

**[Published as M. W. Charney, “A Reinvestigation of Konbaung-era Burman Historiography on the Beginnings of the Relationship Between Arakan and Ava (Upper Burma)” *Journal of Asian History* 34.1 (2000): pp. 53-68]**

**A Reinvestigation of Konbaung-era Burman Historiography on the Beginnings of  
the Relationship Between Arakan and Ava (Upper Burma)**

**Michael Walter Charney<sup>1</sup>**

**(National University of Singapore)**

**Introduction**

In recent work, Michael Aung-Thwin contested the Shan identity of the so-called Three Shan Brothers. In doing so, he challenged colonial and postcolonial historiography on Burma that repeated an error made by Arthur Phayre in the nineteenth century. Based on this misunderstanding, Aung-Thwin asserts, justification was assumed for the claim that late Pagan-era Burma had devolved into the chaos and fragmentation that would characterize the Ava period (fourteenth to sixteenth centuries).<sup>2</sup> Whether one agrees with Aung-Thwin’s conclusions or not, it is clear that prevailing perspectives on indigenous history as inherited from a colonial past need to be re-explored, not only to free indigenous histories from colonial projects, but also because new materials have come to light or, often more importantly, have been reinterpreted. Similar reinvestigations of the relationship between Arakan and Upper Burma during the Ava period are only beginning to be made.<sup>3</sup>

This is an enormous undertaking, given the poor state of historiography on Arakan. No acceptable general survey has yet been provided for Arakanese history, and whole centuries remain unstudied, highlighted by in-depth research of other periods.<sup>4</sup> Added to this problem is the weight given to Burman traditions concerning Arakan that found their way into *Ù Kalà*, and then into Konbaung-era court treatises and chronicles. Arakanese and Burman histories differ on many points, especially when important meetings took place. Much of this was the result of Burman preparations for the conquest of Arakan (which occurred in 1784/85), when stories legitimizing the imposition of Burman rule in Arakan needed to be posited in the record of Arakan's own history. Arakanese traditions, however, challenge the view of Burman dominance in the same trans-cultural meetings.

In this article, I will look at some of the Burman texts of Konbaung-era (1752-1885) Burma and how their authors anachronistically posited in them Burman authority in pre-Burman conquest Arakan. That is, these texts contain stories legitimizing a superior-inferior cultural hierarchy and history of Burman rule into the history of Arakan, especially for the period corresponding to Ava's height in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This 'embedding' of Burman authority, I will suggest, involved creating, in fact, a new history for Arakan of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. According to the "Burman" history of Arakan during these centuries, the Arakanese invited the Burmans to rule their land and a string of Burman-sponsored kings sat on the Arakanese throne. Arakanese chronicles which have survived, inscriptions, and architectural records, however, tell us a different story. These accounts suggest that the Burmans did not rule Arakan at all in the late fourteenth century, and when they did come to Arakan, the

Burmans came as invaders who were repeatedly repulsed. Finally, I will suggest, it may have been Arakan that provided Upper Burma with the concepts and people who made the Ava kingdom, and thus the Ava period, what it was, rather than *vice versa*.

At this point, I should also provide some background information on the Konbaung-era authors and the texts I refer to in this article. Ù Kalà belonged to a wealthy family and lived in Ava in Upper Burma in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Being a man of means and having access to royal libraries, he had the time and the resources to compile the Maha-ya-zawin-kyi (literally, the “great chronicle”) at some point between 1724 and 1730 (although the text basically covers Burmese history only up to 1711). Because many of Ù Kalà’s materials were no longer available after the mid-eighteenth century collapse of Ava in the 1752 (with the incineration of much of the royal library), most of the later Burmese chronicles have borrowed verbatim from Ù Kalà’s text.<sup>5</sup> One of these later chronicles is the so-called “Glass Palace Chronicle,” the Hmannan Maha-ya-zawin-taw-kyi, which was put together by a committee of monks, ministers, and brahmins commissioned by King Ba-kyi-daw (r. 1819-1837) in 1829. A more critical use of Ù Kalà was offered by Maha-si-thu Twin-thin-taik-wun in his Ya-zawin Thet (literally, “New Chronicle”), compiled in 1798. The inscriptions collected at Amarapura had been placed under this minister’s charge by Bo-daw-hpaya (r. 1782-1819), and thus his new chronicle makes use of these inscriptions to check (and correct) Ù Kalà’s chronicle for accuracy. In 1783, Zeiya-thinkhaya completed his Shwei-boun Nidàn, which is a treatise on court practices and the proper arrangement of the royal palace, the royal regalia, the personnel of the royal palace, and other things “royal.” Another significant court treatise is Shin San-dâ-lin-ka’s Mani-yadana-poun, which was

produced in 1781, is a record of the advice of the early fifteenth-century minister, Min-raza, to King Min-kaun of Ava (r. 1401-1422).<sup>6</sup>

