

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS, COMPARISON AND CONTRAST ON LETWE NAWRAHTA'S YODAYAR NAING MAWGUN

In this chapter, analysis on the Mawgun will be made and the sources from Myanmar and Siamese chronicles shall be compared and contrasted whenever necessary. In the analysis, I shall touch upon the physical aspects of the war such as background of the war, root causes, routes, strategies, battles, Ayutthaya defence and the situation after the conquest. Moreover, I will be discussing the economic conditions of Myanmar in brief and economic explanation for the Myanmar-Siam warfare. For psychological aspects of the war, the two important concepts adopted by Myanmar Kings will also be given; Mahasammata theory and the concept of Cakravartin. Since the founding of Bagan, Mahasammata theory had been used by Myanmar kings to strengthen the legitimacy for their kingship. The concept of Cakravartin which is vital in Myanmar-Siam war activities may also provide the answers to why Myanmar kings invaded Siam from time to time. Finally, I will explain about battles after 1767 to have a complete picture of the 18th and 19th century Myanmar-Thai relations.

5.1 Background

King Alaungpaya established the Konboun dynasty and his descendants ruled the country up to the end of Myanmar monarchical system. We can divide this era into two periods; early Konboun period from King Alaungpaya to King Bodaw and the late Konboun period from King Bagyidaw to King Thibaw. The former period is called “Age of Triumph” because during this period, Myanmar power reached its zenith and especially in Hsinphyshin’s reign, it became the terror of the neighbouring countries.

Soon after the ascension of Hsinphyushin in 1763, the king moved his capital from Sagaing to Innwa which took only 106 days. Being a new king, his power was tested by both Chiang Mai and Lan Xang. Another problem he had to deal with was the rebellion in Tavoy which was supported by Ayutthaya. In addition, he should launch an

invasion of Manipur which had given trouble to the king. The biggest challenge posed to him was a series of Chinese invasions from 1765 to 1770.

On the other hand, Ayutthaya had been plagued by royal succession intrigues before the time of King Borommakot. In the struggle between the two sons of King Somdet Phra Phumintharacha and the king's brother Maha Uparat Chaofa Phon (who later became King Borommakot), majority of the government servants from the palace who sided with the princes, were removed and executed when Maha Uparat emerged victorious and became king. Government institutional structure was weakened as new and inexperienced mandarins were appointed in place of those old guards.

Another succession problem arose when King Borommakot removed Maha Uparat Chaofa Tham Thibet and gave the throne to the third son, Chaofa Uthumphon instead of his disfavored son Chaofa Ekathat. When the king died, Chaofa Uthumphon ceded the throne to Ekathat.

Apart from these dynastic crises, three major problems can be attributed to the vulnerability of Ayutthaya. The first problem was the restriction of the dangerous appointments of senior princes to the provincial towns. The king placed them in special palaces in Ayutthaya in order to monitor them. Though this move boosted the centralization of the royal power, it later caused a difficulty for the king to conscript royal troops and lack of assistance from the provinces when needed.

The growing size of government departments caused another problem. These departments were monopolized by the ministerial families for many years and factionalism became the order of the day in the Ayutthaya court. The third problem was the king's control over manpower. Under the Corvee system in Ayutthaya time, phrai som (private retainers) had to serve their lords but they had no obligation to the throne. On the other hand, Phrai Luang (royal servicemen) had to work six months a year for the crown. The workload of phrai luang was much heavier than that of phrai som. As a result, many phrai luang fled from the city to avoid the onerous duties imposed on them. Because of the heavy loss of phrai luang, the power of the king was weakened.

According to Victor Lieberman, these problems engendered fresh instabilities in Ayutthaya.¹

If we look at the contemporaneous events of the world during this period, by 1761 the British East India Company had taken a firm root in India and controlled Bengal. After seven years wars between England and France, a peace treaty of 1763 was signed to acknowledge English supremacy over America, Canada and India. In 1765, James Watt improved the steam engine invented by the Englishman Thomas Newcomen, a very important date in the history of Industrialism. In 1766, the British stamp act was repealed due to stiff resistance by colonials in America. In the year 1767, the British government disbanded American import duty on tea. The most prominent rulers of the time were King George III of England, Catherine the Great of Russia, Prussia's Frederick the Great and Louis XVI of France.

5.2 Casus belli

As stated in the previous chapters, the causes for this war can be one or all of the following reasons; the strong personality of King Hsinphyushin and the weakness on the part of the Ayutthaya state, rebellions and upheavals in Chiang Mai and Tavoy, the influence of the then prevailing concepts of Mandala and Cakravartin and other subsidiary reasons.

The immediate cause for this war was the revolt against Innwa hatched in Chiang Mai in early 1764 and in Tavoy since King Naungdawgyi's reign. Also, in Lan Xang, the Vietnamese backed regime of Vientiane, Old Lan Xang kingdom with its capital Luang Prabang and the Siamese backed city of Champassak existed. The king of Vientiane had already offered to become a vassal of Innwa but the king of Luang Prabang who refused to acknowledge suzerainty of King Hsinphyushin would be crushed in March 1765. With regard to the Ayutthaya question, it was mentioned in the Mawgun that King Alaungpaya, before his death, enjoined his sons to conquer Ayutthaya but this could not

¹ Victor Lieberman, *Strang Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c 1800-1830*, Vol 1, (Cambridge University, 2003), Page 282.

be traced in Myanmar chronicles. We can only guess that King Hsinphyushin, when he was a prince, took command of his father's armies to invest Ayutthaya in 1760. The Myanmar army had to curb their pride and return at that time. As a warrior king, he might have had a strong desire to conquer Ayutthaya during his reign.

There's a discrepancy in sources regarding the intention of the king to attack Ayutthaya. G.E Harvey wrote that Hsinphyushin's claim rest on Bayintnaung's conquest. According to Father Sangermano, the reason Hsinphyushin dispatched his army against Ayutthaya was because of the Siamese king's refusal to pay the tribute promised to his father, Alaungpaya. Prince Damrong took the assumption in his book *Our Wars with the Burmese* that initially, the Myanmar army did not intend to invest Ayutthaya but to loot and plunder the Siamese territories. Only when they found out the weakness on the part of Siamese, did they invest Ayutthaya. This is because Myanmar armies spent quite some time in Siam before the real offensive began. But the king's order was clearly stated in the famous Myanmar chronicle "Konboun Set Mahayazawindawgyi," that the Myanmar armies while utilizing the strength of Chiang Mai and Lan Xang should invest Ayutthaya from the north and the south in a classic pincer movement.

If we look back at the dates of the marches of the two armies, Zimme column to Chaing Mai was in February 1764 and Dawei column to Tavoy in November 1764. The first Chinese invasion of Keng Tung took place in December 1765. The two armies were not called back in defence of the country. Similarly, despite the second Chinese invasion which occurred in January 1767, these two armies had to continue their siege on Ayutthaya. (The second fall of Ayutthaya was in April 1767). These Chinese invasions were comparable to those which had destroyed Bagan in the thirteenth century AD. Most of the time in Myanmar-Chinese warfare, China was the aggressor and Myanmar was the defender. The word "Tayoke" (Chinese) in Myanmar means "intruder".² It simply indicated how firm the resolution of the king was to conquer Ayutthaya from the very beginning.

² U Po Latt, *Treaties on the Explanations of Burmese Language*, vol. 1, Pyin-nyar Nanda Offset, Yangon. 1962. Page 267.

5.3 Routes

In former times, Myanmar kings except King Alaungpaya's armies had the tradition of encroaching Siamese territories via Me Lamaw and Chiang Mai or by way of the outpost of Three Padogas pass. This time, Myanmar armies beat the old tracks, the Zimme column marched along the Chiang Mai route from the north and the Dawei column took the route by way of Tavoy from the south.

Zimme column marched from Innwa on approximately nine stations up to Thanlwin Jetty and crossed nine Htar* regions. When they arrived at Keng Tung through Mo Nai, one column marched along Maing Pu - Maing Tha route and the main army took the Maing Thwin-Kyaing Ye (Chiang Rai) route, to attack enemies at the Lwai Lon mountain ridges and Lamphun town respectively.

After suppressing the rebellion in Chiang Mai, the Zimme column stayed at the town of Nan during the rainy season. The army marched from Nan to Maing Lon Kha Ping (Luang Prabang) on 31 October, 1764 by both land and water routes. After subduing Lan Xang regions, the army left from Maing Lon Kha Ping on 25 March 1765 and arrived at Lampang town on 28 April 1765.

