi) and swamp lands located along the remnant streams east of the site. Each is used for particular crops, with fields varying from edible oils to rice and coriander. Winter rice or mayin is grown on the edges of shallow pools on the shelf between the Ayeyarwaddy and the Indaing forest on Thaung Hwet Taung (‘the mountain of the 10,000 hidden’) to the southeast.\(^53\) Fowl such as pheasants, partridge, toucans, pelicans and Saurus cranes live around in-gyi and the tall swamp grass areas, while numerous fish are found in the in-gyi and Telawa Chaung bordering the walled site on the north. Tigers, elephants, banteng (Saing) and gaur were once common along the Shweli, with various types of deer around Tagaung.\(^54\) One reason the seasonal pools and lakes are vital is that the water flowing down from Thaung Hwet Taung is high in sulphur and not potable. Other natural resources are seen on the mountain to the northeast, the Tagaung Taung or In-net (‘black-in’). These include some mined at present, such as manganese, source of the black waters, and others exploited in the past, notably Kyauk Sein a green chalcedony used for polished stone beads.

Fig. 10a-c Tagaung pit TG31 (Courtesy Chit San Win)

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\(^{50}\) Ashin Pandita (U Min Han), pers. comm. 30.03.06

\(^{51}\) Tun Aung Chain 2005:9

\(^{52}\) Win Maung (Tampawaddy) has documented three stone walls around the Ton Ngeh hill, the purported founding site of the legendary Abhiraja. During survey at Ton Ngeh, San Win recorded one section of a ceremonial stone ring of a type found at Halin. The reconstructed ring would have measured *circa* 14 cm in diameter with an inner hole of 5 cm and 1 cm thick on the inner rim. The find is of note in that to date, many of the bronze artefacts such as *kye doke* or ‘bronze packets’ that are typical in the Samon-Halin sphere have not been recovered at Tagaung. However, ongoing excavation at Tagaung may change this profile (San Win 1997).

\(^{53}\) Scott 1961 (Reprint): 51. The traditional location where the blacksmith Maung Tin Deh and his sister were burned by the king of Tagaung, the northwest part of Thaung Hwet Taung, is perhaps linked to the rich iron resources of this mountain.

Fig. 10b Pot 14 cluster TG31 (Courtesy Chit San Win)

Fig. 10c TG31 layers (Courtesy Chit San Win)
Fig. 11a-c Crescent and round tiles, Hsin Hynat SNK1 (Courtesy Chit San Win)
STAMPED POTS, URNS AND ROOF TILES

The TG31 excavations mentioned earlier recorded finger-marked bricks under the lowest of three levels of urns and pots. Over eighty vessels were recorded, arranged in clusters, generally with several simple egg-shaped urns with lids surrounded by other pottery. All the clusters are slightly different, but the contents of only three vessels checked. One of these, pot 14, contained a complete skeleton and had a bronze lid below the terracotta one. Twenty-five vessels were stamped in single or double rows on the shoulder, motifs including floral and geometric designs as well as zoomorphic depictions such as birds and a human figure flanked by an elephant and a bull. Other finds were shells, copper and bronze bells, bracelets, rings, lids, swords and a spoon; iron bracelets, brackets and rivets; and gold and silver artefacts. There were also beads made of terracotta, bone and various semi-precious stones with drum and cylinder shapes.55

South of TG31 near the Shwezigon and Leh-myet-hna stupas within Wall 2, many votive tablets attributed to Anawrahta have been unearthed. A further group of fifty round tablets have been found, many 1.5 metres below ground level.56 The tablets are 4-6 cm in diameter, many with thumb prints on the reverse. All depict a single figure of the Buddha in Bhumisparsa mudra but are divided into three groups according to the surrounding motifs: tablets with an oval halo, takeh or throne back and up to eight stupas; tablets where the surround is filled with the gamon, an aromatic tuber of the ginger (Kaempferia) family known for its medicinal properties; and those with two small stupas and two enclosing lines, the outer marked by beindu dots.57

Fig.12a-c Votive tablets from Tagaung

Other stamped vessels similar to those from TG31, terracotta roof tiles and end-pieces and finger-marked bricks have been documented at Hsin Hnyat Kon, 3.5 km south of Tagaung’s outer wall.58 In 2000, the Department

55 Chit San Win 2005
56 Pandita Nanda (Tagaung), pers.comm. July 2006
57 Pandita Nanda (Tagaung) 2006; One tablet of the second type is illustrated in U Mya, dated to the 11th century AD (1960: Vol.1: p. 50, Pl. 67) although the in situ finds by Pandita Nanda, the image of the Buddha and the surrounding motifs may indicate an earlier date.
58 Chit San Win 2004. The name of the site literally means the place where the elephants are clamped. The Hsin Hynat (SNK1) and TG31 finds appear linked, although more excavation is needed to clarify this as SNK1 unearthed an aboveground structure and TG31 was below ground level.
of Archaeology carried out excavation of one of a number of mounds at Hsin Hynat (SNK1). An outer (14 metre square) and inner (6 meter square) brick structure was unearthed. The tiles, with textile impressions on the convex side, were of two types, tentatively called Type A and B by Win Maung (Tampawaddy). Type A tiles were slightly curved roughly quarter sections, while Type B tiles were semi-circular with a smaller diameter. There were likewise two types of end-pieces: crescent with a slightly curved top and round. The crescent-shaped pieces are circa 15-20 cm height and 21-26 cm width and 1-1.5 cm. They are divided into two sections by a central vertical band, each with a tri-lobed festoon in the middle. Each triangular side is bordered by a series of small raised dots, in many cases twenty-seven, totalling fifty-four. The circular end-pieces (circa 13-20 cm in diameter) have a deeply inset face into a rim (circa 1-3 cm wide). These are often thicker than the triangular pieces, circa 1-4.5 cm. They bear sun-like rays, usually 10-15, in one case with five thicker lotus shaped designs and ten narrower rays tipped with circular raised dots arrayed around a central raised circular spot.

The use of the tiles and end-pieces may have been similar to that seen at Tra-kieu and Go Cam, central Vietnam. The Tra-kieu pieces differ, some for instance, decorated with large faces. Southworth has compared these to examples from southern China, suggesting a 3rd century date for tiles with faces. The tiles found at Go Cam were of two types, with quarter-section slightly curved tiles thought to have been put with the concave side facing up across lateral roofing beams and the narrower, half-cylindrical tiles placed with the concave side down to cover the gaps between the square tiles below. The finds are interpreted by Southworth in the context of raids of the Qin Emperor, Qin Shi Haungdi against southern ‘barbarians’ in 221 BC. After the fall of the Qin in 206 BC, there was continued fluctuation between Chinese commanderies and local rule. Tribute missions from Myanmar to the Emperor Wu (140-86 BC) were long ago proposed by Luce, ones bringing bright pearls, vitreous objects and rare stones. Battles with the Chinese are traditionally thought to have been fought at Allakappa (Kosambi or locally Ywapugyi) sometimes located midway between Tagaung and Bagan. In 225 AD, the Wei general Chu-ko-liang is said to have had bronze drums made to place in “torrents along the path of the savages [of areas including Yunnan], arranging them in such a way that the water, as it fell, struck them at regular intervals. The barbarians, thinking, they heard the watch-drums of a camp, dared not to approach”. To what degree we can extrapolate accounts such as these, indeed if are accurate, can be queried, but as with Vietnam and the Han expansion into the Dian region, an analogous context is plausible for Tagaung.

A few other tiles have been noted elsewhere in Myanmar. For instance, crescent roof tiles have been found at Sriksetra near to Khin Mu Chon Kon where a terracotta tile with an equestrian figure had earlier been documented. This is similar to the Hsin Hynat pieces but rather than having a tri-lobed floral pan-sweh is filled with a curvilinear kanok or floral pattern. Additional roof tiles have been noted at Tayoke Myo on the northwest side of Inle Lake. Other first millennium finds near the lake are seen at Bodhithat, including finger-marked bricks, silver coins and quartz beads. All are surface finds, without the large numbers of tiles found at Hsin Hynat-Tagaung. The Department of Archaeology has documented sections of roofing tiles in the north part of Halin. It is not known whether these are the Tagaung curved type or a second, flatter type recorded in the upper layers of a sequence dating to the 9th to 14th century AD that have been excavated at Yon Hlut and Otein Taung at Bagan.
The Hsin Hnyat (SNK1) platform may have had a circular brick superstructure or alternatively, a wooden one with a terracotta roof. Based on 6th to 7th century AD corbelled brick structures with stepped roofs recorded in Cambodia, Win Maung (Tampawaddy) has suggested that the SNK1 structure may have borne a two-tiered central wooden structure of uncertain ritual affiliation supporting a terracotta roof with the decorated end tiles. Other options are suggested by early Han two-storey halls which could be built around an earth core, with walls in combination of timber, pounded earth or mud brick. The most common parallels made for the stupa-like buildings are to Taxila and Nagarjunakonda. Wooden structures also existed at Beikthano and Halin but these are rectangular halls and roof tiles were not documented. Beikthano's four radiocarbon dates come from the wooden pillars of two such buildings. Although an underlying structure was recorded at both sites, neither was fully excavated. At Halin a large rectangular hall also provided a radiocarbon date.

Aung Thaw called these ‘congregation building[s] for the performance of rituals connected with the secondary burial of urns’, while San Shwe uses ‘funeral homes’ and suggested that they may have been for ordination or for habitation. Stargardt has labelled this type of structure ‘pre-Buddhist’ based on the pillared form of the building, the placement of urns around the base of the pillars and the use of cremation burials in Iron Age contexts in Southeast Asia. At Nagarajunakonda and Amaravati, however, new Buddhist communities literally and figuratively built upon previous practice. It was thus customary to bury monks within stupa complexes and erect stupas for monks of the local community. One of the authors has elsewhere suggested – which may also be relevant for Tagaung - that the term ‘pre-Buddhist’ defines a separation that was perhaps not the case. However, the Chinese rather than Indian parallels for the architecture hint at varied links where the balance and chronology remains to be clarified.

In our view, Tagaung is best described as a string of sites along the Ayeyarwaddy, some of which are walled. The Tagaung region had ores and agricultural potential as well as abundant floral and faunal resources. As a port, the site and villages to the south were not only way stations for goods from other regions, but had a number of profitable local trade products. This natural setting is of particular importance in understanding complementary upland-lowland ecology that underlies Tagaung’s economic longevity and perhaps its place in local histories. More recent finds suggest multiple routes for the transmission of style in the wake of both political and religious change.

CONCLUSION

The precise date when the first walled communities were constructed in Myanmar remains open. Our aim here has not been to fix the moment but underline the process, for institutional settings and social forces - the ‘habitus’ - were in transition. The vital role of the landscape in this transformation is essential to see if we are to understand these changes. The process took place gradually, with parallel developments throughout the country. Migration was not only along the Ayeyarwaddy, but the Chindwin, Mu, Samon, Thanlwin and Sittaung. There is also every reason to think that the limestone caves of the eastern and southern regions were inhabited by at least the Neolithic. By the end of the first millennium BC and early centuries AD, one or another of the valley cultures came to dominate. We have highlighted the direct correspondence of these cultures to an unpredictable profile of rivers.
streams, creeks, ponds and lakes, for such changes constantly informed reinterpretation of social and religious structures.

From streams at Halin to the Ayeyarwaddy at Tagaung and the arid Samon valley, we stress the diverse ecological modifications that have affected archaeological interpretation. Other equally varied examples are found along the Ayeyarwaddy and Chindwin, the Mu, Samon, Myit Nge (Dotawaddy), Sittaung, Lower Thanlwin and Dawei rivers. The landscape was one where desiccated ponds, meandering streams and new river courses were a matter of course. The unpredictability was normal and corresponding amendments were made to walls, weir and stockades. Adjustments were never the same and were never completed. Rather than the world being an object of human interest, man dwelled in the world – a world not of homoeostatic equilibrium but an “active, perceptual engagement with components of the dwelt-in world, in the practical business of life.”

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<td>Kyaikthata; Kyauktan, Padagyi</td>
<td>Laterite sculptures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV</td>
<td>Extreme North (Me Hka and Mali Hka)</td>
<td>25-28 x 96-97</td>
<td>Moe kaung</td>
<td>Neolithic tools</td>
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<td>Beads, gold</td>
<td>Maru, Azi, Lashi, Rawan, Phun - later migrated tribes</td>
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Crucible of War: Burma and the Ming in the Tai Frontier Zone (1382-1454)\textsuperscript{77}

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Bangkok Post

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The dirty little secret is that for most of ‘Burmese’ history there was no state in any robust sense of the term. There were, instead small scale local chiefs, confederations of villages, warlords, bandits, multiple sovereigns contending … Might it be possible to imagine a history written systematically from this perspective – a kind of anarchist history…? (James Scott, 2000).

Historians write of a Tai state named Mong Mao existing during the Ming dynasty near the present-day Myanmar-Yunnan border. Ming military expeditions into Yunnan, first in the 1380s, then again in the 1440s, broke up this state, dispersed and atomized the power of its ruling elites, and put an end to an ongoing process of state formation. In one counterfactual world, Mong Mao was even a state destined to rival Sukhothai or Lan-Xang to the south (Harvey, 1925; Sai Kam Mong, 2005; Liew Foon Ming, 1996; Daniels, 2006; Tapp, 2000; Wade, 2004, 31; Aye Chan, 2006; Ferguson, 1997 for counterfactuals)

Political power in the Mong Mao area had long been diffuse before the Ming arrived in Yunnan in 1382. Mountainous geography, endemic warfare, inter-elite struggles for power, and overlapping spheres of Chinese and Burmese influence had all contributed to this diffusion of power. Ming frontier policy transformed this diffuse power in various ways over a roughly 150-year period from 1382 to 1524 through a combination of diplomacy, military and police action, tribute, taxation, and settlement. Starting in 1524, Mong Mao’s former rulers, displaced westwards to Mong Yang, played a significant albeit short role in mainland Southeast Asian history when Tai forces swept down upon Upper Burma and established Tai rule over Upper Burma for 28 years. The Burmese reconquest and depopulation of the Shan or Tai states in 1557 brought with it a final “reduction and dismantling” of Tai political power in the Mong Mao region and completed the process that the Ming invasion began in 1382 (Wade, 2004, 31; Fernquest, 2005b, 2005c)

State or chieftainship?

Did Mong Mao ever actually reach the degree of integration that would justify calling it a state or was anarchy the norm? The notions of mandala, segmentary state, and galactic polity have been used to describe diffuse political power in Southeast Asia (Chutintaranond, 1990; Stuart-Fox, 1998; Wolters, 1999; Lieberman, 2003, 33; Reynolds, 2006; Beekman, 1997). Whitmore’s narrative brings the military, political, and economic dynamics of the Mandala alive. Vietnamese domination over the Chams had a “mandala nature”:

… the Vietnamese defeated the defending forces, seized the city, looted it of wealth and manpower (as well as of females), and returned home, having placed another Cham prince as their vassal on the throne…This was standard South East Asian procedure. The goal was political subordination and loot, not territorial conquest or the reformulation of the local civilization. Within the ‘mandala’ nature of these early polities, the power of the capital radiated outward (and weakened progressively) over localities that stretched towards other competing capitals. Strictly speaking, there were no boundaries, merely the range of localities linked more or less strongly to the capital. The capital, centred on a royal Hindu–Buddhist cult, sought to dominate, politically and religiously, these localities and their own particular cults. The goal of the capital was not to change the local ways of life, only to gain human and material resources from them…Thus, what for Đại Việt is generally seen as a thousand-year Nam-tien (Southern Advance) was really, in these early centuries, a series of conquests and withdrawals down and back up the eastern coastal plain of the South East Asian mainland (Whitmore, 2004, 119-120).

The "mandala" pattern of warfare and political domination is not unique to Southeast Asia. Political anthropology uses the term ‘chieftainship’ (chiefdom) for a political entity that is less integrated, more diffuse, and more formative than a fully developed state. This more universal terminology was once employed in Southeast Asian history but has fallen out of use (e.g. Wheatley, 1983, 43-93) Chieftainships are the first kind of emergent “regional organisation” to “arise out of formerly fragmented local groups” and as the scale of political integration increases, chieftainships develop into states. Warfare plays a central role in this integration. Rather than linear development, counter-cyclical tendencies of collapse and dispersal intervene and retard the progress of integration:
Chiefdoms develop in societies in which warfare between groups is endemic but directed towards conquest and incorporation...Always in search for new sources of revenue, chiefs seek to expand their territorial control by conquest. Here a typical cyclical pattern is found as local communities and thousands of people incorporate under the control of an effective chief only to fragment at his death into constituent communities (Johnson and Earle, 2000, 34, my italics).

The cyclical pattern is driven by the success or failure of individual chieftains in warfare. From among many similar local settlements, a single settlement comes to dominate and organize the rest:

Mechanically, ... new integrative institutions such as the village or chieftdom are formed by 'promotion': ... from among the original autonomous units, one becomes dominant and subordinates the others...a single local lineage may expand by conquest to form a regional chieftdom (Johnson and Earle, 2000, 34).

The fortunes of chieftainships are typically tied to individual rulers and their family with the political center relocating quite freely and frequently. Chieftainships take a mobile and flexible approach to where they locate often temporary administrative centers. Pre-modern Southeast Asian political centers were likewise flexible.

Lieberman (66, 1980) notes that the "Burmese and allied peoples did not regard the simultaneous existence of multiple royal capitals as a logical impossibility," and that the Burmese kings Anaukhpetlun (Nyaungyan) and Thalun (Ava) though their origins and main capitals were in in Upper Burma, "dwelt at Pegu for varying periods in order to conciliate the Mon population of the south, to renew commerce, and...supervise military operations" (Lieberman, 1980, 66). Temporary shifts of residence were also common among Tai rulers of the pre-modern period with instances to be found in the Tai chronicles that Scott collected in his Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States (GUBSS, Hsipaw, v. 1, 219, 218, 222). Temporary residence overcame the limitations of geography on transportation and communication allowing control to be asserted over a region, both ritually and militarily, for sustained periods of time. Capitals were also strategically relocated to distance a subordinate ruler from the threat of attack by larger states (Barlow, 1987, 257; MSL 12 1449; LFM: 190-191). "Administrative center" is probably a more appropriate term, since the word "capital" conjures up images of permanence and immobility (cf Wheatley, 1983, 10; Tilly, 1992). The temporary capitals of Burmese and Tai rulers sometimes resemble in their function, the temporary palaces and camps of their near-contemporaneous Mughal neighbors in India described by a western traveler as an "ambulans republica, a walking republic" (Gascoigne, 154; see also pp. 191, 209, 236). Similarly, the late Roman Empire was sometimes likened to a military camp on the march (Luttwak, 1976, 57). The alternating power of some Tai chieftainships between two neighboring poles such as Mohnyin-Mogaung and Onpaung-Hsipaw is also perhaps evidence of mobile and flexible centers. The Mon rajawun genre of royal history also indicates short-lived, ambiguous, and quickly changing centers were the norm in Lower Burma:

The dynastic succession which it is their central purpose to record is at times tenuous; they span without embarrassment periods when the throne stood long unoccupied and the city ‘became a collection of large villages’, and tell of kings ruling in Ramanna at times when the orthodox account presents it merely as a province of Ava, so that the records of its final extinction vary. Geographically, the history of the Mon embraces the three capitals of Thaton, Martaban, and Pegu, though there is a tradition of other Mon kingdoms at Bassein, Dalla, and Labunbyin in the fourteenth century, and we know from an inscription that Moulmein claimed to be a kingdom in the sixteenth (Shorto, 1961, 65-66).

The first impulse is to use traditional European political categories and call Mong Mao a “kingdom” and the smaller subordinate Tai settlements, “principalities” or “feudal lords”. This terminology adds an element of European dignity and grandeur, provides an appropriate context of gravity and respect for legal texts (cf Okudaira and Huxley, 2001), and supports present-day group legitimacy and solidarity, but does it does it have any explanatory power for the processes of state formation that were going on at the time? As Johnson and Earle (2000, 307) note: "By referring to leaders of the Middle Ages as 'kings' and 'emperors' scholars have tended to exaggerate the extent and depth of centralized power available to those leaders." In fact, both medieval Japan and France were “populated with communities ranging from simple to complex chiefdoms, with many areas not integrated beyond the family level or the local group.” Any reference to a political entity in this paper should not be construed as an attempt to lessen the status or historical importance of any ethnic group. Mongol ethnic groups to China’s north
played an important role in Chinese history yet were enmeshed in a process of emergent state formation (Di Cosmo, 1999).

That statehood, even in the distant past, can be a controversial and dangerous topic can be seen in the life of one Chinese historian during the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese historian Huang Xianfan was denounced as a Tai Zhuang “separatist” in 1957 and his writings were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. The historian was eventually rehabilitated shortly before his death in the 1980s and his books reissued with notes indicating only that some historians disagreed (Barlow, 1987, 266-267, citing Moseley, 1973; Huang Xianfan, 1983). Huang Xianfan held that the Tai Zhuang were effectively a state as early as the Qin dynasty:

Huang simply states that the extended Zhuang resistance against the Qin, the highly organized Zhuang army, the common concern for territory, a common tongue, and the suggestions of a class system which can be inferred from feudal ranks among the resisters, all indicate the presence of a state which had recently emerged from the tribal level…This position supports the Marxist argument that the state emerges from the tribal level, a position supported by many western anthropologists. (Barlow, 1987; for a dissenting opinion see Fried, 1983, also see Haas, 1982)

The essence of Huang Xianfan’s Zhuang state argument clearly indicates that a more rigorous and common taxonomy of different degrees of political integration, such as Johnson and Earle’s (2000), are needed to facilitate comparison and avoid ambiguity. This would be an improvement over currently ambiguous and sometimes politically sensitive and dangerous references to “state” and “chieftainship”:

Many of the institutions of European feudalism have been found more generally in chieftainships. This includes “the establishment of personal bonds of fealty between lord and vassal, the obligation of military service to the lord, and the granting of estates in land to loyal vassals” (Johnson and Earle, 2000, 307; Bloch, 1961), territory settled by “subsistence farming communities” at “low population densities,” and endemic warfare with “political life centered around war chiefs allied in tenuous confederations…islands of control…surrounded by dangerous, unstable territories” controlled by the ruler “in name only” (Johnson and Earle, 2000, 308, 252-253; Earle, 1997). Feudal Europe shares these features in common with Tai and Burmese societies of the Ava period (1365-1527) (for examples see San Lwin, n.d.; Fernquest, 2006; Fernquest 2005b, 2005c). The historian Marc Bloch addressed the wider applicability of feudal institutions with the question: “Has there been more than one feudalism?” quoting Voltaire: “Feudalism is not an event; it is a very old form which, with differences in its working, subsists in three-quarters of our hemisphere” (Voltaire “Spirit of the Laws” cited in Bloch, 1961, 441).

Chiefs “allied in tenuous confederations” is a common theme in Tai history. Zhuang political organization has been described alternatively as a “temporary coalition of chieftaincies,” a “league of chieftains,” or a “march-lord loosely associated with” a more powerful state (Barlow, 1987). With respect to Mong Mao, the historian of China Christian Daniels also emphasizes “tenuous confederations” adding the Weberian characterization of these rulers as “charismatic”:

Everywhere Tay [Tai] polities seemed to have been leagues or alliances of basin polities that were frequently prone to fission on the downfall of charismatic leaders. As far as I know we have no evidence for the existence of a central bureaucracy which administrated the whole league of any Tay Kingdom; each basin had its own caw: phaa. [Chao Paw] who owed allegiance to an overlord, perhaps a number of overlords. Thus, individual caw; phaa. at times could conduct raids on neighbouring areas to enhance their own power and wealth, especially if the areas being plundered were not lieges of the central overlord. What I am suggesting is that attacks on Ava did not necessarily have to be concerted efforts; they could be conducted individually by polities with strong ties to the central overlord (Daniels, 2006b).

In summary, extrapolation from raw historical facts as found in primary sources and using them as grist in the mill of political theory has been going on at least since the time of the European Enlightenment. This historical extrapolation has at times been life-threatening as it was in the case of Huang Xianfan and certainly has injected a large element of ambiguity into the analysis of political structure. With this in mind, the analysis of this paper aims to fly low over the surface of historical times and places, making only modest extrapolations and generalizations in the form of tentative hypotheses along the way.
Historical over-extrapolation: Unified states and Southern Advances

To return to the question of whether Mong Mao ever reached the degree of integration of a state. The historian Michael Vickery poses a similar question for the history of the Chams in southern Vietnam. He asks:

…but was there a single unitary state/kingdom of Champa depicted in the standard classical scholarship, a federation of polities dominated by the Austronesian-speaking Cham, or two or more quite distinct, sometimes competing, polities? (Vickery, 2005, 4).

Vickery argues that "there never was a unified Champa" and that this interpretation was based on flawed logic: "events recorded for one part of Champa, whatever the source, may not be extrapolated to the rest" (Vickery, 2005, 80).

Similarly, Taylor throws into question the widely believed notion of a "Nam tien," a Vietnamese Southern Advance over a thousand-year-long period (Taylor, 1998). He calls for historians to take a closer look at historical sources and posit a more variegated history: "a series of different episodes responding to particular events and opportunities" (Vickery, 2005, 29, citing Taylor, 1998, 951, 960 and Li Tana, 1998, 19, 21, 28) with an orientation toward the "surface of times and places" rather than an "imagined unifying depth" (Taylor, 1998, 949). Besides oversimplified models of state and society, there are other likely sources for over-extrapolation and imagined unifying depth.

Periodizations that are not fine enough, maps that are not detailed enough, or a search for reassuring certainty in the face of the ambiguous detail of primary sources, can all distort history. Western historiography has also been affected by it. According to Fischer (1970, 236-240), a "fallacy of cross-grouping" occurs when a historian uses a misleading "conceptualization of one group in terms of another," in other words, falsely extrapolating of the features of one group to another group, as Vickery claims the "standard classical scholarship" of Cham history does.

Extrapolation has also been common in Burmese and Tai history. The hypothesis of a Tai Southern Advance focuses mainly on the period before written historical sources (Baker, 2002; Stuart-Fox, 1998, 22-29). The historian of Burma Harvey (1925) characterized the whole Ava period of Burmese history as a period of "Shan Dominion (1287-1531)." Aung-Thwin (1996) has revealed the shortcomings of this extrapolation. The theory of a Tai Southern Advance widely held by scholars circa 1958 is enunciated by the historian of Burma Luce in his famous paper on the study of the Tai through Chinese sources: "...the earlier period, say 1250 to 1450 AD, is the time of the mass movements of the Dai [Tai] southward from Western Yunnan, radiating all over Further India and beyond" (Luce, 1958, 123). Baker (2002, 8) also attributes to Luce a tentative but more refined hypothesis that Tai expansion to the south resulted from the Mongol invasions of 1277-1279 and 1283-1284. Baker (2002) reviews the relevant literature to-date for the Tai Southern Advance hypothesis and suggests ways in which it can be further refined.

Vickery does not treat periods lacking inscriptive evidence. Historical epochs like Medieval Europe have thrived on literary evidence with inscriptive sources playing only a minor role (cf Cantor, 1991). Inscriptions provide only limited kinds of historical data. Even one of the most important uses of inscriptions, establishing accurate dates for the reigns of rulers, is of limited use if it does not provide any indication of the succession struggles before the succession. The succession struggles of Ava kings in 1400 and 1426 are not found in inscriptions (Tin Hla Thaw, 1959, 135-137). What would make the hiding of a succession struggle by an inscription less likely than the spurious addition of a succession struggle in the recopying of a chronicle manuscript? Are court elites striking the correct pose less likely to do so in stone? The Ava period is well-endowed with inscriptive sources (See Burma, 1972-1987; Duroiselle, 1921; Than Tun, 1959; Tin Hla Thaw, 1959; Tun Nyein, 1899; Bennett, 1971; all cited in Aung-Thwin, 1996; also Aung-Thwin, 1985, 249-251; and Tin Htway, 2001 for bibliography). Mong Mao does not seem to have gone through an inscriptive phase like Keng-tung which falls within the well-endowed Lanna cultural orbit (Luce, 1957, 123, 173). The same problems of diverging chronicle traditions and of matching names in chronicles with names in inscriptions that Vickery cites are also problems with Ava period inscriptions.

Burmese and Tai chronicle texts have many of the same shortcomings as Chinese written texts. Vickery (2005, 10) notes that Chinese histories of Champa were "compiled long after the event, and obviously at second hand." Parts of them were lost and then later reassembled. He concludes that "given these conditions, it requires religious faith to insist that all their details…must be accepted as factual, and their inconsistencies require close attention" (my italics). The composition of U Kala's version of the Burmese chronicle resembles that of a religious text. A large fraction of the chronicle falls between the beginning of the universe and the dawn of recorded history. The chronicle also repeatedly stresses the charisma of the Burmese King and the religious sources of his power. Even for the more accurate post-Pagan period "what actually happened" may be deeply embedded within a chrysalis of religious emplotment and elaboration (White, 2001; Baker, 2002). This is perhaps the best argument to
place the highest value on the original manuscript, publishing it in as many forms, translated or transliterated, as there are interested parties as Anatole-Roger Peltier and Victor Grabowsky (1999a) have done. This would provide the basis for both: 1. the analysis and explication of closed self-referential religious-literary textual systems, as well as 2. more skeptical but controversial Rankeian lines of inquiry along the lines of Crone (1987, 2004) and Wansbrough (1977) who have questioned the accepted historical traditions of early Islamic civilization.

**Geography:** Where was Mong Mao?

The geography of Mong Mao consisted of successive "zones of influence" much as the Braudel's Mediterranean did:

… the Mediterranean must be accepted as a wide zone, extending well beyond the shores of the sea in all directions. We might compare it to an electric or magnetic field, or more simply to a radiant center whose light grows less as one moves away from it, without one's being able to define the exact boundary between light and shade (Braudel, 1966, 168).

The toponym ‘Mong Mao’ has been mapped to physical territory in different ways. The broadest descriptions of Mong Mao’s sphere of influence are found in Tai chronicles and include territory all the way up to India in the west, Tibet in the north, Sipsongpanna, Chiang Rai, and Upper Burma in the south, and Dali in the East (Daniels, 2006, 29). The names of these far-flung states conjure up images of great territorial size, but each of these names is also associated with localities that have their own independent historical chronicles in which Mong Mao hardly occupies a central position.

A smaller and more reasonable sphere of influence for Mong Mao would have been roughly the territory from the Upper Irrawaddy River in the west to the Upper Salween in the east (LFM: 64). Ming lists of domains under Luchuan-Pingmian’s control help fill in the details. Domains included the three large domains of Luchuan-Pingmian (Mong Mao proper, Mong Wan, Longchuan), Mong Yang (Chinese: Meng Yang), and Hsenwi (Chinese: Mu Bang). There were several smaller chieftainships including Mong Ting (Chinese: Meng-ding), Luijiang (Yongchang), Nandian, Ganyai, Zheledian, Dahou, Wandian, Weiyuan, Zhenkang, and perhaps Mong Lem (Chinese: Meng-lian) (LFM 167; Wade, 2004, 4; Daniels, 2006, 30-32, and map p. 27). A slightly larger area is “Yunnan’s Southwest crescent” that Giersch (2001, 68-69) defined for the Qing period, stretching along the present-day Sino-Chinese border and including Tai settlements from Sipsongpanna to Ganyai north of Mong Mao.

An even smaller core area of control is easier to delineate. The core area covered the Upper Shweli river valley (also known as the Ruili, Longchuan, or Nam Mao River) as well as the “adjacent mountainous region’ around Gaoligong mountain (LFM: 64). A well-defined geographical boundary for this core area is given in the Bai-yi Zhuan of 1396 which lists the rivers and mountains that surrounded it:

… To the north, there are the Gao-liang-gong Mountains, and they extend for over 200 li. They are over 50 li high and they follow the Nu river. To the west are the Ma-an [Horse saddle] Mountains. These mountains have a pass that if guarded by even a single person, can make it difficult for even a force of 10,000 to pass through. To the east is the Lu-chuan River which is navigable by boat. To the south this joins with the Jin-sha [Gold Dust, Irrawaddy] River, and then flows into the Western Sea … (Wade, 1996, appendix II, 8, my italics)

Mong Mao’s capital or administrative center seems to have been based in Luchuan with a capital near the modern-day border town of Ruili (Zhelan) until 1438 when it shifted northwards to Mong Yang under military pressure from the Ming. The degree of unity of the various subordinate chieftainships within the sphere of influence fluctuated greatly over time. At times they were unified under one strong leader; at other times there was little unity at all (Sai Kam Mong, 2004, 10, Jiang Yingliang, 1983). Although Tai elite held the top levels of political control at Mong Mao, lower levels of the hierarchy (or territory that did not figure into the hierarchy at all) were inhabited by a diversity of ethnic groups of Tibeto-Burman and Mon-Khmer ethnicity that resembled the modern-day hilltribes of the region. These ethnic groups underwent some assimilation as Leach’s (1954) research on the Kachin indicates. Despite the historical importance of this ethnic diversity, these subordinate tribes are hidden to written historical sources with some notable exceptions found in the work of Daniels (2001), O’Connor (1995), and Wade (2004, 14).
The words used to identify the origins of Tai attacks in Burmese historical sources indicate that the center of Tai military power shifted frequently. From the immediate post-Pagan period to the early 1400s (c. 1342-1426), the words that identify Tais in Burmese historical sources change from more general all-inclusive words to words that identify specific local settlements of Tais (See Table 1). The word used also varies with the nature of the historical source, whether it is a chronicle or an inscription. Ming sources refer to Mong Mao as “Luchuan” or “Luchuan-Pingmian.” However, in the Bai-yi Zhuan circa 1396 the geographical terms ”Luchuan” and ”Pingmian” are not used at all, only the earlier ”Bai-yi” is used. This raises the question of how Ming geographical divisions evolved from earlier divisions and what role tribute missions and proactive attempts by Tai elite to obtain Ming recognition, such as Si Lun-fa’s, played in the process. The Bai-yi Zhuan also does not explicitly recognize the political entity that they visited as Tai, although there are enough Tai words and names cited that the implication is clearly that the language of ruling elite was Tai. The actual toponym “Mao” actually occurs a lot less frequently in historical sources than the historical events that have been attributed to “Mong Mao.”

Table 1: Tai attacks on Ava

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tai reference to</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Nature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1342</td>
<td>Syam</td>
<td>(Than Tun, 1959, 111)</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1356</td>
<td>Mao</td>
<td>(Than Tun, 1959, 112)</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1357</td>
<td>Syam</td>
<td>(Than Tun, 1959, 112)</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1359</td>
<td>Syam</td>
<td>(Than Tun, 1959, 108)</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1362</td>
<td>Syam</td>
<td>(Than Tun, 1959, 108)</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1364</td>
<td>Syam</td>
<td>(Than Tun, 1959, 110)</td>
<td>Inscription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1364</td>
<td>Shan</td>
<td>(UKI: 407-408)</td>
<td>Chronicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1371</td>
<td>Mong Yang, Kale</td>
<td>(UKI: 429-430)</td>
<td>Chronicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1373</td>
<td>Mong Yang</td>
<td>(UKI: 430)</td>
<td>Chronicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1393</td>
<td>Mong Yang</td>
<td>(UKI: 458-461)</td>
<td>Chronicle</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Specifically, prior to the establishment of Ava in 1364 inscriptions usually use “Syam” with the Burmese chronicle using “Shan.” Tai ethnonyms became more localized starting with the death of Si Ke-fa in 1371 and the ascendance of Mong Yang. After Ava began indirect rule over Tai chieftainships in 1401 the variety of specific references to chieftainships increases significantly, including Hsenwi, Onpaung, Mong Yang, and Kale. The names of southern Tai chieftainships such as Yawksawk and Naungmun appear after 1426.

A Tai Frontier?

The notion of a “frontier” is an inherently slippery notion. “Frontier of what?” or “whose frontier?” are questions that naturally arise when the term “frontier” is thrown about loosely. A “frontier” is here defined as a geographical area between two or more powerful societies (states, political entities) that contains smaller less powerful societies (chieftainships, tribes, bands). Power over these less powerful societies is “contested” by the more powerful societies (or “hegemons”) and these less powerful societies must often forge multiple allegiances and loyalties with the more powerful hegemons which surround them (cf Giersch, 2001, 68-69, 72). To answer the first question, this paper is about “the frontier of” the two powerful hegemons Ming China and Burma (c. 1382-1454). A “frontier” is what separated Burma from China.

Whose frontier was it? Tai and hill-dwelling ethnic groups lived within the frontier and some Burmese and Chinese from outside the frontier settled within the frontier. In addition to being territory that separated, a frontier was also a “middle ground”, a “zone of contact”, or ”broad zone of multiple cultural interactions” between the peoples of the dominant and subordinate groups (Giersch, 2001, 72; Perdue, 2005, 520; Turchin, 2003a).

Whereas the notion of “Tai Realm” captures the territorial extent of Tai settlements (c.1350-1600), the notion of a “Tai Frontier” (or “borderlands”) between mainland Southeast Asia and China, defines a cultural “middle ground” between the Ming and the Burmese, occupied by the Tai. Questions still remain about the role of other
ethnic groups in this frontier region, groups whose history is barely addressed in written sources, the predecessors of the modern day hill tribes (cf Daniels, n.d.; Reid, 2006).

At a larger scale, there was also a frontier between mainland Southeast Asia and China. This large-scale frontier was a patchwork quilt or system of frontiers between different spheres of influence and activities. As the French historian Braudel once suggested, “we should imagine a hundred frontiers, not one, some political, some economic, and some cultural” (Braudel, 1966, 170). In the hinterlands that separated mainland Southeast Asia from China, frontiers fell between Burma and the Ming, between Vietnam and the Ming, the Ahom and India, and Ayutthaya and Cambodia.

In recent Southeast Asian historiography, the relevance of the "Southeast Asia" region for pre-modern history has been challenged. Some recent works are predicated on thinking outside of the regional box as do Subrahmanym (1997, 1999), Prakash and Lombard (1999), and Emmerson (1984). Subrahmanym (1999) suggests that the Bay of Bengal was a conduit conveying Persian intellectual traditions to Southeast Asia. In a similar fashion, the influence of Buddhist monks on the Tai Frontier was felt from both the Chinese and the Southeast Asian sides, bringing with it the gradual spreading and adoption of the new universal religion that spread more slowly in the mountainous Tai Frontier area than it did in lowland and maritime areas. The circulation of religious elites proceeded at a much faster pace between Sri Lanka and Pegu (Pranke, 2004, 167-188), Sri Lanka and Arakan (Raymond, 1999), Mon Lower Burma and Lanna (Swearer and Premchit, 1978), Lanna and Upper Burmese (Luce and Ba Shin, 1961), and Arakan and Upper Burma (Charney, 1999, 79-112; Charney, 2002).

Given the greater military might and markets of the Ming, one would expect the Ming to be the ultimate arbiter of resource distribution in the frontier. The tax-tribute base, silver, and abundant luxury goods of the frontier were at least potentially all under their control (SLC: 97-198). Later, during the Luchuan-Pingmian campaigns (c. 1436-1454), the Burmese fought Ming wars as a Ming proxy in anticipation of territorial rights being granted by the Ming.

The Tai Frontier seen from the perspective of the Ming court was part of Ming "foreign policy" (Wang Gungwu, 1998) or "Grand Strategy" (Luttwak, 1976). During the Qing dynasty, the Chinese state “adopted different policies for different frontiers, based on its assessment of strategic significance, revenue potential and control costs” (Shepherd, 1993, 398, cited in Giersch, 2001, 72). Likewise, Ming grand strategy can be conceptualized as undergoing significant changes with each successive Ming emperor. The northern Mongolian frontier usually eclipsed the Southeast Asian frontier in importance, but occasionally a conjunction of events led to heightened attention as it did during the period this paper focuses on. Administrative strategies ranged from the ancient strategy of divide-and-rule to promoting one all-inclusive client state on the frontier. The remoteness of Yunnan, the great distance to the Ming capital, with a tropical climate difficult to endure, featuring diseases to which the Ming were not accustomed (Reid and Jiang Na, 2006, 5; LFM: 178) meant that Ming officials in Yunnan often made their own independent on-the-spot policy decisions. This independent action ran counter to the tendency of proclamations issued by the Ming court to direct policy in a detailed and hands-on fashion. Using the term “grand strategy” may impute far too much determinism in policies that were largely subject to the random influences of person and place.

How can a notion of a Tai Frontier, or that of a greater frontier between Ming China and Southeast Asia, help to better define exactly what Mong Mao was? First of all, the wider definitions of Mong Mao have equated it with the whole Tai frontier itself. Mong Mao was located in a mountainous region in which transportation and communication were inherently more difficult than in the lowlands. Although Mong Mao may have been roughly at the center of the Tai frontier for over 100 years, its control over wide stretches of the Tai Frontier would have been tenuous at best. Furthermore, at the end of Mong Mao’s life during the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns (1438-1454), Mong Yang replaced Mong Mao as the dominant power center in the northern Tai Frontier. Another way of looking at Mong Mao’s demise is that the center of the chieftainship merely moved northwards to Mong Yang, with the core element of chieftainship political structure, family relations among the Tai elite, remaining intact.

**History of the Tai Frontier: Public or hidden?**

The anthropologist James Scott proposed the terms “public transcript” and “hidden transcript” to represent the effect that power relations between dominant and subordinate groups have on the presentation of information (Scott, 1990). The pronouncements sent by the Ming court to the Tai and Ava courts are recorded in the public transcript of the Ming Annals or Ming Shi-lu. These pronouncements make judgments about the indigenous inhabitants of the Tai Frontier, regarding their trustworthiness, motives, past behaviour, and anticipated future behaviour. One approach is to dismiss these judgments as superfluous rhetoric meant for internal consumption only to justify forceful
military or administrative action. How seriously or ironically were the flamboyant turns of phrase of Ming imperial proclamations actually taken by the indigenous inhabitants who received them? Were they even translated adequately into the indigenous languages? There are some indications that various cultural artifacts such as local chronicles and even elite clothing formed a hidden transcript on which Tai elite recorded their dissent. One Tai chronicle, for instance, records that the Tai ruler only handed over his seal of office after the Chinese official got him drunk (Elias, 1876, 21). The ostentatious clothing worn by Si Ke-fa’s son on his visit to the Yuan court seems to have been a form of dissent or flouting of the rules that barely fell within the bounds of acceptability (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 1).

The most visible public transcripts consisted of Ming communications and orders to the Burmese and the Tais copied almost verbatim into the Ming Shi-lu. Draft versions of the official Ming history known as the Ming Shigao (Liew Foon Ming, forthcoming; also 2003, 144,158) and unofficial primary sources reveal a hidden transcript concealed to protect the honour and dignity of Ming functionaries in Yunnan like Mu Sheng, the hereditary Ming ruler of Yunnan who committed suicide in the wake of the Ming’s first defeat in the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns. The public transcript of the official history was modified to protect his good name (LFM: 173-174). Critical personal relationships between key historical actors also do not make their way into the official transcript, like that between Mu Sheng and Mong Mao ruler Si Ren-fa (LFM: 174-175).

