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**Money-lending and contractual *thet-káyits*: A socio-economic
pattern of the later Kòn-baung period, 1819–1885**

Hla, Toe, Ph.D.

Northern Illinois University, 1987

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

MONEY-LENDING AND CONTRACTUAL THET-KÁYITS:
A SOCIO-ECONOMIC PATTERN OF THE LATER KÒN-BAUNG PERIOD,
1819-1885

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY
TOE HLA

DEKALB, ILLINOIS
DECEMBER 1987

Certification: In accordance with departmental and Graduate School policies, this dissertation is accepted in partial fulfillment of degree requirements.

Constance M. Wilson
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December 10, 1987
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ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to bring the attention of scholars to the forgotten records of money-lending, land and human mortgages, obligatory notes, and other forms of written agreements, which were known as thet-káyits, because these documents show a clear picture of social and economic relations among the different social groups. The study opens with a brief discussion of Kòn-baung social structure, agriculture, and trade. Then follows a detailed discussion identifying the money-lenders and land owners, explaining why people became indebted, the role the monastic order played in money-lending directly or indirectly, and the impact of British colonialism; the economy, King Mìn-dòn's monetary and agrarian reforms are also considered. The major chapters are based on the information provided by these thet-káyits.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>AMC</u>	<u>Ámyín Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>BGC</u>	<u>Byan-gyá Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>GUBSS</u>	<u>J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States.</u>
<u>JBRS</u>	<u>Journal of the Burma Research Society.</u>
<u>JSEAS</u>	<u>Journal of Southeast Asian Studies.</u>
<u>KBLC</u>	<u>Kán-bálu State High School Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>KKC</u>	<u>Kyauk-ka Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>KLC</u>	<u>Ko Leì Corypha Palm Leaf MS Collection.</u>
<u>KSC</u>	<u>Kyáw Shìn Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>LDC</u>	<u>Lòn-daw Taik Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>LPC</u>	<u>Hla Hpei Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>LZC</u>	<u>Le-zin Corypha and Palmyra Palm Leaf MSS Collection.</u>
<u>MADC</u>	<u>Mandalay Archaeological Survey Department MS Collection.</u>
<u>MDBC</u>	<u>Mon-daing-bin monastery Corypha Palm Leaf MS Collection.</u>
<u>MGC</u>	<u>Min Hla Gon Yaung Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>MMTC</u>	<u>U Maung Maung Tin Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>MNC</u>	<u>Min Nwe Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>MUHC</u>	<u>Mandalay University History Department Collection.</u>
<u>MYC</u>	<u>Mon-ywèi Corypha Palm Leaf MS Collection.</u>
<u>NKC</u>	<u>Nwe-táme Kyaw Hkin Párábaik and Palmyra Palm Leaf MSS Collection.</u>
<u>NLC</u>	<u>Rangoon National Library and Museum Párábaik and Corypha Palm Leaf MSS Collection.</u>

<u>NTC</u>	<u>Nwà-hteìn Palmyra Palm Leaf MS Collection.</u>
<u>PDC</u>	<u>Pyìn-daw monastery Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>PTC</u>	<u>Pin-tin monastery Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>ROB</u>	Than Tun, ed., <u>Royal Orders of Burma.</u>
<u>RUCL</u>	<u>Rangoon Universities Central Library Parabaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>STC</u>	<u>Sálin Thu-gaùng Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>TGC</u>	<u>Taung-gwin monastery Collection.</u>
<u>TSMC</u>	<u>Thit-hseín Taik Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>TTTC</u>	<u>Thein Than Tun Párábaik and Corypha Palm Leaf MSS Collection.</u>
<u>WBC</u>	<u>Wùn-byeí monastery Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>YTC</u>	<u>U Thaung Párábaik MS Collection.</u>
<u>Yan-dábo</u>	<u>A Burmese Record of the Yan-dábo Treaty From the Peace Talks to the Final Settlement of the War Indemnity, Párábaik MS.</u>

GLOSSARY

Áhmú-dàn: Crown servicemen.

Áhmú-dàn-sà-myei: Land granted to crown servicemen.

Áhmyaw: A kind of increase, apart from interest, customarily demanded on a loan without security.

Ála: One who was born to the union of an athi and kat-pa or outsider.

Ánauk-yòn: The Ladies' Court.

Ású-pon-the(i): Fixed payment of land rent.

Áthi: Tax-paying people who were not bound to any service group and who lived in their native place.

Áthi-myei: Communal land that could be brought under cultivation by any member of áthi.

Átò: Interest

Átwìn-wun: Royal secretary or privy councillor.

Áya-daw-myei: State lands.

Bálf-dága: One who built a mosque.

Ban-da-zò: Steward.

Bò-bábaing-myei: Private lands.

Bon-myei: Communal land.

Byei-daik: Inner Court or Secretariat.

Chin-ywèi: A seed of abrus precatorious, or a unit of weight in monetary system that equals 1/8 of a pè.

Dága: Donor or benefactor.

Dháma-ù-chá-myei: Land acquired by right of first clearing.

Dhammá-that: Coded civil law.

Gaìng-dauk: Chief Abbot in a township.

Gaìng-ok: Chief Abbot in a district.

Hlut-taw: The highest administrative body or supreme court.

Hpáyà-dága: One who built a pagoda.

Hpáyà-kyun: Pagoda slave.

Hpáyà-myei: Land dedicated to a pagoda (glebe land).

Hpyat-sa: Court decision.

Hsat-tàn: A debt-settlement note.

Hsaya-daw: A monk who was conferred with a title of Rāja Guru (royal teacher) by the King.

Kaìng: Vegetable cultivation in inundated areas.

Kat-pà: An outsider, an athi who settled in another place.

Ko-nei: Entering into bondage.

Ko-nei-ngwei: Bondage loan.

Kon-hpet: Sharecropper.

Kyat: A unit of weight, 1/100 of a viss.

Kyat-kè: A certain portion of alloy in kyat weight that was compounded in the ywet-ni silver.

Kyat-tet-daing: A certain portion of alloy in kyat weight that was to be compounded into a good quality silver to get ywet-ni equivalent.

Kyaung-dága: One who built a monastery.

Kyaung-kyun: Monastery slave.

Kyei-hmú-ywa-ta-hsaung: To pay an impost levied on a village.

Kyun: Bondsman, servant, slave, subject.

Lámaing: Crown lands assigned to praedial slaves or war captives; it also refers to crown farmers.

Lámaing-wun: Commandant of the Lámaing Regiment.

Le: Wet cultivation land or paddy land.

Le-paung: Land mortgage.

Let-hpwé: Gift given in a ceremony of either marriage or noviciation.

Lok-hpet: Sharecropping.

Lok-myei: Land allotted to servicemen for cultivation.

Mìn-peì-myei: Land given outright by a ruler.

Mù: A unit of weight, 1/10 or 1/8 of a kyat.

Mù-kè: A certain portion of alloy in mù weight, that was compounded in ywet-ni silver.

Mù-tet-daing: A certain portion of alloy in mù weight to be compounded in good quality silver to get ywet-ni.

Myei-daing: Chief of land tracts.

Myei-daw: Crown land.

Myei-hmàn-ngwei-tò: Non-usufructory mortgage.

Myó-thu-gyi: Hereditary Chief of a town.

Myó-wun: Governor or Chief Constable of a town.

Nàn-zin-áya-daw-myei: The king's private land.

Nat-myei: Spirit land; land dedicated to a spirit.

Ngwei-we-ngwei-baung-myei: Land bought with money.

Párábaik: Black folded book.

Pè: A unit of weight, 1/20 or 1/16 of a kyat.

Pe: A unit of land measure that equals approximately 1.77 acres.

Pwè-zà: Assayer, broker, or assessor.

Sà-myei: Land allotted to servicemen for their maintenance.

Saw-bwa: Shan hereditary chief.

Sit-kè: A military officer.

Sit-tàn: Statement of a hereditary chief concerning his jurisdiction, and right and responsibilities.

Táyauk-táhnán-zà: Sharecropping.

Thet-káyit: A written contracted agreement, such as an obligatory note concerning money-lending, land mortgaging and other kinds of contracts.

Thu-gyì: Headman of a village.

Thwei-thauk-gyì: "Great blood drinker," title for a military officer of certain rank.

Ú-yin: Orchard or garden.

Wun-dauk: Deputy Minister or Under Secretary of State.

Wun-gyì: Minister.

Wun-zà-myei: Land granted to officials.

Wut-tágan-myei: Religious land.

Ya: Dry cultivation land.

Ywa-hsaw: village crier.

Ywei-gyì: the seed of adenanthera pavonina or a unit of weight, 1/4 of a pé.

Ywet-ni: Red leaf or flowered silver, the standard currency.

Zeì: Market, or trading center.