Upon receiving the royal order, they marched from Lampang town to Ayutthaya by land and water routes on 22-8-1765. They marched along the stations towards the towns of Tak, Yarhai, Kampaeng Phet, Sawankhalok, Sukhothai, Rathama, Phitsanulok, and Phichit. After taking these towns, the Zimme column established camp at Pa Thoke (Pa Sak) village a distance of over 400 tars from the north eastern side of Ayutthaya.

Twenty nine armies of the Dawei column (Martaban route) was sent to Tavoy on 30-11-1764. They stayed at Tavoy for the rainy season and marched from Tavoy to Ayutthaya on 22-10-1765. This column, after storming the towns on the route to Ayutthaya, was stationed at Kani (Kaja) village, a distance of five stations on the west of Ayutthaya. When Zimme column arrived at Pa Thoke village, the Dawei column moved

* Myanmar military outposts during monarchical periods.

from Kani village and pitched camp at the back of the pagoda built by King Bayintnaung, a distance of one thousand tars from the north western side of Ayutthaya.

In the Mawgun, Letwe Nawrahta described the route of the Zimme column more clearly than the route taken by Dawei column. For this, we can rely on Kongboun Set Mahayazawindawgyi in which it was mentioned that the Dawei column made submission of the towns of Phetburi, Rachaburi, Kanpuri, Nothernburi, Salin, and Sonphyon before reaching Ayutthaya.

These sources are reliable for Konbounset Maha Yazawintawgyi is made up of the accounts dealing with the Alaungpaya dynasty from the Glass Palace Chronicle and the 2nd Mahayazawindawgyi and the events of the last two kings of Konboun dynasty; King Mindon and King Thibaw.

When we look at the routes taken by Myanmar kings to invest Ayutthaya, King Tabinshwehti used the southern route from 3 pagoda pass. King Bayintnaung marched through Melmaw, the northern route while King Alaungpaya marched along Tavoy, Mergui and Tenasserim routes. Hsinphyushin's army took the routes of Melmaw from the north and Mottama (Martaban) and Tavoy from the south.

5.4 Strategies

David Wyatt describes the strategies of Myanmar and Siamese kings of this period thus:

" The Burmese campaigns against Siam in the 1760's and 1770's were based in part upon Burma political and military presence virtually encircling Ayutthaya on all sides, including a large section of the Malay Peninsula, Lan Na and the Shan states, and Lan Sang in Laos. To break this encirclement, Taksin had to work to expel the Burmans and

*their allies from these regions, and narrow the zone in which subsequent campaigns would be fought."*³

The Zimme column under the command of Naymyo Thiha Pati started its campaign to the north of Siam in the early 1764 and within months, all the fifty seven provinces of old kingdom of Lanna (a million ricefields) fell under him. Furthermore, after the battle of Lan Xang (a million elephants), he had complete control of the upper part of Siam and was able to tap the resources from the north.

The Dawei column under the command of Maha Nawrahta marched from Innwa in November 1764 and after storming towns on the route of the march reached Ayutthaya in January 1766. Counting from the dates of the start of their campaign, Zimme column spent approximately 2 years and Dawei column 1 year before the siege of Ayutthaya began. This is possible because in most of the time in Myanmar-Siam warfare, both sides avoided the rainy season from June to September as it was difficult for the armies to march and invest the enemies as well as the likelihood of the outbreak of endemic diseases such as malaria and cholera were present. If possible, they also shunned the hottest months of March, April and May as well. Thus, the best time for fighting was from October to February, so to speak. One of the reasons why King Alaungpaya failed in his campaign was his late march to Ayutthaya. He arrived at Ayutthaya on April 17, 1760.

As stated before, Myanmar engaged in expansionist war in Siam and at the same time, a defensive war on the home front. The history would be likely to repeat itself when one of the two columns of Chinese army reached near Innwa during the third Chinese invasion in December 1767. The court mandarins urged the king to develop a plan B, a plan to escape but Hsinphyushin disregarded the advice and declared his determination to fight down to the last man. Myanmar could turn the tide only when one Myanmar column cut out the supply line of the invading Chinese army. The strategy of the Myanmar king

³ David K. Wyatt, "The 'Subtle Revolution' of King Rama I of Siam, " ed. David K Wyatt and Alexander Woodside, **Moral order and the Question of Change: Essays on Southeast Asian Thought**, (New Haven: Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, 1982), Pages 13-14.

was very convincing: that he himself would fight the Chinese and the two columns led by the generals should triumph over the Siamese by attacking Ayutthaya from the two directions.

Myanmar had the tradition of conscripting the auxiliary levies under the local chiefs from the conquered lands to assist the campaign. Initially, the Zimme column consisted of only 30 armies. The strength of the army increased from 30 to 74 after storming town after town on the route to Ayutthaya. Similarly, the Dawei column swelled from 28 to 57 armies by the time they besieged Ayutthaya. We saw another stratagem of Myanmar armies to place these armies in the vanguard.

In previous wars, Myanmar kings took the field in person, thus giving their armies the immense advantage of unity of command, which was seldom attainable by ordinary commanders.⁴ It is said that the Shan chief, being loyal, took orders from the crown alone. However, the two able generals commanding the respect and loyalty from their respective armies, synchronized the movement of the armies in attacking Ayutthaya.

The most formidable disadvantage for the Myanmar armies since Tabinshwehti's time in attacking Ayutthaya was the water coming from the north which flooded the area around Ayutthaya during the rainy seasons. Unlike previous occasions, the generals resolved to carry on the war regardless of the rains. Myanmar soldiery laid brick walls and built mounds of earth around their fortifications. They also built, collected and commandeered the boats to keep the armies in action.

In defending the city, the Siamese erected fifty masonry bastions between the city walls of Ayutthaya and the moat encircling the whole city. Myanmar armies built 27 forts confronting these bastions thus enabling them to tighten the siege. As Ayutthaya would laugh a siege to scorn, it would take a much longer time to inundate the city unless five underground tunnels which led to the base to the city walls were dug clandestinely. Myanmar generals took the example from Mahosoda Jataka in which the sage Mahosada

⁴ G.E. Harvey, **History of Burma**, The Beginning of the English Conquest; Longmans, Green and Co. 39 Paternoster Row, (London, E.C.4 , New York, Toronto Bombay, Calcutta and Madars , 1967), Page 270.

saved his king's life and carried off the daughter of the enemy king through the tunnel. This stratagem was often used in the history of siege warfare but implementing it without the knowledge of the enemies was not an easy task and the effectiveness of these tunnels led to the fall of Ayutthaya.

In siege warfare, this method is known as mining. The defenders could dig counter tunnels to cut into the attackers' works or use large bellows (the type the Chinese commonly used in heating up a blast furnace for smelting cast iron) to pump smoke into the tunnels in order to suffocate the intruders.⁵

Other tactics include setting fire against castle or fortress walls to decompose the cement that held together the individual stones so they could be readily knocked over.

On the other hand, Siamese defense was belated and uncoordinated. Upon request by Chiang Mai, Ayutthaya sent a small contingency but it arrived late and did not engage Myanmar army during King Naungdawgyi's reign. Thus, the Siamese lost their chance to withstand Myanmar offensive from strategically located Chiang Mai. Furthermore, Ayutthaya stayed idle concentrating only on the defense of the capital while the Myanmar army had been fighting for control of the north from 1764 to 1765.

In addition, the Siamese king's strategy was too much dependent on the summer monsoon and the subsequent flood around Ayutthaya so as to fight the fight of sit down. Previously, Myanmar armies had to retreat during the rainy season. It is normally difficult even to hold the ground at this time of the year. The Siamese hoped that Myanmar armies would return homeward as in the previous times. This strategy was seriously flawed when Myanmar armies tenaciously held out their posts till the monsoon was over.

When the provision became scarce, the Siamese planned to employ a delaying tactic. According to the plan, they would admit defeat and when Myanmar armies remove the satellite forts, another stratagem to be devised. This kind of tactics was also employed

⁵ Turnbull, Stephen R. *Siege Weapons of the Far East*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd. 2002), Page 40.

during the King Alaungpaya's campaign. Unfortunately, Myanmar generals, conceited and ambitious by the smell of victory, demanded only total submission from the Siamese.