The differential between public and hidden transcripts has an obvious application to the histories of frontiers that lie astride the historical writings of disparate and often incompatible historical traditions. Parallel to the physical Tai Frontier there was also an intellectual or discourse frontier of contemporaneous communications between and within the Ming, Burmese, and Tai courts, and of historical chronicles and inscriptions composed within these courts. Although hidden transcripts are by their very nature more ephemeral and hidden from view, Tai and Burmese chronicle and oral traditions, if they managed to survive, often constitute a transcript hidden from Ming view. The visibility of Tai local chronicles to the gaze of dominant state administrative apparatuses, however, might have transformed these hidden transcripts of dissent into public transcripts with pressures towards self-censorship (Fernquest, 2005c, 1173).

Goals, conventions, sources, and analytical frameworks

This goal of this paper is to contribute to the growing literature on pre-modern Burmese history as evidenced most recently by Charney (2006) and Thant Myint-U (2006), the latter author stressing the importance of a better understanding of Myanmar-Burma’s history in finding a solution to the political impasse that has plagued the country for almost twenty years. This paper also seeks to extend the military history that Charney (2004) began in his survey of Southeast Asian warfare (c. 1300-1900).

A framework from the anthropology of warfare will be used to analyze the factors that lead to warfare. Ferguson (1999) presents, in a manner similar to Braudel (1966), a paradigm or framework for analyzing the factors that lead to warfare. This paradigm originates in the “anthropology of war” literature, seeking factors having cross-cultural relevance for non-western warfare as well as western warfare which is the focus of most current research. This paradigm is applicable to both pre-modern as well as modern warfare. The factors influencing the incidence of warfare are broken into three categories: infrastructure, structure, and superstructure. Infrastructure includes “interaction with the physical environment, population characteristics and trends, technology, and the labor techniques of applying technology, which affect a people’s physical existence and relation to nature.” Structure includes “organized social life, patterns of interpersonal connections and divisions sorted into social organization, economics, and politics.” Superstructure includes “the mental constructs of culture, its belief systems, and patterned emotional dispositions.” The paradigm also divides factors into intra-polity factors (within the political entity) and inter-polity factors (relations between political entities) (Ferguson, 1999, 389-390).

A brief note on sources, the critical use of sources, as well as the role of narrative in this history are needed. The main Burmese source used here is U Kala’s Mahayazawingyi, being the earliest rendition of the Burmese chronicle (U Kala, 1961). Citations are to chapters within volumes (e.g. “UKII: 230” means “U Kala, 1961, Volume 2, Chapter 230). Over the course of last year, a newly edited version of U Kala’s history has been published in Yangon (U Kala, 2006). This new version was published too late to be utilized in the current paper. Thanks to detailed references provided by Maung Aung Myoe of the National University of Singapore, the Mahayazawinthit, a revised and amended version of U Kala’s Mahayazawingyi, has also been used in places.

With greater access to original primary source manuscripts and more critical comparison and editing of these sources by historians specializing in the respective Tai, Ming, and Burmese historical traditions, it will be
possible to zero in on a precise core history of “what actually happened.” However, in a fundamental sense much of these historical traditions may remain incommensurable due to the basic literary nature of much of the historical sources. Fictional elaboration, at least in the Burmese case, was often didactic in nature, added to educate future rulers, and for this reason, exactly what made these historical sources useful and led to their repeated recopying and survival. That’s why the approach of this paper is to aim for a large-scale macro-narrative in the manner of McNeil that is of broader relevance to World History and is also a narrative to provide a context in which to place more detailed verified historical facts as critical work progresses. To focus exclusively on “what actually happened,” for instance, by valorizing insitutional sources to the exclusion of chronicle narrative, will simply further delay an extensive macro-history and perpetuate the reliance on Harvey’s 1925 history or even Phayre’s (1883) history from the nineteenth century.

Charney (2006) unravels the processes of court politics that guided and influenced the composition of texts such as chronicles. Although U Kala’s text is technically a secondary source compiled from primary sources, it is the earliest and most complete of the chronicle secondary sources. Critical review and sorting out of Burmese chronicle secondary sources is a huge project that is already underway (see Tun Aung Chain, 2004; Charney, 2006; Kirichenko, 2006). Further progress may be made when manuscripts in Great Britain, Myanmar, and Thailand become available. As the Russian historian of Burma Kirichenko observes:

More consistent research into the development of Burman yazawin-writing would require a search for a number of known early texts to trace the initial stages of this textual activity, preparation of critical editions of surviving yazawins taking account of as much available manuscripts copies as possible, and refining the analytical apparatus with which we approach available texts (Kirichenko, 2006, 9).

Some notes on the conventions used are in order. Than Tun’s calendar is used for dating. To get the Buddhist Era (BE) dates from the western dates just subtract 638. When only a date is given in the Burmese chronicle, instead of the more accurate but more verbose date pair of Wyatt and Wichienkeeo (1995), e.g. 1385/86, I simple give the first date of the pair, the one obtained by subtracting 638, e.g. 1385. A slight variation of Lieberman’s (2003) geographical terminology is used with: Lower Burma, Upper Burma, Arakan, and the Tai Frontier Zone. Lower Burma is used instead of “Mon Land” because Rajadhira was the first extensive Mon state-building ruler of the era and it is still unclear what role other ethnicities played in Lower Burma at this time (Aung-Thwin, 2005). To label the whole region “Mon Land” or the “Mon realm” seems, based on the existing evidence, to overstate the degree of unity and control.

### Table 2: Mong Mao Rulers (or Tai Chieftain Hegemons)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Transliterated</th>
<th>(1) Tai (and 2) Burmese</th>
<th>Reign (termination factor)</th>
<th>Cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location: Mong Mao</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si Ke-fa</td>
<td>(1) Sa Khaan Pha, Soe Khan Fa, Chau-ki-pha, Tai-Pong, Hso-Kip-Hpa</td>
<td>1340-1371 (died)</td>
<td>++</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhao Bing-fa</td>
<td></td>
<td>1371-1378 (natural)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tai Bian</td>
<td></td>
<td>1378/79 (murdered)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhao Xiao-fa</td>
<td></td>
<td>1379/80</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si Wa-fa</td>
<td>(1) Hso-Wak-Pha</td>
<td>? (murdered)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si Lun-fa</td>
<td>(1) Hso Long Pha, Tai-lung</td>
<td>1382-1399 (died)</td>
<td>++</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si Xing-fa</td>
<td>(1) Chau-Tit-Pha, Tau-Lwei</td>
<td>1404-1413 (abdicated)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si Ren-fa</td>
<td>(1) Chau-Ngan-Pha, Hso Wen Hpa, Sa Ngam Pha (2) Tho-ngan-bwa</td>
<td>1413-1445 (executed)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location: Mong Yang</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si Ji-fa</td>
<td>(1) Chau-Si-pha, Sa Ki Pha (2) Tho-kyein-bwa</td>
<td>1445-1454 (executed)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si Bu-fa</td>
<td>(2) Tho-pok-bwa</td>
<td>1449-?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si Hong-fa, Si Jue-fa</td>
<td>(2) Tho-han-bwa</td>
<td>1465?-1479?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si Lun, Si Lu-fa, Si Liu-fa</td>
<td>(2) Sawlon</td>
<td>1482?-1532 (assassinated)</td>
<td>++</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: LFM:167, 169, 198; Liew Foon Ming, 2006; Elias, 1876, 27; GUBSS, U Kala, note that the author contributed a similar table to Wikipedia)
The simple renderings of personal and place names that were used in colonial era sources (e.g. Pegu, Toungoo, Ava) are used, fully acknowledging that the current transcription standard used in Myanmar-Burma often does a better job conveying the sound of the word. Although the transliteration of indigenous names using indigenous pronunciation is always preferred, the uncertainty that still surrounds the Tai pronunciation of Mong Mao ruler names, along with the fact that the bulk of the historical references to them are in Chinese sources, has led to the use of their Chinese names in this paper, although a table of names found in extant secondary sources has been provided for comparison (see Table 2 below). The Chinese name of Mong Mao ruler “Si Ke-fa” particularly needs to be replaced since the three Chinese characters in his name were deliberately chosen to have an insulting meaning: “die-can-be-chastened.” A rigorous multi-lingual analysis of names remains to be done.

2. Tai raids and the founding of Ava (1301-1382)

As late as 1276, Burma’s first charter kingdom at Pagan was still in the ascendant, waging war against chieftainships in Yunnan. Expeditions to Upper Burma by the Chinese Yuan-Mongol dynasty (1284, 1287, 1300-01) hastened the collapse of Pagan. As Pagan’s strength waned, power in Upper Burma passed from Pagan to two centers at Pinya and Sagaing (Luce, 1958-59, 63, 82-83; Huber, 1909; Lieberman, 2003, 119-123; Bennett, 1971, 26-27; Maung Aung Myoe, 2006).

Mong Mao arose in the power vacuum. The kingdom of Dali had long provided political unity to the diverse ethnic groups of Yunnan’s western frontier. In 1253-54 Khubilai Khan descended upon Yunnan from Tibet, took Dali, and marched on to Kunming. The next year a Yuan general marched south and subdued Mong Mao. A garrison was established at Jinchi, the latter serving as a gateway into the Tai Frontier. The tropical weather of the Tai Frontier kept Chinese officials, used to more temperate climates, away: “When it was necessary to exercise supervision, officials were sent into the area, but they returned with the coming of spring, in order to avoid the miasmic vapours” (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 1). As Wade observes, the unfamiliarity with the frontier region that Yuan texts exhibit is evidence that The Mongol Yuan dynasty did not exert a very rigorous or exacting political control over the Tai Frontier (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 6).

This kingdom of Mong Mao first registers in Chinese sources in a significant way starting in 1340 when Si Ke-fa (r. 1340-71) became king. Si Ke-fa engaged in expansionary warfare, attacking neighboring Tai chieftains as well as Upper Burma. In response, the Chinese Yuan court sent several expeditions against Mong Mao. The Bai-yi Zhuan stresses Si Ke-fa’s imperial ambition:

In…[1348/49], the Lu-chuan native official Si Ke-fa repeatedly raided and harassed the various routes. The [Yuan] general Da-shi-ba-du-lu went to punish him, but was unable to subdue him. Si Ke-fa continued to absorb other routes, but sent his son Man-sa to the court to convey his sentiments and offer his allegiance. While he accepted the Court’s calendar and offered tribute, his clothing, paraphernalia and systems remained that of a king (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 1).

Repeated conflicts with the Yuan eventually led to an accommodation with the Ming:

In 1342, 1346, 1347, and 1348, the Yuan armies fought with Luchuan four times, and the first war lasted for four years. In 1355, Si Ke-fa nominally acknowledged the authority of the Yuan court and the later set up Si Ke-fa’s territory as ‘Pingmian pacification commission’ (Sun, Laichen, 2000, 225; citing Jiang Yingliang , 1983, and Chen Yi-sein, 1969-1970).

Mong Mao under Si Ke-fa was not the only Tai chieftainship that the Yuan considered rebellious. In 1346 a punitive expedition was also sent against Hsenwi (Sainson, 1904, 129-130).

During the period 1359-1368, Tai attacks on Upper Burma intensified and ultimately caused much more “serious economic and social disruption” than the previous Chinese invasions, throwing Upper Burma into a period of crisis (Bennett, 1971, 27). The response to this crisis led to the founding of the Ava dynasty. Power was once again concentrated at a single center in Upper Burma, albeit a much weakened center.

In the lead-up to the crisis of the 1360s, the Yuan dynasty sent representatives to Pinya and other places in Burma in 1338, but they were withdrawn in 1342 (Parker, 1893, 43). Although the Burmese won some military engagements against Tai forces around 1342 (Than Tun, 1959, 129), in the period leading up to the crisis of 1359-1364
Tai raids intensified. We are left with only cryptic intimations in inscriptions of what these raids were like: “In 1356, when Prince Sinkapatiy was in control, he left the headman of Khamwan fight the battle of Khyantwan. As he won the battle, the Prince was pleased. Maw was besieged…Rewards were given” (Than Tun, 1959, 129). Another inscription in 1357 compares the Tai raids to those of the Cola attacks on Sri Lanka (Than Tun, 1959, 130).

Tai raids, a period of crisis, and the founding of Ava (1359-1368)

The period of crisis 1359-1364 took place during the reign of Si Ke-fa (r. 1340-1371) over Mong Mao (UKII: 407-418). In 1359, Pinya was carrying out the first inquest of towns and villages within its domains in order to consolidate its power (Than Tun, 1983-1986, v. 2, p. viii). Kyawswa, ruler of Pinya, died in 1359 and was succeeded by his younger brother Narathu. Toungoo raided Upper Burma’s critical Kyaukse food supply. The Tais struck Upper Burma once again in 1362 when Narathu of Pinya allied himself with the Tai invaders aiming to destroy rival Sagaing. A joint Pinya-Tai campaign was sent against Sagaing in 1364, but the Tai side reneged on the alliance, claiming that the troops committed by Narathu were insufficient. After Narathu was taken captive and carted back north by his Tai allies, a young Burmese nobleman by the name of Thadominpaya seized control of what was left and moved his center of operations to the confluence of the Irrawaddy and Myitnge rivers at the entry point to the Kyaukse granary and food supply and on 26 January 1365 he founded what would later be known as the royal capital of Ava.

Thadominpaya started from a small core area of control and gradually expanded his power, waging war without cease during his short life that ended three years later (UKI: 409-418; Harvey, 1925, 80-81). Thadominpaya recruited support wherever he could find it. A notorious bandit was even recruited to his side. During 1365-67, Thadominpaya led two campaigns to extend and consolidate his domains to the south. In 1365 he subjugated Taungdwingyi and in July of 1365 he set off down the Irrawaddy on an expedition against Sagu near Pagan. The historian Paul Bennett speculates that the hardships of a population subject to the sequestering of troops motivated the following well-known inscription by the wife of a local lord. It describes the hardships of a population living in a war zone:

After the death of my husband, when the great king of Ava marched thrice to battle, all men, monks, and brahman starved. Then I gave cooked food to 37 monks and uncooked food to 200. When men died of starvation, I had compassion on them as I had on myself, (and therefore) I had 50 khwak of rice cooked twice-night and day, daily, and gave them away. When the Lords (of the Religion) became uncomfortable due to the wars, I made them comfortable by giving them complete sets of four requisites [life necessities of monks] (Than Tun, 1959, 129-130; Bennett, 1971, p. 24-25).

This inscription was made in 1375 by the widow of the Toungoo ruler Pyanchi’s father Theingathu who died in 1367. Bennett argues that July “would be a time of year when men were needed in the fields, and if the king ordered a levee en-masse, hardship might easily have followed.” During the campaign against Sagu Thadominpaya contracted a disease that has been interpreted by later historians as smallpox (cf Reid and Jiang Na, 2006), and died at age twenty-five in 1368 (UKI: 418; Harvey, 1925, 81). To summarise, Ava was founded in 1364 in the middle of a crisis that lasted from 1359 to 1368, a crisis brought on by Tai raids that reached a peak in 1364. The resolution of the crisis began with the founding of Ava in 1364, was bolstered by the military conquests during the short reign of Thadominpaya (r. 1364-1368), and was finally consolidated into a lasting state during the long reign of Minkyiswasawke (r. 1368-1401).

Mingyiswasawke builds the state of Ava (1368-1400)

After Thadominpaya’s death, his brother-in-law Mingyiswasawke rose to power (UKI: 419-420, 423; Harvey, 1925, 81, Than Tun, 1959, 128; Bennett, 1971, 21). In 1368, he laid down a set of well-defined administrative guidelines that would effectively work as a royal constitution over his long 32-year reign (Than Tun, 1983-1986, v. 1, 2-4, 149-153; ZOK, 60-62). Under the long peaceful reign of Mingyiswasawke regional power was consolidated at Ava and a secure foundation for the Burmese state was built through administrative reform. The Zidaw weir in Kyaukse was built and the irrigation infrastructure at Meiktila Lake was improved (UKI: 424; Harvey, 1925, 81).

Mong Mao’s ruler Si Ke-fa, the power behind much of the Tai raids against Ava of the 1360s, died in 1371 not long after Thadominpaya. After his death, Mong Mao fell into a period of political instability. Leadership passed
hands frequently and violently among members of the Tai ruling families. Coinciding with Si Ke-fa’s death, the two Tai chieftainships of Mong Yang and Kale that stretched across the northern limits of Ava’s control went to war with each other. Both requested the aid of Ava in 1371, but Ava waited until the two chieftains had reduced their strength from the attrition of continued warfare and then used this opportunity to set up boundary markers (UKI: 429-31) as part of a new series of land inquests to put political control and taxation on a firmer footing (UKI: 429-430; Harvey, 1925, p. 85).

Tai raids, though less intense, continued to pose a threat at intervals. Mingyiswasawke’s attempt to play Kale and Mong Yang off of one another and reduce their power was a failure, for with the power of Mong Mao in eclipse, Mong Yang rose to the position of new primus-inter-pares in the Tai Frontier. The source of Tai attacks on Ava switched to Mong Yang from Mong Mao (See Table 3). Mong Yang attacked Ava’s northern outpost Myedu in 1373 (UKI: 431). Ava recovered quickly from these attacks. After more than a decade long delay, the Ming intervened on Ava’s behalf in 1384 (Harvey, 1925, 8; Parker, 1893, 49; Sai Kam Mong, 2004, 23, 28). By 1373, the political situation at Ava was stable enough for Mingyiswasawke to hold a convention of learned monks and religious examinations (Than Tun, 1983-86, v. 2, pp. viii-ix). An inscription dated 7 February 1375 once again indicates growing peace and stability, but Ava had still not fully consolidated control over its southern domains (Than Tun, 1983-86, pt. 2, p. ix; UKI: 434; Harvey, 1925, 123-124). While Mingyiswasawke was working towards a stronger Ava state, the very Tai military force that had thrown Upper Burma into crisis during the 1360s was entering into a period of crisis itself. The newly emergent Ming dynasty of China invaded Yunnan in 1382.

3. The Ming conquest of the Tai Frontier (1382-1398)

The Ming conquest of the Tai-Yunnan frontier took a long sixteen years. Through the eyes of the Ming, the actions of one Tai leader named Si Lun-fa (r. 1382-1398) dominated this period. Almost all the historical sources that describe him were written by the Ming. Lacking a balanced perspective, questions naturally arise. What was Si Lun-fa’s role among Tai elites or in Tai military action against the Burmese and the Ming? Ming sources only provide hints. Two extreme interpretations span a spectrum of possible answers to these questions.

Mong Mao’s relations with the Ming drives the depiction of Mong Mao ruler Si Lun-fa found in Ming sources such as the Ming Shi-lu [Ming Court Annals] (Wade, 2005) and the Bai-yi Zhuan (Wade, 1996; Jiang Ying Liang, 1983). Several factors have to be considered when interpreting these depictions of Si Lun-fa including: the distance of the Ming Court from the Tai Frontier (cf Brooks, 1998, 30-56), a rigid preconceived view of politics, and the heavy usage of rhetoric in Ming court texts.

Si Lun-fa is often depicted as a strong ruler of a unified state. When he dealt with the Ming, he acted strategically in the best interests of Mong Mao often deceiving the Ming court. The observations of Ming envoys to the Tai frontier region circa 1396 who wrote the Bai-yi Zhuan, a travelogue rich in ethnographic detail, sometimes reveal that Si Lun-fa was weaker and had a lot less control of Tai ruling elite than Ming court pronouncements imply. Si Lun-fa derived political power that ensured a long reign in part from Ming support and legitimacy.

The initial Ming attempts to win Yunnan over (1369-1380)

The first communications between the new Ming Dynasty and Yunnan were prescient of Yunnan’s future. Ritualistic language in formal letters of instruction clearly signaled future Ming policy. The stature and prestige of the Ming court was at stake from the very beginning and would loom large over the next two centuries of Ming-Tai relations. As the royal proclamation had it, submission to the Ming was the next inevitable step in the cosmological order:

From ancient times, those who have been lords of all under Heaven have looked on that which is covered by Heaven, that which is contained by the Earth and that on which the sun and moon shine, and regardless of whether the place was near or far, or what manner of people they are, there was no place for which they did not wish a peaceful land and a prosperous existence. It is natural that when China is governed peacefully, foreign countries would come and submit… I am anxious that, as you are secluded in your distant places, you have not yet heard of my will. Thus, I am sending envoys to go and instruct you, so that you will all know of this (MSL 14 Jul 1370).
The Mongol prince Basalawarmi, a holdover from the Yuan dynasty, ruled over Yunnan from the capital in Kunming. He ruled indirectly over an ethnically diverse collection of small polities and chieftainships in Yunnan. The most powerful of these was controlled by the Duan family ruling over the area surrounding Dali Lake (Langlois, 1988, 143-44). Envoys were sent to coax the rulers of Yunnan in 1371 (MSL 8 Oct 1371). In 1372 the famous scholar Wang Wei offered terms of surrender to Yunnan as an envoy, but he was murdered in 1374 and another mission was sent in 1375. Once again the mission failed (Langlois, 1988, 143-144). A diplomatic mission was sent to Burma in 1374, but because Annam was at war with Champa the roads were blocked and the mission was recalled (MSL 1 Jan 1374). By 1380, the Ming were sending more forceful demands for submission (Wade, 2004, 4). Ming diplomacy was soon followed by war.

The Ming invasion and conquest of Yunnan (1380-1383)

In 1380, the Ming emperor began to forge a more active Yunnan policy. In the founding of the previous Yuan dynasty, Yunnan’s location had been of strategic importance and now figured into Ming geopolitical strategy. The Yuan had conquered the Dali region in Yunnan in order to surround the Southern Song, the last remnants of the Song dynasty. Remnants of the Mongol Yuan dynasty now remained as a threat for the Ming:

... the Mongols were still occupying the Mongolian Grassland, and could launch southern expeditions at any time they wished. More importantly, the Mongols still occupied Yunnan. If the Mongols attacked Ming China both from the north and from the southwest, the Ming court would have battles on two fronts. Therefore, in the 1370s, the Ming dynasty was facing a situation that was similar to what the Southern Song failed to cope with when Kublai Khan took over the Dali Kingdom. Such an international pattern pushed the Ming ruler to launch a campaign against Yunnan in order to avoid the fate of the Southern Song (Bin Yang, 2004, 51-52, 54).

Citing a precedent in the Han dynasty for tighter control, a military expedition was organized to conquer Yunnan. Troops were mustered and money distributed (MSL 20 Aug 1380). In September 1381, Fu You-de was appointed commander of Yunnan expeditionary forces with Lan Yu and Mu Ying, well-hardened veterans of early Ming campaigns in the Mongol north, as his assistants. The expeditionary forces amounted to 300,000 troops and were split into a larger force and a smaller diversionary force. Yunnan was quickly taken:

Fu Yu-te’s [Fu You-de] army reached Hu-kuang in October. In December he sent the smaller force to Yung-ning and Wu-sa, while he led the larger forces as planned into Yunnan. Balaswarmi sent 100,000 troops to guard Chu-ching, but Fu Yu-te and Mu Ying captured the enemy general and 20,000 of his troops. Fu Yu-te then quickly led a smaller force to aid the army at Wu-sa, while Lan Yu and Mu Ying hastened toward K’un-ming. On 6 January 1382, Balaswarmi, who had fled his city, burned his princely robes, drove his wife to her death in a lake and then committed suicide together with his chief ministers (Langlois, 1988, 144-46).

By February 1382, the Ming had extended control over the Kunming area and a further expedition was sent west to Dali. The ruling Duan family at Dali tried to negotiate to continue their autonomous ruler over the Dali area. The Ming general Fu Youde eventually lost his patience, attacked, defeated, and deported the Duan family en masse to the Ming capital at Nanjing (Bin Yang, 2004, 52-3). In 1383, the expedition to Yunnan returned to the Ming capital under Fu You-de and Lan Yu with Mu Ying remaining behind as the hereditary military governor of Yunnan (Langlois, 1988, 146). Altogether 160 people together with 170 horses for the Ming emperor were escorted back including two former officials of the Yuan court in Yunnan, native chieftains from Yunnan, and Guan-yin-bao who was appointed commander of the strategic Jin-chi garrison and given the name Li Guan (MSL 30 Mar 1383).

Steps were also taken to ensure a food supply for the large Chinese garrisons that remained in Yunnan after the campaigns. An envoy was sent from the Ming capital to Annam, in modern-day northern Vietnam, with a request for grain. Grain (5,000 shi) was sent to Shui-wei on the Lin-an border of Yunnan. The Annam ruler Pan refused to accept the gifts of gold and silks sent by the Chinese court (MSL 5 Aug 1384). The provincial government of Yunnan used their salt monopoly to ensure that the supply of rice in Yunnan was adequate:

Under the old precedents, merchants brought rice to Jin-chi [Baoshan] and for every dou, they were given one yin of salt. This was allowed to ensure grain supplies. Thus the merchants collected there and the supplies were more than sufficient. Later, officials did not allow the transport of grain and the merchants rarely went there.
Thus, the troops now have no means of ration supply. It is requested that the old system be followed (MSL 4 Feb 1386).

The precedent of using salt for military rice procurement (the "kai-zhong" system) must have been effective in the early 1380s when Ming forces had just newly arrived in Yunnan. The food supply in Yunnan was not sufficient to support the population increase that followed the establishment of Ming garrisons. Yunnan was endowed with a more than adequate salt supply though. The Ming created a narrowly delimited and tightly regulated exchange process to make up for a lack of rice markets in Yunnan.

The Chinese court also took measures to curb corruption. Chinese administrators who were appointed from outside localities in Yunnan were provided with adequate means of support, so they did not have to resort to bribery, which could have been a cause of resentment and rebellion among the local inhabitants:

Those who have inherited posts have long lived in their territories and they have their own stores and means of livelihood. It is thus not necessary to provide them with salaries and allowances. Those who are appointed have generally come to sojourn...in these areas and because they have won the support of the local people we are employing them for a time. If we do not give them salaries, they will have no means of sustaining a livelihood. The law officials are more likely to accept bribes (MSL 2 Dec 1384).

By 1384, the Ming had established a modicum of control over Yunnan, a control that would soon be challenged.

**Si Lun-fa seizes power and submits to the Ming (1382)**

Realignments were taking place in Mong Mao among the Tai ruling elite at the same time as the Ming invasion of Yunnan in 1382. Si Wa-fa, regarded as the ruler of Pingmian by the Chinese (Mong Mao by Tais) attacked Jin-chi. The garrison at Jin-chi was a pivotal gateway and staging point for expeditions into the frontier region (Wade, 1996, app. 2, p. 1).

News of the Ming invasion in the north reached the Tai Frontier and spurred a group of Tai elites into action. During the winter, while Si Wa-fa was away hunting in Nan-dian, when a high ranking member of the Tai elite by the name of Da-lu-fang assassinated him and installed Si Lun-fa, a legitimate heir, as ruler of Mong Mao (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 1, 11). Si Lun-fa marched immediately to Jinch and submitted to the Ming (LFM: 163). In April 1382, Pingmian was made into an indigenous autonomous region by the Ming and Si Lun-fa was appointed governor there. In August 1384, Si Lun-fa sent a tribute mission to the Ming court in Nanjing under the leadership of Dao Ling-meng, initiating a "tribute system of regulated trade" with Tai chieftainships that would serve "its function well of maintaining Ming honor and security over long intervals of peace" (Wang Gungwu, 1998, 325). The regularity and importance of tribute missions from the Tai Frontier to the Ming Court over hundreds of years can be seen in the great bulk of entries devoted to this activity in Geoff Wade’s *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu* (2005).

While Si Lun-fa’s diplomatic mission resided at the Ming court, the court proceeded to concentrate political power and legitimacy vis-à-vis the Ming in Si Lun-fa and Mong Mao. The seal of authority issued to Pingmian by the previous Yuan court was surrendered and Pingmian was promoted to a higher level of indigenous autonomous region. In September of 1384, the adjacent Tai state of Luchuan was merged with Pingmian and also given to Si Lun-fa. During the Yuan dynasty, Luchuan and Pingmian had been ruled separately (MSL 14 Sep 1384, MSL 21 Aug 1384). The large Tai Chieftainship of Hsenwi [Mu-bang] also came within Mong Mao’s control (Daniels, 2006, 31). In 1384, the Ming court sent a diplomat to put an end to the Tai attacks against Ava (Harvey, 1925, 8; Parker, 1893, 49). The Pegu-Ava War (1383-1325) also began in the early 1380s. Tai manpower would eventually provide a large share of Ava’s military force in these wars.

**A Tai challenge to Ming rule in Yunnan (1382-1388)**

After the Ming conquest of Yunnan, Tai leaders launched a series of counter-attacks against the Ming at Jing-dong, and then Ding-bian (MSL 11 Mar 1396). In January 1386, Tai forces attacked Ming controlled Jingdong and the newly appointed Jingdong governor E-tao fled to a place named Baiyai Chuan near Dali. The official Feng Chong was sent to deal with the problem, but encountering fog and bad weather, his forces were defeated by the Tais (MSL 2 Jan 1391; LFM: 165). Following this humiliating defeat at Jingdong, the Chinese censor Li Yuanming was sent from the Ming capital to the Tai Frontier to investigate the situation. When he returned to the capital in May
1387 his report displeased the emperor. According to the report the Tai presence along the frontier presented a security risk for several reasons. First, there was the issue of deception, the emperor asserted that the Tais simply could not be trusted:

Recently, the Censor Li Yuan-ming returned from Ping-mian. I have listened to his words and know of the deception and deceitfulness of the Bai-yi [Tai]. Even in tens of thousands of their words, not one can be believed. I have observed that the man and the yi [ethnic groups under native rule in Yunnan] have rebelled and are watching, ready to make use of opportunities. They present a danger to our borders (MSL 28 May 1387).

Accusations of deception are a common way that dominant elites signal breeches in the public transcript by subordinates. According to the Ming court, the authority of Ming rule had been compromised by a lack of respect for the Ming institutions of rule, perhaps indicating that the conventions of the Ming public transcript had yet to be mastered by the Tai chieftains:

Last year, the central Yun-nan military commander sent people to the Bai-yi [Tai] and these people demanded much property and goods. They did not consider the seriousness of the situation and, displaying their power, acted in a martial manner and ridiculed the various man [ethnic groups]. Also, because the Jing-jiang Prince was without abilities, the Da-li seal [from the Yuan dynasty] was used to issue orders. All of these acts were wrong and even insulting to the Emperor and embarrassing to the Court (MSL 28 May 1387).

The emperor ordered military defences to be prepared at Jin-chi, Chu-xiong, Pin Dian, Lan-cang and Jiang-zhong with "high walls and deep moats, firm palisades and many cannons for defence" (MSL 28 May 1387).

The imperial proclamation makes a questionable assumption that there was centralized and coordinated control and action among the leaders of the Tai frontier states. The emperor decides on diplomatic isolation as a solution:

From now on, no-one is permitted to go to Ping-mian. It should be treated with coolness. If it sends a despatch, a brief response is to be made, but if it does not send any despatches, no actions are to be initiated. If they send tribute products, they are not to be received. Then in a few years, the territory of Lu-chuan will be included on the maps as part of the Empire. Ministers, you must firmly observe my words and must not be remiss in this! (MSL 28 May 1387).

In the wake of this diplomatic isolation in February 1388, Tai forces attacked and took Mo-sha-le stockade. Mu Ying sent troops to uproot the Tais. Under the leadership of Dao Si-lang, the Tais gathered over 100,000 soldiers and one hundred elephants, but were overwhelmed by the Chinese who killed over fifteen hundred Tais, including two generals, and seized Tai elephants and horses. The remaining Tai troops fled (MSL 3 Jun 1396, MSL 13 Feb 1388, Cambridge; LFM: 165). After the defeat at the Mo-sha-le stockade, repeated attacks were made on Ding-bian in Chu-xiong prefecture, threatening to make a breech into the parts of Yunnan directly administered by the Ming. Chinese sources suggest that containing the Tai to the west bank of the Mekong River was part of Ming strategy (Daniels, 2006b):

Si Lun-fa had raised a force of 300,000 men and over 100 elephants and had repeatedly attacked Ding-bian. He wanted to gain revenge for the Mo-sha-le campaign and his force was extremely violent. The newly attached man and the yi secretly formed alliances and they all had rebellious inclinations (MSL 6 May 1388).

Si Lun-fa later denied that he was the one who carried out these attacks and there is some evidence that the Tai leader Diao Si-lang acted independently from Si Lun-fa in attacking Dingbian since he was the only one captured. Two passages from the Bai-yi Zhuan support this interpretation:

In … [1386/87] … [Tai forces] attacked Jing-dong. The following year, a subordinate named Diao Si-lang attacked Ding-bian. The Son of Heaven [Chinese] ordered the Xi-ping Marquis Mu Ying to take on command of the troops and destroy him. Diao Si-lang was captured and the yi people [Tais] submitted through fear... (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 2).

And once again:
Dao Si-lang did not obey your commands [from the emperor] and plundered Ding-bian. While you were unable to bring an end to those hostilities, Heaven provided majesty to our border commanders and thereby Dao Silang and the others were immediately exterminated (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 11).

Power among Tai elites seems to have been overall diffuse and fragmented. Even by 1391 many of the Tai elite were still not under Si Lun-fa’s control (MSL 2 Jan 1391). Several Tai leaders appear to have been individually responsible for Tai military actions in the period following the Ming conquest (1382-1388). By 1388, though, different Tai chieftains who may have been acting independently in the past may have been joining together into a more centralized and coordinated confederation and working together toward common goals. Along the lines of the Di Cosmo-Andreski model of state formation (Di Cosmo, 1999; Andreski, 1968; Fernquest, 2005b, 373-377), in the face of a rising crisis, the Tai Frontier may have been moving towards a larger and more integrated chieftainship and towards becoming a state. The most prominent Tai leader in Ming relations, Si Lun-fa, dominates the public transcript of Ming-Tai relations (c. 1382-1398) despite the fact that another Tai chieftainship Mong Yang played a more prominent role in conflicts with Burmese Ava to the south during this period.

The Battle for Dingbian 1388: A Ming punitive expedition against the Tais

Tai attacks on Ming frontier outposts eventually led to a large-scale Ming punitive expedition. The governor of Yunnan, Mu Ying, received orders to punish Si Lun-fa. A military training mission was sent to Yunnan and to ensure an adequate food supply for a large expedition. An official was sent to Sichuan with thirty-two thousand ding of paper money to purchase ten thousand head of ploughing buffalo. Plans were made to set up state farms and grain stores to provide a food supply for the increased troops in Yunnan (MSL 1 Oct 1387). Local rulers loyal to the Ming asked for troop reinforcements (MSL 6 Jul 1387). With a cavalry force of thirty thousand, Mu Ying marched towards Dingbian on the Tai frontier. Arriving near the Tai encampment after fifteen days, he built defensive fortifications for battle. The Ming Shi-lu relates:

First 300 light cavalymen were sent to provoke them [the Tais]. The Bai-yi [Tais] met them with 10,000 men and 30 vanguard elephants to do battle. Zhang Yin, commander of the Yun-nan Forward Guard, led 50-plus cavalrymen as a vanguard, while the chieftains, astride their huge elephants, proceeded forward. Our army let fly with their arrows and these hit an elephant in the left knee and the ribs. The elephant fell to the ground and the chieftain was also hit, but fled. He was pursued and killed with arrows. Then, with great screams, the troops rushed forward and hundreds of heads were taken. The army took advantage of the victory and proceeded forward with a great uproar. The bandit forces thus drew back (MSL 6 May 1388).

The next morning, Mu Ying brought his generals and aides together and addressed them to spur them into battle and brought a special repeating crossbow weapon into the battle:

[Mu Ying] issued orders to the army to set up guns and 'mystical-mechanism arrows' in three lines within the ranks. Then when the elephants advanced, the front line of guns was to fire its arrows. If the elephants did not retreat, the second line was to fire off its arrows. If the elephants still did not fall back, the third line was to fire its arrows (MSL 6 May 1388).

The Ming Shi-lu describes the Tai battle array:

[The Tais] came out of their camp and joined ranks to meet them. The chieftains, local commanders and the zhao-gang [Mong Mao lord controlling 1000 people, see Wade, 1996, app. 2, p. 2] all rode on elephants. The elephants were all armoured and on their backs they bore a battle-turret like a parapet, while bamboo tubes hung on the two sides. Short lances were placed between these prepared for attacks. When the forces were about to meet, the massed elephants rushed forward. Our army attacked them and fired off arrows and stones. The sound shook the mountains and valleys and the elephants, shaking with fear, fled (MSL 6 May 1388).

The Ming forces pursued the Tai forces right up to their stockade and lit the stockade on fire. The Ming Shi-lu describes how discipline increased the intensity of battle:
From a high vantage point Mu Ying saw that the left force of our army had retreated a little. He thus sent urgent orders that the force commander be beheaded. The force commander was thus frightened and roused and, with a yell, rushed into the fray. The troops followed him and each was worth 100 men (MSL 6 May 1388).

Intense fighting led to heavy casualties among the defeated Tai forces with thirty thousand dead and ten thousand prisoners taken. Half the elephants died in battle. A mere thirty-seven were taken captive. In the flight and pursuit that followed, many Tais died from their wounds and starvation (MSL 6 May 1388). Mu Ying sent word of the victory to the capital and led his troops back.

The pursuit of Si Lun-fa and war reparations (1388)

The defeated Tai forces retreated to Jing-dong and Ding-bian and Mu Ying received instructions from the Ming capital to move against them and “exert gradual pressure” on their new base at Jing-dong (MSL 25 May 1388). Particular attention was again paid to ensuring an adequate food supply to support the soldiers on the expedition:

Ding-bian is distant from the Yun-nan lake by at least 10 days by slow march. If the troops proceed there at a fast march, they will find it difficult to do battle. You should ensure security, state farms should be opened up, and firm walls should be erected so that battle can be done with them. When the Great Army is collected and ready, the advance should begin” (MSL 25 May 1388).

Mu Ying was also instructed to give the Tai leaders the option of paying an indemnity if they wished to surrender:

If they want to offer tribute and request that the troops be withdrawn, you should instruct them in the Great Precepts of Right Conduct, require them to repay the funds (Alt: food) we have expended and have them present to the Court 15,000 horses and the troops who were killed in Jing-dong. They are also to be instructed to offer as tribute 500 elephants, 30,000 buffalo and 300 elephant attendants. If they listen to orders and offer tribute in the amounts specified, their request to surrender should be allowed (MSL 25 May 1388).

The Tai leader Si Lun-fa sent a mission to Kunming to submit to the Ming, but blamed two other Tai leaders, Dao Si-lang and Dao Si-yang, for the military actions against the Ming. Mu Ying sent word of the Tai submission to the capital and an official named Da-yong was sent to deal with the matter. The envoy carried with him a message for Si Lun-fa from the emperor. Si Lun-fa’s domain, Luchuan was seen as a distant and strange place in this rather assertive public transcript:

… Lu-chuan [Mong Mao] is secluded in the South-west, 10,000 li in the distance. It is not in China’s maps. Why is Lu-chuan alone like this? Like in Yun-nan’s territory, the roads are precipitous, the people make their lairs on cliffs and have to drink their water from the springs and rivers below. They have animal form and yi appearance and their ways are lacking in moral principles (MSL 28 Nov 1389).

The emperor recounts all the problems that Tai resistance had caused for the Ming conquest of Yunnan, the two Jinchii and Jing-dong campaigns they waged, the intransigence of the Tai leader whom he likened to the previous Mongol-Yuan ruler of Yunnan, Balaswarmi. In the end, the solution to these problems was military occupation, troops would “establish camps and fields where they could both plant crops and protect our territory.” (MSL 28 Nov 1389). The emperor admitted that he was not certain that Si Lun-fa was completely in control of the Tai forces that attacked the Ming:

Now, you have come and claimed that the previous violations on the border were not your doing but rather the acts of Dao Si-lang and so on. I have not examined whether this is so or not (MSL 28 Nov 1389).

He admitted that he could have been wrong to attribute all Tai attacks to Si Lun-fa, but he demanded that Si Lun-fa pay an indemnity to “assuage the anger of the various generals.” The emperor also demanded that Si Lun-fa join with Chinese forces in a punitive expedition against a Yunnan leader named Zhi-chun. Shortly afterwards, in 1390,
Si-Lun-fa sent yet another tribute mission to the capital (MSL 26 Oct 1390). Two garrisons were established at Jing-dong and Meng-hua around 1391 (MSL 2 Jan 1391).

An experience by a Ming diplomat in the Tai Frontier around 1390 highlights the cultural misunderstanding that plagued Ming-Tai relations. The Ming appointed an official to deliver credentials and orders of instruction to Luchuan-Pingmian-Mong-Mao. When he arrived, Tai ruling elite presented him with gifts including gold which he refused. He was told: "if you do not accept this display of kindness, the man [barbarian] people may well harbour suspicion and engage in rebellion. It is better to accept the presents," so he accepted them and then quickly handed them over to the Yunnan provincial administration. Following his successful mission, he was promoted to a new post (MSL 16 Oct 1390).

A wholly sino-centric Ming approach sees the conquest uncritically through the eyes of the abundant Ming sources. A wholly Tai-centric approach sees everything the Ming did as effective exploitation. Si Lun-fa derived some temporary power by falling in line with the Ming emperor’s plans for the Tai Frontier and bringing in line a Tai elite at Mong Mao who lacked unity and coordination. The Ming court, immersed in the metaphysics of their political philosophy where Ming rule was an essential part of order in the universe, misunderstood the nature of political control in the Tai-Yunnan frontier region, attributing to Si Lun-fa the leadership of a centralized, unified state, and in the end through Ming support, Si Lun-fa effectively became a Ming agent in the frontier region, an agency relationship that was quickly challenged.

Tai attacks against Ava and a Ming mission to the region (1393-1396)

Tai raids against Burmese Ava escalated once again in the early 1390s as they had done during the period of crisis at Ava from 1359 to 1368. In 1393, Mong Yang attacked Ava territory and the ruler of Legaing [Minbu] led troops against them, but was driven back to Sagaing. Tai forces laid siege to Sagaing, burning buildings, and surrounding the town walls, but Thilawa, ruler of Yamethin to the south of Ava, led troops to Sagaing and ended the siege. Thilawa drove the Tai attackers off as far as Shangon, twenty miles to the northwest of Sagaing, were he defeated them in battle (UKI: 458-461; Harvey, 85). The Burmese sought Chinese help to put an end to Tai intrusions. In 1395, Ava sent a mission to the Ming court seeking their support and asking Ming envoys to mediate. In response the Ming established the “Mianzhong” pacification commission at Ava (SLC: 79, 234).

Continuing the long succession of missions that had been sent from the Ming capital to the Tai Frontier, Li Si-cong and Qian Gu-xun were sent in 1396 on a much longer mission to Burma and the Tai Frontier. At the end of their mission in 1497, Li Si-cong and Qian Gu-xun wrote the now famous account of life in the Tai Frontier, the Bai-yi Zhuan, essentially an ethnography or travelogue of their journey. The mission was sent to put an end to warfare in the Tai Frontier (MSL 11 Mar 1396). They record that Ava had been “engaged in armed conflict” with the Tai for several years and in the winter of 1395-96 Ava made a formal complaint to the Ming court (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 8). There were raids against other locations besides Ava including Sipsongpanna-Cheli, Chiang Mai, and Kale (MSL 11 Mar 1396).