## I

### **Konbaung Historiography on the Ava-Arakan Relationship**

Konbaung historians writing in 1781 and 1783, just on the eve of the 1784/5 Burman conquest of Arakan do not appear to have purposefully ‘invented’ traditions with which to legitimize the intended conquest of Arakan by the Burman kingdom. They did not need to: despite the loss of the royal library in 1752, a wide variety of source materials were available. Konbaung historians and commentators drew from a wide variety of sources, whether written in the form of chronicles, *arei-taw-pon*, *ei-kyin*, and treatises or through oral traditions. In this section, I will attempt to explain not only how these sources were used selectively for a particular Konbaung court project (legitimizing the Burman conquest of Arakan), but rather why these sources could so easily be put to this purpose.

In both written and oral Burman sources much of the information was not reinforced by epigraphic or other substantiating and datable materials. Many of these sources were compiled or developed relatively late, centuries after the events that were claimed to have been portrayed. As a result, chronicles such as that of ù Kalà, highly drawn upon in Konbaung-era historiography, were flawed, inaccurate, and often contained information constructed as part of legitimizing projects involved in Burman statecraft.

It would go too far to suggest that all of Û Kalà's entries concerning Arakan, the subject of this article, were purposeful constructions or misinterpretations, but it is true that Û Kalà neglected both epigraphic evidence and the indigenous Arakanese chronicles in compiling his record. On the other hand, Û Kalà's purpose was to illuminate the record of the rise and fall of kings, who could serve as models for Burman rulers of his day, and not to investigate the veracity of the information that he collected. The information was probably gleaned entirely from Burman sources no longer extant and this was likely coupled with the dangerous practice of trying to connect otherwise un-connectable bits of obscure information.

Konbaung-era writers, especially those of the late eighteenth century, worsened Û Kalà's failings. These Konbaung-era writers sought to reconstruct the court culture of the Restored Toungoo Dynasty, which had disappeared with the conquest of Ava in 1752 by Lower Burma Delta elites. Further, even before 1784, they were duty-bound to legitimize the Konbaung court's invasion of Arakan and the annexation of the Arakan Littoral to the Konbaung dominions. With these two goals in mind, resurrection and legitimation, Konbaung court writers drew upon Û Kalà, and to a lesser extent upon other sources, selectively, honing in on what was useful for their projects and excluding what was irrelevant, or more commonly, what was contradictory to their goals. This becomes apparent especially in two court treatises compiled in the early 1780s: Shin San-dâ-lin-ka's Mani-yadana-bon and Zeiya-thinkhaya's Shwei-boun Nidàn.

The most common theme, regarding the relationship between Arakan and Burma, that emerges in these two texts is that of a tradition of guidance provided to the people of Arakan by Burman kings, extending from the Pagan period up through the Avan period.

These texts suggest that a dynasty was established in Arakan by Alaungsithu of Pagan. Shin San-dâ-lin-ka's Mani-yadana-bon is the most explicit in this endeavor. When the Sak (Thet) people attacked and took Mindon, the king had the people of the village of Apyitsagiri gathered and moved to a new settlement which became known as "take and move" or, in Burmese, "ra-gine." As a result of modifications in this name in colloquial speech, we are told, the name was changed to "Rakhine" or what we now call Arakan.<sup>7</sup> This new settlement eventually became a kingdom, under Nan-kra-kri, who was said to have been installed as ruler in 1248.<sup>8</sup> Shin San-dâ-lin-ka extends from this Pagan-installed ruler, Nan-kra-kri, a single line of kings (seven kings in all) who ruled Arakan for the next 180 years, with an average reign of a quarter of a century per ruler. These rulers were Nan-kra-kri, Nan-kra-ngei, Saw-mon-nit, Saw-mei, Taw-ra-kri, Naw-rata (Nawarata or Anawarata), and Min-law-kra.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the fall of Pagan and Û Kalà's claim that Arakan broke away from the kingdom of Pagan in the late thirteenth century,<sup>10</sup> Zeiya-thinkhaya suggests the continued submission of Arakan, along with other regions of western mainland Southeast Asia to Upper Burman courts. In the fourteenth century, for example, it was said that the Arakanese king, together with the Yun, Gyun, and Linzin kings, entered into association with the King of Pinya (one of the post-Pagan capitals of fourteenth century Upper Burma), Ta-si-shin, and offered him their royal regalia. These four kings symbolically faced the royal capital of Pinya and each built a small temple at the four corners of Ta-si-shin's work of merit, the Shwezigon temple.<sup>11</sup> In doing so, the supremacy of the king of Pinya, the intermediary kingdom between Pagan and Ava, was recognized. I have not yet found corroboration for this story in the primary sources.