The Siamese also followed the rules and tactics of siege warfare. Ayutthaya's moat was deep and the wall was high. Its outlying defenses proved difficult to capture even for a well equipped army. Special attention was paid to defend the city gate. In addition, the Siamese made their city strong by replenishing the weapons, elephants, horses and troops, laying the fields of iron spikes, tree stumps, elephant and horse impediments, and digging thorny pits outside the city. They built and collected boats for the use of the navy. For coming in and going out of the city, it could be done only by scaling up and climbing down the wall by the use of ropes. They relaxed no effort in their defence.

5.5 Battles

Throughout history, Myanmar and Siamese kings had been acquainted with the siege warfare which dominated the conduct of war between Myanmar and Siam. We can trace the beginning of the siege warfare in King Anawrahta's time. When King Anawrahta's demand for the three pitikas (Scriptures) was turned down by the Mon King Manuha, Myanmar armies came down and lay siege on the town of Thaton, the capital of the Mon country.

Three months had passed but King Anawrahta's attempt to overwhelm the city was of no avail. Legend has it that the two Indian brothers, Byattwi and Byatta were shipwrecked and reached the shore of Thaton. Having eaten the flesh of a magician, they became awfully strong. Being afraid of their incredible strength, the King of Thaton tried to kill them both. Byattwi escaped to Bagan but Byatta was killed. According to the magical rites, parts of his body were buried at places around the city walls. As the spirit



of Byatta guarded the town, the city was impregnable. Thaton fell only after Anawrahta exhumed the remains of Byatta and cast them into the sea.⁶

According to Cambodian chronicles, the expedition led by King Ramathibodi, the first king of Ayutthaya invested Angkor in 1351. The siege took 16 months. Ramathibodi built wooden towers as high as the walls of the town in order to be able to shoot fire arrows into the town. Finally the king gave an order for general onslaught on the eastern gate of the town of forces with the help of heavy battering-rams.⁷

From thence onwards, Myanmar and Siamese kings made the fortresses of their cities strong fighting each other with siege tactics both offensive and defensive. I would like to brief a background of siege warfare to understand more about the nature of it.

A siege is a military blockade of a city or fortress. The term derives from *Sedere*, Latin for “to sit”. It involves surrounding the target and blocking the reinforcement or escape of troops or provision of supplies. Sieges probably predate the development of cities as large population centers. During the Renaissance and the Early Modern period, siege warfare dominated the conduct of war in Europe. In Napoleonic era, increasing use of powerful cannon reduced the value of fortifications. In modern times, trenches replaced walls, and bunkers obscured castles.⁸

The importance of siege warfare should not be underestimated. One of the reasons why Hannibal's army could not defeat Rome was his lack of a siege train. He was able to defeat Roman armies in the field, but he was unable to capture Rome itself.⁹

To overrun the fortresses, various methods had been employed to overwhelm fortifications, and a large variety of siege engines were developed for use in the course of time.

⁶ Harvey, **History of Burma; from the earliest time to 1824, the beginning of the English conquest**, (Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1967), Page 27.

⁷ M.L. Manich Jumsai, **History of Thailand and Cambodia**, published by Chalermnit, 108 Sukhumvit 53, (Bangkok 10110, Thailand, Seventh Revised Edition, January 2001), Page 30-31.

⁸ Internet, <http://en. Wikipedia.org/wiki/siege>

⁹ Ibid

Ladders could be used to climb over the defenses. Battering rams and siege hooks were in the use of forcing through gates or walls, while catapults and trebuchets launch projectiles in order to destroy a city's fortifications and kill its defenders. A siege tower built to equal or greater height than the fortification's walls, could allow the attackers to fire down upon the defenders and also advance troops to the wall with less danger than using ladders.

In addition to launching projectiles at the fortifications, it was quite common to attempt to undermine the fortifications, causing them to collapse. This could be accomplished by digging a tunnel beneath the foundations of the walls, and then deliberately exploding the tunnel.

Disease was another effective siege weapon, although the attackers were often as vulnerable as the defenders. In some instances, catapults or similar weapons were used to fling diseased animals over city walls in an early example of biological warfare.¹⁰

In 1346, the bodies of Mongol warriors of the Golden Horde who had died of plague were thrown over the walls of the besieged Crimean city of Caffa. It has been speculated that this operation may have been responsible for the advent of the Black Death in Europe.¹¹

The universal method for defending against siege is the use of fortifications, walls and ditches to supplement natural features. A sufficient supply of food and water was also important to defeat starvation. Particular attention would be paid to defending entrances. Moats and other water defenses, whether natural or augmented, were also vital to defenders.

¹⁰ Mark Wheelis, **Biological Warfare at the 1346 Siege of Caffa**, California, USA 2002. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidoc/EID/vol8no9/01-0536htm>

¹¹ Ibid

Until the invention of gunpowder-based weapons, defenders had the upper hand. With the invention of gunpowder and cannon, the traditional methods of defense became less effective against a determined siege.

If we moved back to the Mawgun, Myanmar armies mopped up the rebellion in Chiang Mai without much difficulty. I would like to borrow some lines from Hman Nan Yazawindawgyi in describing the conditions after the suppression of Myanmar army that within months, situation in Chiang Mai was as smooth as the surface of the water. But the other two battles fought in Maing Lon Kha Ping (Luang Prabang) were quite opposite to the battles in the Chiang Mai region.

Being situated between two rivers, the city of Luang Prabang was difficult even to approach. Myanmar armies fought so fiercely that after the first battle, piles of heads of ten thousand Lan Xang soldiers were heaped up by Myanmar armies near the bank of the river in order to terrify the defenders. In the second battle, siege tactics was applied and before the surrender, half the city lay devastated by the cannon fired from the nearby hillocks and knolls. One army from Vientiane is said to have assisted Myanmar forces.

On the Ayutthaya front, one interesting thing to note is that in the Mawgun and other Myanmar chronicles, there is no mentioning of an English ship aiding the Siamese in delaying the advance of the Dawei column and the confrontation between the Zimme column and the patriotic villagers from Bang Ranhan, situated to the north of Ayutthaya.

Coming from the two directions, both the Zimme column and Dawei column seized the towns on the way to Ayutthaya. Some cities offered no resistance but some fought at best to defend their cities. All these battles were won by means of ladder assault or by breaking walls or gates.

A total of eight battles broke out in and around Ayutthaya during the siege; 2 naval battles and 6 land battles. Out of these battles, I would like to point out some discrepancy in sources from Myanmar and Siamese chronicles. In the battle between reinforcements from northern Siam and the Zimme column, Myanmar chronicle stated that these reinforcements were from Northern provinces of Siam. The testimony of the

old residents of Ayutthaya chronicle agrees with the Myanmar chronicles but Prince Damrong in his book 'Our wars with the Burmese' described that they came from the South. Likewise, he stated in the same book that King Ekathat escaped to the nearby village and died there only after a few days of the battle. The testimony of the old residents of Ayutthaya and Myanmar Chronicles agree that the king was killed within the city walls.

One battle can change the course of war or delay the victory of Myanmar armies. Nearing the end of the war, the Siamese forces under the command of Minister Byathan made a furious assault on the three Myanmar newly built forts from where the surreptitious digging of 5 underground tunnels to the base of the city walls was being carried out by the Myanmar armies.

Owing to the Siamese attack, Myanmar armies at these forts were on the verge of being routed. Unless Myanmar armies from the nearby forts came to their rescue, these three forts would fall into the hands of the Siamese. If that was the case, Myanmar armies' tunneling scheme would be uncovered and the Siamese could have defended Ayutthaya more effectively.

5.6 Ayutthaya Defence

The very first wall of Ayutthaya from King Ramathibodi's reign to 16th century AD was moat and mound with wooden posts. Its site, situated at the confluence of Chao Phraya River and old Lopburi River, was deliberately chosen for defense purpose. The north, south and west sides of the city was surrounded by rivers. As the Pa Sak River ran a few kilometers east, only the eastern flank of Ayutthaya was vulnerable to attack. Thus, a defensive canal called "Front City Canal" was dug for eastern defense. It no longer exists nowadays.

Realizing the power of guns and large cannon, King Maha Chakkraphat strengthened the Ayutthaya defense by digging an exterior moat called "Maha Nak canal" and building walled fortresses along the city wall, mostly at waterway intersections.