The Bai-yi Zhuan portrays Tai leadership as less unified than the Ming Shi-lu does. Unlike official histories such as the Ming Shi or Ming Shi-lu, the Bai-yi Zhuan was composed on the scene, on the Tai-Yunnan frontier by the envoys themselves who talked to the very historical actors who had participated in the Tai-Ming warfare of the 1380s. The emperor wrote long messages of instruction to both the rulers of Burma and Si Lun-fa for the envoys to take with them on their journey. The imperial message to the Burmese king of Ava describes the distance and separation between the Chinese capital and Burmese Ava quite poetically:

The roads are long and dangerous, the mountains and rivers present great obstacles and your customs and practices are different. These situations were created by Heaven and fixed by Earth. You have been diligent in sending an envoy on the long and dangerous journey, to cross neighbouring states, to rush through mist and push through fog, to push onward at dawn and not rest till dusk, and to suffer the wind and the cold until he reached China. It is indeed a difficult journey. The ancients had a saying: ‘When a superior man wishes to undertake some matter at a distant place, even though it be more than a thousand li away, spirit will communicate and intent will be understood.’ Now, from 10,000 li distant, you have diligently sent an envoy over such a distance. This demonstration of worthiness would have been extraordinary in the past, and is quite singular today (MSL 11 Mar 1396).
The Ming emperor aiming for a state of peace between the Burmese and Tais, sweetened his call for peace with a rhetoric that made peace more palatable to both sides.

… bring an end to the problems, allowing both sides to be done with warfare, so as to preserve your people's happiness both in the towns and throughout the countryside. The people of your two countries, although living in their separate places, could live in peace with nothing more required than the maintenance of careful inspections at the border passes and markets (MSL 11 Mar 1396).

The message of instruction that the Ming emperor presented to Si Lun-fa outlined nine kinds of punitive military expedition in Chinese political traditions and finds Si Lun-fa guilty of violating one of them, "the crime of taking advantage of weakness to attack an isolated state," because every year he had used his troops to attack Sipsongpanna-Cheli, Chiang Mai, Jia-li, and Burma. The Ming emperor condemned these attacks: "They are small states and their people few and now you have taken them." He also condemned Tai attacks to the west, towards the heartland of Yunnan, on such places as Jin-chi, Jing-dong, and Ding-dian. The emperor expected further attacks and issued a severe warning:

Recently, I have heard that you have foolishly aggressed against your neighbouring states, with the intention of expanding your territory and illegally gaining more people. Also, you plan to attack our South-west. Verily, this cannot be permitted! … You, Si Lun-fa have not maintained good relations with your neighbours, and instead have sent troops in three directions, stupidly annexing other states. Such is your greed and your plotting. The states surrounding Lu-chuan have, from ancient times until now, all had their own rulers. They have never been united...But I now warn you to content yourself with what you have at present. If you are not satisfied with what you have at present and move to take more, then you will either lose everything or perish. Thus, would it not be best to just look after that which you have at present? (MSL 11 Mar 1396).

On hearing these orders, Si Lun-fa was frightened and quickly complied with the emperor’s wishes, according the Ming Annals. Si Lun-fa walked a rather thin tightrope. In essence, please the Ming or please the Tai elites back home in Mong Mao.

 Shortly after reaching an accommodation with the Ming, one of Si Lun-fa’s subordinate chiefs Dao Gan-meng rebelled. Si Lun-fa believed that he could use the envoy from the Ming court, Si-cong, to force their submission, so he wouldn’t let Si-cong leave and presented him with elephants, horses, gold and precious stones as gifts, but Si-cong refused the gifts, rebuffed Si Lun-fa, and asked to be released:

China does not consider elephants, horses, gold and jade as valuables; what it values is only loyal subjects, noble statesmen, strong soldiers, gallant generals, filial sons and obedient grandsons. You should send us envoys back to the Court and in future should not engage in raiding and trouble-making. Thus will you be showing your spirit as a loyal prince (MSL 11 Mar 1396).

Si Lun-fa invited Si-cong to a feast and afterwards had them escorted to the border. On his return to the capital, the emperor was impressed with the work of the envoys and presented them with gifts as a token of his esteem (MSL 11 Mar 1396).

Si Lun-fa deposed by a rival Tai leader (1397)

A year before the first Ming emperor died in 1398, the Tai-Yunnan frontier descended into chaos. After the Ming envoys return to the capital, Si Lun-fa welcomed even more outsiders into his domain and control over the frontier slipped quickly from his hands. First, he played host to itinerant Buddhist monks:

Initially, the people in Ping-mian did not believe in Buddhism. A monk went there from Yun-nan and spoke well about the effects of one’s actions in successive lives [karma] . Si Lun-fa placed great trust in his words (MSL 10 Oct 1397).

After his apparent conversion to Buddhism (LFM: 166, note: 18), Si Lun-fa next played host to renegade Chinese soldiers, fascinated by their mastery over military technologies:
...some border troops from Jin-chi fled to his territory. They were familiar with cannons and guns. Si Lun-fa was pleased with their abilities. Thus he gave them gold belts and, with the monk, placed them above the various tribes” (MSL 10 Oct 1397).

Welcoming outsiders and giving them higher status than the ruling elite at his own court led to enmity and fissions among the Tai leaders surrounding him. In the face of decreasing power, Si Lun-fa was forced to flee to the Ming and seek Chinese protection. Dao Gan-meng was the leader of the faction that eventually seized power:

Dao Gan-meng hated them [the outsiders] and thus, together with his subordinates, rebelled. He then led his troops to attack Teng-chong Prefecture [to the east into Ming controlled Yunnan]. Si Lun-fa, afraid of Gan-meng’s power, fled to Yun-nan and the Xi-ping Marquis Mu Chun sent him to the [Ming] capital (MSL 10 Oct 1397).

When Si Lun-fa arrived at the Ming capital, the emperor sympathized with him and made military appointments to support him against Dao Gan-meng. The emperor was concerned that the proper steps be taken to thwart the power of Dao Gan-meng:

A guard will be established at Teng-chong to monitor the situation. Wei-yuan and Yuan-gan have already come to the allegiance of the Court and other places are heeding orders. Thus, the force of Dao Gan-meng’s rebellion is growing increasingly less and an increasing number of his supporters are coming to allegiance. Your return to your country can only be a matter of days. However, if the advance is made without caution and Dao Gan-meng’s power is still substantial, his supporters in the country will not dare oppose him. Then the territory will never be yours (MSL 14 Dec 1397).

Si Lun-fa was finally sent back to Yunnan with “one hundred liang of gold, 150 liang of silver and 500 ding of paper money” and a good upbraiding from the emperor. The emperor invokes the natural order once again in words of admonition (reminiscent of modern democracy) as he sends Si Lun-fa on his journey:

In ancient times, there was a saying: ‘Find pleasure in that which the people find pleasure in, and hate that which the people hate.’ This was said to those who look after the people, and meant that where the people’s hearts lie, there also lie the principles of Heaven. Those who are good at ruling the people must seek the people’s feelings. Now you, Si Lun-fa, are head of the region of Ping-mian. However, you became divorced from the likes and dislikes of the people. The people under you could not tolerate this and thus you fled to us. I know that your ancestors benefited the people for generations and thus the people appointed you. However, when you lost the people’s support, you turned your back on your country and your ancestor’s graves, left your relatives and came here. If you long remain here and do not return, the territory will no longer be yours. However, you must recognize that right and wrong are always clear and Heaven’s punishment is always correct. Generals have been sent to punish the crimes of Dao Gan-meng and thus I am ordering you to return to your old state (MSL 15 Jan 1398).

Blamed for not looking out for the interests of his own people, Si Lun-fa seems more a willing policy instrument in a “unite [under one leader] and conquer” strategy than the traditional “divide and conquer” strategy. In hindsight, the interests of the Ming emperor and Si Lun-fa’s Tai subjects were irreconcilable. Pressed in these two opposing directions, Si Lun-fa met his downfall. Ironically, dependence on the Ming emperor sorely tested his legitimacy with his own people. Instructions were given to a Chinese official, the Xi-ping Marquis Mu Chun to escort Si Lun-fa back to Yunnan and to support him militarily. Nowadays, we might call such an outside support of a ruler who had lost his legitimacy, a puppet government.

Dao Gan-meng was quick to seek legitimacy from the Ming. He sent an envoy to Mu Chun requesting permission to offer tribute and, before a reply was even received, the rebel leader “sent people with local products and requested that he be appointed as native official. He was then attacked by Dao De-nong of Da-dian.” Dao Gan-meng was unable to defend himself against Dao Denong and requested an opportunity to petition the Ming court for help. The Ming commander Mu Chun allowed him to make the petition (MSL 15 Jan 1398). Dao Gan-meng’s power was short-lived. Dao Gan-meng claimed in his petition that control of Mong Mao was faced an even further challenge by other Tai leaders in Si Lun-fa’s clan and that the Ming court should send military aid to support him against these other dangerous Tai elite. The rebel was, in turn, quickly rebelled against:
Hu-du of Si Lun-fa’s tribe, has occupied Teng-chong and Nu-jiang, as well as Jing-dong, Yi-wai and Wei-yuan, and all these places have inclined to culture and allied themselves with the Court. Dao Gan-meng is afraid of being attacked and he wants to use the Court’s might to repel Hu-du. [name of the rebel] His claimed desire to come and offer tribute should not, I fear, be too readily believed. The troops which we were ordered to assemble now await deployment (MSL 11 Mar 1398a).

This threat by Tai elites provided Dao Gan-meng with a convenient opportunity to seek Ming help, but there could well have been an element of truth in it. The Tai chieftainship of Mong Mao lacked the essential integration and cohesion of a full-fledged state.

The emperor admitted that Dao Gan-meng was probably trying to deceive him, and was willing to allow Dao Gan-ming a chance to submit and offer tribute, if he did so in good faith and followed Chinese traditions in the matter:

The distant yi are indeed guileful and deceitful. However, I am leniently allowing the request to see if he will change. Those routes occupied by Hu-du you should pacify and instruct as the situations dictate. If Dao Gan-ming is being deceitful, you should make careful preparations and then punish him. Do not lose the opportunity (MSL 11 Mar 1398).

Si Lun-fa was already enroute from the Ming capital to re-assume control.

**The reinstatement of Si Lun-fa (1398)**

Mu Chun provided a military escort for Si Lun-fa back to Yunnan. Mu Chun stayed with Si Lun-fa in Jinchi and sent a commander by the name of Fu with a force of some five thousand troops to attack the rebel Dao Gan-meng:

Fu…crossed the Gao-liang-gong Mountains and directly attacked Nan Dian, greatly destroying it and killing the chieftain Dao Ming-meng [rebel and the first envoy Si Lun-fa sent to the Ming capital], and killing or capturing a large number of people. They then took the troops back to attack Jing-han Stockade, but the stockade, relying on its high and dangerous location, held out and did not fall. As the government troops' grain and weapons were nearly depleted and the bandits' strength was growing, he sent a messenger to urgently advise [Mu] Chun of the emergency.

[Mu] Chun led 500 cavalrymen to relieve them. Taking advantage of the night, they moved to Nu-jiang and the following morning proceeded directly there. He ordered the cavalrymen to gallop to below the stockade and raise dust to scare them. The bandits in their high position saw the dust clouds rising to Heaven and, having not expected the troops of the Great Army to arrive, were greatly shocked and frightened. Thus, they led their troops in surrender. Chun took advantage of the victory to also attack Kong-dong Stockade. The bandits there fled by night (MSL 11 Mar 1398–b).

Mu Chun died of an illness and the official who replaced him (He Fu) was able to capture Dao Gan-meng and install Si Lun-fa as ruler once again.

Si Lun-fa is not heard from again, however, and a completely new group of Tai elite rose in his place and embarked on a short-lived campaign of local raiding. As the Ming Shi-ju reports: “his [Si Lun-fa’s] son San-peng [Si Xing-fa], together with Dao Hun and Dao Cuan pillaged the residents in Bai-mam and Wei-yuan.” Wang You of the Yunnan guard struck back and put end to these raids (MSL 14 May 1403). A state of continual chaos then swirled around Mong Mao. In the next few years, Beijing, Yunnan, and Ava as well as Luchuan-Pingmian would all experience an almost complete change of leadership.

**4. The Ava-Pegu and Ming-Vietnam wars (1401-1427)**

The accession of the Yongle emperor (r. 1402-1424) signaled a fundamental change in Ming grand strategy. A new foreign policy activism with interventionalist goals pushed Ming state institutions to the breaking point. As Wang Gungwu explains:
... the traditional tribute system was never meant to support active international politics. It had been evolved over centuries to encourage regular but minimal foreign relations, to provide an instrument for imperial defense policy, and to satisfy some of the trading requirements of foreign rulers and Chinese merchants. In sum, the Yung-lo [Yongle] emperor's new activism was actually built on his father's reorganised foreign policy system, which had been carefully constructed to limit further foreign contacts. The use of that same system to pursue interventionalist goals suggests that the Yung-lo emperor's ambition ran far ahead of his understanding of the nature of traditional foreign relations with China's Southeast Asian neighbors ... He clearly wanted to elicit signs of respect from the smaller and weaker states in the south (Wang Gungwu, 1998, 322).

In the early decades of the fifteenth century, two wars had a profound effect on the geopolitics of mainland Southeast Asia's hinterlands. The Ava-Pegu War (1383-1425) engaged a whole generation of elites in Upper and Lower Burma (San Lwin, n.d.; Fernquest, 2006), while the Ming-Vietnam war, occupation, and transformation of northern Vietnam into the Ming province of Jiao-zhi (c. 1406-1427), likewise engaged a whole generation of elites from the Ming and Dai Viet courts (Whitmore, 1985; Taylor, 1998, 955-957). The royal courts involved in these conflicts mobilized massive quantities of military man and animal power and displaced large numbers of humans and animals from one geographical region to another. Much of the Ming military manpower in Yunnan was mobilized for the Ming war and occupation in Vietnam (MSL 12 May 1406; MSL 18 Jul 1406; MSL 24 Jul 1406, MSL 25 Aug 1406; MSL 31 Aug 1408). With these large-scale movements came potential for contention over resources.

From 1401 to 1416, the Tai realm became a military resource base for the Ava-Pegu war. Ava’s war in Lower Burma was fueled by a desire for Tai manpower and animals. Later, after the war ended in 1425, Tai intervention in the politics of Upper Burma was a major factor preventing a return to peaceful rule. The Ming invasion and occupation of northern Vietnam in starting in 1406 drained Yunnan of Ming elites and military manpower many of whom may have returned at the end of the occupation in 1427.

**Ming frontier administration reorganized (1402-1406)**

The first Ming emperor died in 1398. Political turmoil and civil war accompanied a long succession crisis and hiatus in political control (c. 1398-1404). When the succession crisis had finally settled and the new Yongle emperor was securely in possession of the Ming throne, Yunnan’s territorial organisation and governance underwent radical change. Succession occurred at every level of leadership. The Yongle emperor, son of the first Hongwu emperor, prevailed at the Ming court (Cambridge History of China, v. 7, Ming Dynasty, pp. 184-204). After a long struggle at Ava, rule passed from the long reigning Minkiswasawke to a younger son Mingaung kept out of harm’s way (Fernquest, 2006, 10, 25). After Si Lun-fa’s death, probably in 1399 (LFM: 167), the mantle of Tai leadership at Mong Mao passed on to his son Si Xing-fa. The governorship of Yunnan passed to Mu Sheng after the death of his father Mu Ying, hereditary ruler of Yunnan and adopted son of the first Ming emperor. Hsenwi’s ruler Nang Fa Hom Muang (r. 1395-1405) also changed (Witthayasakphan, 2001b, 20). Even the peaceful successions in Yunnan, far away from the Ming capital, described summarily without any details, might have been contested with murder and expulsion, despite historical records that claim natural death and orderly succession from father to son.

The Ming created a new administrative organization and policies for the Tai Frontier. Policies included: (1) divide-and-rule by breaking larger Tai domains into smaller ones, (2) Si Lun-fa’s former all-inclusive domain of Luchuan-Pingmian was reduced in size, (3) a tally system for reliable communication of orders between the distant Ming capital and the Tai frontier, (4) increased taxation, (5) strengthening the Tengchong and Yongchang garrisons that served as gateways into the Tai frontier (Wade, 2004, 9), and most importantly, (6) a continued commitment to diplomacy, as opposed to military intervention, to put an end to Tai-Burmese warfare. Yongle, pursued an aggressive policy of warfare from 1406 in Annam, modern-day northern Vietnam, which pulled Ming troops out of Yunnan, leaving a vacuum in military.

From 1402, the new emperor made a flurry of administrative changes. After almost twenty years of failure in governance over the Tai-Yunnan frontier, Ming officials seem to have had second thoughts about raising a single Tai leader to rule over all the others. The large all-inclusive Luchuan-Pingmian domains of Si Lun-fa were replaced with smaller administrative divisions (MSL 20 Dec 1436). The territory of Luchuan-Pingmian (Mong Mao) was partitioned into three pieces that were to become known as the three fus (prefectures): Meng Yang [Mong Yang], Mu Bang [Hsenwi], and Meng-ding.
Larger territorial divisions and jurisdictions were broken into smaller ones. Divide and rule was a long-standing principle in Chinese political theory. This policy sought to lessen the power of domains under native rule and make them less of a threat to the Chinese state by dividing a larger political domain into smaller ones, sponsoring alternative rulers, and transforming local rulers into rivals (Wade, 2004, 23-25). This was a distinct break from the previous attempt to rule the frontier under one Tai leader. The turn of the century and need to consolidate Ming rule and maintain the momentum of the first Hongwu emperor, revived this ancient practice. The Ming court only gradually discovered the contributory role this policy played in transforming the Tai Frontier into a region of endemic warfare along the Tai-Yunnan frontier. Ming forward garrisons at Tengchong and Yongchang established control over the Tai frontier (Wade, 2004, 9). Four smaller Chieftain Commissions, Lujiang, Ganyai, Dahou, and Wandian, were also established under the Jinchi garrison (Sun Laichen, 2000, 223; Jiang Yingliang, 1983, 244; Liew Foon Ming, 1996, 165).

Tax collection was deemed less of a priority by the Yong-le emperor than tightening administrative control over the Tai Frontier. Starting in the 1390s, after the Tai challenges to Ming rule in Yunnan of the 1380’s, Si Lun-fa was to pay the Ming court an annual silver tax instead of corvee labor. This tax was sporadically, if ever, collected and was finally cancelled after Si Lun-fa’s death in 1403 because it was considered too much of a burden on the local population (Liew Foon Ming, 1996, 168; Wade, 2004, 5). The first priority of frontier policy was to foster loyalty to the Ming court, not extract taxes (MSL 12 Mar 1403).

The Ava-Pegu War: Irregular cavalry forces from the Tai frontier (1401-1406)

The death of Ava’s king Minkyiswasawke after thirty years of consolidating rule brought a reversal in military action along the Upper Burma-Yunnan axis. Burmese expeditions into the Tai Frontier replaced the Tai raids into Upper Burma of the previous century. Tai-Ava warfare had abated for a time after the diplomatic efforts of the Ming in the 1390s, but rose once again after 1401. Ava sent expeditions into the Tai region against Hsenwi, Mong Yang, Bhamo, and Mong Mao [Mawdon Mawke] to augment man, horse, and elephant power in the long war against Rajadhirat’s Pegu in the south (1383-1425). The Ming made efforts both diplomatic and military to put an end to these Tai-Burmese hostilities and the latter finally ground to a halt around 1416 with Ava’s last largescale Tai campaign. By this time, a new Mong Mao ruler Si Ren-fa had risen to power. Si Ren-fa would shift his focus from Ava in the west towards Chinese directly ruled heartlands of Yunnan in the east.

Early in the reign of the Ava king Mingaung I (r. 1401-1422), the Burmese began using Tai military man and animal power to augment their military strength. Tai warriors quickly gained a reputation as cavalrymen traveling in the vanguard of Ava’s army in the south. While the Ava-Pegu war entered its second decade, driven by offensive actions on both sides, several devastating events struck Ava. Ava suffered a large-scale Tai attack in the 1490s and a succession crisis weakened Ava at the beginning of Mingaung I’s reign. To recover from these events and renew its military power, Ava targeted Tai chieftainships to the north as a supply of horses and manpower. Rajadhirat Ayei-dawpon provides many examples of the prominence of Tai cavalry in the Ava-Pegu War (See Fernquest, 2006, 11, 13-16). The Rajadhirat Ayeidawpon also indicates that the participation of Tai forces, though initially coerced through military conquest, may later have been motivated by the prospect of booty and plunder (Fernquest, 2006, 14, citing SL: 95), perhaps making this period different from later periods such as the large-scale mobilization of the Tai for expansionary warfare by King Bayinnaung (r. 1551-1581) whose forced migration and resettlement of Tais is a major theme in the Burmese chronicle. Not unlike the controversial story of the “Three Shan Brothers,” Tai military participation in Burmese wars and the earlier appointment by Ava of Burmese rulers over Tai domains (c. 1401-1406) seem to be additional examples of inter-regional circulation and mixing of elites across the Tai realm, Upper Burma, Lower Burma, and the Bay of Bengal (Aung-Thwin, 1996, 887; Aye Chan, 2006, 34-35).

The new king, Mingaung I, subjugated Tai chieftainships and appointed rulers from the Ava court to rule over them. The Tai state of Kale became subject to some degree of control by Ava in 1401 (SL: 57). Minkyei, lord of Thichtit, had governed the Tai state of Kale. When Minkyei died in 1401, Maung Nyo, son of Mingaung’s brother Tarabya, married Minkyei’s daughter. He was given the name Kyetaungnyo and sent to govern the Tai chieftainship of Kale (Bagshawe, 1981, 57). In 1404, Onpaung became the next Tai chieftainship targeted. The Tai chieftain was not replaced (UKI: 472; SL: 54-55). In 1406, Mong Yang, even further north and closer to Ming China, was targeted with a Burmese governor appointed to rule it (UKI: 504). According to Scott’s synopsis of the Mong Yang chronicle, Ava intervened in a war between Tai Kale and Mong Yang, killing the Mong Yang chieftain. The Ming eventually drove the Burmese out and installed their own Tai ruler.
During the reign of Yung-lo [Ming Yongle emperor] ... the suan-wei-chi Tao Muh-tan [ruler of Mong Yang] was at war with Kah-li (apparently Kale in the Kabaw valley). The Burmese chief Na-lo-tah surprised and killed Tao-Muh-tan, with his son, and proceeded to occupy his land; but in the year 1406, Chang Hung was sent to order its surrender to the rightful owner (GUBSS, Mohnyin, 346).

Twenty years later, the governor that Ava appointed to rule over Mong Yang [Mohnyin] would become king of Ava and be known as Mohnyin Mintaya [Mohnyin King] or Mohnyinthado [Mong Yang prince]. The Tai chieftains of Kale and Onpaung would both play important roles in his succession. One can conclude that alliances based on inter-marriage blur the lines of ethnicity among the ruling elite in Upper Burma and the Tai Frontier during this period. These Ava-appointed appanage holders or rulers of Tai domains, from Ava adopted the Tai chieftainship or proto-state as their own state, choosing a paternalistic approach to governance favoring diplomacy and positive incentives over military action.

According to the Maniyadanabon [Relations of Min Yaza] tradition of political didactic literature at the Burmese court (Charney, 2006, 81, 117; Kirichenko, 2006), the Burmese overlords of Tai domains and the indigenous Tai rulers themselves actually had cordial relations. Perhaps there was some degree of harmony due to long-standing marriage ties between the Burmese and Tai courts. Davies’ (1990, 59-65) study of the relations between the early English and Welsh ruling classes shows that there were dimensions of cordiality in what was on the surface a pure relation of domination. Ava-appointed Burmese rulers such as Kyeitaungnyo are said to have employed a paternalistic approach to governance, favoring positive incentives and diplomacy over military action to hold other Tai states in check and prevent them from raiding Ava:

... no enemy could raid his [Kyeitaungnyo's] territory; he kept them in check. While Kyeitaungnyo was governor of Kalemyo, the Khasi chief of Htinyutaungbyin came to make a raid. Kyeitaungnyo made up his mind that it would be best to seek the friendship of all the neighboring chiefs, whoever they were, and that when he had sought and won their friendship, then no outsiders could come to harass his people and he would be able to make proper plans for them. With proper planning, much could be accomplished and his villages would prosper. If the villages prospered, what enemy could vie with him? He therefore spoke softly and in a friendly fashion, sending him presents. Like coaxing chickens into the henhouse, he brought him in, persuading into a retainer's position and thus he became his follower (Bagshawe, 1981, 57).

The Ming occupation of northern Vietnam affected all of Yunnan including the western Tai frontier. The Ming pulled forces out of Yunnan to use in massive campaigns into northern Vietnam in 1406 (Wade, 2004, 7-8; Whitmore, 1985). This troop pullout coincided roughly with the heightened use of Tai forces by Ava in campaigns against Pegu in the south. In 1406, Ava led a military expedition to Bhamo, MongYang, and Kale in the Shan states and took large quantities of Tai war captives, war captives that were used the same year in an expedition against Pegu in the south (SL, 92, Fernquest, 2006, 12-13). Tai cavalry was ever-present in the Ava-Pegu wars from 1401, to such a great an extent that the Ava side is often referred to as ‘Shan,’ the Burmese ethnonym for the Tai ethnic group.

Tai cavalry came to play an important role in the battles of the Ava-Pegu war. Cavalry played its most important role in warfare along the approaches to Pegu on the Yamethin-Toungoo-Pegu axis. Since the Sittang River could not be used to transport forces all the way from Ava’s capital into Lower Burma, overland forces were more important than river-based forces there than they were along the Irrawaddy to the west. Towards the end of the Ava-Pegu war Ava’s penetration into the south slowly approached the Lower Burma delta region and the coast. In this terrain, Tai cavalry lost their military advantage. In 1408, Pegu employed the action of the tides in a riverbed to confuse and destroy Ava’s Tai cavalry for the latter were not familiar with the ocean and tides (SL 95-96). In 1409, Mingaung again quickly combined Tai troops from Onpaung (Hsipaw), Kale, and Mong Yang that he had just brought back with him from the north with Ava’s troops for a campaign against Pegu in the south (UKII: 2).

Ava’s 1406 military expeditions against the Tais led to Tai requests for Ming diplomatic intervention to restrain the Burmese. A whole stream of envoys traveled to the Ming capital from the Tai frontier. First, in 1406, Yunnan officials sent word to the Ming capital that Ava and Kale had attacked Mong Yang and killed its ruler Dao Mu-dan and his son. The Ming sent the envoy Zhang Hong on a long mission to Burma to end these Burmese aggressions against the Tais (Huber, 1904; MSL 25 Aug 1406).

Mong Mao and Ava both sent a tribute mission to the Ming capital in 1408. The Ava representative sent a formal apology to the Ming emperor for “having occupied his younger brother’s [Mong Mao or Luchuan-Pingmian] land
and taken his property without authority” (28 May 1408). The eunuch Yun Xian was sent on a mission to Luchuan-Pingmian (Mong Mao) (MSL 27 Jul 1409). Shortly after he left, representatives from Hsenwi [Mu-bang] also arrived at the capital with more complaints about Ava. Reporting that Ava had encouraged them to rebel, they encouraged the Ming to send troops against Ava (MSL 5 Sep 1409). Pleased with Hsenwi’s loyalty, the Ming emperor sent a eunuch to Hsenwi with a message of praise and gifts. Encouraged by his success in northern Vietnam, the Yong-le emperor drew up plans for a punitive expedition against Ava that would be delivered partly by sea as well as by land, in a fashion similar to Zheng He’s maritime expeditions, a zenith for the emperor’s activist foreign policy in the Tai Frontier that was never reached (Wang Gungwu, 1998, 322):

You have also strongly opposed Na-luo-ta’s [Burmese king] disloyal words. I can thus truly see your loyalty and sincerity. Na-luo-ta, with his petty piece of land, is double-hearted and is acting wrongly. I have long known of this. The reason I have not sent troops there is that I am concerned that good people will be hurt. I have already sent people with instructions requiring him to change his ways and start anew. If he does not reform, I will then order the generals to despatch the army. The troops will attack from the ocean route and you can arrange to have your native cavalry attack overland. The despicable fellow will not be equal to that (MSL 5 Sep 1409).

Meanwhile, when the eunuch Yun Xian arrived at Luchuan-Pingmian, he encountered certain violations in protocol in the way that he was received so he quickly returned to the Ming capital. After a delay Mong Mao sent an envoy with an offering of gifts to make amends for the breech in protocol that arrived at the Ming Capital in 1411. Relations between the Ming court and Mong Mao were reestablished with gifts of brocade and silk woven with gold thread being sent to Mong Mao (MSL 11 Aug 1411). In 1413, a full two to three years after the indiscretion, Si Xing-fa formally asked the Ming emperor permission to abdicate in favor of his younger brother Si Ren-fa (MSL 26 Feb 1413). Si Xing-fa died, but it is not clear how or why. As Liew Foon Ming notes: “Concerning the death of Si Xing-fa there are several versions. Not only does the Mau-Shan version differ from the Chinese version, but also the various Chinese sources differ from one another” (LFM: 169).

Further inroads into the Tai Frontier by Ava under Minyekyawswa (1406-1414)

After becoming Ava’s crown prince, Minyekyawswa played an increasingly important role in warfare in both Lower Burma and the Tai Frontier. Evidence from several sources indicates that he may have led military campaigns into the Tai Frontier for as long as eight years from 1406 until his death in 1414 (Sai Kam Mong, 2004, 28)

The earlier U Kala chronicle dates Minyekyawswa’s elevation to crown prince to 1411, while the later Hmannan and Mahayazawinthit dates it to 1406 (UK2006: 31-33, HMII: 21; TWI: 268). "Crown prince" seems to be confused with "King" in the version of the Hsenwi chronicle used by Scott in his Gazetteer, perhaps because Minyekyawswa played such a prominent role in warfare after becoming crown prince. An independent ruler at Pagan is mysteriously said to have initiated the attack:

In 1409, Mong Pu Hkam, king of Pagan, raised an army and invaded Hsenwi. In the same year Min-ye-kyawswa became king of Ava and joined Meng Pu hkam in the attack on Wing Hham Hkai Lai, but in 1418 the warring states signed a treaty and returned to their own territories. ‘According to the South Hsenwi chronicle, this is the date of the overthrow of Hsenwi’ (GUBSS, Hsenwi, pt. 1, v. 1, p. 244).

Irrespective of when Minyekyawswa actually became crown prince, it seems clear that, following the disastrous retreat of Ava forces around Lower Burma around 1409, Minyekyawswa took over much his father’s role as Ava’s commander-in-chief and began launching campaigns against the south with increased vigor (Harvey, 1925, 94; Fernquest, 2006, 16; Sai Kam Mong, 2004, 28).

The Burmese-Tai conflict entered a new period of intensity around 1408 at approximately the same time as Minyekyawswa became crown prince. The Tai chieftainships of Hsenwi and Mong Mao [Mawdon Mawke] dominate the Tai-Burmese warfare of this period. According to the biography of a ruler of Hsenwi:

… Minye Kyawswa was sent to subjugate Hsenwi, but it took eight years with a heavy toll on the local population. Eventually, the people of Hsenwi pleaded with their sawbwa [ruler] to surrender which he did in 1416 (Sai Kam Mong, 2004, p. 28; citing Luang Tha Aye, 1974, p. 85).
The events surrounding Ava’s conflicts with Hsenwi under Minyekyawswa are complicated and rendered in many different ways by the existent historical sources. There are four Burmese sources for the historical narrative and dating of events: 1. the Rajadhirat Ayeyadawon (San Lwin, n.d), 2. U Kala’s chronicle (U Kala 1961, 2006), 3. the later Hmannan (2006) and New Chronicle (Twinthintaikwnu Mahasithu, 1968), and 4. the Maniyadanabon or Relations of Min Yaza The narratives of the U Kala, the New Chronicle, and Hmannan are the same. The dates differ in each of the four sets of sources. More accurate dating of events was one of the goals in compiling the later Hmannan, but the rationale behind the improved dating has yet to be analyzed in detail. Charney (2006) investigates the socio-political context at the Konbaung court in which the later historical texts were composed. The **Hmannan** and New Chronicle dating of 1406 for crown prince status and 1414 for Minyekyawswa’s death seem to be critical to constraining the dates of the Hsenwi campaigns to the eight year window given by other texts.

After Minyekyawswa became crown prince of Ava, the Ava-Pegu war in the south continued with unabated ferocity. In 1410, Minye Kyawswa led his forces by river and land south, unsuccessfully attacking Myaungmya, Bassein, and Khebaung in the western delta region of Lower Burma. Marching on to Arakan, he took the capital, appointed a ruler, and marched back to Ava. In 1411, Pegu recaptured Arakan and strengthened the capital’s defenses. Minyekyawswa marched south, attempted to retake Arakan, but failed (HMII: 4-7; TWI: 285-287).

In 1412, Hsenwi forces marched towards Ava but were intercepted by Minyekyawswa who drove them back to Hsenwi which he laid siege to. After five months he had still failed to take the city (HMII: 9). Meanwhile, probably seeking to exploit this vulnerability, Pegu attacked Prome. Minyekyawswa was called back to Ava from Hsenwi and led the river force in the southern expedition. A naval battle was fought, the Mon warrior Lagun Ein was killed in battle, Pegu was defeated, and retreated back to the capital Pegu.

In early 1413, with Ava forces encamped in Dagon near Pegu, Pegu tried to "enlist military assistance from Hsenwi, knowing that Hsenwi had been at war with Ava from time to time. Hsenwi sent a messenger with five elephants and seven viss of gold to the Hsenwi sawbwa [ruler] via Chiang Mai” (HMII: 16; TWI: 296; SL: 120; Maung Aung Myoe, 2006). About this time, Mingaung and Minyekyawswa led forces south to attack Pegu in May of 1413 (TWI: 297). Ava encamped near Pegu waiting through the whole rainy season, from May into October 1413. Hsenwi attacked the northernmost garrison of Myedu as well as villages in Ava’s territory in 1413 (HMII: 20; TWI: 299; SL 126), but Ava quickly sent retaliatory forces against Hsenwi under the crown prince Minyekyawswa. The ruler of Hsenwi was defeated and died in battle (UKII: 8). His sons retreated behind the city walls for protection and called for Ming help. Minyekyawswa attacked and defeated a Ming relief force before they arrived at Hsenwi and then returned to continue the siege (UKII: 9). In September 1413, a report was made to the Ming court on recent Tai-Burmese relations. Hsenwi had already engaged in warfare once with Ava and captured elephants and horses. The Ming authorised further attacks by Hsenwi in retaliation for alleged Ava attacks on Mong Yang, implying some sort of supportive relationship between Hsenwi and Mong Yang perhaps based on family ties. At this time, Hsenwi appears to have been militarily stronger than Mong Yang:

The chieftain Dao Bu-da (Alt: Diao Bu-da) and others who had been sent by Han Bin-fa, the Military and Civilian Pacification Superintendent of Mu-bang [Hsenwi], came and presented the elephants, horses and other goods which had been captured from the Ava-Burma native official Na-luo-ta [Nawratha]. Na-luo-ta had not respected the orders of the Court and had attacked and occupied the territory of Meng-yang [Mong Yang, Mohnyin]. Han Bin-fa requested permission to use yi troops to punish him. The Emperor approved this. Han Bin-fa then sent the chieftain Dao San-meng and others to attack him and they destroyed over 20 cities and stockades in Ava-Burma. Many people were killed or captured. The elephants, horses and other goods which had been captured were, at this time, all presented in the capital (MSL 23 Sep 1413).

The Hsenwi campaigns at the intersection of Burmese, Tai, and Ming history

The Burmese chronicle provides many details not found in Chinese sources on the Hsenwi campaigns. One possibility that emerges from a careful reading of this narrative is that Ava may have been involved in the death of the Mong Mao ruler Si Xing-fa and the succession of his brother Si Ren-fa. Combining facts from both the Burmese and Ming historical traditions leads to one reasonable narrative that partially explains the mystery of Si Xing-fa’s abdication and/or death. This analysis is necessarily tentative.

The details from U Kala run as follows. In 1411, Ava learned that Hsenwi was marching towards Ava via Onpaung. Ava sent Minyekyawswa to meet them before they reached Ava. When Minyekyawswa reached a placed
named Hsin-kaung Wet-win, he met the cavalry of the Hsenwi sawbwa and defeated them in a battle dominated by elephant fighting. In the end, six elephants and two hundred horses and eight hundred captives were taken. About three hundred Tai soldiers died. The ruler of Hsenwi also died and the Tai forces gathered together and returned to where they had come from (UKII: 8). Minyekyawswa ordered that the elephants and horses that he had taken captive be handed over to his father king Mingaung.

Hsenwi had called the Chinese to come and help them and in the meantime strengthened its defenses and stored provisions within the town. Although Minyekyawswa attacked Hsenwi repeatedly, he could not take the town and laid siege to it for five months. At the end of this period Minyekyawswa heard that Chinese forces were approaching to provide aid to Hsenwi, so he departed at night from Hsenwi with his forces and attacked the Chinese in advance of their arrival at Hsenwi. They took captive five Chinese officials along with horses. Defeating the Chinese, they continued their siege of Hsenwi (UKII: 9).

In the year 1412, Mong Mao [Mawdon Mawke] attacked Ava’s northern-most garrison Myedu. Minyekyawswa was sent from Ava and defeated them at Myedu. Two of the siblings of the Mong Mao ruler Si Xing-fa fled eastwards towards China with as many people as they could gather together. Minyekyawswa took his wife, children, horses, elephants, and many of his people captive and returned to Ava (UKII: 14; SL: 131). The brothers of Si Xing-fa managed to flee to China and enlist the support of the Ming to get their brother’s wife and children back (Bagshawe, 1981, 131). It was apparently one of Si Xing-fa’s brothers, Si Ren-fa who became ruler of Mong Mao after their brother’s death.

In 1414, the Burmese historical tradition records a heroic duel on horseback between Ava and China (HMII: 21-29; TWI: 301-309). After Minyekyawswa had taken the family of Si Xing-fa ruler captive and his brothers had fled to seek help from the Chinese. The Chinese enlisted the support of other Tai chieftainships to help Si Xing-fa get his family back from Ava. Not heeding a request to return the family, the joint Ming-Tai expedition marched south. When they arrived at Yaw-wa-ka fort, Kyei-myin-taing, Bilu Mountain, Loun Daw, and all the way up to Bauk, they settled down and built fortified positions. King Mingaung prepared his forces for a large-scale battle (UKII: 17).

The Ming sent a message to the Ava ruler: “You do not come out to fight us and neither do you initiate negotiations with us. We are prepared to lay siege even for three full years but if you agree to a tournament of single combat on horseback between your champion and ours, it will be held under the condition that if our champion wins we will take Ava, while if we lose we will turn back and go home” (UKII: 18). In the Burmese chronicle the conflict was finally resolved in a duel between two warrior heroes, a Mon cavalry officer and a Ming cavalry officer and the Ming finally retreated leaving Mong Mao to the Burmese (UKII: 17-19; SL: 138-140). Si Xing-fa died rather mysteriously in 1414 whether in captivity, battle, or peacefully at home in his capital is not clear (MSL 6 May 1428; Elias, 1876, 21; LFM: 169). His brothers, not wishing to raise the ire of the Ming, always suspicious of events far away in the Tai Realm, simply sought a peaceful succession.

Meanwhile the war in the south raged on. Rajadhirat moved south to Martaban [Mottama] and resided there until returning to Pegu in January of 1415 (TWI: 307, 310). Rajadhirat consulted monks on an auspicious day to engage in battle with the Ava crown prince Minyekyawswa. On the day that the monks determined, 13 March 1415 on a Wednesday, Minyekyawswa was killed in battle (HMII: 30; TWI: 310). At the time of his death, Minyekyawswa’s son Minggekyawhtin, later an important figure in court politics, was only eight years old.

After Minyekyawswa’s death Tai Onpaung moved quickly against Ava. The ruler of Onpaung Sao Kem Hpa marched to Ava in February of 1415 arriving at a place named Htunton-Putet near Ava (or “Htuntaya Htunton”, Than Tun, 2005). Onpaung encamped and “erected defence bulwarks of stone, and dug trenches around the camp.” A messenger was sent to Ava to provide an opportunity to surrender before being attacked. Mingaung surrendered, offering his niece Princess Min Sanda in marriage to the Onpaung ruler (Sai Aung Tun, 2004, 153-154). The Onpaung-Hsipaw chronicle’s version of events claims a pre-existing disagreement as the cause of the conflict and stresses the peace agreement sealed by a marriage alliance that brought the conflict to a peaceful end:

Sao Kem Hpa [ruler of Onpaung-Hsipaw] quarreled with the King of Burma, Mingaung I, and marched against him, and camped before Hsakawng (Sagaing). Mingaung was forced to submit and gave Sao Kem Hpa his daughter Santa in marriage, when peace was concluded (GUBSS, vol. I, pp. 218-219).

After the death of Minyekyawswa in March of 1415, two years passed before Mingaung’s son Thihathu became crown prince in 1417. Thihathu was also married to the wife of his deceased brother Minyekyawswa Saw Minhla (UK2006II: 54; HMII: 47). At the death of Mingaung I in 1422, Thihathu became king of Ava.
To summarize, Tai manpower and animals were captured by Ava and employed in the south in the Ava-Pegu War. Permanent resettlement of Tai war captives (forced migration southwards) into Upper Burma likely accompanied the Tai cavalry’s long-term involvement in the Ava-Pegu war. During the last years of the war, the major elite participants in war, the Ava prince Minyekyawswa, the king of Ava Mingaung, and the Mon king of Pegu Rajadhirat all died and the war lost momentum. Conflict, though not ceasing altogether, slowed to a trickle and reduced in intensity. Most of the fighting took place in the delta regions of Lower Burma where river warfare in boats played a more important role than previously. In historical sources, references to Tai cavalry contingents become less frequent. Tai migration from the Tai-Yunnan frontier southwards into Upper Burma started the decline in population concentration at Mong Mao that only accelerated after Burma’s conquest in 1557. In the decades after the end of the war, Tais played an important role in the politics of Upper Burma, as we shall see.

5. A crucible of war: the aftermath of the Ava-Pegu and Ming-Vietnam Wars (1426-1438)

With the accession of the new Xuande Ming emperor in 1425, Ming grand strategy underwent fundamental changes. The activism and interventionism of the Yongle emperor was reversed, and there was a return to the more humble foreign policy goals of the founding Hungwu emperor:

It is not surprising, then, that his [the Yongle emperor’s] more conventional grandson, backed by civil officials loyal to Confucian principles as well as to the first emperor’s specific injunctions, decided to reverse the Yung-lo [Yongle] emperor’s policies within a few years of his death. His grandson decided to end the war in Vietnam and concluded that the great naval expedition of 1431-33 would have to be the last (Wang Gungwu, 1998, 322).