The Burman chronicles, however, imply that the high point of Burman dominance over Arakan was during the Ava period. This view is implicit in the emphasis placed upon Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei's lengthy considerations concerning the appointment of both Saw-mon-kri and his successor, Saw-mei. With the advice of the founder of the Avan dynasty, Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei, Saw-mon-kri, said to have been his uncle, was an ideal ruler.<sup>12</sup> Bolstered by Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei's advice, the Avan royal mandate to rule Arakan, and an Avan grant of the regalia of ruler-ship, the Burman chronicles say that Saw-mon-kri ruled Arakan well.<sup>13</sup> During his rule of Arakan, Saw-mon-kri was also said to have sent cultural items from Arakan to the Avan royal court, especially a diadem worn by Nan-kra-ngei.<sup>14</sup> This account seems to have been drawn from Ù Kalà and both Zeiya-thinkhaya and Maha-si-thu Twin-thin-taik-wun (hereafter, Twin Thin) generally support this account.<sup>15</sup>

There is no satisfactory evidence for the "Saw-mon-kri" episode in either Burman epigraphic sources or Arakanese chronicular sources. This Saw-mon-kri left no pagodas or other architectural remains of which I am currently aware. The suggestion that a line of seven kings ruled for one hundred and eighty years seems highly doubtful, considering that the first three kings of this dynasty were said to have ruled for 115 years altogether, from 1268 until 1383,<sup>16</sup> an average of thirty-eight years each. For later periods of Arakanese history, reigns typically lasted only a few years, before disease or old age took their toll, even briefer when usurpation took place. Reigns lasting over twenty years were highly uncommon and there is no reason to suppose that royal life spans were any greater in the pre-Mrauk-U period. Unfortunately, one of the few inscriptions currently available from fourteenth century Arakan, dated 1366, and placed at the Maha-hti pagoda near

Launkret, appears to be a misdated inscription placed there during the reign of the twelfth-century founder of the temple, King Gauliya of the Parein dynasty.<sup>17</sup>

We do have another epigraphic source, however, which documents and dates, and confirms, in part, the account in Shin San-dâ-lin-ka's Mani-yadana-bon (based upon Û Kalà's work, and continued by Twin Thin)<sup>18</sup> of the establishment of Naw-rata and his queen, the Avan princess Saw-pyi-kantha, as rulers of Arakan in the first decade of the fifteenth century.<sup>19</sup> The Avan ruler, Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei's successor, Min-kaun, responded to Arakanese raids on Yawswa, Launshei, and Kyakat, by appointing his son Min-rei-kyaw-swa as the commander of an Avan army which marched into Arakan.<sup>20</sup> Min-rei-kyaw-swa then placed an Avan candidate, Nawarata, on the throne, along with his queen, Saw-pyi-kantha. After the execution of Nawarata by a Mon army that invaded Arakanese thereafter, Min-rei-kyaw-swa was ordered into Arakan again in 1410, leaving Min-le-kyā as ruler of Launkret and Sukkatei as ruler of Sandoway, quickly followed by the return of Mon armies.<sup>21</sup> The remainder of this episode does not concern us here.