INTRODUCTION

In studying Frank Joseph Shulman's Burma, An Annotated Bibliographical Guide to International Doctoral Dissertation Research 1898-1985,¹ one will find that there are thirty-six scholars who have contributed to Burmese history of the Kòn-baung period (1752-1885). The majority of scholars focused their studies on Kòn-baung politics and Burma's relations with her neighboring countries, especially with British India. They relied heavily upon British sources. As a matter of fact, their views on Burmese society are similar to those of the British colonizers. Since they had no access to Burmese sources, they were not able to make a contribution to the socio-economic history of that period. Even Burmese scholars have not made any attempt to study the social life of that period based on the documents from the major strata of the society: the áhmú-dàns or crown service groups, and the áthis or non-áhmú-dàns of the tax-paying people. They relied primarily upon the inscriptions, the literature, and the administrative records.² However, for the study of Burmese socio-economic life, these records cannot give full information.

What kinds of documents are needed for the investigation of the socio-economic life of the Kòn-baung people? The money-lending records, known as thet-káyits, are a primary source of socio-economic information. These documents were little known to scholars until Yei-u U Thaung's articles on rural life in the Kòn-baung period appeared intermittently in the Lok-thà pyi-thú neí-zin (Working

People's Daily in Burmese language) during the late 1960s and the early 1970s.

One can find these documents in párábaiks (black, folded books) kept in the university libraries of Mandalay and Rangoon, and in the National Library of Burma in Rangoon. Many in the past had perished due to war, natural calamity, and lack of preservation. But a researcher can still glean those documents that are extant under the custody of the descendants of the nobility, the hereditary chiefs, and the moneylenders, or under the custody of some Buddhist monasteries, or of some interested persons.

This study is an attempt to investigate later Kòn-baung society through the moneylending thet-káyits. The period under study extends from A.D. 1819 to A.D. 1885. During this period there reigned five kings, namely Ságaing or Bágyì-daw (1819-1837), Shwei-bo or Tha-ya-wádi (1837-1846), Págan (1846-1853), Mìn-dòn (1853-1878), and Thi-bàw (1878-1885). Generally speaking, this period was one of decline and social unrest. Three Anglo-Burmese wars broke out in this period. Therefore, this study also investigates the impact of these events on Burmese socio-economic life, as revealed in the thet-káyit records.

Thet-káyit documents were written on three kinds of writing materials: on the párábaiks, on the palmyra palm leaves (hàn-ywet), and on the corypha palm leaves (pei-ywet). First a draft of thet-káyit was made on a párábaik with a soap-stone pencil in the presence of the component parties and the witnesses. The writer then copied it on a palmyra palm leaf to be kept by the other party,

the mortgagor or the borrower, and on a corypha palm leaf to be kept by the moneylender or mortgagee. All of these were regarded as legal documents since they were made in the presence of both contracting parties and the witnesses, including an assayer, a weigher, and a writer. Henry Gouger, a British merchant who came to Burma in 1822, writes in his Personal Narrative of Two Years Imprisonment in Burmah about Burmese methods of handling contracts:

Their very loose manner of committing engagements to writing astonished me. A coarse thick paper, like pasteboard, made of bamboo macerated and pulped, and rendered black by a preparation of charcoal and other substances, is written on with a stick of soap-stone, just as we use our slate and slate pencil, the writing being as easily obliterated by a damp sponge. On this the bond is written, the names of the witnesses being inserted, and without any signature, either of the party bound or by the witnesses, is placed in the possession of the creditor. In fact, it partakes only the character of the memorandum. At first, I demurred to such a frail document, but on being assured it was their custom, and that the debt could be established by the witnesses, I submitted, though it must be confessed a less binding document, or one more liable to evasion, can hardly be imaginable.

It is an arduous and time-consuming work to study documents written on the palmyra palm leaves that are known as thet-káyit-hkwei or coiled thet-káyit. They are usually kept in the kitchen above the fireplace in order to be smoked to retard decay and insect-bite. Earth oil was also occasionally applied to preserve them. As a matter of fact, they are so brittle that they break into pieces if they are spread without being soaked for an hour or so in kerosene. If they are soaked in water before spreading, they become puffy and letters are illegible.

So far, nearly two thousand thet-kayits have been collected from the following townships: Bú-dálin, Chaùng-ù, Dáze, Dádà-ù (Ava), Hsàw, Ìn-leì, Kán-bálu, Kyauk-hse, Kyùn-hlá, Laùng-shei, Mádáya, Mandalay, Meik-hti-la, Mon-ywa, Myìn-gyan, Myìn-mu, Páhkòk-ku, Pauk, Pwín-byu, Ságaing, Sálín, Sei-tok-táya, Shwei-bo, Sín-gù, and Taung-dwìn-gyì (see Map in Appendix 1). They provide a great deal of information about Kòn-baung social life and about the ywet-ni-based monetary system, which is complex and difficult to understand. As is known, the ywet-ni system died out after 1865, the year in which King Mìn-dòn introduced a coinage. Moreover, since the establishment of the British colonial administration in Burma in 1886, both the form and the content of money-lending practices also changed. Thus, these documents have become historical relics. They are now brought to light as a source for the study of later Kòn-baung society.

It is evident that the thet-káyit practice among the Burmese people came into existence with the advent of Buddhism in Pagan (1044-1287), which conveyed a new way of life and thinking to Burmese society. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that there are many Pali loan words in Burmese language and literature. Thet-káyit (sakkaraj), which means a "date" or a "year," is one of them.⁴ Almost all of the Pagan inscriptions start with this word. For example, one inscription reads:

Sakkaraj 554 Bhalakuin year Friday 5th waxing of Ta poñ, Cau Mwan San together with her daughter of boundless faith, desirous of escaping the misery of the round of rebirths and of attaining nirvana made an enclosure of brick round Amana Lake.

This style of writing was established in recording historical events--the annals and chronicles. The title-deeds, money loans, mortgages, etc. were also written in the same fashion, starting with the word thet-káyit or sakkaraj. Therefore, these documents came to be known as thet-káyits or thet-káyit-sa-gyoks, meaning a dated written contract or a bond. Later it came to mean a contract of any sort.

Anthropologists say that money-lending with interest emerged and became common in urbanized agrarian societies. In Burma the earliest urbanized agrarian society so far known to us was that of the Pyu, who founded such cities as Beik-thánò, Han-lìn, Tháyeyi-hkit-táya (Sri Ksetra), and others. The Pyu era lasted about one millennium (c. 100 B.C. - c. A.D. 900). Silver coins and metal weights have been unearthed from these cities, an indication of the use of money in commerce. At Han-lìn and Tháyeyi-hkit-táya, inscriptions on stone, on burial urns, and on gold plates have also been found. Most importantly, the Pyu learned not only the art of writing but also the recording of historical events with dates.⁶ Even the Burmese word "hnit" for year is derived from "sni:" of the Pyu.⁷ The historical references suggest that there might have been a system of money-lending even though there are no documentary records.

At Pagan, however, contracts between parties about their socio-economic relationships were of common practice. Written agreements were made on palmyra palm leaves⁸ or on corypha palm leaves.⁹ Historical references make mention that seals were applied to

these documents.¹⁰ Therefore, it can safely be concluded that contracts and bonds with precise dates were well established in this period. Such written agreements were called sa-gyok or written contracts.¹¹

Unfortunately, since few documents are available on this issue, we cannot discuss the Pagan system in detail. We do not know how the contracts were made, what terms were agreed upon, etc. We do know that the transfer of property was considered a solemn affair. It was made before the witnesses and a weigher. We may note its solemnity, for in one inscription, dated A.D. 1244, a grand feast was given "to mark off the success of the transaction and to gain public recognition of the new ownership."¹² It was, as anthropologists call it, a kind of potlatch or the like.¹³ Both the witnesses and a weigher played an important role in every business transaction, since there was no coinage, and silver in fragments of all sizes circulated in the country. Some inscriptions refer to these people in lawsuits over the ownership of land or kyun for which witnesses were summoned to appear before the court to give testimony.¹⁴ This being so, "hkin piy e,"--meaning "weighed and given"--was a usual phrase often found in the Pagan inscriptions.¹⁵

As the silver lumps, the fineness of which varied, were passed, it was required to have a chisel and a mallet to cut the silver, a set of weights and a scale to weigh silver bits, and a pwè-zà or assayer to make an assay of the paid silver. One can find in Pagan inscriptions the mention of klap or kyat (1/100 of viss), of buil or bo (1/20 of viss), and of visa or beik-tha or viss.¹⁶ The system seems

to be similar to, if not the same as, the system used in the Kòn-baung period. The metals of the period were gold, silver, and copper--with silver the most common. Ever since this time, all forms of money or currency have been called ngwei--meaning silver.