When Ayutthaya became temporarily a vassal state of Myanmar, King Maha Thammaracha was allowed to build new walls around the city under the pretext of threat from Cambodia. These walls extended to the river banks in 1580. The moat was dug 20 m wide and 6 m deep from Maha Chai fortress down to connect with Pom Phet fortress near Kaja village (south of the city on the left bank of the Chao Phraya river.)¹²

Since the 16th century onwards, Ayutthaya had become a fully fortified city surrounded by rivers, dug canals and thick brick walls. It was probably constructed under the supervision of the Portuguese. It was so impressive that in 1591, King Nandabayin "ordered all the gates, battlements, and towers of the city (Pegu) to be demolished and to be rebuilt on the model of those round the city of Yodaya."¹³

King Narai (1656-1688) appointed the Sicilian Jesuit priest Tommaso Valguarnera to rebuild the walls and fortresses of Ayutthaya in 1663. At the request of the king, the French engineer La Mare designed and superintended the construction of new fortifications in 1685.¹⁴

Records from foreign visitors of that time mentioned that there were over some 800 canons lining the city walls. The wall was 12 kilometers long, 6 meters high and 5 meters wide, with 16 forts and a total of 99 gates: 18 city gates, 61 smaller gates and 20 water gates.¹⁵

In 1767, the Myanmar army built 30 new forts and dug 5 tunnels to overwhelm the city. I have given the imaginary locations of Myanmar forts that confront the Ayutthaya 50 bastions surrounding the city.

Regarding the 50 bastions erected by the Siamese, Prince Damrong tried to locate the establishment of these fortifications to protect the city on every side. He even

¹² <http://www.ayutthaya-history>

¹³ Sunait Chutintaranond, *Cakravartin: The Ideology of Traditional Warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605*, Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University, 1990), Page 195. Aung Thein, "Intercourse between Burma and Siam as Recorded in Hmannan Mahayazawin dawgyi," in JSS, 8:2 (Bangkok, 1911: Raus Reprint, 1969), Pages 48-49.

¹⁴ <http://www.ayutthaya-history>

¹⁵ Ibid

mentioned some places in his book *Our wars with the Burmese*. However, he admitted that he had examined many histories and records but the places mentioned in his book may probably be wrong.

Most parts of the wall and the fortresses were dismantled in the reign of King Rama I. They were used in the construction of the new capital in Bangkok.

5.7 Afterward

On 8th April 1767, when the wall had been breached, the Myanmar troops effected the entry via tunnels or the ruins of the city wall. After putting down the resistance, thousands of inhabitants of Ayutthaya had been rounded up and carried away in captivity. "The king of Hanthawaddy (King Bayintnaung) waged war like a monarch," wrote a Siamese chronicler "but the king of Innwa like a robber." The wholesale destruction of Ayutthaya by Myanmar armies might partly be due to the news from the capital calling the armies back to defend the Chinese invasion.

As stated in the Mawgun, Myanmar armies carried away the royal family and the vanquished population which consisted of artisans, musicians, dancers, soldiers, etc, and settled them near Sagaing. In the history of Southeast Asia, we have learnt that land was abundant and manpower was in short supply. The situation was that such wars became "glorified slave raids."¹⁶ Almost all the powerful kings had strong desires for accumulation of manpower and wealth at the expense of his neighbors.

Prisoners of war taken from Ayutthaya since Tabinshwehti and Bayintnaung eras were located in the country. We have only stray references to them in Myanmar chronicles and the Royal Orders of Burma (ROB). They can be divided into four groups; farmers, artisans and artists, slaves and soldiers. The majority engaged in cultivation and few sold at slave markets in Bengal. Artisans and artists exclusively served in the royal service. As Ayutthaya men were skilled at soldiering, they were recruited in the service of Myanmar kings. Their contingents marched along on the Kings' expeditions to foreign

¹⁶Dr. Myo Myint, "Alaungpaya's Campaign in Thailand (1759-1760)". **Myanmar Historical Research Journal**, no. 9. (Yangon: June 2002), Page 45.

lands. Owing to their bravery and loyalty, they were entrusted with the duty even to guard the gates of Innwa during King Nyaung Yan's reign.¹⁷

5.8 18th century Myanmar Economy in brief and economic explanations for Myanmar-Siam warfare

The economies of Myanmar in the mid 18th century can be classified into three categories: Inland trade with China, the export of agricultural products, forest goods, gems and minerals from the interior and the maritime trade via port cities in the south.

5.8.1 Overland Trade

In main land Southeast Asia, the most important routes for the inland trade were from Vientiane to Ayutthaya, from northern Burma and Laos into Yunnan and across the Malayan peninsular from Tenasserim.¹⁸ Merchants travelled along these routes in caravans.

From ancient time up to the 19th century, Myanmar courts conducted considerable inland trade with China. The main centre of inland trade was the town of Bhamo. In the 18th century, there was a large scale trade from the dry regions of central Myanmar to Yunnan. It can be seen that one of the immediate causes for a series of Chinese invasions from 1765 to 1770 was a quarrel between Chinese merchants and the local people.

I would like to cite an extraordinary event mentioned in Htin Aung's *History of Burma* to clearly depict the importance of overland trade between Myanmar and China:

"Although in Upper Burma the peace remained unbroken, Bodawpaya had many anxious moments because the Chinese emperor still remained petulant over the failure of his invasions, and on his instructions the governor of Yunnan occasionally sent

¹⁷ Dr. Than Tun, Ayut'ia men in the Service of Burmese Kings, 6th and 7th Centuries, **On Both Sides of the Tenasserim Range: History of Siamese Burmese Relation**, Chulalongkorn University Phyathai, (Bangkok 10330, Thailand 1995), Page 101.

¹⁸ Anthony Reid, **Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680**, Volume Two: Expansion and Crisis. (Yale University, 1998), Page 58.

threatening and insulting letters to the Burmese king. Bodawpaya was anxious to restore normal trade relations between the two countries. Officially the emperor had refused to honor the stipulation of the treaty of 1769 regarding trade relations, but unofficially, because of prevailing peace conditions, trade between the two countries had resumed to some extent.

The Sawbwa of Bhamo and some Chinese merchants from Yunnan were especially interested in the full resumption of trade relations, and they conspired to hoodwink both the emperor and Bodawpaya. They brought a bogus mission purporting to be from the Chinese emperor, and Bodawpaya received it with due honor. When Bodawpaya sent a return mission to Peking, the conspirators arranged that the mission's own interpreter should become separated from the mission on the journey. Then as the mission arrived before the emperor the conspirators explained that the mission was bringing tribute. The emperor was pleased and ordered full resumption of trade.

*Sometime later the conspirators again brought a bogus mission with three beautiful Chinese girls who were said to be the emperor's granddaughters. Bodawpaya now realized that he had been fooled and put the Sawbwa of Bhamo under arrest. Whether the emperor of China ever found out the truth is not known, but the conspirators did achieve their objective – normal trade relations were restored. "*¹⁹

Some of these traders were from the huge Bawdwin silver mines in the Shan area tributary to Myanmar. They were manned by 20000 to 30000 Chinese workers. These mines were brought about by the exodus of Chinese talent at the time of the Ming dynasty's downfall (1644-1662).²⁰ These mines were officially abandoned before 1800.

According to Victor Lieberman, by 1830, the overland trade may have come to represent one-half to two-thirds the level of the maritime trade.²¹ In later years, one

¹⁹ Maung Htin Aung, **A History of Burma**, (Columbia University Press, New York and London , 1967), Pages 199-200.

²⁰ U Thaw Kaung, "Palm-leaf Manuscript Record of a Mission", in **Aspects of Myanmar History & Culture**, (Yangon: March 2010), Page 176.

²¹ Anthony Reid, "Economic and Social Change, c 1400-1800", **The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol 1, part 2 From c.1500 to c.1800**, (Cambridge University Press, 1999), Page 139.

reason behind the third Anglo Burmese war was also the interest of English merchant group resident in Yangon to open up the new land routes to China.

Ayutthaya also conducted overland trade with Laos, Cambodia, and the Malay Peninsula. It is said that overland trade flourished as a consequence of the age of commerce (maritime trade) in South East Asia from 1400 to 1650 AD.²²

5.8.2 Internal trade and revenues

The economies of Myanmar and Siam like other Southeast Asian countries were based on agriculture. In Myanmar since the founding of Bagan dynasty, weirs, canals and dams were built around kyaukse and Minbu areas for the irrigated cultivation of rice. They became rich bowls of upper Myanmar. Apart from agricultural products, forest goods, gems, minerals and cotton were the mainstay of the Myanmar economy.