The Nawarata and Saw-pyi-kantha episode is important, as it is confirmed not only by the inscription I referred to above, but also by other Burman, Arakanese, and Mon sources. Although details vary, none of these accounts dispute the establishment by Avan rulers at Launkret during this period. This is perhaps the only "truly" historical event of Shin San-dâ-lin-ka's Mani-yadana-bon accounts that we have discussed thus far. As a result, it had to be made to fit into the scenario of the Arakanese kings suggested by Shin San-dâ-lin-ka and Zeiya-thinkhaya. The inscription does not tell the whole story but it does confirm (1) the date of the Burman conquest of Launkret, 1407, (2) the name of

the Avan-installed ruler, Anaw-rata (Nawarata), and (3) the event in which a Burman princess, who goes nameless, was raised as queen.<sup>22</sup>

I suggest that this need to tie information together, or rather to supplement documented information with fictional “filler,” led to the invention of the “Saw-mei” episode. Faced with a documented source which suggested that Ava invaded Arakan and set up a new king, the necessity arose to explain how the Avan-installed kings of Arakan had fallen after the reign of Saw-mon-kri. An ineffective ruler was needed and one, I assert, was ‘created’ to fill this need. According to Shin San-dâ-lin-ka, drawing again upon Û Kalà,<sup>23</sup> and carried on by Twin Thin,<sup>24</sup> Saw-mei was appointed by Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei to succeed Saw-mon-kri when that ruler died. In Arakan, the story goes, Saw-mei cut down the trees in the town of Laun-kret and “fed them as food to the elephants; he killed the cats who lived in the forest and the cats who lived in the town and ate them; and he ruled in a manner which was harsh and cruel.”<sup>25</sup> The Arakanese began to complain that Saw-mei cut down all their trees and ate all their cats, and so they rebelled, driving out Saw-mei.<sup>26</sup> As Shin San-dâ-lin-ka concludes this episode, Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei did not appoint another ruler of Arakan.<sup>27</sup> I tentatively suggest that an Arakanese minister, Myin-si, who sought refuge in Ava after he had seized the throne and was overthrown in a popular revolt after five months, may have provided the inspiration or “proof” for this story,<sup>28</sup> but there is no indication in the Arakanese sources that he was installed by Ava or that he was in any way involved with the Burmans before his flight. The name Saw-mei, it seems, may have been borrowed from Saw-mei-pwa, a royal consort and queen of Thintsi,<sup>29</sup> who was on the Arakanese throne within the same decade

that the Avan Saw-mei was said to have been installed on the Arakanese throne. Perhaps her name was misrecorded in Avan royal records as the name of the king.

Based in part upon selective gleaning from Û Kalà of critical episodes in Arakanese-Burman history, Shin San-dâ-lin-ka and Zeiya-thinkhaya (and carried into Twin Thin's work and the Hmannan Maha-ya-zawin-taw-kyi) suggest an Arakan from 1268 until 1430 which was completely influenced by the Burmans, especially during the Ava period. Arakan, according to this view, remained a tributary of Burma and was ruled by Burman-installed rulers. We are told that attempts to introduce cultural items into the Avan court, such as Nan-kra-ngei's diadem supposedly sent by Saw-mon-kri to Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei were frowned upon by Avan royal advisers like Min-raza.<sup>30</sup> Frequently inconsistencies appear in the texts, and the connections between the myths and the events do not provide a completely flowing account, but they consistently stress the precedents for Burman interference in the affairs of Arakan and a right to manage its affairs. Such "precedent" helped support Burma's annexation of Arakan in 1784. These also worked in conjunction with the Burman destruction and removal of Arakan's indigenous chronicles during the conquest.

## II

### **Reevaluating the Ava-Arakan Relationship**

Despite the Burman view of Arakan as a vassal of Upper Burma during the Ava period, or at least a lesser partner in cultural exchange there are brief but important

indicators that Arakan may not have been as subordinate as previously supposed. Arakanese traditions, for example, challenge the notion of Upper Burman cultural and political hegemony in several ways. Reliable sources also provide hints that Arakan played an influential role in Upper Burma's cultural, religious, perhaps even political developments.

Even Burman sources suggest that Arakan broke away from a tributary relationship with Pagan in the thirteenth century, if we do accept the notion that this tributary relationship existed at all. Such a tributary relationship does not reemerge in the traditions or the chronicles of Arakan, save for the conquest of Arakan by Ava several times in the early fifteenth century. Of course, for the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, we have to come to grips with the extremely long reign of "Min Di" who is said to have ruled for a century.<sup>31</sup> One would suspect that claims for the length of Min Di's rule overlap those of kings who have been forgotten. In any event, there is no indication in the Arakanese sources of Burman dominance during this period.