The fall of Pagan was followed by the disintegration of Burma for over two hundred years. The economy deteriorated as well. With a view to economic recovery, the learned poets of the Ava period (1364-1555) urged people to grow more crops, to trade, and to lend money on reasonable interest rates so that wealth could be accumulated.¹⁷ It is from this period that the deeds of money loans and mortgages were called thet-káyits.¹⁸ Because of political instability there was no external trade and little inter-regional trade. However, moneylending on interest or on the security of either land or labor continued, as is shown in the literary records, although buying and selling were not active in the economically weak and politically disintegrated society of Ava.

The Taung-ngu period (1526-1752), on the other hand, saw the reunification and integration of Burma, though it must be admitted that internal political disturbances did occur. Political stability and economic recovery or prosperity to some extent were achieved during the 1630s and 1640s as a result of the vigorous efforts of King Tha-lun (1629-1648). But after his death the practice of selling children by áhmú-dàns seemed to prevail. We find several edicts of post-Tha-lun kings that prevented indebted servicemen from being taken away as debtor-kyuns by their creditors.¹⁹ Moreover, moneylenders were also forbidden to sue indebted peasant farmers

during the growing season.²⁰ This royal edict became a precedent for the Kòn-baung kings and was repeatedly issued in this period until the reign of King Thi-bàw (1878-1885),²¹ suggesting that the kings gave protection to peasant farmers and that their protection was not effective. This will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Apart from money-lending and mortgages, there were other documents that were also called thet-káyits, such as the division of property before parents passed away (ámwei-pèi); the division of property after the death of parents (ámwei-hkwè); written agreements or obligatory notes (hkan-wun-gyet); court decisions over disputes on the ownership of land, kyun, etc. (hpyat-sa); settlement of debt (hsat-tàn); gift-giving on such occasions as the marriage and noviciating ceremonies (let-hpwé); sharecropping (lok-hpet); and sale or purchase contracts (yaùng-we). All of these were made solemnly in the presence of authorities or respectable elders. Witnesses, including a draftsman, a writer, an assayer or broker, and a weigher, were necessarily present in all business transactions whereby the thet-káyits were drawn by the contracting parties. Of them, land mortgages (le-paung), money loans (ngwei-chèi) and bondage loans (ko-nei) were most common. So far, the thet-káyits from the pre-Badon period, that is, 1752-1782, are very few. In this study all these forms of thet-káyits are used as source materials for the Kòn-baung socio-economic life.

The study of the thet-káyits is organized into eight chapters. The first three chapters, on class structure, agriculture, and trade, provide essential background. They are intended to acquaint the

reader with the social and economic conditions in which money-lending was practiced.

Chapters 4-7 form the main body of the study. Chapter 4 looks at the social groups who lent money and the conditions under which loans were made. Chapter 5 examines the relationship between Buddhist practices, the Buddhist monastic order, and money-lending, and Chapter 6 considers the impact of money-lending on the common people, the debtors. Chapter 7 deals with King Mìn-dòn's efforts to reform the monetary system and to encourage economic development. The main source of data throughout is the thet-káyits, and as much information about Kòn-baung social and economic life as possible is extracted from them.

An explanation of the Burmese monetary units, weights, and land measures, which are assumed to be one of the arteries of this study, is also included. Without this knowledge, readers could not easily understand the thet-káyits.

Burmese Monetary Units

The thet-káyits explain how the Kòn-baung monetary system worked. Information about the Burmese monetary system by European travelers, missionaries, and diplomats who came to Burma from the Sixteenth Century through King Mìn-dòn's reign is ample. I would like to cite Howard Malcom, who writes:

The country has no coinage. Silver and lead pass in fragments of all size, and the amount of every transaction is regularly weighed out; as was done by the ancients.... It is cast by the assayers, in thin round cakes, weighing two or three ticals, but is cut up with a mallet and chisel, to suit each sale. The price of a thing, therefore, is always stated in weight, just as if we should say, in

answer to a question of price, "an ounce" or "a dram." When an appearance like crystalization, is upon the centre of the cake, it is known to be of a certain degree of alloy, and is called "flowered silver." Of this kind, which is called Huet-nee, the tical is worth fifteen per cent. more than the Sicca rupee. The Dyng has the flowered appearance over all the cake, in larger and longer crystals; and is cast into cakes weighing about twenty ticals; but varies exceedingly in fineness, being of all qualities from Huet-nee to ten per cent. purer. It is assumed to be five per cent. purer.

An inferior kind of silver, even to twenty-five per cent. alloy, circulates freely, for smaller barter. The people, however, are not deceived in its quality, for the degree of purity is detected by them with great readiness, chiefly by the appearance left on the cake at cooling.²²

As metals were used in weight, we should know the units of Burmese weights. Theoretically, the lowest unit of weight began at an invisible atom called pára-ma nú-myu.²³ In practice, the smallest unit begins with a weight of yweì seed. There are two kinds of yweì seeds: chin-yweì or abrus precatorious; and yweì-gyì or adenanthera pavonina. The latter is twice as large as the former.²⁴ Eight chin-yweì or four yweì-gyì make one pè in weight. The largest unit of the weight is beik-tha or viss, which consists of one hundred kyats or ticals. The divisions between them are given in Table 1.

In the Kòn-baung thet-káyits no mention is made of bo, and the weights used throughout the later Kòn-baung period were not always uniform. King Bádon, who made an unsuccessful attempt to introduce a coinage system, asked his Primate of the Monastic Order which of the three versions--one commonly used among the people in which eight yweì made one pè, another in which six yweì made one pè, and another in the Ábeik-dhan (A Pali Dictionary) in which two yweì made one pè--was correct.²⁵ When the Primate's answer seemed vague, the

king asked the same question again²⁶ because the king was very much concerned about the standardization of weights as part of his plans to introduce coins.

Table 1
Burmese Monetary Units in Weight

8 <u>chin-ywèi</u> (or 4 <u>ywèi-gyi</u>)	1 <u>pè</u>
2 <u>pè</u>	1 <u>mù</u>
2 <u>mù</u> 1 <u>pè</u> (or 5 <u>pè</u>)	1 <u>mat</u>
4 <u>mat</u>	1 <u>kyat</u> or tical
5 <u>kyat</u>	1 <u>bo</u>
20 <u>bo</u> (or 100 <u>kyat</u>)	1 <u>beik-tha</u>

One of the major tasks of every Burmese king, soon after ascending the throne, was the standardization of weights and measurements. Álaùng-mìn-táyà (1752-1760), the founder of the Kòn-baung dynasty, rose to be king after serving as myó-thu-gyi or hereditary chief of a town called Mok-hsò-bo or Shwei-bo. He was not familiar with palace customs. Fortunately, he had advisers who had been ministers of the last king of the restored Taung-ngu dynasty. A minister by the name of Báya-thei-ná was one of them, and he prepared for Álaùng-mìn-táyà a list of weights cast by kings of previous dynasties, addressing him thus: "I, Báya-thei-ná, Your

Majesty's slave, placing the golden feet on my head, submit this supplication."²⁷ His work covered the periods of Pìn-yá (1298-1364), Ságaing (1315-1364), Ava (1364-1555), and restored Taung-ngu (1597-1752). There were altogether seventeen beasts and birds used as effigies of the weights by the 34 kings. They are given in Table 2. The effigies of the weights are arranged in alphabetical order, and the kings are in chronological order.

Land Measure

In the Pagan inscriptions, land dedicated to religion is given in pe. According to King Bádon's inscription, which can still be found in situ in the Chàn-myá Tha-zi police station in Mandalay, there were two kinds of pe: the mìn-pe or royal pe, and the págadí-pe or people's pe, of which the former was twice as large as the latter. The measure is given in Table 3.²⁸

One págadí-pe equals 1.7718 acres.²⁹ In the land mortgage thet-káyits the mention of pe is seldom found, because only the royalty and the nobility used to give the land measure in pe. As for common people, they were wont to mention the size of their land vaguely, by "labor," "capacity," or "outturn." For example, a yoke of buffalo or oxen work, a plot of so many transplanters' work, a plot that can be sown in so many baskets of such and such crops, a plot that can be transplanted with numbers of wisps of paddy seedlings, and a plot that yields so many baskets of paddy are their usual descriptions about the size of their lands. Their equivalents to acreage are given in Table 4.³⁰