During the 17th and 18th century, much state revenue was in kind. Agricultural goods as well as services were demanded as a substitute for taxes. Revenue flowed not only from the customs duties and associated charges. There are also royal monopolies on many of the lucrative export items, tolls on internal trade, taxes on markets and the personal trade of the ruler himself.

According to Wil O. Dijk in her article "Life in Seventeenth Century Burma through Dutch Eyes", the country's monetary system was a bimetallic system of parallel standard. The two metallic media of exchange were silver bullion and ganza (an alloy of copper and lead or copper, lead, and tin). Silver was normally used for wholesale transactions while ganza served the retail market. Since neither was coined but came in smooth chunks of varying sizes and shapes, the least transaction involved weighing so that scales and weights were always at the ready.²³

²² Anthony Reid, "Economic and Social Change, c 1400-1800", **The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol 1, part 2 From c.1500 to c.1800**, (Cambridge University Press, 1999), Page 160.

²³ Dijk Wil O, "Life in Seventeenth Century Burma through Dutch Eyes, Traditions of Knowledge in Southeast Asia", **TRADITIONS OF KNOWLEDGE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**, Myanmar Historical Commission, (Yangon, 2003), Page 123.

This monetary system would probably continue to exist in Myanmar nearly up to the end of the King Naungdawgyi's reign. King Bodawpaya standardized measure and weight and tried to initiate the coinage system but failed.

In the reign of King Bodawpaya, four types of coin were current, the Myanmar, the Rakhine, coinage from Vesali and from India. After the reign of King Bodawpaya, the copper coinage was withdrawn from use. In his time, the coinage bore an image of the shwe pyi soe bird; in the time of Shwe bo min, an image of the moon; in that of King Mindon, of a peacock.²⁴ Myanmar did not have a state monetary system that uses standard coinage till King Mindon's reign.

If we glimpsed at the Myanmar economy as a whole from ancient times up to Hsinphyushin's reign, the economy was in chaos throughout the first Innwa period (1364-1555) due to intermittent wars between several kingdoms. Under King Tabinshwehti and King Bayintnaung, the Myanmar economy recovered thanks to maritime trade which flourished during this period. In Nanda Bayin's reign, maritime trade suffered a heavy setback.

The restored Toungoo kings of Myanmar (during King Thalun's reign) shifted their capital to Innwa, in the rice-growing heartland of upper Myanmar, in 1635. The kyaukse rice bowl of upper Myanmar suffered increasingly frequent crop failure in the period from 1667 to 1740, as royal authority was no longer sufficient to see that irrigation channels were maintained.²⁵ King Alaungpaya and Hsinphyushin had to inherit this poor economic condition and they undertook the resurrection of the country. However, the flight of thousands more Mons into Siam in the 1750s caused ruin to the maritime economy.

Lieberman refutes Hall's (1955: 380) concept of "a long period of stagnation" in Myanmar from the mid-seventeenth century. Although the maritime regions of the delta

²⁴ U Tin, **Royal Administration of Burma**, VOL 2, (Bangkok: Ava Publishing House 2001), Page 132.

²⁵ Anthony Reid, "Economic and Social Change, c 1400-1800", **The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia**, Vol 1, part 2 From c. 1500 to c. 1800, (Cambridge University press 1999), Page 156.

were in disarray, the population of the core region slowly expanded, its market towns grew in number and size, and an internal market economy based on silver grew.²⁶

5.8.3 Long distance sea trade

The maritime trade of southern sea-ports in Myanmar with the Muslim traders flourished since 14th and 15th century. Even after the fall of Malacca in 1511, the volume of trade was still on the increase because of the more frequent use of old ports by these traders who wanted to avoid Portuguese interference.²⁷ However, it became stagnant in the latter part of 17th century. Not only did the English withdraw their factory in 1657 and the Dutch VOC removed theirs in 1679. In 18th century also, the maritime commerce suffered due to civil unrest in the lower part of Myanmar and wars with Siam. The major port cities which flourished from the 14th to 16th century were:

Mon port city of Pegu flourished throughout the 15th century while the interior was in chaos. In the 15th century, the busiest shipyards were in the Mon (Pegu) and Martaban. Mon traders often sold both ships and cargos in Malacca after a trading voyage from their home land.²⁸ In 1539, the Myanmar dynasty seized control of the city from the Mons.

The new port of Ye (South of Martaban) opened in 1438, and as a Mon Chronicle put it, the reign of Queen Shinsawpu in Pegu (1453-72) inaugurated a period when merchants from afar arrived in great numbers, unusual wearing apparel became abundant and the people had fine clothes and prospered exceedingly.²⁹

²⁶ _____, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 145-1680*. Volume Two Expansion and Crisis. (Yale University, 1993), Page 157.

²⁷ Sunait Chutintaranond, *Cakravartin, the ideology of traditional warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605*. Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University, 1990) Page 165.

²⁸ Anthony Reid, "Economic and Social Change, c 1400-1800", *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol 1, part 2 From c. 1500 to c. 1800*, (Cambridge University Press 1999), Page 133.

²⁹ Barbara Watson Andaya and Yoneo Ishii, "Religious Developments in Southeast Asia, c.1500-1800", *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Vol I, Part II, From c.1500 to c.1800*, (Cambridge University Press, 1992) Page 262.

The shipyard of Martaban supplied many of the big junks to Malacca. Martaban and Nakhon Si Thammarat were ringed with stations for the collection of transit dues on every road and water way.

Mergui and Tenasserim on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula were also renowned for their ship building and fine timber.³⁰

5.8.4 Economic explanations for Myanmar-Siam warfare

The economic explanations for the conflict can be provided by the rivalry over the Tenasserim coast, rival claims over Chiang Mai and the need for manpower in under populated Innwa and Ayutthaya.

Over a long period of time, Myanmar and Siam rivaled each other for the control of the Tenasserim coast. It is evident that since Anawrahta and Kyansittha's time, Myanmar influence reached over the Tenasserim coast. In the 15th century, Ayutthaya kings' interests in maritime trade shifted from Malacca to Tenasserim coast when they lost control of Malacca and other sea-ports in Malaya. Accordingly, Ayutthaya seized control of Tenasserim in 1460 and Tavoy in 1488. The reason for King Tabinshwehti's first invasion to Siam was due to the capture of Tavoy by the Ayutthaya king. After the defeat of 1548 and 1564 wars, King Chakkraphat had to pay Tabinshwehti and Bayintnaung yearly 30 war elephants, 300 ticals for silver, and the custom revenue of Tenasserim.³¹ King Bayintnaung took the possession of Tavoy and Tenasserim in 1569. After the battle of Nong Sarai in 1593, Naresuan sent his army to again take control over Tenasserim. King Alaungpaya reclaimed the overlordship of Tenasserim during his resurrection of the country.

Another area of contention was the control over Chiang Mai. Ayutthaya kings tried many times to conquer Chiang Mai before Bayintnaung's occupation took place. In addition to its militarily strategic location, Chiang Mai was a famous hinterland centre of

³⁰ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the age of Commerce 1450-1680, Volume Two: Expansion and Crisis*, (Yale University, 1998), Page 156.

³¹ Sunait Chutintaranond, *Cakravartin, the ideology of traditional warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605*, Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University, 1990), Page 170.

Commerce. Moreover, Chiang Mai was regarded as Suvannabhumi instead of Thaton region up to the end of Nyaung Yan period. Bayintnaung, in one instance, forbade capture of prisoners of war when Chiang Mai fell into his hands, saying it was the land of Suvannabhumi from where Buddhism first came to Myanmar.³²

The third was simply the much needed manpower, and possibly wealth. As mentioned before, land was abundant but population was small in Southeast Asia. It became a tradition for mainland Southeast Asian kings to carry away the whole population of conquered lands and they are forced to cultivate land and help raise the royal revenue.

5.9 Mahasamata and Pyusawhti Theories

Myanmar and Siamese kings require raising their standing well above the other princes, court ministers, generals, etc. The real threat to the throne will not come from outside forces but from within. These king especially those who had not a drop of royal blood in their veins needed to strengthen the legitimacies for their claims to the throne. The fine examples of these kings are King Bayintnaung and King Alaungpaya. The former was a son of a toddy climber while the latter's father was a headman of Moksobo village. Throughout the history, Myanmar literati sought ways to legitimate the rulership of their kings. It is very interesting to note the various attempts of Myanmar literati in developing the legitimacy of their kings' rulership.