When we enter the mid-fourteenth century, however, Arakanese accounts and isolated references in the Burman sources, retained despite their contradiction of early Konbaung claims, suggest a more aggressive Arakanese kingdom and one which played an important role in Ava. In the early-mid fourteenth century, Arakan, in the typical fashion of an early modern state intent on developing and expanding its resources, power, and authority, was acting very little as the passive vassal it is supposed to have been. The Arakanese royal court sponsored slave-raiding expeditions into Upper Burma, against which the indigenous kingdoms were defenseless.

The Burman sources suggest that one captive youth, Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei, who would return to Upper Burma as an adult and found the kingdom of Ava itself. As the son of a nobleman (of Thayek), Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei was raised in the Arakanese royal court and an Arakanese (teacher) and monk guided his instruction.<sup>32</sup> It is unfortunate that we do not have the details of his instruction in Arakan, or any hint of what he may have seen. I speculate that he grew up with an insider's view of the Arakanese court, its culture, and its statecraft, ideas that may have guided his rise to, acquisition of, and his manner of conducting the kingship of Upper Burma as the founder of the kingdom of Ava.

It might be possible that Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei may not have originally come from Upper Burma at all, and the story of the slave-raid is a later invention meant to remove an Arakanese identity from the founder of the great thirteenth to early fifteenth century Burman kingdom. We have numerous references to unhappy courtiers from Arakan fleeing for safety or new opportunities in Upper Burma when their plans were thwarted in the court at Launkret.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei was one such man. Until further evidence is available, however, this suggestion must remain speculative.

We do know, however, that Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei's connections with Arakan were maintained after his rise as the King of Ava. We are told that Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei summoned his old teacher (and Buddhist monk) to the court of Ava and appointed him as the *sasana-baing*, or head of the *sangha* (the Buddhist monastic community).<sup>34</sup> Looking carefully at the chronicular account, one suspects that Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei had purified the religion in his domain with the help of Arakanese monks.<sup>35</sup> Konbaung-era texts, however, are not much help in understanding what occurred, either by avoiding a discussion of the Arakanese monk or by claiming that he was "unscrupulous" and thus

raised himself above the Upper Burman monks. The Sasanavamsa written by Paññasami in 1861, for example, tied an approach somewhere in between by avoiding references to the monk's Arakanese origins while at the same time describing the monks as at odds with the Upper Burman *sangha*.<sup>36</sup>

Upper Burma during the Ava period paid a good deal of respect to the Arakanese kings throughout the Ava period, a fact underemphasized in Konbaung-era accounts of the Ava period. This respect came not only from the Arakanese heritage of the foundation of the kingdom of Ava, its first king, and the chief monks of the *Avan sangha*, but also from Upper Burma's dependence upon Arakan for its connections to the outside world. Intercourse between Upper Burma and the maritime world otherwise had to pass through Lower Burma, under domination by hostile kingdoms, especially that of Hanthawaddy. In times of intense warfare between the kingdoms of Upper and Lower Burma, a connection to Arakanese seaports was an important factor in maintaining a window to the world for Ava, and a passage for luxury goods, and other items only accessible via maritime trade.<sup>37</sup>

To maintain access through the Arakan Roma range, Avan rulers repeatedly paid homage to the rulers of Arakan and in several important meetings, recognized the rulers of Arakan as not only independent, but also as equals, if not superiors to the landlocked Avan kings. The three chief meetings took place in 1454,<sup>38</sup> 1480,<sup>39</sup> and 1603.<sup>40</sup> The noticeable break during the fifteenth century was the result of better relations with the Mon kingdom and the unification of Upper and Lower Burma under the First Toungoo dynastic kings.<sup>41</sup>

These meetings also suggest a weakening of the Kingdom of Ava from the mid-fifteenth century, as we do not see again the repeated invasions that characterized the first quarter of the fifteenth century. Major invasions of Arakan by the Burmans do not resume until the First Toungoo kings united with tremendous results the resources of Upper and Lower Burma in the sixteenth century. Despite continued cultural development, Ava-period Burma was in the midst of political disintegration.<sup>42</sup> This corresponded to the rise of the kingdom of Arakan during the same period with a vigor perhaps not seen in the Arakan Littoral in the past. Backed by maritime commercial revenues, firearms, Muslim mercenaries, and a series of effective rulers, Arakan's rise in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries<sup>43</sup> paralleled Ava's political and, perhaps, economic decline. Konbaung-era histories drawing from Û Kalà and essentially Burman sources, as well as their own creativity, ignored Arakan's rise and little is said about the early Mrauk-U dynasty. To pay attention to this development and the demise of Ava may have been difficult at a time when "their" Burma was in the process of pulpifying Arakanese history and their identity.