The aftermath of the Ming-Vietnam and Ava-Pegu wars had a deep impact on the Tai frontier zone from 1426 to 1438. After 1426, the Tai frontier zone bifurcated into northern and southern halves with Tai military involvement in each half having a substantially different character. In the northern half, Tai banditry and expansionary warfare against the Ming was predominant. In the southern half, rulers at Ava changed frequently and were barely able to hold Upper Burma together.

What factors influenced the different nature of warfare in the north and south? Were elite motives of revenge and opportunism at the level of ideas or superstructure the only ones operative? Were factors at the socio-political level (structure) or at the environmental level (infrastructure) also operative? Using Ferguson’s paradigm (1999) outlined earlier, in the north, at the level of superstructure or ideas, Mong Mao may have been motivated to engage in expansionary warfare to regain territory that the Ming had taken away in the 1380s (LFM: 169). Alternatively, the Ming defeat in Vietnam and the new passivity of the Xuande emperor’s foreign policy may have triggered a strategic motive of “opportunism” at Mong Mao to exploit Ming vulnerability and gain as much territory as they could, while they could. According to the analysis of Wang Gungwu, the Ming defeat in Vietnam during the 1420s led to a loss of Chinese authority in the Tai Frontier. Ming grand strategy became reactive:

The re-emergence of the Maw Shan chieftains of Lu-ch’uan followed on the withdrawal of Ming armies from Vietnam in 1427. Knowing that the Ming court was in no condition to fight on the Yunnan border, the Maw Shan tribes became increasingly ambitious during the next few years…Throughout this period neither tributary diplomacy nor the administrative mechanisms of the aboriginal offices system could prevent war. When the imperial forces won some victories along the northwestern frontiers, strong voices were raised in favor of sending a full-scale expeditionary army to Lu-ch’uan in 1440 (Wang Gungwu, 1998, 325-326).

In the north, at the level of structure or social relations, as the Ming pulled out of northern Vietnam in 1427, Chinese manpower, officials, and soldiers perhaps returned to Yunnan with resettled soldiers perhaps contending for food and resettled officials contending for taxes or other extractable resources. The territorial divisions that the Yongle emperor had put in place in the early 1400s may have been renewed with increased vigor. A frontier society conducive to higher levels of banditry and warfare may have been the end result of these pressures and resource contentions.

Relationships between Mong Mao elite and Ming elite in Yunnan connected the realm of social relations with that of ideas, superstructure with superstructure. Mu Sheng, the hereditary governor of Yunnan, was connected by friendship to the ruling house of Mong Mao. Mong Mao ruler Si Ren-fa "grew up in the residence of the powerful Mu family in Yunnan prefecture and Mu Sheng had no serious intention to suppress his childhood friend." (LFM:
Chau-Tit-Pha, or Tau-Lwei [Si Xing-fa, 1404-1413]...appears to have carried on certain negotiations with the Chinese during the early part of his reign, and...1411...to have gone on a visit to the governor of Yunnan...he went to Mung-Kyei [Kunming], the capital of Mithila, to consult with the emperor, and...during the interview with the latter, in which he was accompanied by his son Chau-Ngan-Pha [Si Ren-fa], he was given a cup of spirit to drink, which so completely intoxicated him that the Emperor, at the instigation of a Minister named Maw-pi, obtained from him his royal seal and thus rendered his country tributary (Elias, 1876, 21).

In the south, the main causal factors seemed to have been at the middle level of structure or social relations. The Burmese governors appointed by Ava (1401-1406) had only tenuous power over the Tai chieftainships in their sphere of influence. As the forty-year Ava-Pegu War drew to a close, a Tai army invaded and killed the king of Ava and Upper Burma splintered into several pieces, each guarding its independence with a vengeance. Upper Burma returned to a situation very similar to the immediate post-Pagan period. Ava was prevented from asserting its control outside of the immediate vicinity of the capital. The involvement of Tai chieftains aggravated the conflicts raging within Ava’s domains.

Finally, for both the north and the south, at the infrastructural level, weather and monetary fluctuations in the 1430s likely aggravated problems, with unsettled weather conditions (c. 1435-9) affecting agriculture and a silver contraction (c. 1430-70) affecting trade (Atwell, 2002, 1998).

The North: Mong Mao expansionary warfare eastwards into Ming Yunnan (1427-1438)

The Ming withdrawal from Vietnam in 1427 refocused Ming attention on the Tai-Yunnan frontier. As the Ming reasserted control over Yunnan, incidents of rebellion, banditry, and internecine warfare increased. The new Xuanzong emperor who followed the Yongle emperor tightened up administration and taxation in Yunnan (Wade, 2004, 13-14). In only eleven years, this renewed pressure on Yunnan would lead to a disastrous Ming military intervention.

Under Si Ren-fa, Mong Mao began to wage expansionary warfare against its neighbors. The likely motive was to reassert control over the domains that the Ming had taken away from Mong Mao in their administrative reforms of the early 1400s. Mong Yang to the northwest fell under the control of Mong Mao in 1426 (Daniels, 2006, 31; MSL 15 Sep 1430). Si Ren-fa seized villages and stockades and occupied territory to the north of Mong Mao around Nandian, Tengchong, Yongchang [Lujiang] in 1428. Yunnan requested fifty thousand government and native troops to send in a punitive expedition. In its reply, the Ming court observed that feuding and banditry were common in frontier regions and warned that “raising troops and deploying forces truly brings great suffering,” that “you must always think long and hard about such actions.” The court instructed them to use diplomacy instead of military means and to “seek negotiated pacification,” but also to make “preparations for border defenses” by building up stores of grain (MSL 6 May 1428, May 17 1428, 1 June 1428). Luchuan under Si Ren-fa was not the only chieftainship to attack neighbors though.

Banditry became a widespread problem in Yunnan. Sipsongpanna-Cheli reported to the Ming court that its territory was “frequently being attacked and occupied by troops who had deserted, civilian fugitives or yi persons from beyond the borders (MSL 16 Jun 1428). Bandits typically plundered property, burnt dwellings, and killed people (MSL 13 Aug 1428). Areas remote from administrative centers were particularly susceptible, often attacked by “foreign” bandits outside the sphere of Ming control in Yunnan. In 1430, foreign bandits attacked remote settlements in Meng-mian’s domains (27 Jun 1430). Local officials often tolerated bandits (2 Nov 1433). Soldiers and civilians fleeing justice in Yunnan and heading south along the road to Sipsongpanna and Chiang Mai would lie saying that they were official envoys to force people to ferry them across the dangerous rivers that had to be crossed “often resulting in deaths” (2 Nov 1433).

Sometimes the threat of banditry even came from within the Ming administration itself. Even Ming military officers engaged in banditry such as Dao Bu-lang-ban, the battalion commander of Yongchang, who attacked the domains of Lujiang. The governor of Lujiang, Nang-bi, fled to Jinchi and enlisted Ming help to repair the situation. It is notable that no punishment was meted out to the military commander. He was merely asked to return what he had taken and return to his normal place of residence and normal tax-paying habits (17 Feb 1430).
Disorder in the Tai frontier zone began to intensify in the early 1430s. Many small acts of raiding and land seizure were reported (MSL 30 Sep 1431). It mattered little that by 1433 Mong Mao had returned much of the land it had taken, the chaos that reigned in the Tai Frontier made the main arteries through the region dangerous to pass through. For instance, tribute missions to the Ming court found it difficult to travel. The constant unrelenting banditry had also caused high levels of peasant flight, making Ming administration and control of manpower that much more difficult (MSL 22 Oct 1433). Yunnan reported that Luchuan was no longer alone in waging expansionary war against its neighbors in 1433. Han Men-fa of Mu-bang (Hsenwi) claimed that Luchuan had attacked them, but both Luchuan and Ava claimed that Hsenwi had attacked them. Nearby, Meng-lian reported that Meng-dian had invaded and occupied their territory (MSL 15 Nov 1433).

With the increased division of territory into separate distinct domains, came a blurring of the lines of authority that increased contention and conflict. According to the Ming Shi-lu, around 1433, Dong-tang near Bhamo faced a military threat from Ava. Mang Zhi, the son of Dong-tang’s Burmese ruler “Xin-ba-di” was sent to the Ming court with tribute. He reported to the Ming court that “Xi-de” the ruler of Ava was planning to attack Dong-tang to kill its ruler Xin-ba-di and seize its territory. The Ming then established the Dong-tang Chief’s Office and Xin-ba-di was appointed as chief but was ultimately “left under the jurisdiction of Ava, implying that any differences between the Burmese ruler of Dong-tang and Ava had been healed (MSL 10 Nov 1433). The Dong-tang incident of 1433 demonstrates the contention between the Burmese and the Ming over territory in the Tai Frontier and that if a historian focuses exclusively on sources in one language tradition, they stand a good chance of only viewing a skewed fraction of the whole historical transcript.

The Ming court had issued orders to mobilize an army to be sent against Mong Mao in 1434. However, Yingzong emperor, a young boy only eight years in age, ascended the Ming throne soon after. This was enough to gain Si Ren-Fa a temporary respite from war. Si Ren-fa quickly made a petition to the Ming court to have his outstanding tax debts of 2,500 taels of silver [3,250 ounces] cancelled. The ascension of a new emperor in no way dissuaded Si Ren-fa from his plans to expand. In 1437, Mong Mao attacked and took 278 villages in Nandian to the north (MSL 12 Nov 1437). In 1438, reports streamed in to the Ming court on Si Ren-fa’s repeated attacks on a whole string of settlements in Yunnan including Teng-chong, Lu-jian, Jin-chi, Gan-yai, Meng-ding, Meng-yang, and many other places protected by government authorized troops (MSL 28 Jun 1438, MSL 10 Oct 1438, MSL 2 Sep 1438). Si Ren-fa followed up these attacks by occupying Lu-jian and other territories and resettling over ten thousand inhabitants from his own domains into these areas. Reports of boat building and imminent plans to employ the rivers of Yunnan in warfare were also received (MSL 15Aug 1438). Si Ren-fa was warned once again, and once again he sent a tribute mission to the Ming court, but by this time the tribute missions were regarded by the Ming court as deceptions used to buy more time (MSL 8 Aug 1438).

The strategy of divide and rule that the Ming had intensified in 1404 sometimes seems to be at the root of these problems. In 1438, the Ming eliminated 199 “native-office interpreters and local commanders,” observing that, in recent years, the number had expanded greatly. These local officials had “with military and civilian servants, laborers and roguish followers, made all sorts of demands and through overbearing actions, oppressed the people and brought calamities to many” (MSL 10 Jul 1438). The very number of these local points of power and control had perhaps contributed towards the balkanization and political entropy of the Tai Frontier. The oft-cited divide and rule strategy of the Ming court had, in fact, backfired and led to loss of control rather than greater control. The re-imposition of control over Yunnan after the Ming withdrawal from northern Vietnam in 1427 may also have become a factor.

The year 1438 was the turning point from diplomatic to military action in Yunnan. Orders to muster troops for an imminent campaign were sent to both places outside Yunnan, like Gui-zhou, and places well within the frontier, like Mu-bang (Hsenwi) (MSL 6 Oct, 1438; MSL 17 Oct 1438). As Southeast Asia entered its cool season, Mu Sheng, the regional commander of Yunnan, received orders from the Ming emperor to take advantage of the cool weather and attack (MSL 8 Dec 1438). The Luchuan-Pingmian campaigns had begun.

Political disorder and uncertainty in the Tai frontier: A small case study

The Ming Shi-lu contains one long story of how local elite contention for resources and power combined with the corruption of Ming officials might have added momentum to chaos and disorder. The story was spread out over the course of several years. In 1421, the Tai ruler of Sipsongpanna-Cheli, Dao Nong, was accused by a relative named Dao Shuang-meng, of repeatedly attacking and plundering his domains. A petition was sent to the Ming...
court to separate a part of the Cheli domains and hand it over to Dao Shuang-meng to govern as an independent domain named Jing-an (MSL 22 Feb 1421). This was a clear instance of local rulers taking the lead in fragmenting political authority, not a “divide and rule” strategy imposed from the Ming center.

Ming tax collectors entered this chaotic situation in 1429. A Ming official named Hong Yi accused the two Tai rulers of feuding and killing. Dao Nong abandoned his territory, fled, and pledged fealty to Laos (MSL 22 Jan 1429). Two years later, another expedition was sent to Cheli and the mother of Dao Nong related to the Ming officials what had happened. The Ming official Liu Heng collect a gold and silver tax from Cheli in 1428 and told the local inhabitants that they had earned a tax exemption. When another official Hong Yi was sent the next year to collect the tax that they were supposedly exempt from, local elite accused Dao Nong of lying. Dao Nong had taken flight to Laos for refuge; when he returned he was killed. Dao Shuang-meng eventually died also (MSL 1 Aug 1431).

Uncertainty is an important part of this incident. Even now, several hundreds of years later, like Ming officials at the capital, readers have to make a choice to either believe the Ming official’s version or believe Dao Nong’s mother’s version of events. Either: (1) Ming officials embezzled money in the course of their tax collecting duties and then bore false witness against local Tais to get rid of and neutralize them, or (2) Dao Nong and his uncle embezzled money and blamed it on the Ming. Under both versions of events, we can conclude that in the hinterlands of Yunnan there was: (1) a high level of contention among local elites for power and resources, (2) high level of uncertainty regarding the truth, regarding what actually happened in any series of events, (3) that someone knew what actually happened, and thus (4) some party to the events took strategic action based on this uncertainty (or information asymmetry). The tally system instituted under the Yong-le emperor in 1402 was a measure to deal with such uncertainty. The tally verified both the identity of the Ming official and the local lord thus reducing possibilities for the dissemination of misinformation. This sort of incident has a certain universal quality about it. Russian tribute collection in remote Siberia was plagued by similar information asymmetry problems (Longworth, 2005, 131-132).

The South: Tai involvement in Ava’s domestic politics (1426-1440)

While Mong Mao pushed eastwards into Yunnan, Ava and Upper Burma to the south was also plagued by disorder. Tai forces attacked Ava in 1426 and put Upper Burma into disarray. According to the Burmese chronicle, Thihathu who had only been king of Ava for five years, was killed while overseeing the construction of irrigation works in an attack by Tai Onpaung.

Onpaung was ruled autonomously by a Tai ruler Hsan Pa. Kale and Mong Yang both had Burmese members of the Ava court as appanage holders involved in their governance. After becoming ruler of Onpaung, Hsan Hpa had married his father’s Burmese wife Sanda, presented to his father in a marriage alliance with Ava in 1393, so he had connections to the court of Ava. To complicate things even further, both the Burmese and Hsipaw-Onpaung chronicles claim that the Ava queen Shin Bo Me conspired with Hsan Hpa and requested his intervention in Ava politics. Some sources go further and suggest a rivalry between Shin Bo Me and the Mon queen Shin Saw Bu resident at Ava as a result of a marriage alliance with Pegu (Fernquest, 2006b, “Shin Saw Bu”).

After the death of Thihathu, Onpaung was defeated and driven back north by Min-Nge-Swa of Ava. Hsan Hpa then enlisted the support of Kyetaungnyo, the Burmese appanage holder of Kale who took Ava and imprisoned Min-Nge-Swa (GUBSS, v. 1, 219). Chinese sources indicate that Hsenwi was also involved in the attack on Ava, raising the possibility that the Tai invasion was a joint effort between Onpaung-Hsipaw, Hsenwi, and Kale (MSL 2 Oct 1427). Wherever the boundary between fact, later historiographical fictional elaboration, and just plain uncertainty, rumour, and lack of information, actually lies, it seems for certain that court intrigue played a significant role in political change during this period and that the distinction between different Tai chieftainships in military campaigns against Upper Burma and even the distinction between the Burmese ruling elite of Ava and the Tai ruling elite was often blurred.

Kyetaungnyo could not hold power for long and was quickly overthrown by yet another member of the Burmese ruling elite Mohnyin Mintaya (r. 1427-40) also known as Mohnyin Thado or Mang De-la, the Chinese transliteration of Burmese "Min-taya". The new Ava king had been awarded with the appanage of Mohnyin for his relief of the siege of Prome in 1406 during the Ava-Pegu War. "Mohnyin" is the Burmese translation of the Tai place name "Mong yang" (UKI: 504, Harvey, 1925, 97; Phayre, 1883, 82-83; Parker, 1893, 55-56). The Ming court under-
stood that there had been a succession struggle at Ava and that Tai forces had played a role in it, but they chose not to intervene and let events follow their own course:

Mang De-la [Mohnyin Mintaya], the great chieftain...of Ava-Burma was appointed as the superintendent of the Ava-Burma Pacification Superintendency. Earlier, the Ava-Burma Pacification Superintendent Xin-jia-si had been killed in feuding with Mu-bang [Hsenwi]. His sons and younger brothers fled and the Ava-Burma chieftains and elders all selected the great chieftain Mang De-la [Mintaya] to temporarily rule the region. The yi people were submissive and they loyally fulfilled their tribute duties. Thus, at this time, the Ministry of War requested that the regional commander and the three offices of Yun-nan carry out a detailed investigation of Mang De-la and that, if he had the trust of the yi people, that he be officially appointed. The Emperor said: 'If the man and the yi of the distant regions are allowed this as an expression of good-will, it will permit the troops to rest and bring the people peace. This is also the way to sway the yi. Appoint him immediately as pacification superintendent. There is no need for an investigation' (MSL 2 Oct 1427).

Despite ruling over Ava for thirteen years, Mohynin Mintaya only achieved lasting control over the immediate area surrounding the capital, his control over much of Upper Burma remaining weak (UKII: 55-56). Pagan to the southwest was regained relatively easy after two expeditions. With only a loose grip on Ava’s food supply, Mohynin Mintaya spent most of his reign trying to reign in Ava’s domains in the southeast including Pinle, Yamethin, Taungdwingyi, and Toungoo.

In 1430, the Ming attempted to reassert control over a Mong Yang that had fallen into Ava’s sphere of control during the early 1400s:

The Meng-yang Pacification Superintendency was re-established and Dao Meng-shu, the son of Dao Meng-dan, the deceased pacification superintendent, was appointed as pacification superintendent, and required, together with the deputy Dao Yu-bin, to pacify the soldiers and people and to fulfil tribute obligations and pay taxes like before (MSL 15 Nov 1433; SLC 1037; Chen Yi Sein, 1970, 11-1).

In the early 1430s, reports of raids by Hsenwi on Mong Mao and Ava were made to the Ming court during tribute missions. Mu Sheng, intimately familiar with the intricacies of Tai politics was ordered to investigate the matter and deal with the problem:

At this time, Si Ren-fa and Mang De-la [Mohnyin Mintaya] had memorialized that Han Men-fa had invaded their land and carried off people and livestock. Imperial orders were also sent to the Qian-guo Duke and Regional Commander Mu Sheng and the three offices, saying: "Both Lu-chuan and Ava-Burma say that Mu-bang has invaded their land and carried off their people. You, Sheng, should send an official who, together with a senior official from each of the three offices, shall proceed together with Yun Xian to issue the instructions. If what has been said is found to be true, order that everything be returned, and that all look to their own affairs, guard their own territories and not attack the others. If they do not heed the orders, memorialize so that arrangements can be made (18 Jul 1430).

In 1433, attacks by Hsenwi were once again reported during the tribute mission. Attacks by Mong Lem on Mong Ting were also reported:

Si Ren-fa and Mang De-la, the pacification superintendent of Ava-Burma, also memorialized that Han Men-fa [Hsenwi] had used troops to invade their territory and commit deprivations. The Meng-lian Chief’s Office also memorialized that Meng-ding Prefecture had attacked and occupied its territory (MSL 15 Nov 1433).

During this period, Mong Mao was not involved in any conflict with Ava or other locations to the south, instead attacking areas to the north and east. Hsenwi seems to have launched out and attacked in all directions. Ava’s attempts to consolidate its settlements to the southeast, from Kyaukse to Yamethin (very important for Ava’s food supply), seems to have consumed much of its time and manpower. Ava also fought to prevent the kingdom of Pegu in Lower Burma from making inroads into Upper Burma at places along the frontier like Toungoo and Taungdwingyi. Stories in the chronicle depict local rulers of Taungdwingyi and Toungoo grudgingly coming to the capital to pledge their loyalty and rebelling almost immediately after returning to their domains (UKII:
A rebellious member of Ava’s court, Min-nge-kyaw-htin took Pinline near Ava in 1427/28 with the help of the Tai chieftain of Onpaung. Ava retook Pinline, but the rebels quickly reoccupied the town (UKII: 61). Once again in 1428/29 Ava attempted to drive the rebels out of Pinline (UKII: 62). While making these initial attempts to assert authority over his realm, Mohnyin Mintaya managed to relax for a moment and build a new palace in 1427 (UKII: 60).

Ava and Pegu engaged in a protracted fight for control over Toungoo on their frontier. In 1427 Toungoo and Tharawaddy formed a marriage alliance with the king of Pegu in the south, Pegu attacked Prome but was repulsed (UKII: 67). Ava sent envoys to Pegu, but the Pegu king initially refused to meet with them. Eventually, the two kings met and decided on the boundaries to their kingdoms and Pegu relinquished its claims on Prome (UKII: 68-70). Even as the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns to the north in Yunnan were beginning, Pegu in Lower Burma deposed the ruler of Toungoo in 1437/38 and installed a new ruler in Toungoo. It took five years for Ava to respond with a punitive expedition and install their own ruler at Toungoo (UKII: 74).

During this period of instability in Upper Burma, Ava’s domains in the southeast forged alliances with Tai chieftains to evade Ava’s control. The southern Tai chieftains of Yawksawk and Naung Mun supported Yamethin and Taungdwingyi. Onpaung, a little further to the north, under Hsan Hpa who only died in 1438, supported Pinline. Ava tried to break these alliances by plying Tai states with gifts and trying to set up alliances themselves (UKII: 62; Harvey, 1925, 97-98).

U Kala only mentions the Tai presence in Upper Burma and does not explain how the Tais got there. Permanent relocation of Tai war veterans to Upper Burma after the Ava-Pegu War was perhaps one source of increased Tai presence, although Tai settlers from previous eras cannot be ruled out. Moreover, these war veterans augmented Upper Burma’s population with military elites skilled in warfare. This explanation matches the evidence provided by the Burmese chronicle. Besides the collapse of Ava in 1426 and the defense of Ava’s southeastern domains in 1438 mentioned above, Shan-Tai troops also aided Yamethin against Ava in 1440 (UKII: 74), and a Shan-Tai ruler named Tho-taing-bwa at Kyaung-pya fought against nearby Toungoo in 1492 (UKII: 152; Fernquest, 2005a, 304). The war added to a post-Pagan trend of Tai migration that was already underway:

The use of Tai cavalry in the Ava-Pegu war may also have seen the migration of a substantial horse population of Shan ponies (“high stamina” horses “effective for traveling long distances) southwards from the Tai Frontier into Upper Burma, fueling the large-scale warfare of the sixteenth century under Tabinshweihti and Bayinnaung:

Perhaps frequent warfare against Ayudhya, or even in the Shan [Tai] hills themselves, encouraged lowland Burmese and Siamese rulers to import Shan ponies. Whether through trade, tribute, or capture, lowland Burmese rulers made certain acquire significant numbers of new Shan ponies before and during their sixteenth century campaigns (Charney, 2005, 172-173, 170, citing Clarence Smith, 2003, 2).

The influence of a single Ava prince named Min-nge Kyaw-htin on the disorder of this period shows that the human agency of court elites played an important role in perpetuating the state of endemic warfare. His rise to power was probably typical of the many other Ava court elites who asserted independence in settlements around Upper Burma during this period. Minyekyawswa’s son Min-nge Kyaw-htin was nineteen years old when Mohnyin Mintaya became king in May of 1426. After being sent into exile at Thit-seint in 1426, he eventually left Thit-seint and established a stronghold at Yenantha. When the king of Ava Mohnyin Mintaya sent a military expedition to subjugate him, he fled to the Tai state of Onpaung and, together with Tai forces gathered there, attacked Ava’s heartland of Upper Burma. He captured Pinline and established a fortified position there. Once again, Ava sent a military expedition to deal with him and retake Pinline in 1428, but failed (HMII, 65-67). Ava tried to persuade Onpaung “to withdraw support from Min-nge Kyaw-htin and to forge an alliance with Ava” (UK2006II: 63-65; Maung Aung Myoe, 2006), but Min-nge Kyaw-htin extended his power even further by taking Yamethin in 1443 (UK2006II: 77) and Toungoo in 1451 killing the ruler of Toungoo in the process (UK2006II: 81). The constant challenge that Min-
nge Kyaw-htin presented to Ava’s control of Upper Burma power finally ended with his assassination in 1458 (UK2006II: 84) (Maung Aung Myoe, 2006)

The events after the fall of Ava in 1426, taken as a whole, clearly indicate that Ava’s control of its southern domains was tenuous at best, much as Ming control of Yunnan was also quite tenuous during this period. For seventeen years from the end of the Ava-Pegu wars in 1425, even the territory immediately surrounding the capital itself had evaded Ava’s grasp. A full-scale war was already raging in the north between the Tais and the Ming. Ava was about to be drawn into its orbit.

6. Burma as Ming proxy in a Tai manhunt: the Final Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns (1442-1454)

The Ming led four disastrous military campaigns into the Tai-Yunnan frontier starting in 1438. The Ming perspective on these campaigns has been painstakingly reconstructed by Liew Foon Ming (1996). The Burmese chronicle, yet to be translated into English, provides an extra dimension missing from Ming sources. Despite the ongoing struggle of Ava to extend its power over Upper Burma, Ava extended its power quite far into the Tai Frontier to the north during this period. A Ming offer of a territorial reward in the Tai Frontier for Ava’s military cooperation provided an impetus for Ava’s military action.

In the First Luchuan-Pingmian campaign (c. 1436-1439), the Ming quickly defeated the Tais and pursued them deep into Tai territory. Ming troops were not accustomed to the semi-tropical environment and were quickly exhausted. In the remote rugged environment Ming supply lines were cut off. Reinforcements were requested but never sent. Alone in hostile territory, the Ming were ambushed, defeated, and withdrew. With this victory, the Tai leader Si Ren Fa became bolder and began waging offensive warfare once again, attacking settlements closer to the heart of Yunnan (LFM 175). The Tai response to the approaching Ming army found here resembles a common pattern on China’s northern frontiers in which indigenous forces “simply move away until the Chinese had stretched their supply lines too far, then turn around and ambush them” (Perdue, 2005, 522).

When Minyekyawswa (r. 1440-1443), ascended Ava’s throne, one his first acts was to mediate in a conflict between the Tai chieftainships of Kale and Mong Yang (UKII: 73). When the expedition arrived at Myedu, the northern boundary of Ava’s territorial control, both chieftains submitted to Ava in fear that the other one would gain the upper hand by submitting first. Both domains were handed over to close members of the Burmese royal family to govern in accordance with the precedent set in during 1400-1410 (UKII: 73).

Ava managed to gain greater control over its southern frontier with Pegu in Lower Burma. Ava sent a punitive expedition to Toungoo, Taungdwingyi, Yamethin, and Pinle in 1440. They failed to take well-defended Pinle, but were able to take buffaloes, cows, and war captives. Yamethin also repulsed their attack, but they took Taungdwingyi, and finally Toungoo in 1442 after a pitched battle in which the ruler who had been installed by the Mons died in an elephant duel (UKII: 74). So, paradoxically, though failing to assert control over places near to the capital like Pinle and Yamethin, Ava was able to assert control over its frontier with Pegu in Lower Burma. This would provide Ava with confidence when they turned almost all of their attention northwards and joined the Ming side in the ongoing Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns.

Before the Second Campaign (1441-1442), Ming scholar officials attempted to stop the campaigns before more damage was done, but the campaigns had developed a momentum of their own. After eight months of stalemate, the Ming forces were ambushed. The attack was repulsed and a counter-attack on the main mountain stronghold of Si Ren-fa was launched. The stronghold was “located on a high cliff” on Mulong mountain near Hotha “with two sides facing the river … strengthened by … 10 miles of palisades, surrounded by a moat.” The attack ended in a massive Tai defeat with fifty thousand dead. Si Ren-fa together with his family and followers fled to the northwest taking refuge in the Mong Yang area.

The Ming offered the Tai territory of Luchuan in Mong Mao as a reward and incentive for the capture of Si Ren-fa. The reward was offered to both Ava and Tai Hsenwi that had supported the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns with troops since 1438 (LFM 180-1). With the incentive of a reward, the Burmese began their search for Si Ren-fa (Burmese: Tho-ngan-bwa) in earnest. Ava discovered that Si Ren-fa had fled west across the Irrawaddy and established a power base at the Tai settlement of Mogaung near Mong Yang. These two Tai settlements are often confused, but the linguistics and historical geography behind the names are actually straightforward. The Burmese usually distinguished between the neighboring Tai chieftainships of Mong Yang, which they called Mohnyin, and Mong Kaung, which they called Mogaung (SLC 233). The Ming rarely made the distinction. It almost always referred to both chieftainships as Meng-yang and only rarely mentioned Meng-guang (Tai: Mong Kaung).
In 1442, the king of Ava sent his brother-in-laws, the Burmese governors of Mong Yang and Kale, to attack Mogaung. Si Ren-fa had prepared strong defensive fortifications, so Ava had to adopt a strategy of siege and waiting. While the siege dragged on, the king of Ava died at Ava during the month of January of 1442 (UKII: 75). With the king’s death, the ministers at Ava faced a difficult decision in choosing a replacement. The king’s son Thihathu, the natural choice, was in Prome. The ministers, however, favored the king’s son-in-law Thihapatei, who had accompanied the expedition north to Mogaung. Thihapatei was recalled to Ava by ministers to assume the throne, but he declined the offer, declaring that he was neither a son nor a brother of the deceased king. He suggested they recall the king’s son from Prome. According to the chronicle tradition, crocodiles following the royal boat from Prome provided an inauspicious omen prompting the king-to-be to double back to Prome and be crowned there as king Narapatei. Thihapatei, after refusing the throne, defeated Si Ren-fa at Mogaung the very day the new king ascended the throne.

By catching Si Ren-fa, Thihapatei had clearly hit the Ming jackpot, but claiming the Ming reward would not be easy. Thihapatei brought Si Ren-fa back to Ava with his family and animals. He also brought another Tai ruler, the ruler of Mong Sit (Mo Sit) named Htaw Maing Gyi. Thihapatei had his nephew Min U Ti present the captives to the new king Narapatei at Ava (UKII: 76). Narapatei requested the reward of territory from the Ming but the Ming delayed so Ava waited (LFM, 181-2).

Meanwhile, with Si Ren-fa gone, his son Si Ji-fa took over the leadership of Mong Mao and established a power base in the Mong Yang region to the west of the Irrawaddy (LFM 183-189; Daniels, 2003, 8). Kale was given to the king of Ava’s son-in-law Minyekyawswa the Younger to govern (UKII: 78). The Tai ruler of Onpaung met the king of Ava at Wekkapaing at an intermediate safe point between their two domains and pledged allegiance to him in 1441/42. The crown prince marched south and Yamethin quickly submitted, but Pinle, with well-defended fortifications, forced Ava to lay siege to the town (UKII: 79).

The Third Luchuan-Pingmian Campaign (1443-1444)

Since the Ming had captured neither Si Ren-fa nor his son, they launched a third campaign (1443-1444). While Ava laid siege to Pinle they received word that Chinese forces were approaching so they returned to Ava and prepared defenses. The Chinese forces were reported to number three million compared to the eighty thousand troops sent to Pinle, an exaggeration, but an exaggeration that does indicate a grave threat. An even larger army said to have numbered 200,000 was mustered at Ava and sent north to defend the approach to Ava. The Ming encamped at Mong Mao sent an envoy south and demanded that Ava submit and send tribute gifts or they would attack. The Burmese chronicle claims Ava refused to send tribute and the Ming, rather than attacking, marched on to Bhamo and built a bridge across the Irrawaddy (UKII: 80). During the interlude of 1443/44, Ava attacked and occupied Yamethin, and built three pagoda-monasteries there: Payon, Theitsa, and Salin (UKII: 80).

In 1444, Ava marched north to meet Chinese forces. Some of the forces traveled by river meeting up with the land forces at two islands on the Irrawaddy near Tagaung named Tin-twei and Nga-yin-u. The Chinese sent an envoy to ask that Si Ren-fa be handed over to them, but Ava refused. Ming troops then descended on Kaung-ton and war broke out. The Burmese chronicle reports that one Chinese general by the name of Maung Taung Peing, the ruler of Yin-ti, was killed together with many Ming soldiers. The Ming faced a food supply problem feeding their numerous troops, so they retreated to Mong Wan [Burmese; Mo Wun]. The Onpaung ruler [Burmese: Thohkan-bwa] traveled to Kaung-ton and pledged his aid to the king of Ava. The king of Ava appointed the Tai rulers of Mogaung and Mong Nai [Burmese: Mone] to watch over Bhamo and returned to Ava.

The following year (1445), Ava forces were appointed for a march to Bhamo. They passed through Mong Sit on the way and since the pagoda named Shwe-baw-kyan-pago had fallen into disrepair there, they had to halt for a time and repair the pagoda. When they learned that the Ming were marching, they decided that the Ming had retreated temporarily because of a food shortage, but would not leave the Tai-Yunnan frontier until Si Ren-fa was turned over. On the third waxing moon of Natdaw [November 16, 1445], on a Tuesday, when the three planets were in alignment, Ava’s forces returned from Bhamo by river and land to Ava, encamping outside the city. Ming forces followed them and surrounded them when they had pitched camp outside of Ava (UKII: 81).

The Ming threatened to attack if Ava did not hand Si Ren-fa over to them (UKII: 82). The king of Ava negotiated a deal and agreed to hand Si Ren-fa over if the Chinese helped him attack and subdue Yamethin first. The Ming agreed and together with a contingent of troops from Ava built a bridge over the Myit-nge River in Kyaukse and marched south. When they arrived at Laing-hte on the approach to Yamethin, the rebel ruler of Yamethin fled from the town to a place named King-ta. Ava troops occupied and garrisoned Yamethin (UKII: 83; LFM 193-196)
When the Ming returned to Ava to claim Si Ren-fa, he had already died from poison. The king of Ava sent the corpse to the Ming. According to the Burmese chronicle, the Ming disemboweled the corpse, inserted an iron rod in it, and dried it over a fire. When they were done, they left. The Burmese chronicle claims that the reason why the Ming wanted Si Ren-fa so urgently was that during the reign of Si Ren-fa’s grandfather named Tho-chi-bwa [Si Lun-fa?] a war raged between the Tais and the Chinese for twelve years, but since neither side could prevail over the other, the Chinese retreated, and it was due to their lingering anger in a war that never really ended that they requested that Si Ren-fa be handed over. Liew Foon Ming provides a full overview of the many different versions of Si Ren-fa’s ultimate fate (LFM: 193-196). Onpaung once again marched to an intermediate point on the approach to Ava in 1446 and presenting gifts, pledged allegiance to the king of Ava (UKII: 83).

Ming forces marched to Gong-zhang near Bhamo in March of 1448 and joined with forces from Ava. The combined forces relied on boats built by Ava to construct a bridge across the Irrawaddy [Jin-sha]. A date before the onset of the rainy season was set to attack Si Ji-fa’s Tai forces, but preparations were not completed in time. Ming commanders on the scene blamed the failure on both Ava’s incompetence and Ava’s collusion with the enemy, two mutually exclusive factors, one would think. The heat of the approaching summer, malaria together with food supply and manpower shortages were more likely contributing factors (LFM 188):

… the Ava-Burma man [barbarians] had plotted together with the bandits and harboured deceit and guile in their hearts. They dawdled about and did not proceed forward, with the result that the Spring came on and the miasmatic vapours began. The river became swollen, the boats were insufficient to span it and thus we could not cross. Further, the grain route was cut and it would have been difficult to long remain there. Thus, the generals and the government troops were recalled and the yi troops [locally recruited troops] were allowed to return home to wait until the Autumn when another attack will be launched on the border (MSL 27 Mar 1448).

Si Ji-fa attempted to win back the goodwill of the Ming court and remove his fugitive status by sending a tribute mission with gifts to the Ming capital in 1443. Fearing reprisal he did not accompany the mission. The emperor sent back an angry reply, demanding that Si Ji-fa come himself and also to bring the “major and minor chieftains” of Mong Yang where he now resided. The emperor promised that the Mong Yang chieftains would be promoted and rewarded and that Si Ji-fa would “be pardoned and not executed.” Despite these reassurances, Si Ji-fa remained apprehensive and refused to present himself to court (MSL 13 Mar 1448, 17 Mar 1448, 27 Mar 1448, LFM 182). Eventually, after the Ming withdrew from Mong Mao area, Si Ji-fa left Mong Yang and reoccupied Mong Mao reasserting control over all the surrounding small chieftainships that his father had once controlled (LFM 182). The Ming manhunt for Si Ren-fa’s family, or as the Ming Annals refers to them the “remnant spawn of a bandit king” had failed.

The Fourth Luchuan-Pingmian Campaign (1448-1449)

The Ming response to the failure at Gong-zhang was to muster together troops for yet another campaign against the Tai elite (MSL 27 Mar 1448). Since the Ming had long ago officially made Mong Yang independent, the Ming court felt they could deal directly with the Tai chieftains of Mong Yang. The court sent “orders of instruction” to Dao Bian-man, the Mong Yang chief that the Ming had dealt with before, ordering him to help the Ming to capture Si Ji-fa or face punishment.

The order was accompanied with a list of reasons why Mong Yang’s ruler Dao Bian-man should cooperate. First, Mong Yang was an office established by the Ming court. Second, Mong Yang had allowed Si Ji-fa, the son of an outlaw, to go free without capturing him. Third, Dao Bian-man had been guilty of undermining a previous ruler of Mong Yang, Dao Meng-bin, who had been supported by the Ming against attacks by Si Ren-fa. Fourth, he had not cooperated with local Ming officials in Yunnan in their efforts to capture Si Ji-fa (MSL 5 Apr 1448). The Ming indicated that they were well aware of the Tai guerilla style of warfare and considered it cowardly:

You thought that because of the mountains and rivers and the dangerous roads, the government troops could not easily reach you and believed that because of the weather, the miasmatic vapours and the heat, the government troops could not long remain there. When powerful you put up opposition, but when weak you fled (MSL 5 Apr 1448).
Precedents from China’s historical past and the fictional “Tale of Three Kingdoms” [San Guo Yen Yi] were invoked to impress the Tais:

You certainly will not know that in ancient times Ma Yuan went and marked the distant frontier with a bronze pillar. He passed through difficulties and dangers without injury. Zhu-ge Liang crossed the Lu River in the fifth month and, despite the heat, came to no harm. Both were able to destroy the man and the yi and open up territory. Now, the great generals have the opportunity for a decisive victory. You know this from the previous Lu-chuan battles. You should repent your crimes and make an effort to change calamity to good fortune (MSL 5 Apr 1448).

The Ming court pledged that if Si Ji-fa personally submitted in advance of his capture, he would be sent back to govern the lands he had been assigned to and would be allowed to exercise his old rights of tribute-taxation (“living or eating off the land”) (MSL 5 Apr 1448). If Si Ji-fa fled to another area, Mong Yang would be held personally responsible (MSL 5 Apr 1448). When the fourth campaign to Yunnan was finally set in motion in April of 1448, flight to Ava by Si Ji-fa where he would be “concealed” was mentioned as a distinct possibility by the Ming. If Si Ji-fa fled, the Ming expedition was ordered to take the ruler of Mong Yang, Dao Bian-man, prisoner (MSL 19 Apr 1448). The Ming court ordered Hsenwi, Ava, Nan Dian, Gan-yai, and Long-chuan, all formerly part of Mong Mao, to raise troops, prepare boats and store grain and await orders for deployment.” Special care was taken to requisition adequate grain stores (MSL 19 Apr 1448, 5 May 1448, 19 Jun 1448).

Since the Ming believed that Si Ren-fa might flee south to Ava to evade Ming capture, the Ming enlisted Ava’s deeper involvement in the campaign. Worried that the ten days it would take to build boats to cross the Irrawaddy river would provide an opportunity for taking flight and evade capture, the Ming commander Wang Ji requested that Chinese leather boats be sent from Nan-jing, but his request was refused (MSL 6 Jun 1448). Si Ji-fa managed to flee into the wilds before the Ming could cross the river, but Wang Ji followed in quick pursuit (MSL 11 Feb 1449).

The Ming Shi-lu describes the route they took. First, the expedition’s forces marched from Tengchong garrison to Gan-yai and built boats. These boats were used to navigate the river to Nan-ya Mountain. From there, they traveled overland to a place named Sha-ba where they again built boats and traveled down the river “to the two fords at Da-ling and Ha-han” on the Irrawaddy river. They floated down the Irrawaddy until they encountered the palisades that Si Ji-fa had erected on the west bank of the river (MSL 12 Mar 1449). Over 100,000 troops from Hsenwi and Ava had already arrived and encamped on both sides of the river. Ava troops under the leadership of Tai-meng Zhe-gai (Chinese transliteration of Burmese name) made a bridge out of over two hundred boats. Ming forces crossed the river, climbed the bank, and attacked the Tai palisade. The Tai side suffered defeat. Casualties and captives ran in the hundreds. Si Ji-fa fled to higher ground.

Since the Ming food supply was running low, the Ming troops spent three days foraging for food, which resulted in the gathering of 400,000 shih of paddy grain, sufficient to feed troops and horses. From the river, the Ming marched into the highlands of Mong Mao to confront Si Ji-fa and his forces.

The bandit son had also built a large stockade on top of Mount Gui-ku, while on the two ridges there were another two stockades. Supporting the three stockades, were a further seven smaller stockades behind and in all, they extended for 100 li. Each stockade had two rows of palisades and there were great logs and stones fastened to the top of the palisades. We divided the troops and attacked in a pincer move. First we attacked the stockade to the left. The logs and stones sounded like thunder and the cannon projectiles and arrows fell like rain. Then suddenly, the Southern wind blew strongly and we hurriedly collected firewood and set it alight. The flames leapt to Heaven and the commanders and troops attacked with great vigour. The man [barbarian] bandits screamed and fled for their lives. In one moment, all the stockades were breached (MSL 12 Mar 1449).