In his *Mahayazawindawgyi*, U Kala mentions that Pyusawhti, a legendary Pyu king descended from the union of solar god and naga (mythical serpent) princess, who liberated the people of Bagan from the five dangers,^{*} was the primogenitor of Myanmar kings. Myanmar probably borrowed this idea from Nanchao. In constructing Alaungpaya's royal ancestry, this Pyusawhti model of kingship was used. Alaungpaya's father became Thiri Maha Dharma Yaza, a direct descendant of Pyusawhti. Alaungpaya

³² U Tet Htoot, "The nature of the Burmese chronicles," in *Historians of South East Asia*. ed. by D.G.E. Hall. (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), Page 54.

^{*} About 3rd century AD, Bagan was menaced by five fearsome enemies, a gargantuan bird, a rampaging boar, a ferocious tiger, a mammoth flying squirrel and an untameably prolific gourd plant.

himself was the forty seventh king in the Pyusawhti line.³³ Later, he was raised to the status of embryo Buddha or bodhisattva.

In 1774, the grantee of Palaik U Hpyaw wrote *Nga Singu Min Eigyin* in which he introduced the Mahasamata theory. Its appeal was stronger than the localized Pyusawhti myth. This was the first connection between Mahasamata and the Konboun kings.

Shortly after this Eigyin, Rakhine court minister Maha Zaya Theinka compiled various documents and wrote *Rakhine Yazawin*. In it, he mentions the first migration of Sakyan king Abhiraja into Myanmar. Abhiraja's eldest son, Kan Raja the elder established Rakhine kingdom and the younger son Kan Raja the younger ruled Tagaung. When Kan Raja the younger died, a son of Kan Raja the elder inherited his uncle's throne. Thus, it provides for a clearer line connecting both Rakhine and Myanmar kings to Mahasamata.

The two Myanmar chronicles called "*Mani Yadana Pon (1781)*" by an obscure monk Shin Sanda Linkka and the "*New Bagan Yazawin (1785)*" by an anonymous writer connects the lineage of Tagaung kings with the Sakyan kings. The former mentions the Abhiraja's migration to Myanmar but the latter omits it and reveals the second migration of Dhajaraja. Some historians argued that Myanmar literati borrowed the idea of these migrations from Rakhine chronicles.

We have not found these migrations of Sakyan kings in other chronicles. There is no mention of them in old chronicles like *Yazawin Kyaw*, *Zatadawpon Yazawin* and other texts such as old Bagan chronicle and Taguang chronicle. Twinthin Taik Wun Maha Sithu did not insert these connections both in his *Yazawin Thit* and *Alaungpaya Ayedawbon* but he mentions only Pyusawhti. Thus, Myanmar kings' genealogy has two main fountain heads: Mahasamata and Pyusawhti. All these efforts to connect Mahasamata and Pyusawhti with Myanmar kings can be viewed as the attempts to raise the status of kings over others by Myanmar literati.

³³ Than Tun, "Historiography of Burma", *Shiroku*, (November, 1976) Page 4.

The description of these two migrations of Sakyan kings to Myanmar can be found in the Glass Palace Chronicle, which was officially written during the reign of King Bagyidaw. The compilers simply put both Mahasamata and Pyusawhti in their chronicle.

Though a few western scholars allege that all these myths were rearranged and combined by the chroniclers, it can otherwise be seen as the attempts of Myanmar literati to write the pre-Bagan history which was mostly conjectural to be more comprehensible while constructing the legitimacy of their kings' rulership.

5.10 Concept of Cakravartin (king of kings)

There are many books written on these subjects. In his book *On Both Sides of Tenasserim Range*, Sunait Chutintaranond explained vividly about the connection between these concepts and Myanmar-Siam war activities. My concern is not to elaborate them in every detail but to provide a general idea of what they are all about.

The idea of a universal monarch emerged in the old texts of many different religious sects. It was redefined in the work of Kautilya's "Arthashastra" in the Maurya period in ancient India. However, this concept is said to have fully developed under the influence of Buddhist thought and ideology.³⁴

Cakra means "a wheel or circle, then a disk and a discus (especially that of Vishnu), and vartin implies one who turns. Therefore, the literal meaning of Cakravartin is "wheel turner or wheel turning king".³⁵

With the power of Cakra, Cakravartin who possesses great merit and seven jewels³⁶ ruled four great continents through dharma. This Cakra transported him from

³⁴ Sunait Chutintaranond, **Cakravartin: The Ideology of Traditional Warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605**, Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University, 1990) Pages 85-95.

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ "the wheel treasure, the gem treasure, the queen treasure, the elephant treasure, the horse treasure, the general treasure and the rich man treasure", Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond, **Cakravartin: The Ideology of Traditional Warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605**, Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University, 1990), Page 119.

one continent to another. In Myanmar, they are known as Sekyawade min whereas Charkrapat was the Siamese rendering of Cakravartin.

Buddhist community later connected Buddhahood with a Cakravartin king. Thus, there is a notion that the Buddha could either be a cakravartin or a world renouncer. Like Cakravartin, the Buddha possesses thirty-two bodily marks. Therefore, the court astrologers can easily predict at his birth that only two destinies await him. Similarly, Buddha merits and receives same funerary rites performed for a Cakravartin; a funeral mound or stupa is raised over their ashes.³⁷

According to Abhidhammakosa of Vasubandhu cited by John S. Strong, there are four possible types of cakravartin: (1) the golden-wheeled cakravartin (Suvarna-cakravartin) who rules all four continents of the world; (2) the silver-wheeled cakravartin (Rupya-cakravartin) who rules three continents; (3) the copper-wheeled cakravartin (Tamra-cakravartin) whose sovereignty extends to two continents; and (4) iron-wheeled cakravartin (Ayas-cakravartin) who rules only Jumbudipa island.³⁸

Cakravartin can be of two kinds. The one who uses method of non-violence i.e. Dharma and the other who resorts to violent means. In Ceylon chronicle "Dipavamsa" of 4th or 5th century AD, King Asoka was depicted as an iron-wheeled cakravartin or balacakravartin (armed cakravartin) whose territories extended from Himalaya mountain ranges to the ocean. After witnessing the horrors of war, Asoka renounced wars of aggression and sought only the moral conquest of the world. This idealistic concept was later used by ambitious rulers as a pretext of war.

In the 6th century chronicle "Mahavamsa", King Duttagamani of Ceylon was portrayed as a violent cakravartin who successfully repelled the invasion of a Tamil king in the 2nd century BC. Myanmar and Siamese kings emulated the model of these kings

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Asoka: A Study and Translation of the Asokawadana* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), Page 61.



through various literary works of Ceylon. One interesting instance is the elephant ridden duel between King Duttagamani of Ceylon and the Tamil king from South India. King Duttagamani reasoned for this dual fight to protect his land and the law of dharma. This tradition had been influenced and passed down to Southeast Asian kings especially Myanmar and Siam.

According to Myakan stone inscription, king Kyansittha was depicted as a balacakravartin. Since Tabinshwehti established a custom to invade Siam, successive Myanmar kings, who took seriously their cakravartin pretensions, were required to reconquer the Siamese kingdom.

According to Father Sangermano, the ambition of King Bodawpaya was to invest the chief city of the Siamese, then to turn his arms against the Emperor of China, and to make him his tributary; thence he would bend his course towards the west, possess himself of the British colonies, attack the Great Mogul in his empire, and finally make himself undisputed master of the whole of the southern island, Zabudiba (Jambudipa).³⁹ Likewise, there were many instances of Siamese kings who were influenced by the vision of the world ruler.

Though these kings used violent methods in subjugating their subjects, they justified their actions by the assertion that they protect the country and defend the religion. They assumed themselves as devastators of the enemies of Buddhism. In time of peace, they acted as fair and just kings who showered mercy on their subjects and ruled according to the law of the land. In Myanmar, they took the title of Mintayagyi (a righteous monarch) and Siamese kings did the same.

In the Southeast Asian context, the political domain or circle of kings of these cakravartin is called Mandala (sphere of influence). The concept of mandala is referred to in various ancient sources. These include the Hindu epics, Mahabharata and the

³⁹ Sangermano, Father, **A Description of the Burmese Empire**, (New York, 1969), Page 62.