## **Conclusion**

In this article, I have attempted to make three interrelated points. First, historiography on Arakan-Ava relations suggests ideas of cultural hierarchy (e.g. Burman superiority and Arakanese inferiority) rooted in Burman views of the period after the Konbaung conquest and annexation of Arakan, rather than earlier, more generous Burman views of Arakanese culture. Second, when we look at the history of a kingdom,

such as Arakan, which was absorbed by Burma, one of the great core polities of mainland Southeast Asia (the other two core polities being Thailand, and Vietnam), we have to recognize the projects of scholars from these core areas in the texts they have left us and the texts which we often, perhaps too often, rely. European colonial and postcolonial scholars often are targeted as the chief culprits in such perversions of local histories, but they are just as often the inheritors of a biased historiography of a privileged center. This adds an additional task to that of finding the subaltern in the elite sources. The additional task is to find the local history in the histories of eighteenth and nineteenth century political centers.

As for the third point, I stress that we are left with a history of Burma itself that has been dictated by extremely late sources. It is unlikely that late eighteenth century scholars of the Konbaung dynastic period fully understood the course of Burman cultural development in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This is suggested by the numerous and contradictory accounts, even within the same work, of the origins of names and practices. There are perhaps a half-dozen explanations in the Burman texts I have seen for the origins of the name “Rakhine.” Similar problems are likely involved in many of the “authoritative” passages of the Mani-yadana-bon, the Shwei-boun Nidàn, the Hmannan Maha-ya-zawin-taw-kyi, and going back a bit, Ù Kalà. Literature, religious concepts, and ideas of statecraft must have passed back and forth across the Arakan Roma between Arakan and Ava. Once we abandon the idea of Avan hegemony in Arakan during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and recognize the equality accorded to Arakan by Upper Burman courts, and perhaps even the superiority of Arakan in their relationship, questions quickly come to the fore concerning the direction of cultural

influence. So far, we have only hints of what was likely important Arakanese influence in Upper Burma during the Ava period. What ideas did Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei bring to Upper Burma, which allowed him to found one of the chief kingdoms of Burman history? What religious ideas were brought to Burman Theravada Buddhism by the Arakanese Buddhist monk who became the head of the *sangha* in the kingdom of Ava? What texts, scholars, religious missionaries, and so on, were brought into Ava via its connections across the Arakan Roma? Considerable work is before us, and the groundwork has only begun to be laid out.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Hong Liu, Timothy Barnard, and S. M. A. K. Fakhri of the National University of Singapore, and Atsuko Naono of the University of Michigan for their helpful comments and suggestions. The author is also thankful to U Saw Tun (Northern Illinois University) for his instruction in reading eighteenth and nineteenth century literary Burmese. Gratitude is also owed to Swapna Bhattacharya (University of Calcutta), Patricia Herbert (British Library), and Daw May Kyi Win (Northern Illinois University), for their help in obtaining some of the materials used in this paper. A previous version of this paper was presented at the International Convention of Asian Studies in Holland in June 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Aung-Thwin, "The Myth of the 'Three Shan Brothers' and the Ava period in Burmese History," *Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 4 (November, 1996): 881-901. This article was essentially republished as a chapter in Michael Aung-Thwin, *Myth & History*

---

in the *Historiography of Early Burma: Paradigms, Primary Sources, and Prejudices*, (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> I take on such a project, concerning religious interaction between Arakan and other areas of the Bay of Bengal and Upper Burma in Michael W. Charney, “Where Jambudipa and Islamdom Converged: Religious Change and the Emergence of Buddhist Communalism in Early Modern Arakan (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries),” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan 1999. A reinvestigation of illustrations in certain Dutch sources has taken early modern Arakanese historiography into the electronic age with Catherine Raymond and Alan Potkin’s CD-Rom: “Illustrating the Kingdom of Arakan in the XVIIth Century: An Arakanese Perspective from the Dutch sources,” (N. P.: Cultivate Understanding, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Despite years of inattention to Arakanese history, numerous works on this subject appeared in the last decade of the twentieth century. A look at some aspects of interaction between Arakan and Sri Lanka between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries was provided in Catherine Raymond. “Étude des Relations Religieuses Entre le Sri Lanka et l’Arakan du XIIe au XVIIIe Siècle: Documentation Historique et Evidences Archéologiques.” *Journal Asiatique* 283 (1995): 469-501. Sixteenth-century Arakan has been examined in Michael W. Charney, “Arakan, Min Yazagyi, and the Portuguese: the Relationship Between the Growth of Arakanese Imperial Power and Portuguese Mercenaries on the Fringe of Mainland Southeast Asia, 1517-1617,” Unpublished M.A. Thesis: Ohio University, 1993; idem, “The 1598-99 Siege of Pegu and the Expansion of Arakanese Imperial Power into Lower Burma,” *Journal of Asian History* 28, no. 1 (1994): 39-57; idem, “Rise of a Mainland Trading State: Rakhine Under the Early