The Ming expedition returned to the Ming capital after their victory. They had achieved a decisive Ming victory and dispersal of Tai manpower but Si Ji-fa and his sons evaded capture. The year 1449 was the year of the Tumu Debacle on the northern Ming frontier in which the imperial armies were destroyed and the Ming emperor himself was captured, a major turning point in the Ming dynasty (Wang Gungwu, 1998, 326). Ava was distracted momentarily from events in the Tai Frontier by events in Arakan. In 1449, war broke out in Arakan and when the ruler of Sandoway came over to the Burmese side he was given the taxes from Prome's villages. A garrison was installed at Sandoway under Taraphya.
After the return of the Ming forces to the capital, the Ming commanders Wang Ji and Gong Ju were accused of gross negligence and profiteering. The use of army porters to carry silks for trading and military officers acting as traders was among the charges leveled at them. War captives had been castrated and kept for their own use as servants rather than turned over to the Ming court for use as eunuchs as required by law. Horses were lost and soldiers made to carry an excessive amount of grain (six dou). A complete lack of discipline that led to “trampling and injury” without “any pity” being shown to those injured. Some soldiers even hanged themselves, so worn out and distraught had they become. Finally, it was claimed that the Ming had achieved no real decisive victory after all these campaigns, expensive in money as well as manpower. Ming forces had simply withdrawn before the real job of conquest was finished and had appointed Ava and Tai Hsenwi to assume their responsibilities (MSL 8 Jul 1449).

In 1450, the Mon king of Pegu was assassinated by one Nga Swe. Ministers at Pegu then made a request to Ava that Banya Kyan be allowed to rule at Pegu. Banya Kyan, a member of the Pegu royal family and a brother of the Mon queen Shin Saw Bu [Mon: Banya Thau], was apparently kept as a hostage at Ava. Ava sent Banya Kyan south with a large contingent of troops to install him on the throne of Ava (UKII: 84). With Ava’s work for the Ming in the north still unfinished, Ava faced military challenges in all directions.

The Burmese capture Si Ji-fa (1449-1454)

In the wake of the northern defeats, most of the Ming forces returned home and responsibility for finding Si Ji-fa was handed over to a Burmese commander from Ava. Ava was promised Mong Yang if they handed Si Ji-fa over to the Ming. In 1451, the Ming reported that Ava had captured both Si Ji-fa and his son Si Bu-fa, but there was still no clear resolution to the problem in sight. The difficult decision as to what the Ming should do remained:

The Ava-Burma Pacification Superintendent Bu-la-lang captured the bandit sons Si Ji-fa and Si Bu-fa, but did not immediately send them to the capital. He then returned Si Bu-fa to Meng-yang [Mong Yang] to manage and live off (lit: eat off) that area. Now I [a Ming official speaking] wish to order them to forward Si Ji-fa to the Court. However, I fear that the Ava-Burmese are greedy for profit and see him as a valuable commodity. Their demands will be endless. We should show that we are not anxious and should wait for them to bring him to the Court. Afterwards, promotions and rewards can be issued. They also declared that if Si Bu-fa again engages in rebellion, they will request troops to coordinate in eliminating him. We cannot really allow this, as I am afraid that it will give rise to border troubles (MSL 22 Sep 1451).

Si Bu-fa sent a tribute mission from Mong Yang to the Ming court in 1453. He requested that Mong Yang be handed over. This was not possible, the Ming court replied falsely, because Mong Yang had already been given to Ava. The Ming sent fine silks in instead (MSL 27 Jan 1453, 2 Apr 1453).

According to Burmese sources, in 1450, the Burmese ruler of Mong Yang Thihapatei died and the king of Ava’s son Min U Ti entered into a state of rebellion against Ava together with the Tai rulers Si Ji-fa [Burmese: Tho Kyein Bwa] and Si Bu-fa [Burmese: Tho-pot-bwa]. The king of Ava sent troops under the crown prince to deal with the problem. The king of Ava accompanied a large body of forces along the river up to Hti Kyi to support the land forces. Min U Ti resisted the crown prince’s forces from Panlat. The crown prince defeated them and captured Min U Ti as well as sons and wives of Si Ji-fa and Si Bu-fa. The two Tai leaders fled south to Hti Kyi to meet with the king of Ava, claiming that they had refused to support Min U Ti with troops when he marched to Mogaung. The king of Ava administered the two Tai leaders an oath of allegiance and had Min U Ti executed together with his accomplice Son Ngot. Mong Yang was handed over to the sons of Si Bu-fa to rule, but Ava kept the two Tai rulers Si Ji-fa and Si-Bu-fa as captives.

Ava waited for the reward of territory that had been promised before handing Si Ji-fa over to the Ming. Meanwhile, in the year 1451, the ruler of Toungoo was assassinated and the town entered a state of rebellion against Ava. The king of Ava sent the crown prince north to Kaung-ton on the Irrawaddy near Bhamo during 1451/52. When the expedition reached Katha, the family of Si Bu-fa came and paid homage. The crown prince of Ava handed over to the king of Ava the sons and wives of Si Bu-fa who had been taken hostage together with a gift of three hundred viss of silver. During the same year, the Mon king of Pegu Banya-kyan died and his son Mawdaw became king. Mawdaw ruled long enough to pledge his assistance to the king of Ava in a letter, but died within the year. His aunt, the devout and renowned Banya Thau (Burmese: Shin Saw Bu), became queen (UKII: 85).

Three years would pass before the Burmese handed Si Ji-fa and his family over to the Ming. An official named Hu Zhi finally made the handover of territory. Domains in Yin-jia are explicitly mentioned in the Ming An-
nals, but Mong Yang is not. In exchange, Ava handed over six people including Si Ji-fa and his family at a village on the Irrawaddy. (MSL 26 Apr 1454, MSL 20 May 1456). Si Ji-fa arrived at the Ming capital in a cage on August 30, 1454 and was executed on September 2, 1454 (MSL 30 Aug 1454, 2 Sep 1454). Two years later, in 1456, Si Ji-fa’s son Si Bu-fa, probably having received news of what happened to his father, sent a humble tribute mission to the Ming capital with gifts and silver tax to clearly signal his submission (MSL 20 May 1456). In 1466, Si Ming-fa, a grandson Si Ren-fa, was sent from Yunnan to the Ming capital. There he was not sentenced to death, but neither was he allowed to return to Yunnan or reside at the capital. Instead “in accordance with the precedents governing surrendering yi [barbarians]” he was sent to live in remote place by the sea far away from his native place mountainous Yunnan with a meager monthly allowance (MSL 8 Jul 1466). It is worth noting that the local Yunnan history of Nanchoa Nan-choa Ye-che claims that Mong Yang was handed over to Burmese Ava in 1452 (Sainson, 1904, 236).

After the end of the fourth Luchuan-Pingmian Campaign in 1454, regular Tai raids once again became a threat to the Burmese heartland. The Chinese allowed remnants of the defeated Tai ruling elite to remain in Mong Yang if they agreed never to cross the Irrawaddy river to the east. This pushed Mong Mao westwards, closer to Ava. These raids would eventually gain momentum and in 1524-27 there would be a fullscale invasion of Ava that brought the Burmese dynasty of rulers that had ruled Ava since 1364 to an end. For the Ming, a revenge motive was a logical way to explain these invasions. The relentless westward push of the Ming frontier, in search of the precious metals and luxury goods like amber that the region was well endowed with, is an obvious alternative explanation (SLC; Perdue, 2005, 41-42). The long Luchuan-Pingmian campaigns drained the Ming state of military and economic resources and encouraged more uprisings in the southwestern provinces of China (Wang Gungwu, 1998, 326). One important consequence of these unsuccessful wars was that the Ming henceforth favored diplomacy and shunned military action along the frontier (Fernquest, 2005b)

7. Conclusion

The initial question put forward at the beginning of this paper can now be revisited: Was Mong Mao a fully integrated state (c. 1340-1454) or was it only a loosely held together chieftainship with decentralized and diffuse power?

The limited scale and duration of shifting political centers in the Tai Frontier indicates that there was a level of political integration not yet that of a fully developed state. A network of chieftainships that joined together occasionally for a common purpose in tenuous and changing confederations offers a better model. The centers within the Tai frontier zone that asserted themselves politically either through warfare or through building ties with the Ming and Burmese varied from period to period. Sometimes there were two major centers asserting themselves in different ways as there was from 1382 to 1400 when Mong Yang attacked Ava and Mong Mao built strong ties with the Ming.

James Scott’s assertion that Burma existed in a state of “anarchy” with “no state in any robust sense of the term” is largely born out for both Upper Burma as well as the Tai Frontier during this period. Warfare played a central role in perpetuating this anarchy. Ava’s rule over Upper Burma was subject to continual Tai military attacks and intervention in the politics of Upper Burma. During long stretches of time, Ava existed as a unified state projecting its power beyond its core area of control only when it was fully mobilized for warfare as it was during the Ava-Pegu War (1383-1425) and once again during the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns (1438-1454) (cf Tilly, 1992). Mingyiswasawke’s long fifteen-year period of state consolidation at Ava (1368-1383) was a peaceful exception to the rule of anarchy and warfare. Yet another factor adding to political anarchy in the mountainous hinterland of the Tai Frontier could best be termed “geographical uncertainty in warfare.” As Whitmore (2004) noted of Vietnamese campaigns into the Tai Frontier adjacent to Vietnamese territory: “The Tai campaign…played itself out in a vague strategic setting…the territory was only vaguely known and the goals left open.” It was a “generally unknown exploration,” in essence, an armed exploration into unknown territory (Whitmore, 2004, 134).

Who ultimately controlled Mong Yang?

One of the more perplexing problems is the question of Mong Yang [Mohnyin, Meng-yang, Mogaung], who governed it, Tais, Burmese or the Ming, and how it was governed before and after Mong Mao’s ruling elite permanently relocated to Mong Yang during the Luchuan-Pingmian campaigns. Since Mong Yang plays a much more important role in Burmese-Tai relations, solving this problem also lies at the heart of integrating the separate Chinese (Dai) and Burmese (Shan) threads of Tai history, that still constitute quite separate domains of scholarly work.
Sun Laichen (2000) notes the ambiguous nature of political control over Mong Yang: “Burmese sources, including inscriptions and chronicles, suggest or even claim that Mohnyin [Mong Yang] had been under Ava’s control up to the 1470s. But this control was at most intermittent and nominal, as Chinese sources show” (SLC 234).

Let us summarise what we know and can assume. The Tai ruling elite of Mong Yang permanently resided at Mong Yang, so they would have formed a first level of two-level indirect rule. A Ming or Burmese ruler appointed from outside would have been the second level of indirect rule, perhaps spending only a fraction of time at their appanage. Ava’s Burmese elite were located fairly close to Mong Yang, at least a lot closer than even the Ming officials at Kunming. The Ming made only periodic assertions of control over Mong Yang, the effort in 1430 being a noticeable example. The Ming, however, were a potentially dangerous military threat, if they chose to assert themselves militarily. During the Luchuan-Pingmian campaigns, Ava appears to have taken their claim to ownership of Tai domains and their offer of a reward for the capture of Tai elites very seriously.

Ava first asserted control over Mong Yang in the early 1400s, putting an end to Mong Yang attacks on Ava from 1373 to 1393. In the 1410s, Mong Yang faded into the background and Hsenwi took center stage in a long-running conflict with Ava. Mong Mao under Si Ren-fa asserted control over Mong Yang in 1426 just as Mong Yang’s Burmese ruler was becoming king of Ava. By the time the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns were in full swing in the early 1440s, members of the Ava court appear to have exerted great influence over Mong Yang, although in 1448 the Ming communicated with a Tai elite ruler of Mong Yang rather than a Burmese one (MSL 5 Apr 1448) and by the end of the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns in 1454, the Mong Mao ruling elite, having relocated to Mong Yang, seem to be firmly in control. What is one to make of all of these shifting power relations?

Mong Yang was likely subject to the sort of dual or overlapping hegemony or spheres of influence typically found in frontier areas. Since the Ming were ultimately the stronger part in this potential contention over resources, a clear title of ownership of a Tai appanage would have been advantageous to the Burmese. There were possibly two tiers of rule consisting of a Tai ruler who ruled directly over the domains and extracted tribute and taxes from them, and a second tier Burmese or Ming possessor of the appanage who received tribute and taxes from the Tai ruler, in essence a patron-client chain.

This could explain why the offer of Tai chieftainships for the capture of Si Ren-fa, and later the offer of Mong Yang for the capture of Si Ji-fa, was attractive to the court of Ava. Recognition by the Ming of Ava’s claim to rule Mong Yang would have avoided contention over tribute and taxes and made them easier to extract. In many ways, Burmese administration circa 1400-1450 resembles the move from decentralized to centralized Indic administration proposed by Lieberman (2003, 35) in which “more closer patronage and family ties between Burmese courtiers and their Tai counterparts” were cultivated and the fact that “some of the most distant tributaries would continue to pay homage to China...as well as Burma” was accepted (Lieberman, 2003, 161)

### Historical cycles in the Tai Frontier

Despite the reign of “anarchy” in the Tai frontier zone, this anarchy had an overall shape that was cyclical. Victor Lieberman discovered a generalized cyclical pattern in later Burmese history in his Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580-1760 (Lieberman, 1984). Prior generations of historians ignored this cyclicity. The historian of Burma Harvey’s (1925) characterization of the Ava period as one of “Shan [Tai] Dominion” is clearly false. The Tais played an important role in the history of this period and were involved in periodic contests with Ava over its domains as well as their own domains. Instead of a grand Tai “Southern Advance” during this period, there was instead a periodic or cyclical movement that was often driven by external factors such as the wars being waged by the Ming and Ava in other theaters or on the disposition of the current Ming emperor and court.

The pattern of Ming-Tai-Burmese warfare over the 150-year period 1300-1450 is summarized below (Table 2) and Maps 1-4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1300-1401</td>
<td>Tai attacks Burma, Ming attacks Tai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1401-1426</td>
<td>Burma attacks Tai, Ming attacks Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1426-1438</td>
<td>Tai attacks Burma, Tai attacks Tai, Ming retreats from Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1438-1454</td>
<td>Burma attacks Tai, Ming attacks Tai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Tai-Burmese relationship was defined by a continual use of military means to assert power. Military action played less of a role in the Ming-Tai relationship, with the Ming asserting power over the Tai Frontier mostly through diplomacy and administrative change, employing only a few, but decisive, military campaigns for limited periods of time. The power of Mong Mao followed the periodic ebb and flow of the personal power of individual rulers. The column labeled "cycle" in the table of Mong Mao Rulers records a rough estimation of the cyclical increase and decrease of Mong Mao’s power with "+" and "-" marks (See Table 2 further above).
The hidden transcript of the Tai Mong Mao chronicle provides, in a rough form, the cyclical manpower-demographic dynamics driving Si Ren-fa’s expansionary warfare leading up to the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns (c. 1426-1438). It shows how expansionary warfare could quickly gather momentum and just as quickly lose it:

… he was reinforced by the armies of all the chiefs he had subdued so far, and decided with his enormous host, to attempt the conquest of Mithila [Yunnan]. He started accordingly from Tai-lai, but was met by a Chinese force under the walls of the capital (Mung-kyei) [Kunming] and was defeated; he then fell back first on Tai-lai, afterwards on Wan-chjang (Yung-chang), and eventually retired into Mau [Mong Mao] territory, followed by the inhabitants of all the places he had subdued, who preferred to cast in their lot with his, rather than endure the vengeance of the Chinese. On arriving near his capital, he found the inhabitants panic stricken and flying to Ayudia and in many other directions; his army broke up and joined in the flight, whilst he himself, accompanied by his brother Chau Si-phap [Si Ji-fa]…sought an asylum at Ava (Elías, 1876, 21-22, my italics).

Long-run demographic forces behind warfare in the Tai Frontier: Further research

Two population flows warrant further investigation: (1) Tai population flows out of the Tai Frontier into Upper Burma during and after the Ava-Pegu War, and (2) Ming Chinese flows out of Vietnam and back into Yunnan. The work of James Lee on the demography of Yunnan indicates the rough magnitude of migratory flows into Yunnan:

Large numbers of Han people began arriving in the crescent [Tai Frontier] during the Ming period. It is impossible to determine how many Han came to the crescent at this time, but James Lee has documented three large immigration waves between 1391 and the 1580s. Using these figures, we can estimate that well over 140,000 Han migrants, mostly soldiers and their dependents, settled in the Tengyue-Yongchang area during the Ming period (Giersch, 2001, 73-74, citing Lee 1982, 285-90).

Inter-regional Ming military movements and the establishment of garrisons may have had more far-reaching demographic effects:

… state policies which encouraged movement of Chinese people into newly-conquered areas included the establishment of state farms ... and military farms ... One of the limiting elements for further expansion by the Ming state was the availability of grain to feed initially troops and later officials and settlers. Military farms and state farms were thus established to provide this grain. In 1426, during the latter years of the Ming occupation of Đại Việt, at least 8,000 ‘native troops’ ...from nine guards in Jiao-zhi were being employed on military farms (Wade, 2004, 29, my italics).

These garrisons (Chinese: wei-suo) were established all over China including Yunnan. The Ming established military farms (Chinese: tun-tian) to support garrisons. The soldiers manning a garrison were divided into farming units and guard units. The farming units produced a food supply to support the guard units (Liew Foon Ming, 1984, 1998, 2006). The soldiers who were mustered under the Yongle emperor to fight in and occupy northern Vietnam (Chinese: Jiaozhi Province) were mustered from garrisons all over China. The Ming often had problems providing enough food for all their troops in Vietnam (Wade, 2004, 8) indicating that contention over food supply often existed in areas newly under Ming control such as the Tai Frontier.

The causal relationships between population pressures and warfare are far from simple environmental circumscription theory that posits a direct causal connection between population pressure and warfare was once widely accepted (Carniero 1970, 1978; Lewellen, 1992, 54-55; Johnson and Earle, 2000, 258-259). Paul Wheatley employed it in Nagara and Commandery (1983, 22), his classic work on pre-modern Southeast Asian urban history. Recent research has cast doubt on a general relationship between population pressure and warfare, but population pressure can be a factor behind leading to increased intra-regional warfare (Turchin, 2006, 1-2). Models that simplify the problem such as Turchin and Goldstone’s ‘Demographic-Structural’ model can be adapted to describe the effect of changing population on politics and warfare in the Tai frontier zone (Turchin, 2003, 118-149; Goldstone, 1991).

The general idea of how long-run changes at Ferguson’s infrastructural level eventually could cause change at Braudel’s (1966) history of events level, runs roughly like this. Human agency, driven by ideas at Ferguson’s su-
Another force driving Ming migration and political control was the kai-zhong system of rice procurement. This system used the Chinese state monopoly on salt to procure rice for Ming military forces. In this system, the state sold “state-monopoly salt to merchants for grain which the merchants were required to transport to areas where border troops were stationed” (Wade, 2004, 29-30). Exactly what impact, if any, the system had on the Tai frontier food supply during our period is obscured by the system’s complexity:

The system was instituted in Yun-nan during the Hong-wu reign (1368-98) in order to feed the Ming forces sent to occupy the region. In the 1420s, with the Ming occupation of Vietnam, the merchants preferred to sell their grain to the forces in Vietnam, rather than continue to supply Yun-nan. In the 1430s, the system was strongly revived in Da-li and Jin-chi in Yun-nan to supply the forces to be used against Si Ren-fa of Lu-chuan. It was still being used in 1445 to feed the persons building the walled city at Teng-chong, the new Chinese outpost in Yun-nan (Wade, 2004, 29-30, my italics).

Demographic models have the potential to reveal repeated historical patterns. Tai expansionary warfare (c. 1426-1438) may have repeated the earlier pattern of Tai raiding against Burma (c. 1340-1364), raiding that played an important role in state collapse and regime change in Upper Burma (Bennett, 1971, 27). In the process of moving from internal feuding-banditry to external expansionary warfare (Turchin and Korotayev, 2006), Tai chieftainships likely moved away from acting independently and drew into temporary cooperative confederations and alliances for strength and solidarity (Di Cosmo, 1999; Turchin, 2003; Andreski, 1968), however these confederations were fragile and held together for only short periods of time. They were apparently also accompanied by settlement into the regions the Tais attacked. Contemporaneous emergent Mon, Cambodian, and Ayutthayan states seem to have exhibited similar patterns of political activity at roughly the same time (Chutintaranond, 1990; Baker, 2003; Fernquest, 2006), a promising area for future research.

Clearly, a lot of research remains to be done on the demographics side in the study of the Tai Frontier. Fundamental changes in social structure brought about by contact along frontiers also remains largely unstudied. As anthropologists such as Leach (1954, 1960) have shown, frontiers are also places where politically dominant societies can transform the social structures of politically subordinate societies, a process that can lead to a higher degree of political integration as it did in the Kachin movement from a egalitarian tribal to a more hierarchical Tai-like social organization. Leach’s analysis focused on the effect of the dominant Tai on the hill-dwelling Kachin. Similarly, Grabowsky (2004, 41-44) critically reviews the possible Chinese or Mongol origins of the northern Tai Nai Sip social structure. How long it takes for these social structure changes to occur is a critical question. The rigid hierarchy of the Tai political structure that Ming envoys found at Mong Mao in 1396, and later describe in the Bai-yi Zhuan, may have been the result of Chinese influences, much as Kachin social structure was influenced by the proximity of lowland Tai social structure. Mong Mao shared the same basic Nai Sip (“master of ten”) or “Hua Sip” social structure with social groupings of: 10/50/100/1000/10,000/100,000 to enable census, taxation, and labor mobilization for both military and corvee labor uses. This social structure was likely borrowed from the Chinese and may date as far back as the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) (Grabowsky, 2004, 41-43; Wade, 1996, app. 2, 2). Mong Mao’s mail courier system (Wade, 1996, 10) that tied Mong Mao society together across a mountainous landscape also appears to have been influenced by similar Chinese systems.
A brief summary of the history

A brief summary of the broad historical patterns during our period is in order. During the first period (c. 1340-1401), Mong Mao was a unified coalition of states waging expansionary warfare against Ava. In the second period (c. 1401-1426) the Burmese split the Tai coalition and governed each of the Tai chieftainships separately. In the third period (c. 1426-1438) individual Tai chieftainships in the south joined with local rulers in Upper Burma and aided them in their resistance against the Burmese center at Ava. To the north, Mong Mao united Tai chieftainships and engaged in expansionary warfare against the Ming. Finally, in the fourth period of the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns (c. 1438-1454) the Ming defeated a united Mong Mao in decisive battles. With the help of Burmese, Ava tracked down the remnants of Mong Mao’s ruling elite. The center of Mong Mao’s power was pushed westwards to Mong Yang closer to the Burmese heartland. Overall, there was no lasting territorial consolidation in either the Tai Frontier or Upper Burma during this period and the degree of unity and independence varied greatly over time. Tai unity largely depended on mobilization for warfare.

Starting in 1340, Mong Mao attacks against Ava under Si Ke-fa brought a period of crisis and regime change to post-Pagan Upper Burma. After Si Ke-fa’s death, power seems to have passed to Mong Yang for an interval as evidenced by the frequent successions and disorder that reigned at the Mong Mao court and Mong Yang’s attacks against Ava in the 1370s and 1390s. From 1382, Si Lun-fa ruled over the Tai Frontier under the aegis of the Ming. The Ming are said to have joined Pingmian to the Luchuan that Si Lun-fa ruled over. There is little evidence, such Mong Yang’s attacks against Ava during the period, to indicate the furthest extent to which the Mong Mao of Si Lun-fa projected its power or whether Mong Yang was acting in coordination with Mong Mao.

In 1388, the Ming overcame challenges to their power in the Tai frontier zone. Renewed Tai attacks against Upper Burma in 1393 were ended by Ming envoys in 1396. Buddhist monks and renegade Chinese soldiers added to the parade of outsiders welcomed to Mong Mao by Si Lun-fa during the 1390s. Threatened Tai elite insiders reacted by expelling Si Lun-fa. The rebels at Mong Yang were, in turn, rebelled against. The Ming reinstated Si Lun-fa militarily by the Ming. Nonetheless, he died in the continuing chaos, succeeded by his son Si Xing-fa.

The succession crisis at Ava in 1401 brought with it a military reversal. The Tai raids that had delivered the final coup-de-grace to post-Pagan Upper Burma were reversed and Ava began to assert control over the Tai north. Ava extracted man and animal resources from the Tai Frontier for Ava’s war against Pegu in Lower Burma. Ming diplomacy that had once supported the Burmese against Tai intrusions, now supported Tais against Burmese intrusions.

Political discord and fragmentation accompanied the end of the Ava-Pegu and Ming-Vietnam wars. To the south, Tai forces attacked Ava, killed the king, and sparked a succession struggle that passed power to the former Burmese governor of Mong Yang. To maintain his power he had to wage continual warfare against settlements in the southeastern part of Upper Burma such as Yamethin, Pinle, Toungoo, and Taungdwingyi. Tai chieftains, who apparently remained in Upper Burma after their service in the Ava-Pegu war, supported these settlements. To the north, Mong Mao resurged and engaged in expansionary warfare driving into the Ming heartland of Yunnan. This led to the Ming launching the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns that would last more than a decade (c. 1438-1454). They consumed massive amounts of Ming manpower and threatened Ming prestige. In the aftermath, the Ming favored coercion by traditional Chinese diplomacy and administration over military means.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chieftainship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1426</td>
<td>Mong Yang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1428</td>
<td>Nandian, Tengchong, Yongchang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1436</td>
<td>Mengding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1437</td>
<td>Nandian (annexed 278 villages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1439-42</td>
<td>Menglian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Daniels, 2006, 31-32)
tier zone made it possible for small remnants of the Tai elite to continue their existence in hopes of fighting again in the future. Under Ming pressure, the political and military leadership of Mong Mao moved westward to Mong Yang. At Mong Yang Tai power was lined up along the Irrawaddy river with the Burmese capital of Ava in Upper Burma and posed much more of a threat to the Burmese heartland.

The semi-tropical climate made it difficult for Ming forces to survive for long periods in the Tai Frontier. The difficulties that the Ming encountered led them to offer territorial rewards to both Ava and Hsenwi for the capture of Tai leaders that evaded capture. Eventually, the Burmese captured the remnant Tai leaders but delayed handing them over until the Ming fulfilled their part of the bargain and gave Ava the Tai territory they had promised. Eventually, under pressure, the Tai leaders were handed over to the Ming with only a partial fulfillment of the promise.

Neither Mong Mao nor Mong Yang was ever turned over to the Burmese as the Ming had promised. This led to further contention over territory in the Tai Frontier in the 1490s. In 1524 there was a full-scale Tai invasion of the Burmese capital of Ava in Upper Burma that instituted a period of Tai indirect rule that lasted from 1527 to 1557. A resurgent Burmese kingdom won back Upper Burma from the Tais in 1555 and took the Tai heartland of Mong Mao in 1557 (Fernquest, 2005b, 2005c). This was the beginning of a long series of campaigns into the Tai Frontier that controlled for a time Lanna, Lan Chang, and Ayutthaya. Mong Mao never regained its independence after this final Burmese assertion of power.

Epilogue: Bibliographical notes on Tai history

A short literature review for Tai History is in order to lay a foundation for future history writing. Tai ethnic settlements (Shan, Ahom, Tai Lu, Lanna, Siam, Tai Daeng, Tai Dam, Lao) have long extended across the hinterlands of northern mainland Southeast Asia (See map 5 and map 6).

Map 5: Tai Realm – Tai Frontier

![Map 5: Tai Realm – Tai Frontier](image-url)
Lieberman (2003) proposed the notion of a Shan realm between China and Upper Burma (123-5). Whereas the Shan realm is restricted to the mostly Burmese western mainland Southeast Asia, Tai ethnic groups extended across the full length of northern mainland Southeast Asia into Vietnam (Si Song Chu Tai) and down into central mainland Southeast Asia into Lanna and Ayutthaya. A notion of a “Tai realm” extends the notion of a Shan realm to this larger region.

Each Tai ethnic group in the Tai realm has a history recorded in local chronicles, oral traditions, and in the historical works of neighboring China and Burma. Linguists describe and compare the grand sweep of Tai linguistic diversity in great analytical depth (Baker, 2002). Historians, on the other hand, have yet to plumb the depths of this diversity. Part of the problem is that Tai history sits astride both Chinese and Southeast Asian history.

Historians from the time of Scott (1900, v. 1, 199-200) and Luce (1957, 1958, 1959) have conceived of an integrated Tai history. The complex web of historical place names and events, recorded in the chronicles of the disparate Tai, Ming, and Burmese historical traditions, have made the collation of historical sources and the reconstruction of an integrated history a formidable task. The calendrical systems, rendition of personal and place names, the extent to which obviously fictional elaborations have crept into the historical narrative, and the very purpose for which the history was composed in the first place, all vary between the Tai, Ming, and Burmese traditions of historical writing. The extensive Tai historical chronicle tradition remains largely unexplored, despite being an important medium “for the creation and transmission of historical memories,” an additional independent source, and a counterbalance to the often “excessive subjectivity” of Ming sources (Daniels, 2006, 21). Ultimately, the three perspectives of the Tai, Ming, and Burmese historical traditions must be reconciled to produce a composite picture of what actually happened during this critical period in Southeast Asian and Chinese history.

Historical scholarship that treats the Tai realm in an integrated manner has developed slowly over the years. Over one hundred years ago, Scott and Hardiman’s Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States (1900) and Elias’s History of the Shans (1876) provided a synthetic view of Tai history. Scott’s Gazetteer contains translations of extracts from the extensive collection of Tai manuscripts that he collected during the British colonial period that are now located at Cambridge University (Marrison, 1972) Terwiel’s (1981) magisterial comparative survey of Tai ritual is perhaps the most wide-ranging comparative work to date. Recently, new contributions range from accurate, complete, and well-indexed translations of the Ming Shi-lu and the Bai-yi Zhuan by Geoffrey Wade (1996, 2004), David Wyatt’s integrative general history of Thailand (1984) and annotated chronicle translations (1994, 1995), in a similar manner Jiang Yingliang’s general history of the Tai in Yunnan (1983) and annotated translation of the Bai-yi Zhuan (1980), the detailed critical Ming histories of Liew Foon Ming (1984, 1996, 1998, 2003, 2004) and Christian

The most urgent priority and greatest bottleneck to a better understanding of Tai and Burmese history is the compilation, editing, and translation of primary sources in languages of relevance to the Tai Frontier: various Tai dialects, Classical Chinese, and Burmese. This constitutes a whole research program unto itself, one which is only just beginning.

Appendix A: Lists of Rulers

**Ming Dynasty Emperors**

- Hongwu 1368-1398
- Jianwen 1398-1402
- Yongle 1402-1424
- Hongxi 1424-1425
- Xuande 1425-1435
- Zhengtong 1435-1449
- Jingtai 1449-1457

**Ava Kings/Chieftains**

- Thadominpya (1364-1368)
- Nga Nu (1368)
- Minkyiswasawke (1368-1401)
- Tarabya (1401)
- Nga Nauk Hsan (1401)
- Minhkaung (1401-1422)
- Thihathu (1422-1426)
- Min-hla-nge (1426)
- Kalekyetaungnyo (1426)
- Mohnyinthado, Mohnyin Mintaya (1427-1440)
- Minyekyawsa (1440-1443)
- Narapati (1443-1469)
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Ro(d)gers: a Brief Addendum

Gerry Abbott

In my article concerning Ro(d)gers (Abbott, 2005), I inadvertently omitted a certain amount of information. As I have been contacted by a descendant who tells me that there is also a Rodgers in Australia who can trace his ancestry back to that renegade Englishman, the following additional information will no doubt be welcomed by these two people, and I hope will be of interest to others.

Readers will remember that Ro(d)gers claimed to have arrived in India aboard the HCS Worcester, which anchored in the Hooghly in 1782, probably in the August of that year. Bulley (1992) supplies some evidence of his activities between that landfall and his appearance in Amarapura fifteen years later.

Less than four years after arriving in India, Ro(d)gers turns up in Sumatra, where he first appears on 29 June, 1786. John Adolphus Pope, a young mariner at that time, was aboard the Princess Royal – a ‘country ship’ plying the shores of Southeast Asia – and noting his experiences in a series of letters. He recorded what happened that day while the ship was anchored at Gingham (modern Bireun, near the northern tip of Sumatra) and he was ashore:

I got on board about Noon and found while I was on shore that a Ketch under Pegu colours had arrived and that she was commanded by a Mr. Rogers, the man that had been our Chief Mate before Mr. J. came. (…) The Captain and he not being on good terms, I suppose he will not trouble us much. I have heard Captain F. say that he was a man of some talents but very unfit to be an officer. I don’t exactly know what he meant by this (Bulley: 69).

Unfortunately Pope does not say how long Rogers had been chief mate of the Princess Royal. Almost two years passed, and then the ship docked at Rangoon. Early in May 1788, when young Pope went ashore to deliver some cargo, Rogers reappeared:

I meet every day a number of French. There are near 50 settled here and some English, amongst them our Mr. Rogers. (…) This town seems to be a resort for people labouring under bad characters and for rogues of every description. The whole part of its European inhabitants are people of this description (Ibid: 116-117).

Rogers soon showed one sign of bad character by dragging the eighteen-year-old Pope through the town’s red-light district:

The Quarter appropriated for Courtezans called Jackaley is in the suburb to the west of the town. They are regularly licensed and the Master of so many (for they are slaves of various nations) is answerable for their good behaviour. You know I became acquainted with this by being forced to go through it on an excursion I made the other day with Mr. Rogers. They were in general very handsome … I was gallantly offered to be introduced which I very ungallantly declined (Ibid: 119).

Pope was delighted, however, when Rogers took him to view the superb Shwe Dagon Pagoda. Thereafter Rogers does not figure in Pope’s letters, and almost a decade passes before the talented but tainted renegade reappears, this time in the Burmese capital, Amarapura. The second of a series of British envoys, the self-important Captain Hiram Cox, arrived there in 1797. Although he makes no mention of Rogers in his official journal, Cox says in his report to Calcutta:

To one man I have particular obligations (…) a Mr Rodgers, who has been eleven or twelve years in the country, and should I effect an establishment here I shall beg leave to recommend him as Burmha Translator and Head Interpreter to the Residency. Such an appointment will be absolutely necessary (Cox, 1812).
It is at this point that I can return the reader to my earlier article, the fifteen-year gap having been at least partly filled in. All that remains to be said is that, given Captain F’s description of Ro(d)gers as ‘a man of some talents but very unfit to be an officer’, there can be no doubt that the Rogers recorded by Pope and the Ro(d)gers described by later figures such as Symes and Gouger are one and the same.

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The Mandarin-speaking Chinese peoples of Burma, whether Hui or Han, have been little studied, which is a cause for welcoming this book on the Han state of Kokang, bordering on Yunnan. It is written with passion, and with much intimate inside knowledge, and the maps, photographs and family tree are illuminating. However, the author is no professional historian. Although the book is based on British archives and oral sources, it is very lightly annotated, so that it is often unclear where information comes from. The chronology is jumbled, and the approach is personal, anecdotal and partisan. This is the story of a dynasty, rather than that of a state or people, and the author presents a somewhat questionable view of the benevolence of her family as rulers. Jackie Yang favours British colonialism for its indirect rule, and dislikes Burman nationalism for snuffing out regional autonomy and hereditary dynasties. For all these weaknesses, however, there is much here that can contribute to a better understanding of the fragmented history of northern Burma.

The House of Yang originated when a Ming loyalist, a tea trader by profession, fled westwards from the Qing advance in the mid-seventeenth century. He became a minor warlord in the marches of Yunnan, and kept the turbulent non-Chinese minorities under control. His descendants came to rule over a population that was mainly Han, and their little court was culturally oriented towards China. By the late eighteenth century, the Yang family had extracted recognition from the authorities in Yunnan, while simultaneously paying tribute to the Shan ruler of Hsenwi. After the British had forced China to accept the inclusion of Kokang in Burma in 1897, the House of Yang attempted to shake off the suzerainty of Hsenwi. Under the Pax Britannica, Kokang prospered by replacing tea with opium, gaining an exemption from the 1923 British prohibition on cultivating this crop, and hiring mules to the Indian army. With the arrival of the Japanese in 1942, the House of Yang threw in its lot with the Guomindang authorities in Yunnan, while staving off Chinese plans to annex the principality. This 'loyalty' was rewarded after the war, when Britain at last made Kokang a 'Shan State' in its own right in 1947. However, independent Burma 'betrayed' the spirit of the Panglong Agreement of 1946. After a brief Indian summer, the regime born of the 1962 coup dismantled the Shan States. Armed struggle in Kokang, from 1963 to 1968, was financed by smuggling opium to Thailand, and much of the population left for Thailand and Lashio. The Communist Party gained a precarious ascendancy in Kokang into the 1980s, and when the junta finally agreed to a measure of autonomy in 1990, the House of Yang was no more.

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In *Karaoke Fascism: Burma and the Politics of Fear*, Monique Skidmore seeks to understand how Burmese people have survived under authoritarian rule and managed the fear that the military regime engenders. In this, she undertakes an anthropological study of the creation of affect in the politics of everyday life. She argues that the regime’s attempts to create a totalitarian military utopia have caused the Burmese people to fragment and silence themselves emotionally, but that they have been successful in exploiting the fissures in this campaign of fear and finding, if only symbolically, means of escape.

Skidmore takes as her premise that fear has become “the central affective element of urban life in contemporary Burma” (x) and the first few chapters are dedicated to understanding the means of production of this fear. She uses Michael Taussig’s work on terror as theoretical model for this section, however Skidmore finds traditional anthropological methods inadequate to study affect in contemporary Burma. Given both the potential danger to informants of speaking with a foreigner about politics and the fear that discussing their vulnerabilities produced, Skidmore carefully limited her interviews to situations in which her informants felt safe, which were often restricted to brief reflections whispered in secret. In order to supplement this data, she proposes to read Burmese slences about fear and to intuit Burmese experiences of fear through her own emotional experiences of the same and similar situations. The first four chapters thus give us a picture of urban Burma during the year of her fieldwork-1996-the year of the extraordinary hit-and-run demonstrations and military repression. In this presentation we get an image of the paranoia, self-censorship and feelings of vulnerability the experiences of this year produce in the anthropologist. Through her informants’ and her own experiences, she presents a picture of Burmese affect as characterized by a lack of trust, an uncertainty that means one cannot plan for the future and a vulnerability which collectively, she argues, have lead Burmese people to block external expression of emotion and to deny thinking about the fear that she understands to characterize Burmese life.

In chapter four, Skidmore moves from the catalog of the means of production of fear to an argument that the current regime is an aspiring, but yet unrealized fascist state. Working from late 20th century Marxist analysis of Fascism in Europe, she argues that the regime enacts a totalitarian strategy of social control which, relying on terror, seeks to subjugate all aspects of life to the goals of the state, repressing thought, criticism and creativity completely. While the Burmese state has not realized this type of military utopia, she argues that the concern that it might become reality is forefront in the fear she studies. It remains only incipient fascism because the Burmese people have become adept at exploiting the fissures in the totalitarian project. The concept of karaoke fascism, from which the title is derived, is not simply that of the Burmese state imperfectly reproducing a European political form, but of Burmese people resisting the totalizing aspects of the regime’s project by emptying themselves out emotionally while mouthing the words to the military’s version of society.

Starting with chapter five, Skidmore leaves the specific description of affect and moves to a broader description of the cultural and symbolic modes of repression. Here Skidmore engages Walter Benjamin’s insights into the nature of fascism and capitalist modernity to investigate the urban façade of wealth and consumption that has emerged in the past decade. She points out not simply the ways in which the new construction has been financed through drug trafficking but the hidden costs of this endeavor through her fieldwork with heroin addicts.

In chapter six, Skidmore engages Benjamin’s argument that modernity has transformed the citizen into a consumer of empty dreams and spectacles and equally turned the body itself into a commodity for consumption. Skidmore uses this insight to investigate the phenomena of mass rallies and the regime’s use the bodies of large groups of the population to demonstrate both their role in the promotion of the people’s goals and the populations acceptance of their projects. Yet, as Skidmore argues both for mass rallies and in her studies of prostituted women in the new peri-urban towns, Burmese people find multiple routes of escape. They employ the various cultural and symbolic means at their disposal to send their souls and emotional selves away during the most acute moments of repression, ultimately defeating the totalitarian project. Here Skidmore provides a very detailed description of life in the town she calls New Fields to describe the various means, particularly religious and magical that Burmese people use to exploit the fissures and interstices in the military’s project and ensure that its totalitarian ideals are never fully realized. The use of absurdity, magic, astrology, mediation, alchemy and games of chance of-

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78 In this section, Skidmore relies heavily on an article by Peter Sinclair on the capitalist nature of Fascism. The citation is one of a few from this section that are missing from the bibliography. It is: Peter Sinclair, "Fascism and Crisis in Capitalist Society," *New German Critique* 9 (Autumn 1976) 87-112.
fer a means of imagining alternative realities and possibilities and it is in the description of this Burmese subaltern religious world that the book really shines. Ultimately Skidmore is worried that these strategies may have fragmented Burmese people emotionally beyond possible future integration, but she demonstrates the ways in which they have successfully thwarted the totalizing aspects of the state.

Given the political nature of anthropology of contemporary Burma, emphasis in this book as in other recent studies regrettably falls on the extraordinary as opposed to the ordinary aspects of Burmese life. I found, however, the book was at its most insightful when it was focused on more mundane aspects. An example of this comes in the contrast between the first few lines of chapter one, which present stark and shocking images of a prostituted woman, a heroin addict and an impoverished mother and the thick descriptions of these groups presented in later chapters. The shock-value of the first lines leaves the reader skeptical of the argument they seek to present, whereas, the careful depiction of these groups in the later chapters is highly effective in communicating the everyday and structural violences of the current situation. When the emphasis or tone falls on the more exceptional the book is weaker. The period of Skidmore's fieldwork was an extraordinary moment in the history of the past eighteen years and this may be the reason that the scenes and emotions she describes take on a tone not recognizable to other scholars and residents of urban Burma. Likewise, it is the extraordinary nature of the experience for her that limits the method she proposes. Skidmore's method participates in a history of anthropology that intentionally places the anthropologist in the ethnography, however, in this case, the project doesn't account for the fact that what for her are exceptional experiences of fear and paranoia are realities that Burmese people have lived with for over a decade. In the same vein, I feel that her emphasis on the Burmese state as an incipient fascist state is less useful than the broader insights into the betrayals and totalizing trajectories of capitalist modernity for which the theorists she uses are better known.

The book however offers a wealth of insight when its emphasis is on the ordinary. Skidmore is unique among foreign anthropologists in gaining extended access to groups of the peri-urban poor, especially heroin addicts and prostituted women. Her insights into the nature of prostitution and the ways in which Burmese women survive the structural and mundane violence of poverty and prostitution are valuable contributions for those thinking about the position of women in Burmese society. Likewise her analysis of the use of religion, the occult and gambling contributes to the current work in the post-colonial studies that seeks to understand the ways in which people re-deploy symbols to try to shape their realities outside of hegemonic forces. Most important is her contribution to Burma studies in the engagement of contemporary critical theory, here Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School of criticism, to understand the cultural and symbolic politics of the current situation. She provides an analysis that moves beyond a simple analysis of state-focused politics and economics to a broader level of cultural critique. It is in these, its best aspects, that we can hope the book represents the future of anthropological scholarship on Burma.