Table 2

Weights and Kings Who Cast Them

<u>Effigies</u>	<u>Kings</u>
<u>Aùng</u> (yak)	Thádò-dhammá-ya-za (1629-48)
<u>Byaìng</u> (pond heron)	Táráhpà (1401-1402)
<u>Byaìng-auk</u> (brown paddy bird)	Nyaung-yàn-mìn (1597-1605)
<u>Gyò-gya</u> (crane)	Mìn-yè-mìn-gyì (1349)
<u>Hìn-tha</u> (sacred goose)	Ngà-zì-shin Kyaw-swa (1342-50)
<u>Hìn-tha-ni</u> (red sacred goose)	Mìn-gaung-gyì (1402-21)
	Kyèi-taung-nyo (1426-27)
	Kyá-zwa (1348-49)
	Mìn-byauk (1352-54)
	Thádò-mìn-sàw (1554-84)
<u>Hseik</u> (goat)	Thi-háthu (1422-26)
<u>Hsin</u> (elephant)	Tho-han-bwà (1526-42)
<u>Kyet</u> (fowl)	Kyaw-swa-nge (1350-59)
<u>Ok-aw</u> (cuckoo)	Mìn-gyì-swa-zaw-kè (1368-1401)
<u>Saìng</u> (a species of wild <u>Taurus</u>)	Thádò-mìn-hpya (1364-68)
<u>Tha-lí-ka</u> (a large mina bird)	Thi-háthu (1312-22)
<u>Tò</u> (a kind of fabulous beast)	Mò-nyìn-mìn-táyà (1427-40)
<u>Tò-aùng</u> (with bull body)	Ú-zána (1322-42)
	Shwei-daung-tet (1336-48)
	Shwei-nàn-kyáw-shin (1501-26)
	Tánìn-gánwei-mìn (1714-33)
<u>Tò-myìn</u> (with horse body)	Táráhpà (1349-52)
	Máha-dhammá-ya-za-dí-pátí (1733-51)
<u>Wun</u> (bear)	Mìn-hlá-nge (1425)
<u>Za-máyi</u> (a fabulous bird)	Mìn-yè-kyaw-zwa (1440-43)

Table 3
Burmese Land Measure

7 widths of paddy called <u>yathei-saba</u>	1 <u>let-thit</u>
8 <u>let-thits</u>	1 <u>maik</u>
3 <u>maiks</u>	1 <u>taung</u>
5 <u>taungs</u>	1 <u>hkan</u>
7 <u>taungs</u>	1 <u>ta</u>
10 <u>tas</u> square	1 <u>gan</u>
25 <u>tas</u> square	1 <u>págadí-pe</u>
35 <u>tas</u> , 2 <u>taungs</u> , 1 <u>maik</u> and 4 <u>let-thits</u> square	1 <u>mìn-pe</u>

Table 4
Land Measures by "Labor," "Capacity," and "Produce"

<u>Description</u>	<u>Equivalents in Acreage</u>
A yoke of buffalo work in <u>le</u>	8-10
<u>ya</u>	12-15
<u>kaing</u>	10-12
5 transplanters' work	1
1 1/2 baskets of paddy sowing land	1
200 wisps transplanted land	1
1 basket of sesame sowing land	8
1 basket of millet sowing land	3
20-35 baskets of paddy producing land	1

Romanization of Burmese Words

In Romanizing Burmese words, titles and place names, the "standard conventional transcription" adopted by J. W. A. Okel is employed.³¹ The accents grave (`) for heavy tones, and acute (´) for creaky tones, are used. Some "place" names which are well established and familiar to scholars, i.e., Rangoon, Mandalay, Prome, Martaban, are left as they are. Also, some personal names are not changed if they are spelled by the persons themselves. Pali loan words are spelled as they are pronounced by the Burmese people, like thet-káyit for sakkaraj.

Conversion of Burmese Dates

All forms of thet-káyits bear dates in Burmese. In this study, all Burmese dates are converted into, and given in, Christian equivalents, by using Yi Yi's `In-gálek myan-ma pyet-hkádein, ei-di 1675-1824³² and Hsáya Mauk's Yò-yò shìn-shìn hkit-mi hnit 250 pyet-hkádein (A.D. 1738-1983).³³ Except in citations of the thet-káyits, the Burmese dates are not given. Christian dates are used throughout the entire study.

NOTES

¹Published by the Asia Program, The Wilson Center (1896); see pp. 292-327.

²See Dr. Ma Yi Yi, "Burmese Sources for the History of the Konbaung Period 1752-1885," Journal Southeast Asian History 6, no. 1 (March 1965): 48-66.

³Henry Gouger, Personal Narrative of Two Years Imprisonment in Burmah (London: John Murray, 1860), pp. 63-64.

⁴U Htun Myint, Pali-thet Wàw-ha-rá Ábeik-dhan (Rangoon: Tet-kátho Pon-hneik-taik, 1969), pp. 342-43.

⁵Pe Maung Tin, "Buddhism in the Inscriptions of Pagan," Journal of the Burma Research Society, vol. 26, pt. 1 (1936): 53.

⁶C. O. Blagden, "The 'Pyu' Inscriptions," JRBS 7, no. 1 (1917): 42-43.

⁷Ibid., p. 42.

⁸Pe Maung Tin and G. H. Luce, comps., Inscriptions of Burma 5 portfolios (Rangoon: Rangoon University Press, 1933-56), Plate 417, line 6.

⁹Ibid., Plate 296, line 25.

¹⁰Than Tun, Hkit-haùng Myan-ma Ya-záwin (Rangoon: Máha Dágon-taik, 1969), p. 162.

¹¹Pe Maung Tin and G. H. Luce, Inscriptions of Burma, Plate 262, line 20.

¹²Than Tun, "Maha Kassapa and His Tradition," JBRBS 42, pt. 2 (1959): 101-102.

¹³See Lewis Hyde, The Gift (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), pp. 9, 28-32; and also see Marcel Mauss, "The Gift," trans. Ian Cunnison (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1967), pp. 34-39.

¹⁴Michael Aung-Thwin, Pagan: The Origins of Modern Burma (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), p. 84.

¹⁵Pe Maung Tin and G. H. Luce, Inscriptions of Burma, Plate 74, lines 6 and 29.

¹⁶Pe Maung Tin and G. H. Luce, Inscriptions of Burma, Plate 73, line 16.

¹⁷Kan-daw Mìn-kyaung Hsáya-daw, "Làw-ká Tha-rá Pyó," in Han-tha-wádi Hsòn-má-sa Paung-gyok (Rangoon: Han-tha-wádi Press, 1961), para. 12.

¹⁸Shin Máha Ráhtá Tha-rá, Sátú Dhammá Tha-rá Kò-gàn Pyó (Rangoon: Buddha Sasana Áhpwé Press, 1970), para. 150.

¹⁹King Pyei's edict dated 11 June 1664 in Than Tun, ed., The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598-1885, Pt. 2, A.D. 1649-1750 (Kyoto: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1985), p. 148 (hereafter Than Tun, ed., ROB); also see Victor B. Lieberman, Burmese Administrative Cycle, Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580-1760 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 107-109.

²⁰King Pyei's edict dated 21 March 1668, and King Mìn-yè Kyaw-din's edicts dated 10 April 1679, 5 October 1681 in Than Tun, ed., ROB 2, pp. 158, 176-78, 241-42.

²¹King Thi-baw's edict dated 28 March 1879, Párábaik MS, Wiu-byei Collection (hereafter WBC).

²²Howard Malcom, Travels in South-Eastern Asia: embracing Hindustan, Malaya, Siam and China: with notices of numerous Missionary Stations, and a full Account of the Burman Empire (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, n.d.), p. 176.

²³Mon-daing-bin Hsaya-daw, Thòn-bon Gádó, Sa-reik-tá Wa-reik-tá Hpáyà-shí-hkò (Rangoon: Han-tha-wádi Press, 1968), p. 65. Also see Mandalay University History Department Collection (MUHC) párábaik MS 467.

²⁴Judson's Burmese-English Dictionary, revised and enlarged by Robert C. Stevenson and Rev. F. H. Evelth (Rangoon: Baptist Board of Publications, 1966; reprint ed.), pp. 285, 864.

²⁵Maung-daung Hsáya-daw, Ámei-daw-hpyei (Mandalay: Zábú-meik-hswei-taik, 1961), p. 218.

²⁶Ibid., p. 303.

²⁷Párábaik MS, U. Maung Maung Tin (Advisor, Burma Historical Research Department) Collection (hereafter MMTC).

²⁸Inscriptions Collected in Upper Burma, 2 vols. (Rangoon: SGP, 1900), I: list 1294, A: Reverse line, pp. 22-24.

²⁹J. George Scott and J. P. Hardiman, Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States, 5 vols. (Rangoon: SGP, 1900-1901), pt. I, vol. 2: 168.

³⁰For this table, information was gleaned from these sources: J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 442-43; Frank N. Trager and William J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns 1764-1826: Records of Rural Life and Administration (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1979), p. 43; Nisbet, Burma Under British Rule and Before, 2 vols. (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co., Ltd., 1901), I:305; correspondence with Hsaya-daw U Za Ti La, Abbott, Lèi-myet-hna monastery, Yei-zágyo, Mágwèi Division (22 September 1985), and correspondence with Yei-ù U Thaung (4 December 1986 and 19 January 1987).

³¹J. W. A. Okel, A Guide to the Romanization of Burmese (London: RAS and Luzac, 1971).