Ramayana, the Puranas, the Manusamhita (Code of Manu) and the celebrated Arthashastra by Mauryan Chief Minister Kautilya in the 4th century BC.⁴⁰

The Mandala of Myanmar and Siamese kings was in theory the entire Jumbudipa Island. However, it was impossible to rule by one king the whole Jumbudipa because it covers 10,000 yojana extent (1 yojana is about 9.94 statute miles)⁴¹. Therefore, they had to create their own mandalas.

At first, Myanmar mandala did not reach the eastern flank of the country as King Anawrahta and his grandson king Alaungsithu encroached upon Rakhine, Bengal, Malay peninsula and parts of China. It was king Bayintnaung who established the Myanmar mandala up to Lanna, Lan Xang and Ayutthaya. From then on, successive Myanmar kings had royal duties to subdue all these regions. The Ayutthaya mandala includes Lanna, Lan Xang, Cambodia, Malay peninsular and lower part of Myanmar (Mon kingdom and Tenasserim).

In Mandala system, there was no fixed boundary and bureaucratic apparatus. Moreover, Kings tried not to centralize the administration of these provincial rulers but give them independence in their internal affairs so long as they remained loyal and obligated.⁴² By doing so, they could draw support from their client states in times of war and annual tributes in times of peace. This system was further supported by kinship and marriage ties.

Later, Cakravartin theory was obscured by the Bodisatta concept. In Myanmar, it is evident that the chroniclers from U Kala onwards conceived all their kings as embryos or semi Buddhas. The emergence of western powers put an end to the traditional concept

⁴⁰ For more information, see Dellios, Rosita. "Mandala: from Sacred Origins to Sovereign Affairs in Southeast Asia," in **Traditions of Knowledge in Southeast Asia (Part-I)**. Myanmar Historical Commission, (Yangon, 2004), Page 41.

⁴¹ Taung Goe, **U Pon Nya's chronicle on overcoming the Siamese incursion of 1853**, (Yangon, 1995), Page 22.

⁴² Sunait Chutintaranond, **Cakravartin: The Ideology of Traditional Warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605**, Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University, 1990), Pages 296, 297.

of Cakravartin. Western ideas of fixed boundary and a sense of nationality overwhelmed both Cakravartin and Mandala theories.⁴³

5.11 Battles After 1767

After the wars with China ended in 1770, Hsinpyushin turned his attention to make fresh invasions to Siam. It opened the way to invade the region when the King of Vientiane implored him to help lift the siege of Vientiane by forces of Luang Prabang in 1771. The Myanmar army helped lift the siege of Vientiane but Chiang Mai was taken by King Taksin of Siam one year before Hsinphyushin's planned invasion of 1776.

During the invasion, the Myanmar army under the command of General Maha Thiha Thura, a hero of Myanmar-Chinese wars, stormed Sukothai and Pitsanulok but was unable to advance further. Owing partly to the death of Hsinphyushin and partly because of the shortages of supplies, the armies had to return homeward in the same year.

It is noteworthy that in one occasion, General Maha Thiha Thura met with Chao Phraya Chakri. During the encounter, Myanmar general predicted that Chao Phra Chakri had the bearing of a king and would one day become king.

Though the new king Singu min was less enthusiastic about waging wars with the Siamese, he made one further attempt to retake Chiang Mai which nearly succeeded. Owing to the devastations caused by the frequent invasions, Chiang Mai was so ruined that it was abandoned by the Governor and the people and they settled at Lampang. It remained practically deserted for some twenty years.⁴⁴

Another struggle between the two countries broke out during the reign of King Bodaw. Thinking himself a Cakravartin, he had boundless ambition to conquer all the neighboring countries. His rival at that time in Siam was King Rama I who subsequently moved his capital from Thonburi to Bangkok.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*. (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1984), Pages 139-144.

The massive campaign of king Bodaw took place in 1785. He sent his troops in 9 armies via five routes namely Mergui, Tavoy, Chaing Mai, Saiyoke and Rahaeng.⁴⁵ He also led the main army in person but his attempt was all in vain due to lack of logistics in the battlefield. One notable incident was that when southern column of King Bodaw invaded Phuket to encircle Bangkok, Lady Chan, wife of the Governor of Maung Thalung and her sister successfully saved their city from the Myanmar attack in 1785.⁴⁶ Another campaign taking only one route took place in 1786 with the defeat of Myanmar armies.

To retake Chiang Mai, king Bodaw staged two fairly large scale offensives- one in 1787 and the other in 1797, but both failed. The governor of Chiang Mai returned to Chiang Mai from Lampang in 1796. In 1803, the Siamese ravaged as far as Keng Hung and carried away the population to Chiang Mai. In 1809-11, King Bodaw launched another four campaigns but they were all futile. It can be seen that Chiang Mai, Keng Tung, Phuket, Mergui and Tavoy were the main areas of contention between the two countries.

His wars with Siam still went on up to the King Rama II's second reign. But during this time, it affected only the Malay Peninsula. In 1810, the Myanmar armies captured the island of Phuket and besieged Chumphon but they were later expelled by the Siamese armies.⁴⁷ At this stage, king Bodaw shifted his concentration upon gaining control over Manipur, Assam*, Jaintia and Cachar.

On the death of King Bodaw, his grandson King Bagyidaw was enthroned. This king, before the 1st Anglo-Burmese war, sent an embassy to Emperor Minh Mang of Vietnam to attack Bangkok from two directions. The mission was unproductive.

⁴⁵ Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond, "History of Siamese Burmese Relations", **On Both side of the Tenasserim range**, (Chulalongkorn University, 1995), Page 50.

⁴⁶ Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond, **Cakravartin: The Ideology of Traditional Warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605**, Ph.D. Thesis (Cornell University, 1990), Page 48.

⁴⁷ David K. Wyatt, **Thailand: A Short History**. (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1984), Pages 166-180.

* Assam was founded by Tai speaking Ahom dynasty.

At King Rama III's ascension in 1824, the British hoped that Siam would join then in the war with Myanmar, but the king remained aloof, conscious of a clash of interest with the British in Malaya.⁴⁸ This is because the king was alarmed by the rumors that the British were preparing a great expedition to besiege Kedah, a Siamese vassal state in Malaya, after which they would proceed to attack Siam. However, when the Treaty of Yandabo was signed, Siam was mentioned in the treaty as a party to it.⁴⁹ The British first thought to cede Tenasserim to Siam in order to please the Siamese king, but they later dropped the subject and not even introduce it to the negotiations.⁵⁰

From the reign of King Bagyidaw onwards, the successive Myanmar kings, being occupied with the menace from the British at their back door, could not lead any expeditions to invade Siam. Only the Siamese underwent minor aggressions. In 1850, Rama III sent his troops to intervene in a civil war in the northern Lu state of Chaing Hung. It happened in the reign of Bagan min (1846-1852).

By 1852, the new ruler of Chiang Hung had sent tribute to Bangkok requesting protection against Myanmar, which exercised suzerainty over that region through Keng Tung.⁵¹ Accordingly, in 1852-53 and again in 1854, King Mongkut (Rama IV) sent expeditions against Keng Tung, led both times by his younger brother Prince Wongsathirat. The prince's army mainly consists of levies of troops from Lan Na. Neither expedition succeeded in taking Keng Tung. These are the wars written by U Pon Nya.

Dr. Sunait rightly pointed out that, a detailed study on other significant wars after 1767 should be done and comparisons between evidences belonging to both sides should

⁴⁸ David K. Wyatt, **Thailand: A Short History**. (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1984), Pages 166-180.

⁴⁹ U San Nyein, "Research on Myanmar-Thai Historical Relations", *Comparative Studies on Literature and History of Thailand and Myanmar*, (Yangon, 1997)Page 86.

⁵⁰ David K. Wyatt, **Thailand: A Short History**. (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1984), Page 166-180.

⁵¹ Ibid

be made. Then, the whole picture can be visualized and the evidence be differentiated between them.⁵²

5.12 Conclusion

The Mawgun represent Burmese history from the point of view of Innwa. Written at the moment of glory, Letwe Nawrahta finished its work in 1767. It had become a source for later chroniclers to refer to it. There are some discrepancies between Mawgun and Thai chronicles but they reconcile with each other in most of the events.