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Emma Larkin’s Secret Histories: Finding George Orwell in a Burmese Teashop begins with her discovery that Orwell has the reputation in Burma of being a “prophet” due to his three most famous books: Burmese Days, Animal Farm, and Nineteen-Eighty-Four. According to Larkin, “It is a particularly uncanny twist of fate that these three novels effectively tell the story of Burma’s recent history” (p. 2). Larkin explains that the oppression of the entire population in Burma was “completely hidden from view” by information control carefully yet invisibly planted in every corner of Burma and cemented by the “vast network of Military Intelligence spies and their informers” and the “threat of torture and imprisonment.” Larkin admits that the fear that ordinary Burmese face everyday was beyond imagination for an outsider and fits well with the psychological, social, and political landscape of Orwell’s novels, which “explore the idea of individuals being trapped within their environment, controlled by their family, the society around them or an all-powerful government” (p. 4). Larkin’s fascination with Orwell was further strengthened when she found that Orwell in his final days was trying to write another novel about Burma under the title of “A Smoking Room Story.” Generally, Larkin’s familiarity with Orwell’s writings is impressive, bringing into the discussion other writings by Orwell including The Road to Wigan Pier, Homage to Catalonia, The Clergyman’s Daughter, Shooting an Elephant, and A Hanging.

Although many researchers of Orwell underestimate the significance of his experience in Burma, Larkin suggests that Orwell’s years in Burma provided a strong foundation for the perspectives that fueled his writing. Larkin thus embarked on a trip to Burma to “experience Burma as Orwell knew it” which she believed possible because “almost half a century of military dictatorship has given it the air of a country frozen in time” (p. 4). Larkin discovered, however, a much more bitter reality in contemporary Burma, “a real-life Nineteen Eighty-Four where Orwell’s nightmare visions are being played out with a grueling certainty” (p. 4).

Larkin’s story is based on her own interviews with students, former prisoners, publishers, intellectuals, refugees, and members of the Anglo-Burmese minority, as well as those who approached her, on their own initiative, with their own accounts. Larkin is fluent in Burmese and this is a real strength of the book, for she is fully able to grasp the reality and essence of life in Burma vividly through stories told by her interviewees. Larkin then weaves each of their stories into Orwell’s world in which the life under a totalitarian regime where people (as well as animals) were constantly under Big Brother’s surveillance and those who opposed the government faced severe torture. Chapters are divided according to the cities (Mandalay, the Delta region, Rangoon, Moulmein, and Katha) where Orwell spent his life in colonial Burma as one of the officers of the Imperial Police Force in the 1920s. In order to understand Orwell’s life in Burma and how his experience influenced his writing, Larkin attempted to find locals who knew Orwell or his family and the houses where he resided or the buildings where he might have visited during his residence. In doing so, a parallel theme emerges in the story of Burma today as told by the people she interviewed.

In Chapter One, Larkin visited the last royal capital of Burma, Mandalay, where Orwell began his colonial career studying at the police training school. Larkin visited the colonial hill station of Maymyo (today, Pyin-Oo-Lwin), northeast of Mandalay, which Orwell had described as a nostalgic place reminding him of his English homeland. In both places, Larkin tells us that remnants of Orwell’s Burma still linger. The building that housed the police training school, for example, is still being used to the present. Larkin locates the remains of Orwell’s days in the building’s haunted room in which a young, lonely British officer committed suicide, in the old colonial hotel built in “impressive mock-Tudor-style” in Maymyo, in the hotel restaurant’s menu, and the dusty bar where British officers once drank the day (and night) away. But these are mere glimpses of another time. All that remains, Larkin finds, are derelict buildings, abandoned rooms, and many ghosts. This corresponds to the present condition of her interviewees, especially their dismal living conditions, the government having forgotten to take care of them.

In Chapter Two, Larkin visited the Delta region, a mud land and a mosquito heaven where no British colonial officers had wanted to dwell for very long. It was so miserable that one Burmese author whom Larkin talked with even believes that Orwell’s experience in Delta was the catalyst for his transformation into an author ruled by pessimism. While in the Delta region, Orwell was posted at Myaungmya and Twante. From her research at the India Office Records (British Library), Larkin discovered that the time during which Orwell was stationed here was one of the most unsettling times for the British in Burma. Violence and crime, always attributed, correctly or incorrectly, to the “dacoits” was at its peak, making Burma “the most violent corner of the Indian Empire.” According to Larkin, Orwell’s superiors at both stations were famous “crime-busters” who were also skilled in shooting. Larkin suggests that this harsh colonial reality, witnessed first hand by Orwell, raised his doubts about the beneficial aspects of the imperial system.
Today, Orwell might have been just as wary of government rule in the Delta region. Larkin tells us that Burma's Big Brother is fully at work here, even in remote Myaungmya. Her arrival was reported immediately to the Military Intelligence (MI) and they swiftly appeared to investigate her purpose for visiting this town. Although Burma's Military Intelligence's method is not high-tech, Larking assures the reader that "it is just as efficient." Larkin continually asked her friends how to distinguish MI agents or their informants from other people and the answers she collected reveal that everyone has their own method for doing so, ranging "from the ludicrous to the arcane." What becomes clear is that the peoples' preoccupation with the ubiquity of this secret network, and the belief that they are watched constantly in their daily lives, runs so deep that they are trapped in a state of paranoia. As one of her Burmese friends remarked, "it doesn't make any difference whether they have informers or not. It is enough that we believed that their informers are everywhere. After that, we start to do their work for them" (p. 63).

In Chapter Three, Larkin focuses on her experiences in Rangoon in the midst of the removal of the FEC (Foreign Exchange Certificate) from the market. Larkin's discussions with a Burmese friend reveals how the information-deprived people in Burma, at the time of special economic or political changes, have learned how to live safely by analyzing every available source of information, especially reading between the lines. Larkin's friend, Ko Ye, for example, explained to her that the Burmese were "experts at looking for what's not there" and they pay attention to what is missing because that absence is the key to tell the truth" (p.132). Ko Ye gave an example of the time of Burma's banking crisis when articles on the banking system suddenly disappeared from the leading economic magazines. That was an indicator that something big must be happening in the banking system. Further, Ko Ye informed Larkin that the Burmese do not miss any small change happening around them in their everyday life, because these slight changes are also great indicators and telltale signs of concealed events. Ko Ye's explanation of how to survive includes some measure of pride, since he discusses such a strategy in terms of a match of wit between the government and the people. Nevertheless, Larkin explains that she felt she was becoming immediately paranoid after adopting this 'Burmese' way of life, suggesting to the reader how mentally demanding it is to survive in a society where one has to watch everything constantly.

Chapter Four focuses on Moulmein, where Orwell's mother grew up and where he served in 1926 as the chief of the police headquarters. Larkin attempts to understand how Orwell's views, as a representative of the colonial empire, on racism began to tremble from time to time as Flory does in Orwell's Burmese Days. Larkin was interested in Orwell's ambivalence to racism, as he believed it to be a quintessential element of colonial society, yet was deeply appalled with colonial rhetoric that sustained it. Larkin's research on Orwell's life in Moulmein led her to an interesting fact that Orwell might have had an Anglo-Burmese cousin whom he never mentioned in his writings, which would complicate attempts to interpret Orwell's views on racism. Larkin further analyzed Orwell's ambivalence as revealed in his "love and hate relationship" with Kipling as well as in Orwell's essay, Shooting an Elephant. In Shooting an Elephant, Larkin explains, "Orwell writes how he was trapped between his own resentment toward the Empire and the Burmese peoples' resentment towards him" (p.177). Larkin continues this examination up to the final chapter: Katha, where Orwell was stationed and which Orwell used as a model for the setting of Burmese Days. Larkin concludes that Orwell had become a strong Empire hater by the time he served at Katha as he carried guilt for being a part of "the great despotic machine of empire" (p. 219). It was from this point that that Orwell's essence as a writer was born and it is this 'new' Orwell to whom contemporary Burmese relate. At the same time, Larkin does not let us forget that racism which existed in Orwell's time never disappeared but continued to take new forms, that is, the current regime's discrimination against non-Burman ethnic minorities.

Burmese Studies, always representing a strange milieu of views, tends to move back and forth between engagement and disengagement with political activism and issues. Academics appear much more silent today on the negative aspects of the regime and the Burmese situation than several years ago, while expressions of sympathy or apology for the regime and its policies seem to be increasing. Critics, perhaps a silent majority, might be more cautious today because of disagreement on how to resolve Burma's current situation, admission of the futility of evoking change, fear of jeopardizing the safety of friends in Burma, or various professional risks. Whatever the reasons, this reviewer finds Larkin's attempts to remind us of the precarious life of Burma's population courageous.

One cannot help but feel sympathy for the Burmese in the face of the book's many stories of hardship and desperation. These stories may not contribute new information about the general living conditions of the Burmese population. Reports and other information made available by Amnesty International and the WHO, as well as numerous other international organizations (not to mention the Western press) have made this situation abundantly, even numbingly clear. Judging the book on these terms would be a superficial reading. The real value of this book does not lie in providing familiar stories but in putting them into a new context. Seemingly endless accounts of hardship told by the people whom Larkin interviewed help the reader to understand how the essence of Animal...
Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four was so evident in Burma, not just in Orwell’s time, but also in the present. As Larkin argues, this is the reason why the Burmese consider Orwell as a prophet of the emergence of Burma as it is today and as their storyteller and this is why stories of peoples’ lives in contemporary Burma dwell on Orwell’s writings and overlap with Orwell’s protagonists. This is a fine book, recommended for both the general readership and academics interested in a people whose daily lives leave much to be desired.

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Given the paucity of published material on the ethnic group who are labelled Taungthu by the Burmans but call themselves Pa-O, this book is to be warmly welcomed. In fact it is, barring theses or dissertations, the first book on the Pa-O to be published in English. The Pa-O, a name cognate with Pwo, are generally considered to be a subgroup of the Karen. Although this book is a little slender (81 pages excluding notes and bibliography) it contains a great deal of information about the Pa-O, most of it right up-to-date and much of it gathered first-hand along the Thai-Burma border. The fieldwork was carried out over a four-year period by Christensen, a former US officer plainly committed to the Pa-O cause, with the invaluable help of Sann Kyaw, himself an ethnic Pa-O who has served with the Pa-O National Organisation as a signals officer.

The book begins with a glance at the tale of Weikja and Naga, the legendary ancestors of the Pa-O, a couple who emerge from two eggs. This story is very reminiscent of the folk-tale ‘Master Born-of Egg’ (see Gerry Abbott & Khin Thant Han, 2000: 198), a fact which may indicate a close kinship with the Mon. The book then moves on to a brief survey of references to the Pa-O in Burma’s history, by the end of which we have reached page 14. The rest of the book deals with events from 1947 onwards, including the Pa-O rebellion. Here we come across the all-too-familiar fracturing into rival groupings: on page 29 alone, for instance, we see SSNLO, CPB, SSNLF, SURA, KMT and KNPP.

But the focus remains on the Pa-O, and sharpens in the succeeding chapters. We are taken through the tribulations and sufferings of one community, mainly at the hands of the Burmese army but also because of Thai government policy, as it is forced to relocate ten times in eighteen years. As a result of such hostility and upheaval, the Pa-O identity on the Thai side of the border is being eroded, while the communities still on Burmese soil are being hounded by the so-called People’s Army.

The focus finally falls upon some individual survivors, who tell of their experiences in a chapter headed ‘Six Pa-O voices.’ Here are a few extracts:

*My aunt said because I am Pa-O I should learn Pa-O...(12-year-old girl)*

_In 1996 my sister and three children died. My mother stayed with my brother. He was conscripted as a porter, got malaria, and in 1997 he died. In January 1998 my father died ...*(23-year-old man)*

*We had no food. We cut down young banana trees and ate the hearts. (…) We had no meat for a month until I shot a large monkey. (30-year-old former soldier.)*

*My children, a daughter and two sons, were killed by government soldiers while they worked in the fields… (80-year-old Karen refugee)*

_I had twelve sons; nine have died. One was a Red Pa-O soldier and was killed in southern Shan State. I don’t know whom they were fighting. (90-year-old woman)*

The book ends with chapter-by-chapter notes, a useful bibliography and an index.

I felt that there was an occasional slight discontinuity, which may have resulted from welding together various articles on the Pa-O. Having outlined the origin-legend on page 1, for instance, the authors provide seven pages of historical information before telling us that “The legend focuses upon the Pa-O’s migration” (p. 8). The gap led me to wonder whether this was indeed a reference to the Weikja/Naga tale or to some other legend. But this is a trivial matter. The authors and Silkworm Press are to be congratulated for updating our knowledge of a little-studied ethnic minority group and for highlighting yet again the inhumanity of the Burmese junta.

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Leiden / Boston / Köln: Brill.

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Captain Alexander Hamilton collated an account of his voyage to Cambodia and Siam in 1718 with accounts of his experiences in Pegu and elsewhere on earlier travels, as well as information he had gathered about certain other locations (such as Arakan) in his *A New Account of the East Indies* (Edinburgh, 1727). While the original account also included accounts of parts of the Malay world and “Cochinchina,” these have been excluded from the following text. The account begins with a brief account of Chittagong and concludes with eastern mainland Southeast Asia. The best biographical account of Hamilton is that by William Foster in his introduction to the 1930 reprint of the text (London, Argonaut Press).

M.W.C.

Account of Pegu and the Voyage to Cambodia and Siam in 1718

Captain Alexander Hamilton

Chittagong

Xatigam [Chittagong] is a town that borders on Bengal and Arackan, and its poverty makes it a matter of indifference whom it belongs to. It was here that the Portugueze first settled in Bengal, but the dangers their ships run in coming thither in the South-west monsoons, made them remove to the bandel at Hughly. The Mogul keeps a Cadjee or judge in it, to administer justice among the pagan and Mahometan inhabitants, but the offspring of those Portugueze that followed the fortune of Sultan Sujah, when he was forced to quit Bengal, are the domineering lords of it. It is not so fertile in corn as Bengal, and has but few cotton manufactorys, but it affords the best timber for building, of any place about it. The river has a deep enough entrance, but is pestered with sand banks, and some rocks within. I have known some English ships forced from Point Palmeira by stress of weather thither, and had safe riding till the North-east monsoons came to relieve them. The government is so anarchical, that every one goes armed with sword, pistol, and blunder-bush, nay, even the priests are obliged to go armed, and often use their arms to as bad ends as the licentious laity, and some of the priests have died martyrs to villainous actions.

Arakan

Arackan is the next maritim[e] country to the Southward of Bengal, and in former times made some figure in trade. It was into this country that the unfortunate Sultan Sujah came a supplicant for protection, when Emirjemal chased him out of Bengal. He carried his wives and children with him, and about two hundred of his retinue, who were resolved to follow his fortune, and he carried six or eight camels load of gold and jewels which proved his ruin, and in the end, the ruin of the kingdom of Arackan.

When Sultan Sujah first visited the king of Arackan, he made him presents suitable to the quality of the donor and receiver, the Arackaner promising him all the civilities due to so great a prince, with a safe asylum for himself and family. When Emirjemal knew where Sultan Sujah had taken sanctuary, he sent a letter to the king of Arackan, wherein he demanded the poor distrest prince to be delivered up to him, otherwise he threatened to bring his army into his country to take him by force. The threatening letter wrought so far on the base Arackaner, that he contrived ways and means to pick a quarrel with his guest, to have a pretext to oblige Emirjemal, at last he found a very fair one.

Sultan Sujah having a very beautiful daughter, the king of Arackan desired her in marriage, but knew well enough that Sultan Sujah would never consent to the match, he being a pagan and she a Mahometan. Her father
used all reasonable arguments to dissuade the Arackaner from prosecuting his suit, but in vain, for the Arackaner
grew daily more pressing, and Sultan Sujah at last gave him a flat denial, on which the base king sent him orders to
go out of his dominions in three days, and forbid the markets to furnish him any more with provisions for his
money.

Sultan Sujah knowing it would be death for him to go back to Bengal, resolved to pass over some mounts
ains overgrown with woods, into the king of Pegu’s dominions, which were not above one hundred miles off, and
so next day after summons, with his family, treasure, and attendants, Sultan Sujah began his march, but the barba
rous Arackaner sent a strong party after him, who overtook him before he had advanced far into the woods, and
killed most of Sultan Sujah’s company, and seized the treasure, and brought it back in an inglorious triumph. What
became of Sultan Sujah and his fair daughter, none could ever give a certain account; whether they were killed in
the skirmish, or whether they were destroyed by wild elephants and tigers in the woods, none ever knew, but the
Arackaners alleged they were destroyed by the wild beasts of the woods, and not by the more savage beasts in
human shape.

So much treasure never had been seen in Arackan before, but to whom it should belong caused some dis
trubance. The king thought that all belonged to him, those that fought for it claimed a share, and the princes of the
blood wanted some fine large diamonds for their ladies, but the tribe of Levi found a way to make up the difference,
and persuaded the king and the other pretenders, to dedicate it to the God Dagun, who was the titular god of the
kingdom, and to deposit it in his temple, which all agreed to; now whether this be the same Dagon of Ashdod, mentioned in the first Book and fifth Chapter of Samuel, I do not certainly know, but Dagun has a large
temple in Arackan, that I have heard of, and another in Pegu that I have seen.

In 1690, a king of Arackan dying without issue, two princes of the blood quarrelled about filling up of the
vacancy, they both took arms, and both had an eye upon the treasure, which so frightened the priesthood, that they
removed Sultan Sujah’s treasure to another place only known to themselves; and those two hot blades pursued
their quarrel so warmly, that in one year themselves and families were entirely cut off, and the kingdom has con
tinued in anarchy ever since.

Arackan has the convenience of a noble spacious river, and its mouth is both large and deep enough to ac
commodate ships of the greatest burden into a spacious harbour, large enough to hold all the ships in Europe.

When the English left Bengal in anno 1686. Mr. Charnock came thither with half a dozen of great ships, to
pass the South-west monsoons away, the country assisted them plentifully with provisions, but they had no other
commerce; they had no less than six fathoms water going in to the river, and in some places within, above twenty.
The country produces timber for building, some lead, tin, stick-lack, and elephants teeth.

The sea coast of Arackan reaches from Xatigam to Cape Negrais, about four hundred miles in length, but
few places inhabited, because there are such vast numbers of wild elephants and buffaloes, that would destroy the
productions of the ground, and tigers to destroy the tame animals, that they think it impracticable to inhabit it,
only some islands in the sea are peopled with some poor miserable fishers, who get their bread out of the water, to
keep them from starving, and they live out of the way of oppression.

There are some of the Mogul’s subjects who trade to Arackan for the commodities above mentioned, and
sometimes they meet with good bargains of diamonds, rubies, &c. precious stones, and gold rupees, which are to
be supposed are some of Sultan Sujah’s treasure, pilfered by the avaricious priests.

There are abundance of islands on the Arackan coast, but they lie close to the shore, only the Buffalo Islands
lie about four leagues off, and there is a rock that shews its head above water about the middle of the chanel, be
 tween those islands and the continent. The channels among the Buffalo Islands seem to be clear of danger, and
above twenty fathoms water in them, but about eight leagues off the North end of the great island of Negrais, is a
dangerous rock that only appears above water in the low ebbs of spring tides, it lies in fifteen fathoms water, and
twenty yards off are thirteen fathoms.

The other island of Negrais, which makes the point called the Cape, is a small, low, barren rocky island, it is of
ten called Diamond Island, because its shape is a rhombus. About the year 1704, four French ships went to careen
at the great Negrais, and turning in between the islands, one ship of seventy guns called L’Indien, run aground on
some rocks lying on the inside of Diamond Island, and was lost, but the rest saved the men, and all her portable
furniture.

Three leagues to the Southward of Diamond Island, lies a reef of rocks a league long, but they do not appear
above water, tho’ they are conspicuous at all times by the sea breaking on them. There is a good chanel between the
island and them, above a league broad, and eleven or twelve fathoms deep; the rocks are called the Legatti, or, in
English, the Lizard.
Pegu

(information gathered in 1709)

The sea-coast from Negrais to Syrian Bar, is in the dominions of Pegu, there are some of the mouths of Pegu River open on that coast into the sea. Dolla is the first, about fifty miles to the Eastward of Negrais. China Backaar is another about forty miles to the Eastward of Dolla, and between these openings there is a dangerous bank of black sand, that runs four or five leagues out into the sea, and so far off there are but fourteen foot water. About sixty miles to the Eastward of China Backaar, is the Bar of Syrian, the only port now open for trade in all the Pegu dominions.

If by accident a ship bound to Syrian, be driven a league or two to the Eastward of that river’s mouth, a strong tide carries her on hard sands till she sitis fast on them, for anchors are of no use to stop them, because of the rapidity of the current; at low water the ships are dry when on those sands, and the sea leaves them, and retires five or six leagues, at which time the shipwrecked men walk on the sands toward the shore for their safety, for the sea comes back with so much noise, that the roaring of the billows may be heard ten miles off, for a body of waters comes rolling in on the sand, whose front is above two fathoms high, and whatever body lies in its way it overturns, and no ship can evade its force, but in a moment is overturned, this violent Boer the natives call a Mackrea.

About six leagues from the bar of Pegu River, is the city of Syrian, it is built near the river’s side on a rising ground, and walled round with a stone-wall without mortar. The governor, who is generally of the blood-royal, has his lodgings in it, but the suburbs are four times bigger than the city. It was many years in possession of the Portuguese, till by their insolence and pride they were obliged to quit it. The ancient city of Pegu stands about forty miles to the Eastward of Syrian, the ditches that surrounded the city, which are now dry, and bear good corn, testify that few cities in the world exceeded it in magnitude, for they are reckoned six or seven leagues round their outward polygon.

It was the seat of many great and puissant kings, who made as great a figure as any in the East, but now its glory is in the dust, for not one twentieth part of it is inhabited, and those are but the lower class of people who inhabit it. The cause of the ruin of the kingdoms of Pegu, Martavan, and some others under the dominions of Pegu, I had from some Peguens, in several discourses with them about that revolution, which was thus.

There was great love and friendship between the kings and subjects of Pegu and Siam, being next neighbours to one another, and they had a good intercourse of trade, both by land and sea, till in the fifteenth century, a Pegu vessel being at Odia the chief city of Siam, and when ready to depart for Pegu, anchored one evening near a little temple a few miles below the city, and the master of the vessel, with some of his crew, going to worship in that temple, seeing a pretty well carved image of the God Samsay, about a foot high, fell in love with it, and finding his priests negligent in watching, stole him away, and carried him on board prisoner for Pegu. When the negligent priests mist their little god they were in a deplorable condition, lamenting their loss to all their neighbouring priests, who advised them to complain to the king of Siam of the theft, which accordingly they did, imploring his good offices with the king of Pegu, to have their god sent back; and it happened that by the unseasonable flood in the river that year, there came to be a great scarcity of corn, which calamity was imputed by the priests to the loss of Samsay, upon which the pious prince sent an embassy to his brother of Pegu, desiring the restitution of the image, whose absence had caused so great loss and clamour in his country.

The king of Pegu being as great a bigot as his brother of Siam, would by no means deliver back a god who had fled from the impurities of his native land to him for protection, and with that answer sent back the Siam ambassador, who was not a little mortified with the disappointment.

Since fair means could not persuade the Peguer to send back the little god, the Siamer was resolved to try what force would do, and accordingly raised an army of two or three hundred thousand men to invade the king of Pegu’s dominions, and the first fury of the war fell on the Province of Martavan, being contiguous to the territories of Siam, and with fire and sword destroyed the open country almost to the gates of the city of Martavan, where often the king of Pegu kept his court, and was formerly the metropolis of an independent kingdom, before Pegu reduced that country by conquest to be a province of theirs.

After the Siamer had satiated his cruelty and rage, by the destruction of many poor innocents, he retired back to his own country very much elevated with pride and vain-glory for his great achievements, but next year
he was pretty well humbled, for the Peguer raised a much greater army, and embarking them in small boats on the River Memnon, on which the City of Odia stands in one of its islands, his army was brought with so much celerity and secrecy, that the Peguer brought the first news of his invasion, and pitching his tents round the city, soon brought it into great straits, by stopping the daily provisions that supported it, but unexpectedly the river bringing down great floods of waters, sooner than their ordinary time, the country about the city overflowed, and spoilt all the Peguer’s provisions of corn, and drowned near the half of his army, which obliged him to raise the siege, and retire to his own dominions.

Next year, the Siamer, to be revenged, levied another great army, with which he over-ran all the inland countries of Pegu that lay near him, and annexed them to his own dominions. The Peguer finding that he could not recover his lands without foreign aid and assistance, invited the Portugueze, whose name began to be dreadful in India, and by the great encouragement he gave them, got about one thousand volunteers into his service.

Neither the Siames nor the Peguers at that time understood the use of fire arms, and their noise and execution at so great a distance terrified them. With the Portugueze assistance, the Peguer went with his army, which was very numerous, to find out the Siamer and having found him, gave him battle, the Portugueze being in the front with their fire arms, soon put the Siamer to flight before they could come to handy-blows, on which he left the Peguer’s country in greater haste than he came into it.

The king of Pegu was so sensible of the Portugueze service in gaining the battle, and driving the Siames out of his conquered country, that he made one Senhor Thoma Pereyra (who commanded the Portugueze in the war) generalissimo of all his forces, which preferment made the Portugueze so insolent, that in a few years they became intolerable to all ranks and degrees of persons in Pegu.

Both kings grew tired of war, but both too proud to make advances toward peace, so that for many years they had skirmishing with small parties, tho’ no set battles, and where ever the Portugueze arms went, they had victory to accompany them.

The king of Pegu, to have his forces nearer the borders of Siam, settled his court at Martavan, and kept the Portugueze near him, to be ready on all occasions, either to repel or assault the Siam forces, as opportunity served, and Thoma Pereyra was the darling favourite at court, he had his elephants of state, and a guard of his own countrymen to attend him. One day as he was coming from court in state, on a large elephant, towards his own palace, he chanced to hear musick in a burgher’s house, whose daughter being a very beautiful virgin, had been married that morning to a young man of the neighbourhood. The general went to the house and wished them joy, and desired to see the bride. The parents took the general’s visit for a great honour done them, and brought their daughter to his elephant’s side; he being smitten with her beauty, ordered his guard to seize her and carry her to his house.

His orders were but too readily obeyed, and the poor bridegroom not being able to bear his loss, cut his own throat, and the disconsolate parents of their injured children, rent their clothes, and went crying and complaining through the streets towards the king’s palace, imploring their gods and country-men to avenge them on the insolent Portugueze, the common oppressors of their country. Crowds of people came from all parts of the city to hear and see the tragedy, their numbers grew so great, that the streets were hardly big enough for them, and their noise so loud that it reached the king’s ears, who sent to know the cause of their uprore. The messenger returning, acquainted the king what had been transacted, and he, to appease the tumult, sent them word that he would punish the criminal, and accordingly sent for his general, but he being much taken up with the enjoyment of his new purchase, made an excuse that he was so much out of order, that he could not then wait on his majesty till he was better, which answer so provoked the king, that he ordered the whole city to take arms, and to make a general massacre on all the Portugueze wheresoever they could be found in city or country.

The king’s orders were put in execution so speedily, that in a few hours all the Portugueze were slaughtered, and the guilty criminal was taken alive, and made fast by the heels to an elephant’s foot, who dragged him through the streets till there was no skin nor flesh left to cover his bones, which spectacle appeased the enraged populace. There were only three Portugueze saved, who were accidentally in the suburbs next the river, who hid themselves till night favoured their escape in a small boat, in which they coasted along the shore, feeding on what the woods and rocks afforded them, and at length arrived at Malacca, to give an account of the melancholy scene.

Both kingdoms being much weakened with bloody wars, took rest for many years, but never entred on treaties of peace. So about the middle of the seventeenth century, the Siamer invaded the dominions of Pegu, and conquered all to the Southward of Martavan, taking in the provinces of Tanacerin and Ligore, who were tributaries to Pegu, and retains them still in his possession.

The king of Pegu finding that the incroachments of Siam daily lessened his dominions, and his own forces were not able to protect what he had left, sent an embassy to the king of Barma, a potent prince, whose dominions
lay about five hundred miles up the river from Pegu, to beg his assistance to stop the Siames in their course of conquests, and he promised to give good encouragement to the Barmaes. The embassy was graciously received, and an army of an hundred thousand was levied for that service, and sent on transport vessels to Pegu, and joyed the Pegu army, who conjunctly marched against the Siamer, and drove him quite out of his new conquests; and when the Barmaes observed the feebleness and bad discipline of the Pegu army, they even killed the king of Pegu, and broke the Pegu army, and seized the kingdoms of Pegu and Martavan for their master, and in that family it continues to this time. The Barmaes ruined both the cities of Pegu and Martavan, and sunk vessels in the mouth of the River of Martavan, to make it unnavigable, and so it continues. This account I had at Pegu in anno 1709, both from Peguers and Portuguese, who agreed in the history as I have related it.

The dominions of Barma are at present very large, reaching from Moravi near Tanacerin, to the Province of Yunan in China, about eight hundred miles from North to South, and 250 miles broad from West to East. It has no sea-port but Syrian, and that river is capable to receive a ship of six hundred tuns. The town drives a good trade with Armenians, Portuguese, Moors and Gentows, and some English; their import is several sorts of Indian goods, such as betellas, mulmuls, cossas, sannis, orangshays, tangebs, European hats coarse and fine, and silver. The customs are eight and an half per cent, which, with other charges, amount to about twelve in the hundred. The product of the country is timber for building, elephants, elephants teeth, bees-wax, stick-lack, iron, tin, oyl of earth, wood-oyl, rubies the best in the world, diamonds, but they are small, and are only found in the craws of poultry and pheasants, and one family has only the indulgence to sell them, and none dare open the ground to dig for them. Salt-petre they have in abundance, but it is death to export it, plenty of ganse or lead, which passeth all over the Pegu dominions for money. About twenty sail of ships find their account in trade for the limited commodities, but the Armenians have got the monopoly of the rubies, which turns to a good account in their trade; and I have seen some blue saphires there, that I was told were found on some mountains of this country.

The country is very fruitful in corn, fruits, and roots, and excellent Legumen of several species, abundance of wild game either quadrupeds or winged. In the months of September and October, wild deer are so plentiful that I have bought one for three or four pence; they are very fleshy, but no fat about them. They have many sorts of good fish, and swines flesh and poultry are both plentiful and good.

They wear none of our European commodities but hats and ribbons, and the gentry will give extravagant prices for fine beaver hats, and rich ribbons flowered with silver and gold, and if it be never so broad it is stretcht up the crown of the hat as far as it can go, and they use no sort of cock to their hats. Cotton cloths from Bengal and Chormondel, with some stripped silks, are best for their market, and silver of any sort is welcome to them. It pays the king eight and an half per cent. Custom, but in lieu of that high duty, he indulges the merchants to melt it down, and put what alloy they please in it, and then to pass it off in payments as high as they can.

Rupee silver, which has no alloy in it, will bear twenty eight per cent. of copper-alloy, and keep the Pegu Touch, which they call flowered silver, and if it flowers, it passes current. Their way to make flowered silver is, when the silver and copper are mixed and melted together, and while the metal is liquid, they put it into a shallow mould, of what figure or magnitude they please, and before the liquidity is gone, they blow on it through a small wooden pipe, which makes the face, or part blown upon, appear with the figures of flowers or stars, but I never saw any European or other foreigner at Pegu, have the art to make those figures appear, and if there is too great a mixture of alloy, no figures will appear. The king generally adds ten per cent, on all silver that comes into his treasury, besides what was put on at first, and tho’ it be not flowered, it must go off in all his payments, but from any body else it may be refused if it is not flowered.

His government is arbitrary. All his commands are laws, but the reins of government are kept steady and gently in the king’s own hand. He severely punishes his governors of provinces or towns, if oppressions or other illegal practices are proven upon them; and to know how affairs pass in the state, every province or city has a mandereen or deputy residing at court, which is generally in the city of Ava, the present metropolis. Every morning these mandereens are obliged to attend at court, and after his majesty has drest and breakfasted, which is generally on a dish of rice boiled in fair water, and his sauce is some shrimps dried and powdered, and some salt and cod-pepper mixt with those two ingredients, and that mixture makes a very pungent sauce, which they call prock, and is in great esteem and use among the Peguers.

When his breakfast is over, he retires into a room so contrived that he can see all the attendants, but none can see him, and a page stands without to call whom the king would have give account of the current news of his province or city, which is performed with profound reverence toward the room where the king stays, and with a distinct audible voice; and if any particular matters of consequence is forgot or omitted, and the king comes to hear it by another hand, severe punishments follow, and so he passes his mornings in hearing the necessary cases of
his own affairs as well as those of his subjects.

If he is informed of treason, murder, or such like hainous crimes, he orders the matter to be judicially tried before judges of his own choosing, for that time and affair, and on conviction he signs the dead warrant, wherein he orders, that the wretch convicted shall trade no more on his ground, and execution presently follows, either by beheading, or ordering them to be sport for his elephants, which is the cruellest death. Sometimes he banishes them for a certain time to the woods, and if they are not devoured by tigers, or killed by wild elephants, they may return when their term is expired, and pass the remainder of their days in serving a tame elephant; and for smaller crimes they are only condemned to clean his elephants stables for life.

His subjects, if they may be so called, treat him with fulsom adulation. When they speak or write to him they call him their god (or in their language Kiack) and in his letters to foreign princes, he assumes the title of king of kings, to whom all other kings ought to be subject, as being near kinsman and friend to all the gods in heaven and on earth, and by their friendship to him all animals are fed and preserved, and the seasons of the year are regularly kept: The sun is his brother, and the moon and stars are his near relations, lord over the floods and ebbing of the sea; and after all his lofty epithets and hyperboles, he descends to be king of the white elephant, and of the twenty four white somereroes or umbrellaeas. These two last he may indeed claim with some shew of justice, for I have seen elephants of a light yellow colour both in Pegu and Siam, but who ought to be called their lord is a question not yet decided; and as king of the twenty four white somereroes, I believe few kings will much care to dispute that glorious title with him, for those somereroes are only common China umbrellaeas, covered over with thin Chormondele beteellaes, and their canes lackt and gilded, and because his own subjects dare not use any such umbrellaeas, he wisely lays his imperial commands on all other kings to forbear wearing of them when they go abroad.

After his majesty has dined, there is a trumpet blown, to signifie to all his slaves, as he terms other kings, that they may go to dinner, because their lord has already dined and when any foreign ships arrive at Syrian, the number of people on board, with their age and sex, are sent to him, to let him know that so many of his slaves are arrived to partake of the glory and happiness of his reign and favour, and the highest title his own subjects assume, is the king’s first slave. The king’s palace at Ava is very large, built of stone, and has four gates for its conveniences. ambassadors enter at the East Gate, which is called the Golden Gate, because all ambassadors make their way to him by presents. The South Gate is called the gate of Justice, where all people that bring petitions, accusations, or complaints, enter. The West is the Gate of Grace, where all that have received favours, or have been acquitted of crimes, pass out in state, and all condemned persons carried out in fetters; and the North Gate fronting the river, is the Gate of State where his majesty passes through, when he thinks fit to bless his people with his presence, and all his provisions and water are carried in at that gate.

When pots of water, or baskets of fruits are carried through the streets for the king’s use, an officer attends them, and all the people that fortune to be near, must fall on their knees, and let it pass by, as a good Catholick does when he sees the host.

When an ambassador is admitted to audience in the palace, he is attended with a large troop of guards, with trumpets sounding, and heralds proclaiming the honour the ambassador is about to receive, in going to see the glory of the earth, his majesty’s own sweet face, and between the gate and the head of the stairs that lead to the chamber of audience, the ambassador is attended with the master of the ceremonies, who instructs him to kneel three times in his way thither, and continue so with his hands over his head, till a proclamation is read before he dare rise. Some of his elephants are instructed to fall on their belly when the king passes by them.

This relation I had from one Mr. Roger Alison, who had been twice ambassador from the Governor of Fort St. George, or his agents at Syrian, to the court of Ava; and tho’ the palace is very large, yet the buildings are but mean, and the city tho’ great and populous, is only built of bambow canes, thatcht with straw or reeds, and the floors of teak plank, or split bambows, because if treason or other capital crimes be detected, the criminals may have no place of shelter, for if they do not appear on the first summons, fire will fetch them out of their combustible habitations. His sword-officers have no salary, nor his soldiers for their support, but there is a province or a city where they are quartered. ambassadors enter to him by presents. The king’s palace at Ava is very large, built of stone, and has four gates for its conveniences: The king’s first slave. The king’s palace at Ava is very large, built of stone, and has four gates for its conveniences: the king’s first slave. The king’s palace at Ava is very large, built of stone, and has four gates for its conveniences: the king’s first slave. The king’s palace at Ava is very large, built of stone, and has four gates for its conveniences: the king’s first slave. The king’s palace at Ava is very large, built of stone, and has four gates for its conveniences: the king’s first slave. The king’s palace at Ava is very large, built of stone, and has four gates for its conveniences: the king’s first slave. The king’s palace at Ava is very large, built of stone, and has four gates for its conveniences: the king’s first slave. The king’s palace at Ava is very large, built of stone, and has four gates for its conveniences: the king’s first slave. The king’s palace at Ava is very large, built of stone, and has four gates for its conveniences: the king’s first slave. The king’s palace at Ava is very large, built of stone, and has four gates for its conveniences: the king’s first slave.
number of joints in the golden mouth-piece, the quality of the officer is known, and respect paid him accordingly.

All cities and towns under this king’s dominions are like aristocratical commonwealths. The prince or governor seldom sits in council, but appoints his deputy, and twelve counsellors or judges, and they sit once in ten days at least, but oftner when business calls them. They convene in a large hall, mounted about three foot high, and double benches round the floor for people to sit or kneel on, and to hear the free debates of council. The hall being built on pillars of wood, is open on all sides, and the judges set in the middle on mats, and sitting in a ring there is no place of precedence; there are no advocates to plead at the bar, but every one has the privilege to plead his own cause, or send it in writing to be read publicly, and it is determined judicially within the term of three sittings of council, but if any one questions his own eloquence, or knowledge of the laws of equity, he may impower a friend to plead for him, but there are no fees but what the town contributes for the maintenance of that court, which in their language is called the rounday, and those contributions are very small: There are clerks set at the backs of the judges, ready to write down whatever the complainant and defendant has to say, and the case is determined by the prince and that council, very equitably; for if the least partiality is found awarded to either party, and the king is made acquainted with it by the deputies at court, the whole sentence is revoked, and the whole board are corrected for it, so that very few have occasion to appeal to court, which they may do if they are aggrieved, and if an appeal is made upon ill grounds, the appellant is chastised, which just rigour hinders many tedious suits that arise where there are no penalties annex to such faults.

The judges have a particular garb of their own. Their hair being permitted to grow long, is tied on the top of their heads with cotton ribbon wrapt about it, and it stands upright in the form of a sharp pyramid. Their coat is of a thin Betella, so that their skin is easily seen through it. About their loyns they have a large lungee or scarf, as all other Peguers have, that reaches to their ancles, and against the navel a round bundle made of their lungee, as big as a child’s head, but stockings and shoes are not used in Pegu.

The Barmaes wear the same habit, and imprint several devices in their skins, prickt with a bodkin, and powder of charcoal rubbed over the little wounds, while the blood continues wet in them, and the black marks remain ever after. The Peguers dare not paint their skins, so that the natives of each nation are easily known by the distinguishing mark of painting or plainness. There are few of their men fat, but plump, well shaped, of an olive colour, and well featured.

The women are much whiter than the men, and have generally pretty plump faces, but of small stature, yet very well shaped, their hands and feet small, and their arms and legs well proportioned. Their headdress is their own black hair tied up behind, and when they go abroad, they wear a shaul folded up, or a piece of white cotton cloth lying loose on the top of their heads Their bodily garb is a frock of cotton cloth or silk, made meet for their bodies, and the arms of their frock stretcht close on the arm, the lower part of the frock reaching half-thigh down. Under the frock they have a scarf or lungee doubled fourfold, made fast about their middle, which reaches almost to the ancle, so contrived, that at every step they make, as they walk, it opens before, and shews the right leg and part of the thigh. This fashion of petticoats, they say, is very ancient, and was first contrived by a certain queen of that country, who was grieved to see the men so much addicted to sodomy, that they neglected the pretty ladies. She thought that by the sight of a pretty leg and plump thigh, the men might be allured from that abominable custom, and place their affections on proper objects, and according to the ingenious queen’s conjecture, that dress of the lungee had its desired end, and now the name of sodomy is hardly known in that country. The women are very courteous and kind to strangers, and are very fond of marrying with Europeans, and most part of the strangers who trade thither, marry a wife for the term they stay The ceremony is, (after the parties are agreed) for the bride’s patents or nearest friends or relations, to make a feast, and invite her friends and the bridegroom’s, and at the end of the feast, the parent or bride-man, asketh them both before the company, if they are content to cohabit together as man and wife, and both declaring their consent, they are declared by the parent or friend to be lawfully married, and if the bridegroom has an house, he carries her thither, but if not, they have a bed provided in the house where they are married, and are left to their own discretion how to pass away the night.

They prove obedient and obliging wives, and take the management of affairs within doors wholly in their own hands. She goes to market for food, and acts the cook m dressing his victuals, takes care of his clothes, in washing and mending them; if their husbands have any goods to sell, they set up a shop and sell them by retail, to a much better account than they could be sold for by wholesale, and some of them carry a cargo of goods to the inland towns, and barter for goods proper for the foreign markets that their husbands are bound to, and generally bring fair accounts of their negotiations. If she proves false to her husband’s bed, and on fair proof convicted, her husband may carry her to the rounday, and have her hair cut, and sold for a slave, and he may have the money; but if the husband goes astray, she’ll be apt to give him a gentle dose, to send him into the other world a sacrifice to her
resentment.

If she proves prolific, the children cannot be carried out of the kingdom without the king's permission, but that may be purchased for forty or fifty L. sterling and if an irreconcilable quarrel happen where there are children, the father is obliged to take care of the boys, and the mother of the girls. If a husband is content to continue the marriage, whilst he goes to foreign countries about his affairs, he must leave some fund to pay her about six shillings eight pence per month, otherwise at the year's end she may marry again, but if that sum is paid her on his account, she is obliged to stay the term of three years, and she is never the worse, but rather the better lookt on, that she has been married to several European husbands.

Account of the Pegu Clergy

The Pegu clergy are the best observers of the rules of morality and charity, that I have met with in my travels, and the people are pious and hospitable. There are vast numbers of temples built in this country, but most of wood, because that material is plentiuest and cheapest, and takes varnish and gilding best, being gawdily painted both within and without. Every one has free liberty to build a baw or temple, and when it is finished, purchases or bestows a few acres of ground to maintain a certain number of priests and novices, who manure and cultivate the ground for their own sustenance, and in the garden the priests and novices have a convent built for their convenience of lodgings and study, and those are their settled benefices, for they are no charge to the laity, but by their industrious labour in managing their garden, they have enough for themselves, and something to spare to the poor indigent of the laity; but if their garden is too small or sterile for the subsistence of their family, then they send some novices abroad with a large orange-coloured mantle about their bodies, with a basket hanging on their left arm, a little drum in the left hand, and a little stick in the right, and when they come to the people's doors they beat three strokes with the stick on the drum, and if none come to answer, they beat again, and so onto the third time, and then if none answer, they proceed to the next house without speaking a word, but they are seldom sent away without an alms of rice, pulse, fruits, or roots, which is their only food, and what they receive more than they have present occasion for, they distribute to the poor, for they never take care for to morrow, living all their days in celibacy, they have none of the anxiety of thinking about provision for a widow and children. Their innocent exemplary lives procure them many free-will-offerings from the well disposed laity, and what is saved after providing their convents, of eatables and clothing, returns to the maintenance of the distrest laity, who, through age, sickness, or other accidents, cannot maintain themselves by labour, but none who are able to work, partake of their charity.