³²Yi Yi, Ìn-gálek myan-ma pyet-hkádein, ei di 1675-1824 (Rangoon: n.p., 1965).

³³Hsaya Mauk, Yò-yò shìn-shìn hkit-mi hnit 250 pyet-hkádein (Rangoon: Zwè-sa-peì-yeik-myon, 1982).

CHAPTER 1

BURMESE SOCIETY: CLASS STRUCTURE

Burmese society in the pre-colonial period is referred to as a customary (mí-yò-hpála) society.¹ Its functions and practices--whether occupational, administrative, social, economic, or religious--were performed in accordance with custom. People were functionally organized into regiment-like groups under the charge of officials appointed by the kings. Such groups were called ású-áhmú-dàns--crown service groups. Everyone belonged to a group, either under the crown or under other institutions. Freedom of choice concerning occupation was therefore limited. Parents' occupations or trades were mostly transmitted to sons, especially the crown service groups and the hpáyà-kyuns--pagoda slaves.

In such a society where custom was norm there was little social mobility. Lineage (myò-yò) and customs (mí-yò-hpála) regulated social and economic relations. Kingship and office of the local chiefs were hereditary, although it was not necessary that primogeniture be followed. To keep lineage and customs in order was the major concern of the ruling class. "Do not go away from precedents and customs" (shei-htòn-mápe-hnín) was the maxim with which the people--both the rulers and the ruled--had to cope. The Kòn-baung kings, whenever they deemed it necessary, issued edicts instructing the hereditary chiefs to maintain customary society intact.²

As Burmese society was based on functions, not on wealth,³ social stratification was complex. Here one might argue that the social stratification of pre-colonial Burma was based on the Indian model because references to the four castes of India, namely brahman (the priest), kshatria (the warriors), vaisya (the traders and husbandmen), and sudra (the working class)⁴ are often found in the Kòn-baung literature and royal edicts. When compared to the Indian caste system, the Burmese social structure was not as rigid as its counterparts. To the Burmese, exogamy or endogamy was not a social problem. The reference to the four castes was not an example of Burmese social practice, but of Burmese familiarity with Sanskrit literature and ancient Indian culture.

Kòn-baung society was customarily stratified into eight classes as follows: (1) Buddhist monks; (2) kings and royal families; (3) brahman or wise men; (4) nobility or officials; (5) men of wealth; (6) áthi or tax-paying people; (7) paupers and the destitute; and (8) kyuns or bondsmen of all sorts.⁵ Although in this traditional stratification we find that áhmú-dàns or crown service groups were missing, they were regarded most often to be above the áthi class. Moreover, paupers and the destitute were placed above kyuns. It might be because they were free from bondage. Insofar as the Buddhist monks are concerned, they were considered holy and religious. Therefore, they were placed at the top of the social pyramid. Functionally, Kòn-baung society had five distinct classes, namely, king and royal family, nobility, áhmú-dàns or crown service groups, áthis or tax-paying people, and kyuns. The main purpose of

this chapter is to observe how these classes performed their social obligations and how they were related to each other. An attempt is therefore made to describe these classes based on the contemporary records--mainly thet-káyits.

King and Royal Family

At the top of society, far above the people, the Burmese king was an "Arbiter of Existence." His power and position, when measured by the standards of our modern society, were immense. In the chronicles and contemporary literature one can find numerous eulogies on the king's power and position in society. For example, the king was an áthet-ù-hsan-baing--lord and master of life, head and hair of all human beings.⁶ He claimed to be, and was accepted as, yei-myei-shin meaning lord of earth and water.⁷ He was the sole master, and all people were his subjects or born-slaves (kyeì-daw-myò, kyun-daw-myò). Moreover, he assumed the title of the sasana-da-yaka--Defender of the Faith and Promoter of the Religion.⁸ Dr. Thaung writes: "He was the fountain-head of honour and justice and he could exalt and degrade his people at will. He made final decisions in affairs of importance, both domestic and foreign, and there was no one who dared to criticize--or even question--the motives behind the policies."⁹

A father in a Burmese family is highly esteemed to be an ein-ù-nat--god of the front house. So also did the people assume their kings to be the Làw-ká-thámútí-nat--living god of the human abode.¹⁰ Such deification seemed to be referred to the kings who brought peace and prosperity to the society. Generally speaking, the

king was responsible for everything that happened in society since he was the pivot around which the administrative, social, economic, and religious institutions revolved. The Burmese chronicles tended to consider a king benevolent and the country peaceful and prosperous if he did not wage frequent aggressive wars against the neighboring states, impose taxes more than the customary dues, and demand corvee labor from the people to the detriment of their seasonal work.¹¹ Of course, the king was expected to be as good and humane as the Bodhisattvas of the Jataka stories. Some scholar-poets, therefore, composed epic-like story poems called pyós, based on these Jatakas as "exemplary models which they hoped their contemporary rulers would emulate."¹²

Being a yei-myei-shin (lord of earth and water), the king was the sole and real landowner in the country. People were, on the other hand, only the holders of certain rights on the land to the extent that they were permitted by the ruler. Only the kings in the Kòn-baung period could dedicate lands and kyuns to the sasana or religion, and nobody else was allowed to do so.¹³ There were two types of land under state ownership. The first was land called myei-daw or royal inherited land. These lands were privately owned by the king, and the produce of which was, therefore, enjoyed by the king himself. These lands were located in the productive areas of Mádáya, Shwei-bo, Kyauk-hse, and Mìn-bù, where irrigation was accessible. The second type of land was called áya-daw-myei, which was allotted to all crown service groups either for dwelling (nei-myei), for cultivation (Lok-myei), or for maintenance (sà-myei).

These lands were located all over central and lower Burma, especially along the Irrawaddy, the Chindwin, and the Sittang river valleys.

Among the Kòn-baung kings, Bádon (1782-1819) and Mìn-dòn (1853-1878) attempted to develop the country's economy, both domestic and foreign. They encouraged people to grow more crops and to trade. King Bádon issued an edict on 21 September 1787, ordering the people to cultivate all possible crops on all available lands.¹⁴ He also lent a fairly large sum of money to a rich man to invest in trade.¹⁵ Trading licenses for specific goods were farmed out to the largest bidders, and, thus, the king could amass a great sum of money in gold and in silver.¹⁶ King Mìn-dòn followed suit. He made an attempt to change the traditional subsistence economy into a market-oriented one. Some crops and minerals were declared royal monopolies, from which the inflow of cash into the royal treasury in 1855 alone amounted to 1,820,000 kyats. As J. G. Scott has commented, "The king was by far the most full-blown trader in the country."¹⁷

Kòn-baung kings were also moneylenders. They lent money to the Shan chiefs (saw-bwas) and the provincial governors. It is found that some kings charged interest on the loans. However, King Bádon and Mìn-dòn did not charge interest on the loans they gave to the Shan saw-bwas. There were also instances in which the kings granted remissions of loans to some Shan saw-bwas and provincial governors. In 1810, King Bádon granted a remission of debt to various chiefs which amounted to over 23,000 kyat weight of silver (13,432 oz) and over ten viss of gold (584 oz).¹⁸ We are also told

that when the loans taken by the Shan saw-bwas from King Mìn-dòn and Thi-bàw could not be repaid, the kings exempted them from the debt.¹⁹ Money-lending to the people without charging interest was, of course, one of the activities incumbent on kings.

In sum, the Burmese king was an absolute monarch; he was lord of the earth and water. He was also referred to as a Defender of the Faith and Protector of the Religion in relation to the Buddhist Church. He was the only lord over the entire people who were his subjects or born-slaves. He was also the biggest landowner in his realm. In the Kòn-baung period every king was engaged in money-lending, but some kings did not charge interest on the loans. Some kings encouraged both domestic and foreign trade, and they even conducted the trade as if they themselves were the merchants.

Queens and Concubines

Polygamy was a popular practice among the elite in pre-colonial Burmese society. Since the Pagan times down to King Thi-bàw, the last king of the Kòn-baung dynasty, Burmese kings maintained this practice. And throughout the Kòn-baung period, there were in every reign abortive coups, rebellions, and massacres of kinsmen. All these events could be attributed to this polygamous system, because all of the conspirators were princes born to various queens. Also, there was no law regulating succession to the throne.

The Burmese kings never considered polygamy evil or inappropriate. They even thought that the kingly estate with the numerous queens they enjoyed was the reward of their past good

deeds (karma). Their golden palace was, therefore, always crowded with queens, consorts, concubines, maids of honor, etc.

The chief queen was called nàn-má-daw-mí-báyà-hkaung-gyì, and she occupied the southern palace. She was the half-sister of the king. Like the king, she owned large estates. Moreover, she was also assigned towns and villages by the king to "eat" the revenues from them.²⁰ An office to manage her estates was also set up. The nàn-má-daw-wun or officer in charge of the Chief Queen's Apartment and Affairs headed it.