---

Mrauk-U Kings, c. 1430-1603,” Journal of Burma Studies 3 (1998): 1-33; and Jacques Leider, “These Buddhist Kings With Muslim Names . . . A Discussion of Muslim Influence in the Mrauk-U Period,” in Etudes Birmanes en Hommage a Denise Bernot, edited by P. Pichard and Fr. Robinne, (Paris: EFEO, 1998): 189-215. On Seventeenth-century Arakan, we have Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Slaves and Tyrants: Dutch Tribulations in Seventeenth Century Mrauk-U,” Journal of Early Modern History 1, no. 3 (1997): 201-253 and Michael W. Charney, “Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom of Southeast Asia: Forces of Instability and Political Disintegration in Western Burma (Arakan), 1603-1701,” Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient 41, no. 2 (1998): 185-219. On eighteenth-century Arakan, we have Jacques Leider, “La Route de Am (Arakan): Contribution a l’etude d’une Route Terrestre entre la Birmanie et le Golfe du Bengale,” Journal Asiatique 282, no. 2 (1994): 335-370. On nineteenth-century Arakan, we have Jatswan Singh, “The Origins of British Burma: Arakan and Tenasserim, 1826-1852,” unpublished M.A. Thesis, (University of Malaya, 1992), and Michael W. Charney, “Chinese Traders on the Rice Coast: Singapore and the Triangulation of the Arakan-China Grain Networks, 1830-1855,” *forthcoming*. Fortunately, we have one doctoral student, Mizue Saito of Tokyo University, currently researching the topic of twentieth-century Arakan. Two recent dissertations cover precolonial Arakan more broadly: Michael W. Charney, “Where Jambudipa and Islamdom Converged: Religious Change and the Emergence of Buddhist Communalism in Early Modern Arakan (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries,” and Jacques Leider, *Le Royaume D’Arakan (Birmanie): Son Histoire Politique entre le Debut du XVe et la Fin*

---

du XVIIe Siecle,” (unpublished dissertation, Paris: Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> For a thorough analysis of Û Kalà, see Victor B. Lieberman, “How Reliable is U Kala’s Burmese Chronicle? Some New Comparisons,” Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 17, no. 2 (September 1986): 236-255 and Tin Ohn, “Modern Historical Writing in Burmese, 1724-1942,” in D. G. E. Hall (ed.), Historians of South East Asia, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 86-87.

<sup>6</sup> For a more thorough study of these works, see U Hla Pe, Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life, and Buddhism (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 35-67; U Tet Htoot, “The Nature of the Burmese Chronicles,” in D. G. E. Hall (ed.), Historians of South East Asia, 50-62; Tin Ohn, “Modern Historical Writing in Burmese, 1724-1942,” 85-93; and Victor B. Lieberman, “How Reliable is U Kala’s Burmese Chronicle?,” 236-255.

<sup>7</sup> Shin San-dâ-lin-ka, Mani-yadana-poun, (Rangoon: Hantha-waddy Press, 1901), 94-5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 95, 142.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>10</sup> Û Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyi, Hsaya U Khin Soes (ed.), 3 vols., (Rangoon: Hantha-waddy Press, 1961), I, 307.

<sup>11</sup> Zeiya-thinkhaya, Shwei-boun Nidàn, U Saw Tun and Michael W. Charney (trans.), unpublished ms., 26.

<sup>12</sup> Shin San-dâ-lin-ka, Mani-yadana-poun, 94.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

---

<sup>15</sup> Û Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyi, I, 364-367, Zeiya-thinkhaya, Shwei-boun Nidàn, U Saw Tun and Michael W. Charney (trans.), 51-2; and Maha-si-thu Twin-thin-taik-wun, Twin-thin Myanma Ya-zawin Thet, (Rangoon: Mingala Ponhneik Press, 1968), I, 214-5.