They preach or lecture frequently, and have a numerous auditory. Their religion is paganism, and their system of divinity polytheism. They have images in all their temples or baws, of inferior gods, such as Somma Cudom, Samsay, and Prawpout, but they cannot form an idea of the image of the great god, whose adoration is left to their tallapoies or priests.

Those tallapoies or priests, teach, that charity is the most sublime virtue, and therefore ought to be extensive enough to reach not only to human species, but even to animals, wherefore they neither kill nor eat any, and they are so benevolent to mankind, that they cherish all alike without distinction, for the sake of religion. They hold all religions to be good that teach men to be good, and that the deities are pleased with variety of worship, but with none that is hurtful to men, because cruelty must be disagreeable to the nature of a deity: So being all agreed in that fundamental, they have but few polemicks, and no persecutions, for they say that our minds are free agents, and ought neither to be forced nor fettered.

The images in their temples are placed in domes, in a sitting posture, with their legs across, their toes all alike long, their arms and hands very small in proportion to their bodies, their faces longer than human, and their ears large, and the lappets very thick. The congregation bows to them when they come in and go out, and that is all the oblation they receive.

They never repair an old baw, nor is there any occasion for that piety or expence; for in every September there is an old custom for gentlemen of fortune, to make sky rockets, and set them a flying in the air, and if any fly any great height, that is a certain sign that the owner is in favour with the gods, but if it comes to the ground, and spends its fire without rising, the owner is much dejected, and believes that the gods are angry with him, but the happy man, whose rocket makes him in the gods favour, never fails of building a new baw, and dedicates it to the god he adores, and some priests, whose temples are gone to decay, bring their images to adorn it, who have the benefice for their pains.

I have seen some of those rockets so large, that one of them could contain above five hundred weight of
raw rice, and some earthen pots to boil it in, then they bid him farewell for twenty-one days. If the patient has bows and reeds, which they have in great plenty. They leave with the diseased person a jar of water, a basket of cereals, and all sorts of things needful for the patient's health, and they seldom fail of a speedy recovery; but the smallpox is dreaded as pestiferous, and in the Province of Pegu, where the disease is most prevalent, the people are as careful to avoid the smallpox as they were formerly to avoid the plague. They have the custom of dipping the naked hand in boiling oil, or liquid lead, to clear them of atrocious crimes, if accused, and if the accuser scalds himself in the trial, he must undergo the punishment by according the accuser and the accused take some raw rice in their mouths, and chew, and swallow it, but he that is guilty of the crime alleged, or of false accusation, cannot swallow his morsel, but the innocent chews and swallows his easily.

A little while after the rockets flying they have another feast, called the collock, and some women are chosen out of the people assembled, to dance a dance to the gods of the earth. Hermophrades, who are numerous in this country, are generally chosen, if there are enough present to make a set for the dance. I saw nine dance like mad folks, for above half an hour, and then some of them fell in fits, foaming at the mouth for the space of half an hour; and, when their senses are restored, they pretend to foretell plenty or scarcity of corn for that year, if the year will prove sickly or salutary to the people, and several other things of moment, and all by that half hour's conversation that the furious dancer had with the gods while she was in a trance.

They have various sorts of musick, but the pipe and tabor are esteemed the best, tho their stringed instruments pleased my ears best. They have one sort in shape of a galley, with about twenty bells of several sizes and sounds, placed fast on the upper part, as it lies along. The instrument is about three foot long, and eight or ten inches broad, and six inches deep. They beat those bells with a stick made of heavy wood, and they make no bad musick.

There are two large temples near Syrian, so like one another in structure, that they seem to be built by one model. One stands about six miles to the Southward, called Kiakiack, or, the god of gods temple. In it is an image of twenty yards long, lying in a sleeping posture, and, by their tradition, has lien in that posture six thousand years. His doors and windows are always open, and every one has the liberty to see him; and, when he awakes, this world is to be annihilated. The temple stands on an high champain ground, and may easily be seen, in a clear day, eight leagues off. The other stands in a low plain, North of Syrian, about the same distance, called Dagun. His doors and windows are always shut, and none enters his temple but his priests, and they won't tell what shape he is of, only he is not of human shape. As soon as Kiakiack dissolves the being and frame of the world, Dagon or Dagun will gather up the fragments, and make a new one. There are yearly fairs held near those temples, and the free-will offerings arising at those fairs, are for the use of the temples.

For finding out secret murder, theft or perjury, the trial of ordeal is much in custom in Pegu. One way is to leave out of the people assembled, to dance a dance to the gods of the earth. Hermophrades, who are numerous in this country, are generally chosen, if there are enough present to make a set for the dance. I saw nine dance like mad folks, for above half an hour, and then some of them fell in fits, foaming at the mouth for the space of half an hour; and, when their senses are restored, they pretend to foretell plenty or scarcity of corn for that year, if the year will prove sickly or salutary to the people, and several other things of moment, and all by that half hour's conversation that the furious dancer had with the gods while she was in a trance.

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Another way they have by driving a stake of wood into a river, and making the accuser and accused take hold of the stake, and keep their heads and bodies under water, and he who stays longest under water, is the person to be credited, and whosoever is convicted by this trial, either for the crime alleged, or for malicious slander, by accusation, must lie on his back three days and nights, with his neck in a pair of stocks, without meat or drink, and fined to boot. They have also the custom of dipping the naked hand in boiling oil, or liquid lead, to clear them of atrocious crimes, if accused, and if the accuser scalds himself in the trial, he must undergo the punishment due to the crime, which makes people very cautious how they calumniate one another; and, if any one asperse a woman with the name of whore, and cannot prove the aspersion to be true, they are fined severely.

The country is fruitful and healthful, and the air so good, that when strangers come hither in a bad state of health, they seldom fail of a speedy recovery; but the smallpox is dreaded as pestiferous, and in the Province of Kirian that distemper is most dangerous and most infectious, so that if any one is seized by that disease, all the neighbourhood removes to two to three miles distance, and builds new houses, which are easily done with bammows and reeds, which they have in great plenty. They leave with the diseased person a jar of water, a basket of raw rice, and some earthen pots to boil it in, then they bid him farewell for twenty-one days. If the patient has
strength enough to rise and boil rice, he may then recover, if not, he must even die alone, and it is observable, that, while a person has that distemper, the tiger, for all his voraciousness, will not touch him. If the patient dies within the term of twenty one days, then the smell certifies them on their approaching the house, and if he live, they carry him to their new built city, and make him a free burgess.

I saw the ceremony of an high priest’s funeral, and was not a little pleased with the solemnity. After the corps had been kept three or four months by spirits or gums from putrefaction, there was a great mast fixt in the ground, so fast, that it could be moved no way from its perpendicular position. Then, about fifty or sixty yards on each side of that mast, four smaller masts were placed, and fixed perpendicularly in the ground. Around the great mast, in the middle, were erected three scaffolds above one another, the lowermost bigger than the second, and the third smaller than that, so that it lookt like a pyramid four stories high. The scaffolds were railed in on each side, except an open place of three or four foot wide on each side. All the scaffolds, and the ground below them, were filled with combustibles. From the mast in the middle four ropes were carried to the other four masts, and an haPd tight, and a fire-rocket on each rope was placed at the respective small masts. Then the corps was carried to the upper story of the pyramid, and laid flat on the scaffold, and, after a great shew of sorrow among the people there present, a trumpet was sounded, which was a signal to set fire to the rockets, which, in an instant, flew with a quick motion along the ropes, and set fire to the combustibles, and in a moment they were all in a flame, so that in an hour or two all was consumed.

This high priest was held in so great veneration, that he was reckoned a saint among the people. He was in great esteem with the king, and when any nobleman fell into disgrace, he used his interest with the king to have him restored again to favour, unless they were guilty of atrocious crimes, and, in that case, he used his endeavours to have the rigour of the punishment extenuated.

All the Pegu clergy are mediators in making up cases of debate and contention that happen among neighbours. They never leave mediating till there be a reconciliation, and, in token of friendship, according to an ancient custom there, they eat champock from one another’s hand, and that seals the friendship. This champock is tea of a very unsavoury taste, it grows, as other tea does, on bushes, and is in use on such occasions all over Pegu.

And now, since I must leave Pegu, I must not omit giving the clergy their due praises in another particular practice of their charity. If a stranger has the misfortune to be ship-wracked on their coast, by the laws of the country, the men are the king’s slaves, but, by the mediation of the church, the governors overlook that law; and when the unfortunate strangers come to their bawos, they find a great deal of hospitality, both in food and raiment, and have letters of recommendation from the priests of one convent to those of another on the road they design to travel, where they may expect vessels to transport them to Syrian, and if any be sick or maimed, the priests, who are the Peguers chief physicians, keep them in their convent, till they are cured, and then furnish them with letters, as is above observed, for they never enquire which way a stranger worships god, but if he is human, he is the object of their charity. There are some Christians in Syrian of the Portugueze offspring, and some Armenians. The Portugueze have a church, but the scandalous lives of the priests and people make them contemptible to all people in general.

I have only to add to my observations of Pegu, that, in former times, Martavan was one of the most flourishing towns for trade in the East, having the benefit of a noble river, which afforded a good harbour for ships of the greatest burden; but, after the Barmaes conquered it, they sunk a number of vessels full of stones, in the mouth of the river, so that now it is unnavigable, except for small vessels. They make earthen ware there still, and glaze them with lead-oar. I have seen some jars made there, that could contain two hogsheads of liquor. They have also still a small trade in fish. Their mullet dried is the best dry fish I ever tasted, either in India or Europe.

The islands off the coast of Pegu, are the Cocoes, uninhabited, but full of cocoa-nut trees. They ly about twenty leagues West-south-west from Cape Negrais: and the islands Perperies ly thirty-six leagues South of the said cape. They are high islands uninhabited, and so environed with rocks under water, that there is danger in landing on them. They seem to be overgrown with woods, and that is all that I could observe of them. There is another small island called Commoda, that lies about ten leagues off the Coast of Pegu, but is not inhabited.

Merjee [Mergui] and Tanacerin

The next place on the continent, to the Southward, is Merjee, a town belonging to the king of Siam, situated on the banks of the river of Tanacerin, lying within a great number of small uninhabited islands. The harbour is safe, and the country produces rice, timber for building, tin, elephants, elephants teeth and agala wood. In former times a
good number of English free merchants were settled at Merjee, and drove a good trade, living under a mild indulgent government; but the old East-india Company envying their happiness, by an arbitrary command, ordered them to leave their industry, and repair to Fort St. George, to serve them, and threatened the king of Siam with a sea war, if he did not deliver those English up, or force them out of his country, and, in anno 1687, sent one Captain Weldon in a small ship called the Curtany, to Merjee with that message. He behaved himself very insolently to the government, and killed some Siamers, without any just cause. One night when Weldon was ashore, the Siamers thinking to do themselves justice on him, got a Company together, designing to seize or kill the aggressor, but Weldon having notice of their design, made his escape on board his ship, and the Siamers missing him, tho’ very narrowly, vented their rage and revenge on all the English they could find. The poor victims being only guarded by their innocence, did not so much as arm themselves, to withstand the fury of the enraged mob, so that seventy-six were massacred, and hardly twenty escaped on board of the Curtany; so there was the tragical consequence of one man’s insolence.

Before that fatal time, the English were so beloved and favoured at the court of Siam, that they had places of trust conferred upon them, both in the civil and military branches of the government. Mr. Samuel White was made shawbandaar or custom-master at Merjee and Tanacerin, and Captain Williams was admiral of the king’s navy; but the troublesom Company, and a great revolution that happened in the state of Siam, made some repair to Fort St. George, others to Bengal, and some to Atcheen.

The Andamans

The islands opposite to the Coast of Tanacerin, are the Andemans. They ly about eighty leagues off, and are surrounded with many dangerous banks and rocks, they are all inhabited with canibals, who are so fearless, that they will swim off to a boat if she approach near the shore, and attack her with their wooden weapons, notwithstanding the superiority of numbers in the boat, and the advantage of missive and defensive arms of iron, steel and fire.

I knew one Fergusson, who commanded a ship from Fort St. George, bound from Malacc to Bengal, in Company with another ship, going too near one of the Andeman Islands, was driven, by the force of a strong current, on some rocks, and the ship was lost. The other ship was driven thro’ a chanel between two of the same islands, and was not able to assist the ship-wracked men, but neither Fergusson nor any of his people were ever heard of, which gave ground to conjecture that they were all devoured by those savage canibals.

I saw one of the natives of those islands at Atcheen in anno 1694. He was then about forty years of age. The Andemans had a yearly custom to come to the Nicobar Islands, with a great number of small praws, and kill or take prisoners as many of the poor Nicobareans as they could overcome. The Nicobareans again joyned their forces, and gave the canibals battle, when they met with them, and one time defeated them, and gave no quarter to the Andemans. This man above mentioned, when a boy of ten or twelve years of age, accompanied his father in the wars, and was taken prisoner, and his youth recommending him to mercy, they saved his life, and made him a slave. After he had continued so three or four years, he was carried to Atcheen to be sold for cloth, knives and tobacco, which are the commodities most wanting on the Nicobar. The Atcheenen being Mahometans, this boy’s patron bred him up in that religion, and some years after his master dying, gave him his freedom; he having a great desire to see his native country, took a praw, and the months of December, January and February being fair weather, and the sea smooth, he ventured to the sea, in order to go to his own country, from the islands of Gomus and Pullovey, which ly near Atcheen. Here the Souther-most of the Nicobars may be seen, and so one island may be seen from another, from the Southermost of those to Chitty-andeman, which is the Southermost of the Andeman, which are distant from Atcheen about an hundred leagues. Arriving among his relations he was made welcome, with great demonstrations of joy to see him alive, whom they expected to have been long dead.

Having retained his native language, he gave them an account of his adventures; and, as the Andemans have no notions of a deity, he acquainted them with the knowledge he had of a god, and would have persuadew his country-men to learn of him the way to adore god, and to obey his laws, but he could make no converts. When he had stayed a month or two, he took leave to be gone again, which they permitted, on condition that he would return. He brought along with him four or five hundred weight of quick-silver, and he said, that some of the Andeman Islands abound in that commodity. He had made several trips thither before I saw him, and always brought some quick-silver along with him. Some Mahometan fakires would fain have accompanied him in his voyages, but he would never suffer them, because he said, he could not engage for their safety among his countrymen. When I saw him, he was in company with a Seid, whom I carried a passenger to Surat, and from him I had this account of his adventures.
Jonceyloan [Junkceylon]

The next place of any commerce on this coast, is the island of Jonkceyloan, it lies in the dominions of the king of Siam. Between Merjee and Jonkceyloan there are several good harbours for shipping, but the sea-coast is very thin of inhabitants, because there are great numbers of freebooters, called salleiters, who inhabit islands along the sea-coast, and they both rob, and take people for slaves, and transport them for Atcheen, and there make sale of them, and Jonkceyloan often feels the weight of their depredations.

The North end of Jonkceyloan lies within a mile of the continent, but the South end is above three leagues from it. Between the island and the continent is a good harbour for shipping in the South-west monsoons, and on the west side of the island Puton Bay is a safe harbour in the North-east winds. The islands afford good masts for shipping, and abundance of tin, but few people to dig for it, by reason of the afore-mentioned outlaws, and the governors being generally Chinese, who buy their places at the court of Siam, and, to reimburse themselves, oppress the people, in so much that riches would be but a plague to them, and their poverty makes them live an easie indolent life.

Yet the villages on the continent drive a small trade with shipping that come from the Chormondel Coast, and Bengal, but both the buyer and seller trade by retail, so that a Ship’s cargo is a long time in selling, and the product of the country is as long in purchasing. The islands off this part of the coast are the Nicobars, and are about ninety leagues distant from the continent. The Northmost cluster is low, and are called the Carnicubars, and by their vicinity to the Andemans, are but thinly inhabited. The middle cluster is fine champain ground, and all but one, well inhabited. They are called the Somerera Islands, because on the South end of the largest island, is an hill that resembles the top of an umbrella or Somerera. About six leagues to the Southward of Somerera Island, lies Tallang-jang the uninhabited island, where one Captain Owen lost his ship in anno 1708, but the men were all saved, and finding no inhabitants, they made fires in the night, and next day there came five or six canoaes from Ning and Goury, two fine islands that ly about four leagues to the Westward of the desert island, and very courteously carried the shipwrackt men to their islands of Ning and Goury, with what little things they had saved of their apparel and other necessaries.

The captain had saved a broken knife about four inches long in the blade, and he having laid it carelesly by, one of the natives made bold to take it, but did not offer to hide it. The captain seeing his knife in the poor native’s hand, took it from him, and bestowed some kicks and blows on him for his ill manners, which was very ill taken, for all in general shewed they were dissatisfied with the action; and the shipwrackt men could observe contentions arising between those who were their benefactors in bringing them to their island, and others who were not concerned in it: However, next day as the captain was sitting under a tree at dinner, there came about a dozen of natives towards him, and saluted him on every side with a shower of darts made of heavy hard wood, with their points hardned in the fire, and so he expired in a moment. How far they had a mind to pursue their resentment, I know not, but their benefactors kept guard about their house till next day, and then presented them with two canoaes, and fitted them with out-leagers to keep them from overturning, and put some water in pots, some cocoanuts and dry fish, and pointed to them to be immediately gone, which they did. Being sixteen in company, they divided equally, and steered their course for Jonkceyloan, but in the way one of the boats lost her out-leager, and drowned all her crew, the rest arrived safe, and I carried them afterwards to Matchulipatam.

Ning and Goury

Ning and Goury are two fine smooth islands, well inhabited, and plentifully furnished with several sorts of good fish, hogs and poultry, but they have no horses, cows, sheep, nor goats, nor wild beasts of any sort, but monkies. They have no rice nor pulse, so that the kernel of cocoa-nuts, yams, and potatoes serves them for bread. Along the North end of the eastmost of the two islands, are good soundings from ten to eight fathoms sand, about two miles off the shore.

The people come thronging on board in their canoaes, and bring hogs, fowl, cocks, fish, fresh, salted and dried yams, the best I ever tasted, potatoes, parots and monkies, to barter for old hatchets, sword-blades, and thick pieces of iron-hoops, to make defensive weapons against their common disturbers and implacable enemies the Andemaners, and tobacco they are very greedy of, for a leaf of tobacco, if pretty large, they will give a cock, for three foot of an iron hoop, a large hog, and for one foot in length, a pig. They all speak a little broken Portugueze,
but what religious worship they use, I could not learn.

**Sumatra**

The island Sometera lies about eight leagues to the Northward of Ning and Goury, and is well inhabited by the number of villages that shew themselves as we sail along its shores. The people, like those of Ning and Goury, are very courteous, and bring the product of their island aboard of ships to exchange for the aforementioned commodities. Silver nor gold they neither have nor care for, so the root of all evil can never send out branches of misery, or bear fruit to poison their happiness. The mens clothing is a bit of string round their middle, and about a foot and an half of cloth six inches broad, tuckt before and behind within that line.

The women have a petticoat from the navel to the knee, and their hair close shaved, but the men have the hair left on the upper part of the head, and below the crown, but cut so short that it hardly comes to their ears. The Southward cluster of the Nicobars, is mountainous, and the people partake of its unpolished nature, being more uncivil and surly than those to the Northward. Their islands produce the same necessaries as the others do.

**Quedah**

Quedah is the next place of note on the continent to the Southward, and is honoured with the title of a kingdom, tho’ both small and poor. The town which bears the same name, stands on the banks of a small navigable river, deep, but narrow, about fifty miles from the sea, and the king resides in it, but shews no marks of grandeur, besides arbitrary governing.

Their religion is Mahometan, much mixt with paganism. The people are deceitful, covetous, and cruel. It was many years tributary to Siam, but in their long Pegu war, it threw off the yoke. Its product is tin, pepper, elephants, and elephants teeth, canes, and *dama*, a gum that is used for making pitch and tar for the use of shipping. The king is poor, proud, and beggarly, he never fails of visiting stranger merchants at their coming to his port, and then, according to custom, he must have a present. When the stranger returns the visit, or has any business with him, he must make him a present, otherwise he thinks due respect is not paid to him, and in return of these presents his majesty will honour the stranger with a seat near his sacred person, and will chew a little betel, and put it out of his royal mouth on a little gold saucer, and sends it by his page to the stranger, who must take it with all the signs of humility and satisfaction, and chew it after him, and it is very dangerous to refuse the royal morsel...

**Siam**

The kings of Johore ever paid homage to the kings of Siam, by sending them a rose made of gold in a golden box once in three years. The year 1719 happened to be the year that the rose came, for I saw the messenger that brought it at Siam, where he had orders from his master to know how my affairs went, with a profer of the king’s service, if I came back into his country.

Sangore is the first town on the king of Siam’s dominions. On that side it is under the government of Ligore, which was once the metropolis of a kingdom of the same name, but, by civil dissensions, it became a prey to the king of Siam.

Sangore stands on the side of a large river. It yields some tin, elephants teeth, agala-wood and coarse gold, but the inhabitants meet with so great discouragements in digging for tin, that there is very little to be procured; and what is manufactured, is bought up by the Dutch factory at Ligore. Ligore lies about twelve leagues to the Northward of Sangore, and between them lies a low uninhabited island, called Papier. It reaches from Sangore within three leagues of Ligore River. It is well stored with wild buffaloes, hog and deer, which are free for all persons to kill at pleasure. The road of Ligore lies two leagues from the river, and about a league within the river’s mouth stands the Dutch factory, a pretty commodious house, built of brick, after the Dutch fashion. The town stands about two miles above the factory. It is built of barnbows, and thatcht with reed. There are many pagan temples in it, which have steeples built very high, in form of very sharp pyramids. They are so small, that, in the road, they look like ships masts. It produces abundance of tin, but the Dutch engross it all. Pullo Cara, an high island, lies about twelve leagues off Ligore.

The next place of note is Cui, a place that produces great quantities of tin and elephants teeth, but all are sent to the city of Siam or Odia for the king’s use. The rest of the coast being little frequented, I will pass by it, and
steer for the Bar of Siam. The city stands on an island in the River Memnon, which, by turnings and windings, makes the distance from the bar about fifty leagues. The country is low, and as fruitful as any spot of ground in the world, in rice, legumen, fruits and roots, cattle wild and tame. And the river abounds in many species of excellent fish, which plentifully indulge the inhabitants, and make them indolent and lazy, and consequently proud, superstitious and wanton.

The city is reckoned ten miles round the walls, and many canals, from the river, pierce thro’ the city from all quarters. The walls of the city are high and thick, built of stone and brick; but the houses of the natives, tho’ large, are low, built on stakes driven into the ground, about ten or twelve foot high; but the Mahometans, Chinese and Christians raise the grounds they build on high enough to be secure from the yearly inundations. The natives houses are raised on those stakes on the same account, and as their walls are built of bamboo and reeds, their roofs are built of the same materials, and are all thatched, except what are built on terra firma, and they are generally tiled. There are many arched bridges in the city, built of brick or stone, and some of wood. The floors of the natives houses are made of split bamboo or reeds made fast together, so that one cannot move on them without both noise, and shaking them.

The three palaces of their kings, and some temples, are the only magnificent edifices in the city; and some steeples belonging to the temples are gilded with gold on the outside, and in a sun-shine they reflect the rays so strongly, that, at two or three miles distance, they disturb the eye, when lookt upon.

They have many large temples well decorated after their way, and well stockt with gilded images of gods and goddesses, of the priests contrivance and canonizing, and they never want devotees to adore them, who pay their deceitful imposers very well for deceiving them; but they are not the only people that are so cunningly deluded, for the fatal custom has spread universally in all the corners of the world.

The great god, who created the universe, they have no image of, nor can they make any of him, because he never shewed himself in any bodily shape, and therefore they can form no idea of his shape, dimensions or beauty; but Tipedah, the great god’s partner has often shewed himself, and him they worship in his image with the highest adoration. Praw Prumb and Sommo Cuddem his friends they adore with the second degree in worship; and Prapout and Samsay have the third sort of veneration paid to their images.

They have many little deities inferior to those above mentioned, whom they adore as patrons or protectors of several tribes of men, and other animals of different countries and cities, of health, prosperity and other chances and casualties, so every one is at liberty to choose his own patron or protector, and worship him according to his own mind, but none are persecuted for the opinion of the way he is to worship, either the great or the little gods. That heavenly frenzy is only a raging mad distemper that affects the melancholick brains of the western world.

I was in one temple pretty large, built exactly four square, and each square contained just an hundred images They were placed in notches or domes about four foot from the ground. There were more goddesses than gods, and all were in. a sitting posture cross-legged, as tailors sit on their shop-boards. Their noses were low and small, their vissage long, their ears large, and the lappets of them thick and plump. They sat promiscuously in those notches, and all clothed in one livery of gold-leaf. They were almost as big as full-grown men and women, but very different in their substances. The priests told us, that some were of pure gold, others of tecul silver, which has no alloy in it, some of copper, and some of brass, and some of baked clay; but, for want of sumpture laws, they have many little deities inferior to those above mentioned, whom they adore as patrons or protectors of several tribes of men, and other animals of different countries and cities, of health, prosperity and other chances and casualties, so every one is at liberty to choose his own patron or protector, and worship him according to his own mind, but none are persecuted for the opinion of the way he is to worship, either the great or the little gods. That heavenly frenzy is only a raging mad distemper that affects the melancholick brains of the western world.

In one temple, as I was informed, stands the famous Samsay twenty yards in height. He is in a right lineal descent from little Samsay, who caused so much war between Siam and Pegu, which never ended but with the dissolution of the Pegu Empire. In most of their temples there are frightful dragons standing sentinels at their gates, but whether they are placed there to keep in the gods, or to keep out devils, I know not.

There are reckoned no less than fifty thousand clergymen or tallapoys belonging to the temples in and about the city of Siam; but they are easy to the state, having no stated benefices or other revenues, and yet they are plentifully supplied with all the necessaries of life by the charity and benevolence of the laity.

There is one temple about three miles below the city, on the opposite side of the river, called the fishes temple, because annually in the month of September, when the floods overflow the low ground, (as in Egypt) there are good numbers of fishes almost like small Salmon, that frequent a pond close to that temple, and are to be found in no other place in the Siam dominions, and they are so tame, that they will come close to our boats, and frisk and play on the surface of the water, if any body has a mind to feed them, with bread, cocoa-nut meat, or other food that does not easily separate. 'Tis only to hold some near the surface of the water, and they will take it familiarly from the hand. I have often taken pleasure to feed them, and see them play, but as soon as we leave off feeding them, they will withdraw, so that hardly one is to be seen till a new supply of victuals is offered to them.
But none dares offer to take one of them, for fear of raising a zealous sanctified mob, who punish small faults with the greatest severities, and those fishes being consecrated to the god of that temple, are securely protected by the consecration. They continue about the temple till the middle of December, that the floods begin to draw off the ground, and then they depart, and are seen no where in any river or pond belonging to Siam, till September brings them back to their temple.

Whatever animal comes within the verge of a temple, it is secured from pursuit or violence. I knew a Portuguese inhabitant of Siam, who shot a crow as it sat on the branch of a tree that grew near a temple, on which the priests raised a mob, who broke both the poor man's legs and arms, and left him in the field for dead, but some Christians coming accidentally by, carried him in a boat, in that deplorable state, to a French surgeon, who set his bones, and cured him. I saw him alive and well in anno 1720.

The French have a bishop at Siam, with a church and a seminary for the education of converts. They stand a little above above the city, on the opposite side of the river. They make but few converts, except when corn is dear, and then some of the poorer sort receive baptism, which intitles them to a maintenance from the church, but, when plenty returns, they throw away their beads and brazen saint, and bid farewell to Christianity In anno 1720 there were not above seventy Christians in and about Siam, and they the most dissolute, lazy, thievish rascals that were to be found in the country.

The Bishop was one Mr. Cissee, a man of about eighty years of age, who, in a famine that happened there in anno 1708, took up about three thousand pounds sterling from the king, to buy coin for the support of his church, and such poor Siamese as were converted by the necessity of the times, who relapsed again as soon as the famine ceased, and the poor old bishop cannot leave the country till that debt be discharged. He is superstitiously zealous for his religion, and would fain go to Cochin-china or Tunquin to die a martyr, because it is death by their law to preach any foreign doctrine without leave first obtained from their kings.

Whatever principles he may have had in religion I know not, but I am sure that he was a diminutive moralist, which I knew by experience, in seducing some of my seamen, who were black Christians, to leave any ship at Siam, contrary to his promise, which obliged me to buy slaves to supply their places; but I left him some cause to repent of his folly and breach of promise.

There were four or five priests there besides the bishop, one whereof always attends the college, and the others officiate daily in the church. They live abstemiously, but, I believe, rather thro' force than choice, for their incomes are very small, as charity and piety are very cold among their flock The Portuguese have also a church there, built on the side of the river opposite to the lower end of the town; but their priests are generally so scandalous in their lives, that few frequent their church, or care for their conversation. The Chinese being very numerous in Siam, have several small temples, but none remarkable for their structure or beauty.

The Dutch have a factory there, about a mile below the town, on the same side of the river. Their greatest investments are in tin, sapan-wood and deers skins, which they buy up for the Japan market. The Siam market takes off but little European goods; however the Dutch chief makes a pretty good figure there.

The English, for many years, had also a factory there, till about the year 1686, the East-India Company seeking occasions to pick a quarrel with the Siamese, in order to withdraw, they took hold of such as they could first find, tho' never so frivolous. The first was about anno 1684.

The Carolina, bound from England to China, had the misfortune to lose her passage, and coming to Siam to pass away the North-east monsoons, and the king of Siam having occasion for some stores for shipping out of the Carolina's cargo, to equip some ships that he had built in order to humble the Cambodians and the Couchinchinese, who disturbed the navigation of his country, he civilly requested the English chief to supply him at the prices the same commodities used to be sold at to merchants, but he could not find that favour, which he resented, and threatened to disturb their commerce. At length they supplied him with some part of what he demanded, to avert the ill consequences that might happen by a total refusal. This was represented to the Company in the darkest colours, and they thought that sufficient to ground a war on; but they had, at that time, a fleet of large ships, which they had equip to regain their trade of Bantam and other places, which the Dutch had insolently robbed them of; but they were disappointed by the deep politics of King Charles II, as is before observed.

However, the king of Siam continued his indulgence to the Company and their servants, in much affluence and luxury, continually carousing in debaucheries with wine and women, till their common salaries and gains by trade, were in no proposition to their extravagant expenses, however that being a free country, they had liberty to spend their own and their masters estates, as they pleased.

The king of Siam having formed the design of a war, as above mentioned, with Cambodia and Couchinchina, employed a good number of English who had resorted to Siam, to partake of the king's indulgence and
bounty, and to help the Company's servants to spend their money. All the English who had a mind to list themselves on board of his fleet, had great encouragement of honourable posts and good salaries well paid, and they did perform actions in the war worthy of the bravery and courage of the English Nation, by which the king's favour to the English, increased more than before the war.

One Mr. Pots happened to be chief of the English factory at that time, who by his extravagant luxury had rioted away a great part of his masters goods and money, and had run his own credit out of doors. He then began to form projects how to clear accounts with his masters and creditors, without putting anything in their pockets. The first was on five hundred chests of Japon copper, which his masters had in specie at Siam, and they were brought into account of profit and loss, for so much eaten up by the white ants, which are really insects, that by a cold corroding liquid quality, can do much mischief to cloth, timber, or on any other soft body that their fluids can penetrate, but copper is thought too hard a morsel for them; however, I saw that article in the Company's accounts, as they were remitted from Siam to Bombay, and were in Mr. Vaux's custody at Surat afterwards.

But that small article of 2500 pounds, went but a small way towards clearing of his accounts. So after supper one night as they were merrily carousing, the factory was set on fire, and that balanced all other accounts. Mr. Pots alleged to the king, that his subjects the Siamers, had done that mischief, and expected the king to be accountable for losses and damages, sustained by the Company and their servants.

The king, on the other hand, proffered to prove, that Mr. Pots and his drunken companions had done it, and that he expected the company should be accountable to his subjects for the loss they had sustained by the fire, which had burnt several houses that lay near the factory.

However, the Company adhered to the just complaints of their honest servants, and thought that the king's refusal to make good their demands, was a sufficient piece of ground to build their war on. However, the Company considering that a war could bring them no advantage, thought it enough to bully the Siamers, but never declared a war.

In the year 1685, the Company sent two ships to the Bar of Siam. One was the Mary of 400 tons, to frighten the Siamers, but they did no damage to them, and the Siamers treated them civilly.

About 1680 there was one Constantine Falcon, a Greek by birth, that some years before had shipt himself steward of an English ship at London, bound to India, and, being ordered for Siam, and finding some ill treatment on board, he deserted from the ship, and fled to a small village some distance from the city, where he amused himself in learning the Siam language. He being a sober, ingenious, and industrious person, soon made himself master of the language, and served as an interpreter for the English at court, where he was remarkably taken notice of, and got a post there. His behaviour recommended him to greater preferments, so that in a very few years he became prime minister of state, and behaved himself so well in that high station, that every thing belonging to the state of the country prospered, so that Siam became the richest and powerfulest kingdom in that part of the world. The Jesuits hearing that one of the Romish communion sat at the helm of the Siam affairs, and it being a rich country, brought whole troops of them into Siam, who got the whole management of affairs into their hands, through the interest of the Barkalong, that being the appellation of first minister. They tickled themselves with the fancy of bringing the whole kingdom of Siam under the Pope's jurisdiction, and in anno 1683, the first year of his ministry, they got the king to send an embassy to the king of France, which ambassador came also to London, and settled a treaty of commerce for the English that should trade in Siam. The Jesuits imposed on the king of France, and made him believe, that if he would send an embassy to Siam, that king would leave his own superstition, and embrace theirs. Accordingly an ambassador was sent, with many valuable French curiosities, and among them a very fine mass-book, with beautiful cuts of all the first rate saints in the Romish Kalendar.

On the ambassador's arrival, he was received with the respect due to his character, and when the presents were laid before the king, according to custom, he seemed much pleased with their curiosity, but when he viewed the pictures in the Mass-book, he asked a Jesuit who was interpreter, what they were, who answered, that they were the pictures of holy men now in heaven, and such as his brother the king of France adored, and as he designed an eternal friendship with his majesty, he hoped that he would also adore those pictures, and worship the images of those saints, rather than those idols that were worshipped all over his dominions. The king returned answer, that the gods of his country had been auspicious to them who lived in it for time out of mind, and as it would be unjust and ungrateful to banish those gods that had been so long very kind to his predecessors and himself, so he could not turn his old gods off and take new ones in their places that he did not so well know, and that he would oblige his brother of France in any thing but that the king of France complimented Mr. Falcon with the order of knighthood, and in his letter to him, wherein he recommended the French affairs to his care, particularly that of religion,
he stiled him loving cousin and counsellor.

After the embassy was gone from Siam to France, the Jesuits thought of nothing but bringing the trade of Siam under the power of the French, and in order to that, got the king to order the building of a fort on the river's side, opposite to the Fort of Bencock, a town about twenty leagues below the city of Siam, and to have it manned with a garrison of French, to be paid by the exchequer of Siam, and all this was granted according to their mind.

The fort is a regular tetragon, and can mount about eighty great guns. When the French got possession they grew intolerably arrogant, which made the Siamers uneasie, and murmured at the king's weakness, but that was in private, for certain destruction is the sure reward of talking publickly of any mismanagement of the state, for a king of Siam can no more err in politicks, than a Pope can in matters of faith.

Yet about the year 1688, by some malevolent planet that over-ruled his actions, he made a war with his neighbors the kings of Cambodia, and Couchin-china He sent an army by land, and a fleet by sea, to carry on the war, but was not successful by land. However in the land-army there was a mean person, a citizen of Siam, who kept a fruit-shop, he had a bold daring spirit, and behaved himself so well on all occasions, in the land war, that he came to preferment, and at last was made generalissimo, and then ended the war to the satisfaction of the whole army abroad, and his prince at home; but when he brought back the army to Siam, seeing the king wrappt up in the opinion he had of the Jesuits counsels, and the management they had in the affairs of state, by the countenance of the king and his first minister my Lord Falcon, he pickt a quarrel with the king, and having most of the army at his devotion, seized his master and put him to death, after the manner of royal criminals, or as princes of the blood are treated when convicted of capital crimes, which is, by putting them into a large iron caldron, and pounding them to pieces with wooden pestles, because none of their royal blood must be spilt on the ground, it being, by their religion, thought great impiety to contaminate the divine blood, by mixing it with earth. And after he had murdered his master, he summoned all the mandereens in the city, to hold a council in the palace.

My Lord Falcon, for that was generally his designation, had, by his civil deportment towards people of all ranks and degrees, so ingratiated himself, that he had a stronger party by far, both in the city and country, than the general; and besides, had all the fleet at his devotion. Many of my Lord's friends dissuaded him from obeying the summons, but to raise the forces of the city, and revenge the death of the king, and many officers of the army that detested the regicide would have come over to his party, which at least was above fifty thousand strong, but being infatuate, he was deaf to all good advice, and went to the palace, where as soon as he had set his foot, he was seized by the general's guards, and beheaded, so the usurper took the sovereignty into his own hands, and at that instant was by jure divino made an infallible favourite of heaven, and the sun, moon, and stars, had the honour to be his near relations.

Had my Lord Falcon followed his friends advice, or had courage answerable to his other good qualities, he had certainly been honoured with the diadem in Siam, and if he had introduced popery in the place of paganism, he had been honoured with a place in the Pope's Almanack, but his pusillanimity made him unworthy of both.

I had this account from my Lord Secretary Mr. Bashpool, who, on his master's death, was clapt up in prison, and lay three years with his neck in the congoes, which are a pair of stocks made of bamboes, and was never taken out, but in order to be severely whipped, to make him accuse rich men whom the usurper had a mind to destroy, that he might seize their estates under the umbrage of justice and law.

I saw my Lady Falcon in anno 1719, and she was then honoured with the superintendency of his majesty's confectionery. She was born in Siam of honourable parents, and at that time much respected both in the court and city, for her prudence and humanity to natives and strangers, when they came into difficulties, or under the weight of oppressions from the officers of the court or city.

When the Siam ambassador returned from France and England, in the murdered king's time, his master, among many other questions, askt him if the king of France had any palaces like his at Siam, for beauty and magnitude, and the poor man unadvisedly told him truth, that in France were many finer, nay, that the king of France's horse stables in Paris, exceeded any buildings in India, which his majesty took so ill, that he disgraced him, and was very near losing his head for his telling truth.

The king of Siam is as fond of lofty titles as the king of Pegu. Besides his proximity with the heavenly luminaries, he is a god on earth, in whose court are to be found justice, mercy, and benevolence to mankind, with such a train of senseless hyperboles, and at last, to illustrate all the rest, he is king of the white elephant, a title that none disputes with him but the king of Pegu.

The king bestows his anniversary blessing on his people in the month of September, when he passes through the city attended with a numerous train of elephants, among whom is the white elephant, but he is only of a cream colour, and I have seen several at Bangarie a village near Jonckeyloan, as white as him. All the elephants
that day are drest in their finest trappings, with drums, trumpets, hautboys, and other musical instruments making a noise as they go along, but whether it is to divert his majesty or his elephants, I know not, but I am sure the noise was harsh in my ears.

While he is making his elephantine cavalcade through the city, the populace dares not look him in the face, but prostrate on their knees and their elbows on the ground, with their hands open and joyned above their heads, and their eyes fixt on the ground, or shut till he has past by them, then they are permitted to rise and look on his back parts or side.

In the month of November he also shews himself on the river, in a ballong or barge of thirty or forty yards long, about two yards broad, and two foot deep, with a throne placed near the middle of her length, about seven foot high, and a rich canopy over his head, and being seated on the throne, his greatest lords or minions sit under the throne, and about fifty or sixty rowers are seated a-fore and be-aft the throne, (clothed in carnation coloured waistcoats, with fine caps or turbands on their heads) to row or paddle his majesty wherever he orders them, and there are ordinarily above one thousand other barges to wait on his majesty, besides several thousands of other common ballongs, insomuch, that for five or six miles, the river is covered with boats, except near his majesty's barge, and there is half a mile of the river clear for his barge to move in.

About four or five in the evening, he goes in his barge to a temple about three miles above the city, on the opposite side of the river, where the priests pray for him, and present him with two yards and an half of cotton cloth, that must be spun and woven the same day that the king comes to receive it. After sun sets, he embarks again (leaving some royal gratuity to the priests for their miraculous present) and is attended in state to his palace.

His reason for honouring the river and his people that time of the year, is to forbid the river formally to flow higher or longer than such a number of inches in height, or of days in time, as he sets it; yet sometimes it disobeys his royal commands.

All the mandarines belonging to the government, whose affairs require their residence in the city, whose numbers generally amount to three thousand, must daily attend in the palace, except they have leave to be absent, and if any one transgresses, he is severely whipt with split rattans, which cut pretty deep into the flesh, and leave conspicuous marks behind them. The greater the marks appear, the greater the honour they take them to be. And the pretty ladies are not exeemed from the flagellation, for very small faults. And I have seen some pretty agreeable young gentle-women with rottan marks on their backs, which they are so far from covering, that as they pass the streets, they expose their backs, tho’ their breasts, bellies, and necks are covered with a scarf, seeming to glory in being so much taken notice of by the greatest king on earth.

The women in Siam are the only merchants in buying goods, and some of them trade very considerably. The husbands in general are maintained by the industry of their wives. And the Europeans that trade to Siam, accommodate themselves as they do in Pegu, with temporary wives, almost on the same conditions too, and it is thought no disgrace to have had many temporary husbands, but rather an honour that they have been beloved by so many different men. The Christian priests cry down that way of marrying, and want every heretick, as well as Christian Catholick, to be tied to some young lasses of their bringing up, but the hereticks, according to their innate principles, generally continue deaf and obstinate to the grave advice and sound doctrine of the holy fathers, and marry according to the Siam way. The Catholicks dare not do so for fear of excommunication, but the Siam wives generally prove the most obedient, loving, and chaste, for which reason, when the Catholicks once go from Siam to follow their business in other countries, they seldom return to Siam, but leave their beloved wives a legacy to the church, who is a very indulgent mother to her termagant daughters.