In addition to the chief queen there were three other queens of the first rank: northern queen of the palace (myauk-nàn-daw-mí-báyà); queen of the center (á-le-nàn-daw-mí-báyà); and queen of the west (ánauk-nàn-daw-mí-báyà). Next to them were four queens of second rank who also held titles based on the names of the apartments and royal chambers to which they were assigned. "These eight queens every constitutional king was bound to have. He might add indefinitely to their number according to fancy, or convenience, or state policy."²¹

Then came lesser queens. They were called either town-eater queens (myó-zà-mí-báyà) or village-eater queens (ywa-zà-mí-báyà), for they were granted towns (myós) or villages (ywas) as "pin-money."²² The evidence shows that some lesser queens did money-lending business. One of King Mìn-dòn's queens who was the eater of Zá-bwè-daung-taik, her daughter Princess Pìn Hteik-hkaung Tin; and her brother, the Commandant of the Lá-maìng regiment (shwei-nàn-yò-Lá-maìng-win) were money-lenders and mortgagees.

Two of their párábaiks, in which money loans and land mortgages were recorded, are now kept in the National Museum and Library in Rangoon.²³

While they were in the palace the queens were at the top of the social pyramid. But changes usually took place with their life when the kings either died or were dethroned; some even met with horrible deaths.²⁴ Some, after being ousted from court life, became ordinary people. We have some money loan thet-káyits that refer to two ex-queens. The first one was the ex-queen of northern palace (myauk-nàn-haùng).²⁵ She is thought to be a queen of King Págan (1846-1853) and was presumably ousted when King Mìn-dòn ascended the throne, overthrowing Págan in 1853. A mortgagor mentioned her name when he stated the location of his land that bordered hers. The second one was a former southern apartment queen and the eater of Tálók-myó (taung-hsaung-daw-Tálók-myó-zà-haùng). She married an ordinary man who, therefore, came to be known as the husband of a former southern apartment queen, the eater of Tálók-myó.²⁶

Princes and Princesses

Unlike Thailand, a Theravada Buddhist country like Burma where members of the royal family could hold administrative positions in the bureaucracy,²⁷ Burmese kings hardly entrusted royal members in administration. The members of the royal family were, at the king's pleasure, given fiefs as appanages, personal titles, and insignias in accordance with their status as long as they did not pose any threat to the king and were loyal to him.

There were two lines of royalty: (1) those born of the king and chief queen (daing-daw-gyì); and (2) those born of lesser queens (daing-daw-lei). In theory, only the daing-daw-gyì had the right to succeed to the throne.²⁸ However, in the later Kòn-baung dynasty, some kings, for example, Mìn-dòn and Thi-bàw, were not from the daing-daw-gyì line. To legitimize their kingship they married the tábin-daing-mìn-thámì--princess of the Solitary Post--who was reserved for the crown prince.²⁹

Among the royalty, the ein-sheí-mìn--lord of the Eastern (front) House or Heir Apparent--was in rank and status the highest, next to the king. He was either the king's brother or the eldest son of the king and chief queen. He was vested with immense powers over the administration. The Hlut-taw--highest administrative body and supreme court as well--sessions were mostly presided over by him in lieu of the king. The Hlut-taw discussed and decided the internal and external affairs of the country on behalf of the king.

Of course the Heir Apparent had his own office, which was staffed with high-ranking officials and clerks. He also had his own armed forces. He owned a large estate and was granted towns and villages as his appanage. Like the king, he had a chief queen and as many concubines as he wished.

However, since there was no clear law of succession regulating the relationship among the numerous sons born of different queens, "perpetual intrigue" always existed in the palace. Of the five kings of the later Kòn-baung period, only King Tha-ya-wádi and Mìn-dòn were able to appoint heirs apparent. And only King Ságaing

(1819-1837) and Págan (1846-1853) succeeded the throne rightfully and peacefully.

The mìn-thàs (king's sons) or princes were stratified into three grades according to their mothers' status: (1) the mìn-thà-gyì--great princes comprising the king's brothers and sons of the chief queen; (2) the mìn-thà-lat--second grade princes born of lesser queens; and (3) the mìn-thà--princes born of the concubines.³⁰ Moreover, there were other mìn-thàs who were not of royal blood. However, because of their outstanding service to the throne they were raised to mìn-thà status. Some such mìn-thàs were very powerful and trusted by their lords. For example, the Sálin-mìn-thà of King Ságaìng and the Ya-naung mìn-thà of King Thi-bàw were, of course, not of royal blood; they were raised to that status in order to check the real mìn-thàs who were thought to be dangerous to the throne. They were very notorious because of their abuse of power. Both of them finally met with violent death.

Usually, only the near relatives of the reigning king and those who were born to the union of the prince and princess were granted high royal status. Those who could not win royal favor, or who were distant relatives of the reigning king, usually had to support themselves. So what should be kept in mind is that royal status, apart from the king, was not hereditary. Proximity to the reigning king plus royal favor determined one's status. A person raised into royalty but not of royal blood rose to top societal status.

Heirarchy and Nobility

Apart from kingship there were five categories of hereditary office in the local and provincial administration of the pre-colonial period. U Tin in his Myan-ma-mìn Ok-chok-pon Sa-dàn, vol. 2, gives these suffixes for official titles as hereditary.³¹

1) hmù--as in shwei-hmù for headman of a village of gold bearing tract, ngwei-hkun-hmù for headman of a village of silver bearing tract, etc.

2) gyì--as in ywa-thu-gyì for headman of a village, myó-thu-gyì for headman of a town, etc.

3) kè--as in ku-dó-kè for headman of a ferry, tàw-kè for forester, etc.

4) hsaw--as in ywa-hsaw for village crier, myaung-hsaw for keeper of canals, etc.

5) gaung as in tàn-gaung for headman of a ward or a group of villages, ywa-gaung for an assistant to a village headman, etc.

The sit-tàns or statements of hereditary chiefs concerning their rights and responsibilities reveal that all towns and villages were under the charge of the hereditary chiefs. The myó-thu-gyì, the myei-daing-thu-gyì (chief of land tracts), pyi-zò (governor), etc. administered the towns. Their offices were hereditary. But some pyi-zòs and shwei-hmùs ruled over fairly large administrative units which consisted of many villages. In rank and status they were sometimes equal, and sometimes inferior, to myó-thu-gyìs. Villages were, on the other hand, under the charge of thu-gyìs, myei-daings (chief of land tracts), than-hmùs (headmen of the villages in iron-producing tracts), thit-sei-hmùs (headmen of the villages in

black-varnish-producing tracts), htaung-hmùs (officers-in-charge of one thousand men), sit-thàs (revenue collectors?), and tàn-gaùngs.³²

In the Shan state the hereditary chiefs were of five grades. The saw-bwas were at the top. They were as supreme as a Burmese king in their domain. They were regarded as the lesser kings to the Burmese king who was styled as king of kings. To assist them in administrative affairs, the saw-bwas appointed ámats (ministers) who were granted towns for maintenance. These ámats were at the top of the Shan hierarchical system. Then came in descending order other hereditary chiefs, such as heng (headman of a town), htamong (headman of a large village), and ke (headman of a village).³³

In Burmese society neither hereditary nobility nor landed aristocracy ever existed.³⁴ The officials who constituted the noble class came of either the áthi or the sú-gyì (military service group) class. Because of their outstanding ability and services, they were raised to that status by the king, who was the only fons et origo of power and honor in the country. We can categorize the officialdom into three groups: (1) those who were attached to the palace and the royal household; (2) those who were assigned to the central administrative offices known as the Hlut-yòn-ngà-yat (five courts); and (3) those who were appointed such offices as governors, customs officers, and military officers in the provinces. Needless to say, these officials, appointed by the king at his pleasure, could be removed from their offices at any time. It is, therefore, analogized that "a courtier's life is uncertain and unsafe like a tree that grows on the edge of a river bank."³⁵

There are records which show how Burmese kings chose and appointed their officials. The royal edict of Mìn-gyì-swa-zaw-kè (1367-1400), dated 19 June 1368, defines the qualification of a person to be appointed an official. It says: "Officers are expected to be well versed in the affairs of state so that they might not do detriment to the interests of the king, the Royal Family, and the state and are given permission to remonstrate the king if necessary."³⁶ This became a precedent for later kings in choosing their officials. If a person was outstanding either in his "physical agility, strength, and valour" or in his "intellectual attainments," he would be chosen and appointed an official in the king's government.³⁷