During the siege of Ayutthaya, Myanmar strategy was to prevent provisions and arms from entering the city. Having suffered a succession of defeat, Siamese fought the fight of "sitting down". Though Myanmar won many battles, there seemed no prospect of being successful in gaining the city. As the king's order was to take the city as quickly as possible, Myanmar generals had to win the war with all due speed.

Myanmar attacks on Siam served one constructive purpose; they aroused the Thai pride. Soon after the fall of Ayutthaya, their power grew rapidly and extended their control over Lanna, Lan Xang and Cambodia. Another bright side of the war was the captivity of Thai artists and artisans which contributed to the development of Myanmar cultural heritage. The conquest of Ayutthaya resulted in the dawning of Myanmar drama. Siamese plays including Ramayana were translated, improved and acted out by Myanmar artisans. It was so popular that a new Ministry was formed to keep track of the whole new development.⁵³ Yodayar songs had been Myanmarized and the puppet show, inspired by Siam, became celebrated. Cuisine also paved its way into the Myanmar diet.

Since the founding of the Bagan period, the concept of Cakravatin was widely held by Myanmar kings. It became prominent during Bayintnaung's reign as he was labeled as the conqueror of the ten directions. Taking King Bodaw as an example, we can see that his aim was to conquer all neighboring countries thus becoming Cakravartin of

⁵² Sunait Chutintaranond and Than Tun. **On Both Sides of the Tenasserim Range: History of Siamese Burmese Relations.** (Chulalongkorn University Phyathai, Bangkok 10330, Thailand 1995), Page 49.

⁵³ Thant Myint U, **The Making of Modern Burma,** (Cambridge University Press, 2005), Pages 92-93.

the Jumbudipa Island. Regarding Mandala of Myanmar and Siamese kings, Myanmar kings' mandala or sphere of influence include Chiang Mai and Ayutthaya but Siamese kings' mandala excludes Myanmar territories.

It is also interesting to note that the new thinking of Myanmar court in King Bodawpaya's reign was brought forth by the western campaigns; to restore Buddhism in India, a homeland of Lord Buddha.

Myanmar had traditionally been associated with the Ponna community who were adept at Hindu beliefs and court rituals. Ponna means Purohit in Myanmar, instructor to the king (according to the books of Veda⁵⁴). It is a Myanmar corruption of Sanskrit word for pundit.⁵⁵ In King Bodaw's reign, many Ponnas from Rakhine, Assam and Benares arrived in the court of Innwa. In Myanmar court, the Sanga is essential but so are the Ponnas too. He even appointed a Ponna Tharthana baing (primate).⁵⁶ He sent fact finding missions to India to obtain many works of Sanskrit both religious and secular. These contacts increased the influence of Ponna already existed in the capital. All these developments might lead to the new and bold idea of invading India.

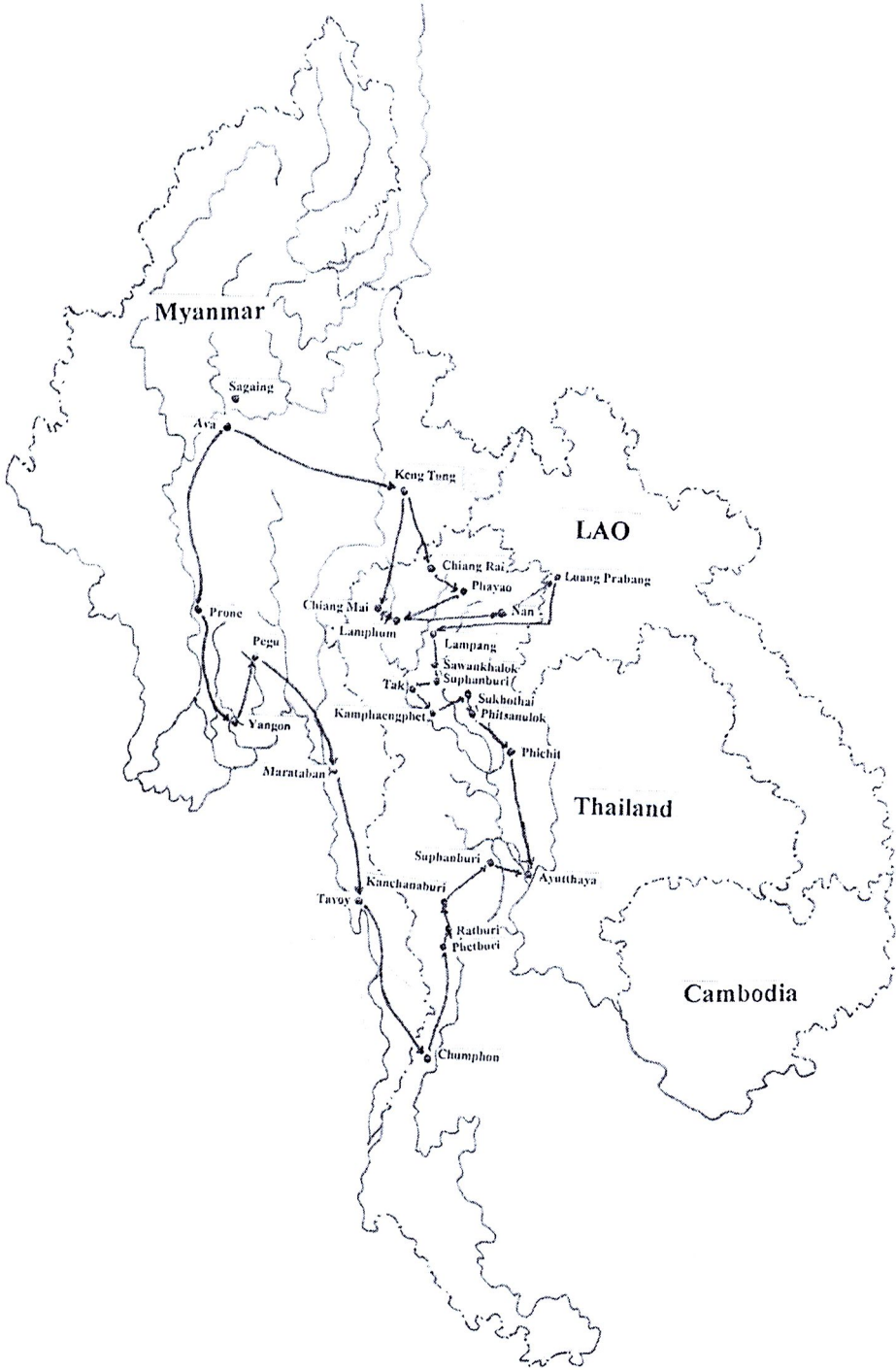
King Bodawpaya stopped invading Siam partially due to the failure of many campaigns and partly to this grand scheme which would give the king a chance to gain the greatest merit. Having confidence in Myanmar military power, the possibilities to conquer India was excited by the court of Innwa. In 1813, a royal order announced that India was to be invaded, Benares occupied by the king in person, and Buddhism re-established in its place of birth.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Veda is myanmarized as Bei-din, refers almost exclusively to astrology.

⁵⁵ Thant Myint U, *The Making of Modern Burma*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005), Page 96-98.

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Ibid



5.1 Routes taken by Myanmar Army in 1767

5.2 Imaginary Map of Myanmar Forts



Myanmar forts around Ayutthaya

A1. Naymyo Thiha Pati

A2. Maha Nawrahta

A3. Satu Gamani

B. Shwe Taung Sithu

C. Ponya Kyaw Htin

D. Chaung U Bo

E. Kyaw Gaung Kyaw Thu

F. Giri Naya

G. Tuyin Yama Kyaw

H. Tuyin Yan Kyaw

I. Thiri Thara Kyawswa

J. Thiri Yaza Thingyan

K. Shwe Taung Kyaw Swa

L. Taza Bala Kyaw

M. Thidi Kyaw Thu

N. Mingyi Zayathu

O. Nanda Udain Kyaw Htin

P. Bala Nanda Kyaw Htin

Q. Letwe Kyaw Swa

R. Yan Ngu Thiri Kyaw Htin

S. Nandamaik Sithu

Shwe Taung Letwei Nawratha

U. Letyar Bala

V. Thiri Yanamaik Kyaw Htin

W. Thidi Kyaw Htin

X. Thiha Dhammarat

Y. Bala Pyan Chi

Z. Three newly built towns