The natives of both sexes go bare-headed, and their hair cut within two inches of the skin, and gummed, and combed upwards, which makes their head seem very big, and all in bristles like a boar's back. They are well shaped in body and limbs, with a large fore-head and a little nose, and handsom mouth with plump lips, and black sparkling eyes. Their ears of a moderate size, but large thick lappets. The men have but little hair on their chins, and they are of an olive-colour, but the women of a straw complexion, and some of the ladies have a little tincture of red in their cheeks and lips, but whether it is natural or artificial I know not. They are very prolifick and long-lived, which may be partly imputed to their temperance in eating and dunking.

While the usurper had settled himself on the throne of Siam, he ordered the French to deliver their fort at Bencock, to an officer that he sent to take possession of it, but they refused, without first making terms for themselves, on which he sent a part of his army to attack it, and threatened every man's life that returned before it was taken. His orders were punctually put in execution, and all the French got, was the honour of dying bravely in the defence of their liberty. The fort stands still undemolished, but no artillery is in it.

In Siam they have several ways in punishing criminals with death, for theft and other such like peccadil-
loes. Beheading is the common way. For rebellion or mutiny they are ript up alive, and their guts and intrails taken out, and their carcases woven up in a twig-case, and tied up to a stake for vultures and other voracious fowls, or dogs to feed on. I saw eighteen one morning going to be executed so for mutiny. They were each put on a triangular seat, with their necks and hands in wooden fetters, and carried by three slaves in chains through the streets to the place of execution, but they lookt as if they had been almost starved in prison, for they were very meagre. Some were weeping, others joyful that they were near the end of a miserable life.

For treason and murder, the elephant is the executioner. The condemned person is made fast to a stake driven into the ground for the purpose, and the elephant is brought to view him, and goes twice or thrice round him, and when the elephant’s keeper speaks to the monstrous executioner, he twines his trunk round the person and stake, and pulling the stake from the ground with great violence, tosses the man and the stake into the air, and in coming down, receives him on his teeth, and shaking him off again, puts one of his fore feet on the carcasse, and squeezes it flat.

In anno 1717, the king of Siam made war on his neighbour of Cambodiana, and invaded his country with an army of fifty thousand by land, and twenty thousand by sea, and committed the care of his armies to his Barkalong, a Chinese, altogether unacquainted with war. The China Man accepted of the charge with much reluctancy, but the king would not be denied. The war proved unsuccessful, but I’ll leave the particulars till I treat of Cambodiana, and return to Siam, where I had some difficulties to meet with.

In anno 1719, I went thither with a cargo to dispose on, expecting to trade on the footing of the old treaty concluded at London with the king of England, and the king of Siam’s ambassador, in anno 1684. But on my arrival, I found that Mr. Collet, Governor of Fort St. George, had cancelled that agreement by his ambassador Powny, as I have already observed, and the new conditions being too hard for me to stand to, I solicited for liberty to depart again with my ship and cargo, which I could not obtain in less than four months.

Collet’s attorney at the court of Siam, was a Persian by birth, but had come to Siam with his father when very young, and had remained about forty years at Siam. He was as complete a rascal as Collet could have found for his villainous purposes, for by false informations to the king, he had brought many honest men into trouble, and some treasure into the king’s coffers.

When I understood that he was the Remora that had put a stop to my commerce, I tried if I could remove him by large presents, but all to no purpose, for if I traded, it must be on the scheme laid down by Collet, by the negotiation of Powny, who kept one Collison as his resident at Siam, to consult and inform the Persian of the best methods to ruin the English traders that had not Collet’s letters of protection.

This Persian, (whose name was Oia Sennerat) and I, were discoursing one day of my affairs in the Industan language, which is the established language spoken in the Mogul’s large dominions, and, among other things, I was laying down to him the difficulties that might attend the king of Siam’s trade, carried on from Merjee to Fort St. George, because if the rest of the English colonies were forbid trading with Siam, they had just cause to forbid his subjects to trade to Fort St. George, or any where else, and that other troubles might arise to the king’s affairs, by thus imposing on the king, who was ignorant of the consequences that might follow in breaking the agreement made in England, without so much as once giving warning to the English colonies of other parts of India.

He answered me, that the king of Fort St. George could best give me an answer, who was able to protect the king of Siam’s trade thither, and that his majesty had no other foreign trade but Japon, that he valued, and the English had no trade that way to disturb his master’s commerce, and that if I did not comply with the agreement made by Powny in Collet’s name, I might go away when I could.

I told him that I had a mind to see the king, and would make him a present of a thousand dollars, if he could find means to introduce me to his presence. He answered me, that the English had not good manners enough to be admitted into the presence of so great a king, and therefore I ought not to expect to appear before him, and for fear I should have made application to some other court favourite to introduce me, about two or three days after our confabulation, I heard that there was a proclamation published, all over the city, that no foreigner should dare to approach within such a distance of the king’s palace, under very severe penalties.

About a week after I had a summons to appear before a tribunal, to answer to an indictment of speaking treason of the king. I knew my self innocent, and appealed at the time appointed, which was about eight in the morning. The court was held in a large, square, oblong hall, open on all sides. About nine the judge came with some thousands of attendants, and, as he passed by me to take his place, he viewed me very narrowly, as I did him with much attention. He was a man of a middle stature, about fifty years of age, of a pleasant, but grave countenance, and had a quick sparkling eye. He spoke to my interpreter, to bid me have a care of my tongue, lest I should prejudice myself in answering to intricate questions. I thanked him for his admonition, and told him, a word to the
Having placed himself, he ordered my indictment to be read, which was accordingly done, and in about half an hour’s time it was ended. He askt me by my interpreter, if I understood what was libelled against me. I answered, No. He then bade the interpreter inform me of the meaning of each particular paragraph, as they were read a second time with deliberation, and, having heard my impeachment, which was grounded only on my saying, That the king had been imposed upon, I thought fit to deny all, and put my adversary Oia Sennerat at to prove that I had said so; but, by the by, I found, that saying the king of Siam was capable of being imposed on, is rank treason.

The judge chose out of the assembly two procurators for each of us, and there were no small debates for three or four hours, whether or not a stranger, who was ignorant of the laws of Siam, could come under the penalty annexed to the transgression of their laws, when they were broken through ignorance, and not with design, but my antagonist at last carried it in the affirmative, tho’ the judge seemed to incline towards the opinions of my advocates.

Then the judge put Oia Sennerat to prove what I was accused of, and he produced two of his own servants, who stood at some distance when we were discoursing of my affairs; but my advocates challenged the laws of Siam for their insufficiency, for that law admits not of a servant’s testimony, either for or against his master. Then he preferred to bring an undeniable witness against me, who was the only person with us when we discoursed, and that was Collison, who was presently sent for, and being set by my adversary, the judge askt him by the interpreter, if he was present at such a time, when Oia Sennerat at and I were in warm discourse. He answered, he was he then interrogated him, if he had heard me say in my discourse, that the king had been imposed on he affirmed he had, on which I perceived a cloud overspread the judge’s countenance, and many others, who had come to hear the trial, seemed sorrowful.

After a little pause, the judge, by the interpreter, askt me what I had to say to Collison’s evidence. I answered, that I had little knowledge of him, but that he might be an honest man, or otherwise, as his interest led him. All continued mute for a little space, and I broke the silence by desiring the judge to ask Collison in what language I held that discourse in with Oia Sennerat at, which the judge did, and was answered, that he did not well know, but that he believed it was in the Indostan language. I begged the judge to ask him if he understood that language, and he did so. Collison, after some pause, answered, No. Then the judge askt him angrily, and with an air of disdain, how he could come in as an evidence of words spoken in a language that he did not understand, and he simply said, that he thought I had said so, at which the whole crowd gave an Huzza, and clapt their hands, and seemed joyful. The judge reprehended Oia Senrmat for putting him and the court to so much trouble, and complained of me on my safe delivery, and so departed seemingly well satisfied.

I had two British gentlemen that accompanied me all the time of my trial. One was commander of a small ship from Bengal, called Mr. Alexander Dalgleish, and one Mr. John Saunders, who was second supercargo under me; and when the judge came, some executioners followed him with their instruments of death, to put the sentence in execution as soon as the judge pronounces it. Our debates held so long, that it was near eight at night before we got home. Had I been cast in my process, my head had been a sacrifice to my adversary’s resentment, and my ship and cargo to the much injured king, and, to sum up all, my ship’s company had been the king’s slaves. On my return home victorious, I had the congratulations of all my friends, particularly the Chinese merchants, whose lives and estates might have been endangered by the like villanous informations.

My adversaries being shamefully disappointed in that project, had one more to try their skill in, and that was to bring me in for piracy, for about four years before, Mr. Harrison, then Governor of Fort St. George, had sent a ship to Amoy in China, and some China merchants having taken goods and money, to the amount of 20000 tayels, or 6700 pounds sterling, when the term of payment came, they eloped, and the supercargoes could have no redress, which made them give orders to the captain of the ship to make reprisals, which they did on a large jonk belonging to the Barkalong of Siam, which jonk they carried with them to Fort St George, and which fact my adversaries fixed on me, tho’ at that time, I was in Arabia or Persia, which I preferred to prove by some Mahometan merchants that saw me there; but all that I could allege would have been ineffectual, if I had not accidentally found some Chinese who belonged to the jonk when she was seized, and who knew both me and Captain Jones, who was the captor, and so it never came to a trial.

It being high time for me to get from Siam at any rate, I applied myself to my judge for his assistance, and carried a present of four yards of scarlet cloth, and some pieces of Surat goods, to the value of twenty L. in all. He received me very courteously, and promised me his assistance, but would accept of none of my presents. At last on my pressing him to take it, he accepted of the scarlet cloth, but would not touch any of the Surat goods, tho’ they
were very fine in their kind, but recommended me to two officers more, whom I must address to make my request be the easier granted, and he told me, that those Surat goods would serve to make them my friends. I took his advice, and in three days had my clearance, for paying about two hundred L. for my ship’s measurage, (an imposition of Mr. Collet’s) and so I fell down to Bencock, where, according to the Siam custom, I was obliged to put my guns ashore, before I could go up to the city. I lay there four or five days before orders were sent to deliver my guns, which, as soon as I had got on board, and mounted, I told the officer that delivered them, to give my service to Oia Sennerat, and tell him, that if the king’s three jonks arrived on this coast this season, he would hear farther from me by them.

By that time I was clear at Bencock, Captain Dalgleish arrived there also, in order to proceed to Bengal. He had fallen into the trap laid by Collet, and had paid measurage and customs, besides the usual presents to the court, according to the old constitution, but he could not get ready to go so soon out of the river as I, otherwise I designed to have brought some troubles on Sennerat, if not on Collet and Powney’s affairs at Siam, but Captain Dalgleish being still in their power, tied my hands.

Siam Bar is only a large bank of soft mud, and, at spring-tides, not above ten or eleven foot water on it. It is easy getting into it in the South-west monsoons, because, in two or three tides, with the motion the ship receives from the small waves and the assistance of the wind, she slides thro’ the mud. My ship drew thirteen foot, and we had not above nine on the bar when we went into the river, but coming out with the North-east monsoons, the sea being smooth, we are obliged to warp out with anchors and halsers, and, if the ship draws any considerable draught of water, we are sometimes two springs in warping over, but, at twelve foot draught, I got over in four tides.

And now, having given some particular accounts of my observations on and in Siam, I will also give some general remarks, and begin with the fertility of the country, which, on that point, is inferior to few (if any) in the world.

There are but two parcels of mountains to be seen in the places that I passed thro’, and they ly between East and North-east from the City of Odia, about ten leagues distant, and they produce good timber for building, and agala-wood for perfumes. They have also mines of iron, tin, lead, silver and gold, but they are all entailed on the crown, who has the sole benefit of them. They breed vast numbers of wild deer, which are hunted and killed for the sake of their skins, which they yearly send to Japon.

The plains produce all sorts of grain necessary for animal and human sustenance. They plentifully bear as good, if not the best oranges, lemons and limes in the world. Their rivers super abound in fish of several species, very good in their kind. Their villages are numerous, and well inhabited with artificers and peasants; but there are but five walled towns in all the Siam dominions, and Odia is one of them.

They have abundance of wild animals in their woods, such as elephants, rhinoceroses, leopards and tigers, and tame cattle, as bullocks, buffaloes and swine, in abundance about their farms. Temples and priests are more numerous here, in proportion to the laity, than in any country I ever saw out of the dominions of Portugal. Their tallapoys or priests are distinguished from the laity by a cinnamon or orange-coloured cloke which they wear, they again differing among themselves by distinguishing badges, by which they know their degree and dignity. Their heads, beards and eye-brows are kept close shaven. They are forbidden marriage or meddling with money, and if any of the priesthood is convicted of incontinency with women, he is burned for it alive, and, if only suspected and brought to a trial, he is degraded and banished.

They have sermons or lectures four times in a moon, the gates of the temples being set wide open, and the people meet in good order. Their sermons consist in recommending moral duties to the people, and charity towards one another, but particularly to the church, by which acts it subsists; and, after the priests benediction, every one goes to an image, and kisses it, or bows to it, and marches off in good order. They have morning and evening prayers, and sing anthems. They visit the sick, and pray for the dead, and accompany the corps to the funeral pile, and sing obsequies. They go to weddings, and make sacrifices for the prosperity of the bridegroom and bride, but have no hand in joyning them together.

Marriages are there made up by parents or near relations, without the consent of the parties to be married, for that reason they are commonly married very young, but, if they are come to the years of discretion or maturity, then the spark gets some female friend to acquaint his mistris with his passion for her, and if she will permit a visit from him, the bargain is as good as made. The civil magistrate with them officiates the priest’s part with us, and when once they are married, they seldom sue for a divorce, which is very hard to procure, except in case of insufficiency in the man, or barrenness in the woman, for adultery, in either party, is not reckoned infamous; and fornication is either allowed or tolerated.
The children are carefully educated in schools by priests set apart for that service, and it is rare to find a Siamer but who can write. After schooling, they are put to such callings as suit best with their genius and quality: And there is generally a reciprocal harmony between parents and children. The children are obedient, and the parent indulgent. In childhood and youth the parent furnishes the child with what is necessary, and in old age the child supplies all the wants of his parent, as far as he is able. In marriages they make no account of consanguinity, farther than between father and daughter, mother and son, and sister and brother; all other degrees are lawful.

And now it is time to steer my course to the Southward again as far as Cambodia. Coasting along shore, the first place we meet with is Bankasoy, a place not frequented by strangers, tho' it produces much agala and sapan-woods, and elephants teeth; but all are sent to the king, who, for all his gaudy titles, yet stoops to play the merchant. I suppose he makes use of trading in honour of his kinsman mercury, who superintends merchandizing, but was never reckoned a fair dealer, and in that point the king is nearly related to him: but Bankasoy is famous, chiefly for making Balhchang, a sauce made of dried shrimps, cod-pepper, salt and a sea weed or grass, all well mixed, and beaten up to the consistency of thick mustard. Its taste and smell are both ungrateful to the nose and palate; but many hundred tuns are expended in Siam and the adjacent countries.

Bankasoy River lies but four or five leagues to the Eastward of Siam Bar, and there are two islands, called the Dutch Islands, where great ships are obliged to stay in the South-west monsoons, when they cannot get water over the bar that bears off it South-east and by South, about nine leagues distant.

I observed before, that the Company sent the Herbert and another ship from England in anno 1685, and in 1686, as the Herbert lay at those islands, one Captain Udal, who commanded her, died, and the succeeding captain carried his corps ashore, and buried it in a pretty deep grave. Two days after, some of the ship's people going ashore, had the curiosity to go and see the grave. When they came near, to their great wonder, they saw the corps stript of its winding sheet, and set upright against a tree. It was afterwards put again into the coffin, and buried in the same grave, with a quantity of heavy stones on it, and next day they came to the grave, and found it opened a second time, with the corps standing upright against another tree, so they made fast some stones to it, and carried it a pretty way into the sea, and buried it in the water, where it remained undisturbed. This strange resurrection left room for various conjectures, but the most probable seemed to be, that some sorcerers took it up, and put it in that posture, whilst they, by their sorceries or incantations, interrogate it about future events, and received answers thro' human organs. The matter of fact I have heard often affirmed by severals who were there at the time and saw it, which made me enquire, if any people in Siam used to enquire about future events after that manner, and I was told that they did.

The coasts of Liampe and Chiampo are the territories of Siam, but for fifty leagues and more along the seashore, there are no sea-ports, the country being almost a desert. It produces good store of sapan and agala-woods, with gumlack and sticklack, and many drugs that I know but little about.

Cambodia

The first sea-port to be met with is Cupangsoap, a town in the dominions of Cambodia, It affords elephants teeth, sticklack and the gum Cambouge or Cambodia, but there is no free commerce allowed there, without a licence from the court of Cambodia.

The next place is Ponteamass, a place of pretty good trade for many years, having the conveniency of a pretty deep but narrow river, which, in the rainy seasons of the South-west monsoons, has communication with Bansack or Cambodia River, which conveniency made it draw foreign commerce from the city of Cambodia hither; for the city lying near one hundred leagues up the river, and most part of the way a continual stream running downward, made the navigation to the city so long and trouble-som, that few cared to trade to it, for which reasons foreign commerce chose to come to Ponteamass, and it flourished pretty well till the year 1717, that the Siam fleet destroyed it.

When the Siam army and fleet threatened Cambodia, the king knew his inability to withstand the Siamers, so the inhabitants that lived on his borders had orders to remove towards the city of Cambodia, and what they could not bring with them, to destroy it, so that for fifty leagues the country was a mere desert. He then addrest the king of Couchin-china for assistance and protection, which he obtained, on condition, that Cambodia should become tributary to Couchin-china, which was agreed to, and he had an army of fifteen thousand to assist him by land, and three thousand in nimble gallies well manned and equipt, by sea.

The Siam army by land was above double the number of the Cambodians and Couchin-chinese in conjunction, and their fleet above four times their number. The land army finding all the country desolate, as they marched
into the borders of Cambodia, soon began to be in distress for want of provisions, which obliged them to kill their carriage beasts, and their elephants and horses which they could get no sustenance for, and the soldiers being obliged to eat their flesh, it being a diet they had never been used to, an epidemick flux and fever seized the whole army, so that in two months one half was not left, and those were obliged to retreat towards their own country again, with the Cambodian army always at their heels.

Nor had their navy much better success, for they coming to Ponteamass, sent in their small gallies to plunder and burn the town, which they did effectually, and, of elephants teeth only, they burnt above two hundred tuns. The ships and jonks of burden lying in the road, above four miles from the town, the Couchin-chinese taking hold of that opportunity, attackt the large vessels, and burned some, and forced others ashore, whilst their gallies were in a narrow river, and could not come to their assistance till high-water that they could get out. The Couchin-chinese having done what they came for, retired, not caring to engage such a superior number, and the Siamers fearing famine in their fleet, steered their course for Siam with disgrace. In anno 1720, I saw several of the wracks, and the ruins of the town of Ponteamass.

The City of Cambodia stands on the side of the great river, about fifty or sixty leagues from Ponteamass by land, or by water in the South-west monsoons. The country produces gold of twenty one carats fine, raw silk at 120 dollars per pecul, elephants teeth at fifty to fifty-five dollars for the largest. The small are of different prices. They have also much sapan-wood, sandal-wood, agala-wood, sticklack, and many sorts of physical drugs, and lack for Japaning. They are very desirous of having a trade with the English; but they will not suffer the Dutch to settle factories in their country. Provisions of flesh and fish are plentiful and cheap, and are the only things that may be bought without a permit from the king. I have bought a bullock, that weighed between four and five hundred weight, for a Spanish dollar; and rice is bought at eight pence per pecul, which is about 140 lb. but poultry are scarce, because the country being for the most part woody, when the chickens grow big, they go to the woods, and shift for themselves. Tigers and wild elephants are numerous in the woods, and there are also wild cattle and buffaloes, and plenty of deer, all which animals every body is free to catch or kill.

There are about two hundred Topasses, or Indian Portugueze settled and married in Cambodia, and some of them have pretty good posts in the government, and live great after the fashion of that country; but they have no priests, nor will any venture to go among them, for in anno 1710, a poor Capuchin went there to officiate, and finding one of the toppingest of his congregation to have two wives, ordered him, by virtue of his sacerdotal power, to put one of them away, but his parishioner would not obey in that point, which made the priest use the weapon of excommunication against him, which the other took in such dudgeon, that he knockt his spiritual guide’s brains out for his unseasonable severity, since that time they wrote to Siam and Macao in China for some more ghostly fathers, but not one will go, tho’ perhaps they might have the honour of dying martyrs.

They all of them have small pensions from the king, but too narrow to maintain them, so they go to the woods with firearms, and kill wild elephants for their teeth, which they sell to foreigners; and their way of killing them, is very singular, for they form a piece of iron like a slug, and the foremost end is made sharp. In the woods grow certain trees with a thick bark of a violent poisonous quality. They drive the sharp end of the slug into the bark, and let it stay a short time in it, then put the slug into their gun charged with powder, and coming near the beast, fire the slug into its body. The elephant being thus wounded, flees from the man, but the man keeps sight of it for a small space of time, and then it drops down dead.

And with the same poisoned slugs they kill cattle and buffaloes, for their tongues. This subtil poison has also another strange quality, that if men become hungry or thirsty, (as they often do in the woods) they squeeze a few drops of it on a leaf of a tree, and they licking the leaf, it gives immediate refreshment; but if the skin be broken, and the juice touch the part, it proves mortal without remedy.

When I arrived at Ponteamass, an officer came on board, who could speak a little Portugueze. He brought a present of refreshments along with him, and advised me to send to the king, to give him an account of my arrival, and acquaint him that I designed to trade with his subjects by his permission, which I did, and in twelve days, received an answer that I might, but desired me to send some person up with musters of my goods, that he and his merchants might see them, and sent two Portugueze for interpreters, one to stay with me on board of my ship, while I staid, and the other to accompany the person I designed to send to him with the musters. On their arrival I dispatcht my second supercargo, with an equipage of twenty-five men, well armed with fuzees and bayonets, with two small bales of musters, and presents for the king, with instructions to let me hear from him once a week by an express, if no other opportunity offered.

After he arrived at the city, he had a large house allowed him for the accommodation of him and his retinue, and had store of provisions sent him, and many folks of distinction visited him, but ten days past before he
could see his majesty, who at last received him in great state, sitting on a throne like a pulpit, with his face vailed below his eyes, and after many gracious speeches, some whereof were pertinent to my purpose, but many not, he gave me liberty and encouragement to trade.

I had staid above three weeks in expectation to hear from my second supercargo, but could get no account from him. I beginning to be uneasie, got an express to carry letters to him, and ordered him to send it back with as much speed as was possible, but had the mortification to find he had been stopp'd at the city. I was extremely uneasie for want of advice what was become of my people, and the approaching of the South-west monsoons, which would have made that coast a lee-shore, and would have obliged me to take sanctuary in one of their harbours for five or six months, and was not certain whether I was in a friend's or an enemy's country. In this labyrinth I continued a week, and at last resolved to depart by a certain day, and leave my people to come after me to Malacca, if they were alive and at liberty. The goods I had sent up with them, would have been sufficient to have hired a vessel to carry them thither. I told my resolution to my interpreter, and that I should be obliged to carry him and some more of the king's Subjects along with me as hostages for the civil treatment of my people at Cambodia. He seemed surprized at my resolution, and got a person to go to the city in all haste to give an account of my impatience and design, who returned in fourteen days, about two days before my term was expired, that I had set for my departure. There accompanied him three Portugueze, who brought me letters from my second supercargo, that he had taken leave of the king, and was coming to me with all haste, and in three days after the Portugueze came, he arrived with all his retinue, with a letter of compliment to me in the Portugueze language, and one directed to the Governor of Bombay, to invite the English to settle in his country, and to build factories or forts in any part of his dominions to protect trade.

The reason why he kept us so long in suspense, was, that he would enter into no correspondence with us without the knowledge and consent of his guardian the king of Couchin-china, who at last consented to allow us commerce both in Cambodia, and in his own proper dominions, but that the Siamers had destroyed the country where they had been, and they had nothing ready for barter with my cargo then, but in a year or two they would be provided.

When the king bestows his favour on any person whom he has a mind to honour, which he never does without a considerable present, he presents the person with two swords to be carried always before him when he goes abroad in publick, one is the sword of state, and the other of justice. All people that meet him when those swords are carried before him, must give him place, and salute him by a set form of words, but if he meets with another court minion, then they compare the dates of their patents, and segniority takes place, and must be first saluted. Wherever those mandareens go in the country, they hold courts of justice, both civil and criminal, and they have the power of laying on fines, but they are paid into the king's treasury; but in capital crimes, his sentence is law, and speedy execution follows sentence.

The Cambodians are of a light brown complexion, and very well shaped, their hair long, and beards thin. Their women are very handsome, but not very modest. The men wear a vesture like our night-gowns, but nothing on their heads or feet. The women wear a petticoat reaching below the ancle, and on their bodies a frock made close and meet for their bodies and arms, and both sexes dress their hair. I saw none of their priests, but understood from my interpreter, that they worship the same gods that are adored in Siam. They worship the great god under the name of Tipedah, and Praw Prumb, and Prow Pout, are his Sons. The church subsists by freewill-offerings, and their Priests are not much respected, being generally chosen from among the lower sort of the laity.

Laos

The kingdom of Laos borders on Siam, Cambodia, Couchin-china, and Tonquin. It produces gold, raw silk, and elephants teeth are so plentiful, that they stake their fields and gardens about with them, to keep out wild hogs and cattle from destroying their fruit and corn. They are all pagans in religion.

The natives of Laos are whiter in complexion than their circumjacent neighbours. I saw some of them at Siam, of both sexes. Their women were little inferior to Portugueze or Spanish ladies.

Coastal Islands

There are several islands that ly off the coast of Cambodia, but none are inhabited, because the Saleeters, or pirates that infest that coast, rob them of what they get by pains and industry, tho' there is one about three leagues West of
Ponteamass, called quadrone, that has good qualifications for a settlement. It is about three leagues long, and one broad wood and fresh water are plentiful, the ground of a moderate height, the soil black and fat, except along the East Side which faces Ponteamass, and that has several fine sandy bays, and they are good safe harbours in the rainy and windy seasons.

About thirty leagues East-south-east from Ponteamass, is the west entrance of Cambodia River, generally called Bocca de Carangera. The shallowest place in the chanel in going in, is four fathoms, and within it deepens to twenty in some places. The North entrance is broader, but much shallower, and lies about ten leagues distant from the west chanel, but is little frequented. Between Ponteamass and the river, are several small uninhabited islands. Pullo-panjang is the largest, and consists of a cluster of eight islands, which form a pretty good harbour. Pullo-ubi is the East most, and affords good masts for shipping.

Pullo-condore is the largest and highest, composed of four or five islands. It lies about fifteen leagues South of the West chanel of Cambodia River. Pullo-condore had once the honour of an English colony settled on it, by Mr. Allan Ketchpole, in anno 1702, when the Factory of Chusan, on the Coast of China, was broke up, he being then director for affairs of the English East-india Company in those parts.

He made a bad choice of a place for a colony, that island producing nothing but wood, water, and fish for catching. He got some Maccassers to serve for soldiers, and help to build a fortification, and made a firm contract with them to discharge them at the end of three years if they were minded to quit his Service, but did not perform what was contracted, which was the cause of his own ruin, and the loss of the colony, for those Eastern desperadoes are very faithful where contracts and covenants are duly observed when made with them, but in defailance, they are revengeful and cruel. Mr. Ketchpole having detained the Maccassers beyond their time of agreement, still entrusted them with the guard of his own person and the garison, and they taking the opportunity of the night, when all the English were in their beds, who lodged in the fort, they inhumanely murdered them all. There was some noise made by those who were awake, which a few who lodged without the fort, hearing, took the alarm, and ran to the sea Side, where kind providence directed them to a boat ready fitted with oars and Sails, which they embarked in, and put off from the shore, and were not a stone throw off, till the bloody villains on the shore were in quest of them. So those in the boat, with much fatigue, hunger, and thirst in sailing, and rowing above one hundred leagues, got to some place of the king of Johore’s dominions, where they were treated with humanity. The reverend and ingenious Doctor Pound, was one of those that escaped, and Mr. Solomon Lloyd (an old acquaintance of mine) was another.

There were two harbours, or anchoring places, at Pullo-condore, but neither of them good. One at the North-east end, they were forced to use in the South-west monsoons, the other on the West-side for the North-east winds, the bottom of which is rocky, and therefore dangerous for losing anchors and cables, yet that was the place chosen to build their fort on, but since a factory was thought necessary to be settled on that coast, I wonder why they chose these islands, rather than Quadrole which I mentioned before.

The city of Cambodia is reckoned to lie one hundred leagues up from the bar, and the river filled with low islands and sand banks. The country of Laos is about forty leagues farther up, but what navigation is used above the city of Cambodia, is done by small rowing vessels, and the river being one of the longest in the world, employs great numbers of those rowing boats.
The following three notes relating to the origin of the Burmese word “Talaing” were published shortly before World War I. It is hoped that they may be of some use to ongoing debates on “Mon” history.

M.W.C.

Origin of the Word “Talaing” (1912)

M.O.

Phayre, in his History of Burma, page 28, says that the name “Talaing” is obviously connected with the word Teling-gana, and accepts the theory that the Mun (or Mon) were originally settlers from southern India. There is a great deal to be said in favour of this view, but many have been inclined to place faith in the story that the epithet “Talaing” (said to mean “downtrodden”) was applied to the Peguans by Alompra after his conquest in 1757. That the latter suggestion is utterly incorrect may easily be proved; we have only to turn to several well-known Burmese works of much earlier date to see that the term as designating the people of the delta was known and used long before Alompra.

The Yakhaing Minthami Egyin, written about 820 B.E. (1458), the Thakin Twe Egyin, composed in honour of a princess born in 830 (1468), and the Mindaya Shwehti Nadaw-thwin, an ode submitted to Tabin Shwehti, who reigned from 1530 to 1550,—all give the name “Talaing,” rhyming with other words having the same vowel-ending.

Among other works there are also Maung Kala’s histories, the Yazawingyi, the Yazawin-lat, and the Yazawin-gyok, all written about 30 years before Alompra appeared, and in all of which the same name is found. The Alaung-mindaya-gyi Ayedawbon, a detailed account of the great King’s exploits, does not mention the alleged re-naming of the Mons.

Note on the Word “Talaing” (1912)

Charles Duroiselle

The etymology on the word “Talaing” has given rise to much controversy. The derivation offered by Forchhammer, followed later on by J. Gray, is absolutely inadmissible, not only because it is fundamentally wrong, not to say absurd, but principally because it makes the word “Talaing” originate with Alompra in the 18th century. Now, as M.O. rightly points out, the name was known to the Burmese before Alompra, and this alone would be sufficient to refute Forchhammer’s view; but this word was also known to the Chinese early in the 17th century. Kou Tsou-Yu, in his Tou che fang yu ki yao, speaks of the great Kou-la called also Pai-kou, that is Pegu, to the north of which are the people of Tong-wou (Taungu) and to the south-east the people known as Tö-leng; these latter, we are told, are a division of the Kou-las (that is Peguans=Talaings) and in 1610 A.D. they sided with the Siamese in an attack on the Burmese. It remains to see whether Tö-leng was the indigenous tribal name, pronounced by the Bur-

80 Original source: Journal of the Burma Research Society. M.W.C.
82 Notes on the Early History and Geography of British Burma, Part ii, p. 11-12, Government Press, Rangoon, 1884.
84 On Kou-la cf. also Parker’s Burma, its Relations with China, 65f. He writes: Kulah and Kulat.
mese Talaing, or whether it was a Chinese pronunciation of “Talaing” itself; I incline to the latter assumption, and in this case the word Talaing was known to the Burmese at least before the beginning of the 17th century. The derivation of Phayre,⁸⁵ which makes it come from Telinga=Kalinga, is no doubt the right one.

A Further Note on the Word Talaing (1913)⁸⁶

Maung Mya

At page 246, Vol. II, Part II, of the Journal of this Society [Journal of the Burma Research Society], Mr. Charles Duroiselle in his note on the word Talaing, referring to an inscription dated B. E. 469 = A. D. 1107, says that that word has been in use long before it was thought to be, and thinks that it was probably in use among the Burmese in the time of King Anawrata in the 11th century A.D. In support of the above I am glad to be able to give below another inscription,⁸⁷ dated B. E. 444=A. D. 1082, wherein the same word “Talaing” occurs, thus taking us back a few decades further and bringing us within a few years from the end of the reign of King Anawrata (A.D, 1044-1077).⁸⁸

Translation

(1) (The year) in which the King Saw Lu built (this pagoda) is Sakkaraj 444,⁸⁹ and the land which the King dedicated to the pagoda

(2) is comprised of 70 (plots of) land at Sagyet, 30, at Chet, within the district of ....................

(3) totalling 100, and of one large plot, and one small plot, of paddy land in Tanlaing-in

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⁸⁵ History of Pegu in J. R. A. Society of Bengal Vol. XLII, Part I.

⁸⁶ Original source: Journal of the Burma Research Society. M.W.C.

⁸⁷ The inscription was found among those collected by King Bodawpaya, and placed originally near the Sin-gyo Shwe-ku Pagoda, but now removed to the Patodawgyi Pagoda, Amarapura. The whole collection has now been transcribed into modern Burmese characters and printed. It is expected that the volume will issue from the Press in a few month’s time.

⁸⁸ This date was taken from the “Jāt-bōn Yazawin” which is considered to be more trustworthy than the Hmann-nan (see para 44 at page 16 of Mr. Taw Sein Ko’s report [i]n the Archaeological Survey of Burma for the year ending 31st March, 1911.

⁸⁹ This date falls outside of that assigned by the Hmann-nan to the reign of King Saw Lu. According to it King Saw Lu reigned from B. E. 421-426 (A. D. 1059-1064). But if we accept the date given in the “Jāt-bōn-Yazawin”, B. E. 439-446 (A. D. 1077-1084), the date in the inscription fits in very well, and the construction of the pagoda took place two years before the death of King Saw Lu.
(4) of Mayingwè paddy land at Anauk-in-ngè, of one pè at Nyaung-she-gwè, at Tanlaing-in

(5) of 2 pèś of land that has to be watered, and of one and a half pèś of Mayin at Min-dè-in, (The land) dedicated by Sithu Min Hla (to this pagoda) is, below Lôn Wun Kan (lake) of Mingyi Yon,

(6) 10 (plots of) paddy land. The land dedicated by Sithu Min Hla to the great monastery is 55 (plots of land) for cultivating betel, totalling

(7) 510 Above..............is Khādibauk, and below are Kyauksauk and Myinmu. (The land) dedicated by (the monk) Thingahti is

(8) below and above Tahnaung Kan (lake), 10, On the South..............

The word Talaing, occurs in lines 3 and 4 and is spelt Tanlaing, in the same way as in Mr. C. Duroiselle’s. inscription. It is used here as an appellation or name of a certain lake, perhaps in commemoration of a certain event connected with the Talaings. This fact. would probably take us right into the reign of King Anawrata, if perhaps not earlier, for the event after which a certain place is called will occur some years before the name becomes popular.

The inscription records the dedication of land to a pagoda and a monastery by Kings Saw Lu and Sithu Minhla\(^{90}\) and a Monk; therefore it is not contemporaneous with King Saw Lu. But there is no reason to doubt that the name Tanlaing In has been kept intact without any attempt to obliterate the original that existed in the time of King Saw Lu.

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\(^{90}\) There were two Kings with their names ending in Sithu: Alaungsithu, B. E. 473-529 (A. D, 1111-1167) and Narapatisithu, B. E. 535-572 (A. D. 1173-1210). It is not certain to which of them the name in the inscription refers, most probably Alaungsithu is meant.

The inscription was put up probably in the time of Alaungsithu, i.e., about 50 years after the reign of Saw Lu. This is borne out by the archaic character of some of the words; for example, さ (line 1) for さ (a pagoda), さ (line 2) for さ (District), さ (lines 3 and 4) for さ (Talaing), さ (lines 4 and 5) for さ (pè=about 2 acres).
On Some North Arracan Celts (1871)

Mr. St. John

Mr. St. John gives outlines of several celts in his collection. One large form is from Upper Burma and, in having a short abrupt shoulder, resembles the Burmese celts described and figured by Mr. Thoobald in the Proceedings of the Society for 1869, p. 181 &c., pls. iii and iv. Two other celts are from the hills in North Arracan and are in form and size very similar to those figured in the Proceedings for 1870, pls. iii and iv. One of them has the lower edge sharpened from both sides, the other only from one. A fourth outline represents a long iron hatchet, of the shape of a broad chisel; it is still in use by the Arakanese in being simply put through a hole at the end of a stick of a male bamboo.

Royal Edict of King Mindon, 1867

Colonel Albert Fytche, Chief Commissioner of British Burma, has represented to me that commerce is likely to be immensely increased and improved and the prosperity of both countries secured by opening out the old overland route between Bhamo and the Chinese frontier. He further informs me that it is his intention to depatch an expeditionary party, whose duty it will be, under instructions received from the Government of India, to proceed overland from Bhamo as far as the Chinese cities of Yoonchan and Talifoo in Yunan. My co-operation and assistance are solicited in a work which is intended to increase trade and add to the material prosperity of both countries. I therefore agree to assist this party as far as lays in my power, and will cause it to be well received at each of the places at which it may arrive en route. All officials, Saubwas, Magistrates, and Tseekays within my territories, are hereby ordered not to impede in any way, but to further, the progress of the English party by every means in their power.

Given at our Royal Palace at Mandalay, the first day of the increasing moon Ta-shoung-hmon 1229, Burman Era.
My dear Capt. Crisp,

Many thanks for your interesting letter of the 26th ultimo delivered to me by your nephew. I am sorry to say he could not procure a cargo of tobacco and betel nut. The former has been a good deal exported to Europe this year and the latter now in the market is not of good quality, so he was obliged to go on to Calcutta.

I am looking forward anxiously to see what will be the upshot of this expedition to Rangoon. As you remark it will be quite impossible to give up the Pegu country to the Burmese again. I should much like to know if you would undertake to hold the country with the people themselves, the British Government only supplying arms and ammunition to arm the people.

I was glad to see mention made of your son’s gallant conduct at the storming of the Pagoda. I hope his exertions will be well rewarded. I know not in what way I am to get across the mountains to you, but I shall be sorry to be shut out of all participation in the struggle if further operations are determined on.

I shall be doubly anxious to hear what the Government is replying to the petition of the people of Rangoon to have you as their Civil Magistrate. You have great claims from your long residence among them and your intimate knowledge of their claims, interests and wants.

I shall yet hope to meet you there and so until then between lines, my dear Capt. Crisp,

Very truly yours,

A. P. Phayre

91 Source: Journal of the Burma Research Society.
Two Missionary Letters from Arakan (1839)

Circa 4 March 1835

Letter of Mr. Comstock
Originally published in Baptist Missionary Magazine 16.2 (1836)

Original editorial comments: Mr. and Mrs. Comstock arrived at Kyouk Phyoo, in this province [Arracan], the 4th of March last [1835]. In a letter to the Corresponding Secretary, Mr. Comstock gives the following description of the Province.

As this province is a new field of labor, perhaps a hort account of it will not be uninteresting. It is situated on the eastern shore of the Bay of Bengal, and extends from 15° 54' to 20° 51' North lat. Its width is very variable.

At the northern part. of the province, it is about 90 miles wide, while the width at the extreme southern point is but 2 or 3 miles. Probably the average width is something less than fifty miles. It is bounded on the north by the province of Chittagong, on the east by the Burman empire, and on the south and west by the Bay of Bengal. An extensive range of mountains is the boundary between Arracan and Burmah, over which are several passes—one to Ava, one to Prome, another to Bassein, &c. Only the first, is very much travelled. By this we are only six or eight days' journey from Ava. A good deal of this province is mountainous, and much of the rest is jungle or uncultivated land. The people live in small villages, which are scattered over the whole province.

The population according to the government census, I do not exactly know, but it must be something less than 250,000. It is very difficult, however, to ascertain the population, as the people will deceive all they can, to avoid taxes, which were very oppressive under the Burman government, and are not very light now. A great deal of itinerant labor must be performed here, as the inhabitants are so scattered; and much must be done by tracts. Two or three laborers beside br. Simons and myself, I think should enter this field as soon as may be. The province is subdivided into four subordinate jurisdictions, called districts. The northern one, Akyab, is the largest. Here is br. Fink, with his native church, and here I believe br. Simons intends to settle. The Ramree district is the next in size. It consists of Ramree Island, about forty miles long, and on an average about fifteen wide, extending from 18° 51' to 19° 24' N. L., of Cheduba Island, lying a short distance to the S. W. of Ramree, which is 18 miles long, and 14 wide, and of several smaller islands. There are in the district 374 villages, and about 70,000 inhabitants. This is the field of labor I occupy. Kyouk Phyoo is on the northern point of Ramree Island, and, though not as central or as large as some other places, is on some accounts a very desirable station. It is very healthy, is visited by a good many natives from other places, who bring articles to sell to the English, troops, &c, and the harbor is an anchoring ground to the numerous native boats belonging to Rangoon, Bassein, &c, on their way to and from Calcutta. I do not, however, feel decided in reference to a permanent location. The Sandoway, and Aeng districts are important fields of labor; but very little can be done for them, till more missionaries are sent to Arracan.

4 March 1839

Extract From a Letter of Mr. Comstock

Original editorial comments: It will be seen by the following letter that Mr. Comstock and family, who were compelled to leave Kyouk Phyoo, near the close of 1837, on account of ill health, have been enabled to recommence their labors in Arracan, at a more salubrious station, and in circumstances favorable to the permanent prosecution of the mission. The letter is dated at Ramree, March 4, 1839.

I left Maulmain with my family and br. And sister Stilson, on the 1st last month, in the ship Louvre, of Boston, and reached Kyouk Phyoo on the 15th. I brought with me from M. two native assistants, beside an old Mug Christian baptized by br. Judson two or three years since. Br. S. has also two assistants with him After remaining ten days at Kyouk Phyoo, we (br. S. and myself) left for this place, where it is the intention of both of us to locate. The Board, I think, are already aware of the size and importance of Ramree, being itself a town (including suburbs) of nearly
10,000 inhabitants, and the centre of a large population. We think there is ample scope here for both of us; and the advantages of having two missionaries at one station, every where important, are in such a place as Arracan peculiarly so.

I am not yet definitely informed as to the course which the English Baptist Society will take in reference to Akyab station, but have heard indirectly that Mr. Fink is to spend a portion of each year in A., and native assistants are stationed there all the while. Were this not the case, I am not prepared to believe it our duty to locate at present at A. It is a large, fine town, and is improving rapidly; but from the time that Europeans first inhabited the place till the present, it has had the reputation of being very sickly. It is believed to be improving in salubrity, and that it will eventually be a healthy place. Should this anticipation be realized, and the field opened to us, it certainly will be very desirable to occupy it. At present, the districts of Ramree and Sandoway, if suitably occupied, will afford room for all the missionaries we are likely to have in the province for four or five years to come.

We have come here with strong desires to be made instrumental in the salvation of souls, and I can but hope that God will graciously grant us his blessing, and convert many of these heathen through our instrumentality. We beg an interest in the earliest and frequent prayers of the Board, and all our Christian friends at home.