Of course everyone, if not a slave or an outcast, could hope to be raised to be a noble. When appointed an official by the king, a person would receive a title with the insignia and other rights and privileges to be enjoyed in accordance with his status. The highest rank in the Burmese bureaucracy was wun-gyì (minister or councilor) in the Hlut-taw. Usually, there were four wun-gyìs in the Hlut-taw. They were vested with immense powers; they administered the affairs of the state collectively. The king's power was exercised mostly through the Hlut-taw and its four wun-gyìs. Evidence that the Hlut-taw and its four wun-gyìs chose the successor to the throne is not rare. And some rebel princes could hold the throne with the assistance of the wun-gyìs. However, they (the wun-gyìs) were more vulnerable to the incompetent kings. The removal of the wun-gyìs from their offices usually meant that they were either executed or "reduced to poverty."³⁸

Next to these four wun-gyis were: one myin-zu-gyi-wun commandant of the cavalry brigade; one athi-wun--minister of works or corvees; four wun-dauks--under secretaries of state; and other junior officers. Among them, the wun-gyis, the myin-zu-gyi-wun, and the athi-wun were senior gazetted officers (pyan-dan-gyi-hkan). The wun-dauks were ordinary gazetted officers (pyan-dan-yo-hkan). As evidence shows, there were about fifty officials, including the four wun-gyis and royal clerks, appointed in the Hlut-taw.³⁹

Apart from the Hlut-taw were the Bye-daik (the Inner Court), the shef-yon (Criminal Court), the Taya-yon (Civil Court), and the Anauk-yon (Women's Court). All officers in these courts were appointed by the king. And none of these offices or courts were hereditary.

In the Bye-daik there were four atwin-wuns (royal secretaries) who were styled pyan-dan-gyi-hkan (senior gazetted officers). They were very powerful--as powerful as, and sometimes more powerful than the wun-gyis of the Hlut-taw because they were in close proximity to, and much trusted by, the king. The records reveal that this court had fifty staff members.⁴⁰

The shef-yon literally means the front court, but since the criminal cases were heard and tried in this court it came to be known as the criminal court. Four myo-wuns--governors or chief constables--were assigned to this court. To assist the myo-wuns, twenty-four junior officers and clerks were also appointed.⁴¹

The Táya-yon--civil court--consisted of four Táya-thu-gyis or Chief Justices. They were senior gazetted officers. Under these four Táya-thu-gyis there were seventeen junior officers. However, only the civil suits were heard and tried in this court, since the criminal cases were brought to the shei-yòn where four (in Thi-bàw's time, three) myó-wuns sat.⁴²

The Ánauk-yòn (Women's Court) consisted of four ánauk-wuns (governors of the Ladies' Court) who were senior gazetted officers. There were also twelve other junior officers appointed to assist these ánauk-wuns.⁴³ Of course this court tackled the affairs of the court ladies.

Apart from these five court officers, there were also others who were attached to the royal household and the royal city. They can be categorized roughly into two groups: military and non-military officers. The former numbered twenty-two persons and the latter fifty-three.⁴⁴ Among them the senior gazetted officers were the hsin-wun (officer in charge of the Royal Elephants), the hsin-mìn-wun (warder of the White Elephant), the nàn-mádaw-wun (officer in charge of the Chief Queen's Apartments and Affairs), the kyi-wun (officer in charge of the Royal Granaries), the hpaung-wun (officer in charge of the Royal Boats and Barges), the Shwei pyi-tágun-myin-wun (colonel of the Shwei-pyi tagun Horse), and the shwei-daik-wun (officer in charge of the Royal Treasury).⁴⁵ And the others were ordinary gazetted officers. On all of them were conferred titles in accordance with their ranks.

To check and supervise the hereditary chiefs in the provinces and outlying districts, the Burmese kings had officers appointed and posted there. These officials were styled myó-wuns (governors), myó-oks (township officers), myìn-wuns (commandants of cavalry regiments), sit-kès (military officers), myó-sáyeis (town clerks), and so forth. The myó-wuns were very powerful officials, and only the most trusted persons were appointed to these posts. In the time of Kings Mìn-dòn and Thi-bàw the myó-wuns and the myó-oks, who were appointed and juxtaposed with the hereditary chiefs in various parts of Burma, numbered forty-eight.⁴⁶ At the seaports where foreign trade prevailed there were such officials as the yei-wun (lord of the waters), the ákauk-wun (collector of sea customs), and the pwè-zàs (assessors).⁴⁷ But when the littoral provinces were ceded to the British after the First and Second Anglo-Burmese Wars, these posts ceased to exist.

As is evident, the Burmese bureaucracy was not unduly large or overly complicated. There were only a few hundred officials who were directly appointed by the king at his will. The officials appointed for the central administration headquartered at the Royal City (Ya-zá-hta-ni) numbered 208 souls, among whom 108 were senior gazetted officers.⁴⁸ In the provinces and outlying districts there were 221 officials; of them, forty-eight were gazetted officers.⁴⁹

The Burmese bureaucracy declined in size when the British arrived. At the end of the first Anglo-Burmese war in 1826 two littoral provinces of Rakhine (Arakan) and Tenasserim were ceded to the British in compliance with the Yan-dábo Treaty. Again, in 1853,

the British annexed the most fertile and very productive littoral province of Pegu and the Irrawaddy deltaic region that together formed lower Burma. Since then, independent Burma became a landlocked country up to the end of the Kòn-baung dynasty. When King Mìn-dòn came to the throne, the country was reduced almost by half. Consequently, Burmese officialdom was also reduced. One can see that the bureaucratic machine in the later Kòn-baung period was run by a handful of the so-called pyan-dàn-gyi-hkan or senior gazetted officers with the assistance of a few hundred junior officers and staff members. And as before, the mainstay of the administration lay with hereditary chiefs.

As gift-giving was a legal form of practice in the Kòn-baung officialdom, some court officials were very rich while they were in office. It was because well-to-do people sought to become officers or chiefs by giving gifts to the court officials who won the king's favor. Naturally, it led to corruption, for which evidence abounds in the money loan records. These matters will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Áhmú-dàn and Áthi

At the base of the upper structure of the Kòn-baung society, which was formed with the royalty and nobility, there was an ású-áhmú-dàn class consisting of crown service groups. The ású-áhmú-dàns were considered to be higher in social status than the áthi or in Michael Aung-Thwin's words, "non-indentured people."⁵⁰ These ású-áhmú-dàns or áhmú-dàns, in other words, were perpetually attached to the various services of the crown. Based on the nature of their services, they can be categorized into three groups: those

who performed military service; those who were assigned to the crown lands; and those who were attached to the royal household to supply royal needs, to render menial service, etc. Many ethnic people were also included in this class: the Chiangmai men (yùn), the Chinese (táyok), the Indians, especially Muslims (kálà), the Manipuris (káthè), the Mons, the Rakinese (Arakanese), the Shans, the Thais (yò-dáyà), the Viengchang men (lìn-zìn), and so forth.

In pre-modern mainland Southeast Asia, land was abundant in such regions as the Irrawaddy River valley in Burma, the Chaophraya River basin in Thailand, and the Mekong delta in Kampuchea and Vietnam. However, labor was scarce. The rulers of these countries occasionally waged wars against their neighbors in order to obtain the working hands they desperately needed for agriculture. In Burma's case, the áhmú-dàns of the Kòn-baung society were chiefly made up of war captives. They were ethnically or functionally organized into ásús-service groups such as lámàing (crown praedial slaves or crown farmers), myìn (cavalry), hsin (elephantery), hke-tù (lead miners), and thágyà-chet (sugar boilers).

The ású-áhmú-dàns were classified into four grades. At the top was the military service group known as sú-gyĩ (big corps), which consisted of the musketeers, the artillery, the cavalry, etc. Next to it were the departmental security service groups known as sú-thèi (small corps), which consisted of non-officers of the Hlut-taw and the guardsmen of the Treasury and other departments. Then came the crown artisans groups known as sú-nú (tender corps). The last grade consisted of the crown menial service groups called sú-gyàn

(rough corps), which was chiefly composed of all menial servicemen including the royal boatmen and the executioners.⁵¹ The sit-tàns, the royal edicts, and other administrative records such as the law suits, the court decisions, and the patents issued to the soldiery tell us about these ású-áhmú-dàns, i.e., their ethnic origin, how and when they were organized and settled in various parts of Burma, and where their allotted lands were for their maintenance.