<sup>16</sup> Saw-mon-kri is said to have died in 1383. See Shin San-dâ-lin-ka, Mani-yadana-poun, 103.

<sup>17</sup> See inscription in Shei Haung Myanma Kyauksa Mya, (Rangoon: Department of Archaeology, n.d.): IV, 356-7.

<sup>18</sup> Maha-si-thu Twin-thin-taik-wun, Twin-thin Mvanma Ya-zawin Thet, I, 268, 270.

<sup>19</sup> Shin San-dâ-lin-ka, Mani-yadana-poun, 121.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 134-5; Maha-si-thu Twin-thin-taik-wun, Twin-thin Mvanma Ya-zawin Thet, I, 286.

<sup>22</sup> Inscription of the minister Naga-thamana, dated 1407, text provided in Shei Haung Myanma Kyauksa Mya, IV, 229.

<sup>23</sup> See Û Kalà's inclusion of this episode in Û Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyi, I, 368-62 (Û Kalà is misnumbered, hence the seemingly mistaken page numbers of this citation).

<sup>24</sup> Maha-si-thu Twin-thin-taik-wun, Twin-thin Myanma Ya-zawin Thet, I, 220-221.

<sup>25</sup> Shin San-dâ-lin-ka, Mani-yadana-poun, 105.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>28</sup> See Nga Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," [palm-leaf manuscript, number 3465a] AMs, n.d. [circa 1840], p. 121a, Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library, London. I follow my own system of pagination.

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 118b.

<sup>30</sup> Shin San-dâ-lin-ka, Mani-yadana-poun, 95.

<sup>31</sup> See discussion of this king in Nga Mi, “Rakhine Razawin,” 113b-118b.

<sup>32</sup> Û Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyi, I, 348-9, Maha-si-thu Twin-thin-taik-wun, Twin-thin Myanma Ya-zawin Thet, I 207, provide the details of Min-kyi-swa-saw-kei’s capture, presence in Arakan, and his return to Upper Burma, to become the royal founder of the Avan court in 1368, some thirty-five years after he had been taken away to Arakan.

<sup>33</sup> See the flight of the minister Myin-si to Pagan in 1397, in Nga Mi, “Rakhine Razawin,” 121a.

<sup>34</sup> Û Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyi, I, 362-363 [Again, there is a problem with pagination and this is the second set of pages number 362-3].

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., I, 363.

<sup>36</sup> Paññasami, The History of the Buddha’s Religion (Sasanavamsa), (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1986): 99-100.

<sup>37</sup> These meetings were likely due to considerations of access to maritime trade through Arakan when Mon hostility prevented trade by Upper Burma through Lower Burmese ports, I suggest some of this in reference to the Avan ruby trade in Michael W. Charney, “Rise of a Mainland Trading State,” 8-9.

<sup>38</sup> Û Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyi, II, 84.

<sup>39</sup> An early chronicle, which we now have only in translation, says that in 1480, the king of Ava and the King of Arakan met on the Arakan Roma Mountains. See Anglais 26-ms. de la Biblioth. nat. a Paris, “Extrait d’une Chronique Arakanaise,” p. 1. This source kindly provided to the author by Jacques Leider. Nga Mi, however, says that this meeting

---

was between the king of Arakan and the king [bayin] of Prome. See Nga Mi, “Rakhine Razawin,” 138a.

<sup>40</sup> Parabeik 30 (1603), Henry Burney Parabeik Collection, British Library, Oriental and India Office Collection.

<sup>41</sup> Atsuko Naono refers to some of this in Atsuko Naono, “Arakan and Burma During the First Toungoo Dynastic Period: An Analysis of the Direction of Cultural Interactions,” a paper delivered at the International Convention of Asian Scholars, The Netherlands, 28 June 1998.

<sup>42</sup> Victor B. Lieberman, Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580-1760, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984): 15.

<sup>43</sup> Discussed in Michael W. Charney, “Rise of a Mainland Trading State.” The discussion of Arakan after 1603 is taken up in Michael W. Charney, “Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom of Southeast Asia.”

<sup>44</sup> It should be noted that Pamela Gutman, although studying a much earlier period than is examined in this article, laid much of the groundwork upon which more recent scholarship has been built. See Pamela Gutman, “Ancient Arakan (Burma) With Special Reference to its Cultural History Between the 5th and 11th Centuries,” Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Australian National University, 1976.