It is generally accepted that the organization and the settlement of these ású-áhmú-dàns took place during the Taung-ngu period, especially in the reign of King Tha-lun (1629-1648). In the early Kòn-baung period, King Álaùng-mìn-táyà settled the Mons and the Manipuris at Kyauk-hse. His son Myei-dù (1763-1776) settled thousands of Thai war captives in central Burma.⁵² Some Thai captives were appointed Yátána-bon-taik-thà in the custom houses at seaports.⁵³ A census of Thai people was taken in 1810.⁵⁴ King Meyi-dù also settled the descendents of the Portuguese in Chaùng-ù and Yei-ù townships.⁵⁵ In 1800 their population numbered about five thousand.⁵⁶

The Manipuris were organized into different ásús--some in the lámaing as praedial slaves; some in the cavalry; some in the army; some in mining; and some given to members of the royalty and the nobility as slaves.⁵⁷ In the Burmese troops dispatched to Chiangmai in 1807 there was a Manipuri battalion of five thousand men.⁵⁸

King Bádon brought Muslims as war captives after the annexation of Rakhine in 1785. They were organized into regiments of musketeers and horse soldiers⁵⁹ and were settled in Yámè-thìn,

Kyauk-hse, and Kán-bálu townships.⁶⁰ Some were settled in and around the royal capitals to guard the palace.

The Chinese were not numerous in the crown service groups. They were found only in two ásús as sugar boilers⁶¹ and lead miners.⁶² They were organized into these ásús by King Badon during the first decade of the nineteenth century. Of course there were many Chinese people who were not members of ásús. Most of them lived in the royal city as merchants and shopkeepers. Jade mining in the Mò-gaùng district developed under their entrepreneurship.⁶³

Of the crown service groups, the crown praedial slaves or the crown farmers of the lámaing-ású are worthy of note. It seemed that their origins began as war captives. But, in the later Kon-haung period, the Burmans were also recruited in this ású, presumably because no more war captives were available since Burmese power declined at the advent of British colonialism. The new recruits were the criminals⁶⁴ and the kyuns bought by the crown.⁶⁵ Moreover, there was a custom that any person who wanted to marry a lámaing woman was required to be registered in the lámaing-ású.⁶⁶

The lámaing villages were located around the royal city, in Kyauk-hse and Sálín townships. Some were: the Aung-pin-le Lámaing, the Kywè-myò-peì Lámaing, the Let-wè Lámaing, the Let-ya Lámaing, the Min-gála Lámaing, the Ngásín-gù Lámaing, the Nwà-myò-peì Lámaing, and the Shwei-nàn-yò Lámaing.⁶⁷ The names Kywè-myò-peì and Nwà-myò-peì Lámaings reveal that the crown farmers in these regiments were provided with draft cattle and seeds

by the state. We do not know exactly the acreage of land under their cultivation. But, according to some documents, we are told that the Let-wè Lámaing had 4340 pes (7,681 acres) and the Let-ya Lámaing had 6043 pes (10,696.8 acres) for cultivation.⁶⁸

All these crown farmers had to work as instructed by the Lámaing-wun--Commandant of the Lámaing Regiments. Tilling the land, sowing the seeds, transplanting the seedlings, and harvesting the crops were to be carried out only on the marked days that were announced by the Lamaing-wun after consulting the Ya-zá Mat-tan Kyàn (the Book of Astrology?).⁶⁹ The lands assigned to them were fertile and productive. Irrigation was accessible. As for land rent, they had to pay to the crown only 13.25 percent of the produce.⁷⁰ It is, therefore, apparent that their life was more secure than that of the common people called áthi. It is not astonishing to find that some áthis made attempts to become crown farmers even though the lámaing-ású was looked down upon by other status groups.⁷¹

The sú-thei or departmental security service groups, the sú-nú or the crown artisans groups, and the sú-gyàn or the crown menial service groups were of course the minor status groups, among which the sú-gyàn were the lowest in social status.⁷² All of them were allotted lands for their maintenance. And these lands, being located in the alluvial tracts along the river banks of the Irrawaddy, the Chindwin, the Mu, and the Myit-nge, or in the perennial tracts where irrigation was accessible, allowed a life in peaceful times as being somewhat likable and livable.

The population of Burma in the later Kòn-baung period is estimated at over four million.⁷³ Insofar as the áthis are concerned, a document reveals that there were 114,128 households, whereas the áhmú-dàns numbered 105,818 households.⁷⁴ In estimating the population of Burma, Major Burney, the British Resident at Ava after the first Anglo-Burmese war, warns us:

Under the Burmese government, however, the monasteries are numerous, and always full of men who desire to avoid public service; and the inhabitants run up two or three houses as one and adopt other means for concealing their habitations and escaping taxations. We may therefore allow as many as seven souls to each house set down in their returns; and I think if we add a tithe for omissions and false returns on the part of the local officers of Mendaragyee [Badon or Bo-daw-hpayá], we shall obtain a tolerably correct account of the population of Burma and Pegu.⁷⁵

When we work out the population of áthis and áhmú-dàns as suggested by Burney, we get 878,786 áthis and 814,799 áhmú-dàns. This population represents only central Burma. Lower Burma, the Shan state; the northern Burma of Mò-nyìn, Mò-gaùng, and Bhamo districts; and the peripheral areas where ethnic people lived are not included.

Generally speaking, the áthis were the Burmans who paid a tithe (dasama-bha-ga) or a capitation tax (tháthá-mei-dá) to the government and who were also liable to military service in times of war. With respect to their social status, the áthis were considered lower than the áhmú-dàns and higher than the kyuns. Of course, it was they who were the most vulnerable to the maladministration of the local and central government authorities. They were, therefore, referred to as the hsìn-yè-thàs or poor folks.⁷⁶ Most of them lived

in villages in rural areas under the rule of áthi-thu-gyis or headmen, who were responsible to the áthi-wun (the minister of áthi and/or corvees).

An áthi village was of a closed type. It usually had communal lands called the áthi-myei that could be brought under cultivation by the members of the village áthis. The outsiders, or kat-pàs, were denied this right. But if the communal lands were abundant, the headman could allot some land to outsiders for cultivation as long as they remained in the village. The children born to the union of the village áthi and the outsider kat-pà were called álas. As for inheritance, only the children of the same sex as the áthi parent could inherit their áthi parent's lands. Thus, if the áthi parent was a woman, then only her daughters could inherit her lands; her sons could not.⁷⁷

As village society was a closed type, social movement in the Kòn-baung period is hardly seen except in the times of social unrest and of great scarcity. This condition was either because the hereditary chiefs did not allow their people to move out of their villages lest the chiefs should lose their privileges over the people, or because the people themselves, mostly cultivators, were much attached to their villages since their choice of occupation was limited.

Evidence reveals that people fled their villages because of epidemics⁷⁸ and scarcity.⁷⁹ Moreover, the demand for cash contributions and other imposts by the state were also reasons for running away. An epistle of Shin Nandá Dázá, popularly known as Kyè-gan Shin-gyì, tells of the conditions of an áthi village:

The date fixed by you, for the final payment of taxes and tolls is past, but the revenue from our village still remains uncollected. In this present time of change and discord, the villagers face a financial crisis of their own. The expected and carefully calculated income, so regular in the past, has failed to accrue; the creditors press for re-payment of debts, and all business, trade and crafts are in disturbed state. On top of it all, there are old taxes and new tolls to pay. Troubled and despondent, many villagers have abandoned their property and left the village, and it is only through the assistance and leadership of the elders ⁸⁰ that the village has been saved from complete disintegration.

Evidence is not rare that the áthis were called for military service,⁸¹ that cash contributions were exacted from them,⁸² and that some poor áthis took bondage loans pledging either themselves or their family members⁸³ in order to meet the demands. So the indebtedness of the people was not only because of their poor economy but also because of the frequent demands of contributions and corvee labor by the crown.

Kyuns

The Burmese word "kyun" is loosely translated as "slave." In Kôn-baung society everybody was the kyun of the king and of someone else. The use of their first person pronoun, kyun-daw (meaning I, the royal kyun), or kyun-nok (meaning I, the inferior kyun), strongly suggests that there had been a social relationship of patron-client type. The kyuns were of two types: religious kyuns and non-religious kyuns. Some were redeemable and some were not.

The non-religious kyuns were called lâw-ki kyuns. They were either paid or non-pecuniary servants. The Burmese Dhammá-thats (Coded Civil Law) give clear definitions of the lâw-ki-kyuns.

According to the Shwei-myìn Dhammá-that (The Dhammá-that of the Golden Rule) a man was called kyun when he was (1) bought with money, (2) born to a kyun mother, (3) born to kyun parents, (4) given as a present, (5) sold by himself, (6) hired for his labor, and (7) provided with food and shelter in times of scarcity.⁸⁴ He had certain rights and freedom to be enjoyed. (A detailed discussion on the kyuns will appear later.) Unlike slaves, kyuns were not subject to torture.

Although redeemable kyuns were prevalent, there were also non-redeemable kyuns. When war captives were not available, as the country was declining, King Min-don bought several hundred kyuns for his projects. These kyuns were known as the crown-purchased-kyuns (Ngwei-daw-we-kyuns). Some were assigned to crown lands⁸⁵ and some were organized into a special force of musketeers.⁸⁶ They were perpetually attached to their assigned status groups.

Other non-redeemable kyuns were young girls who were sold for prostitution, although such trade was very rare. During the time of King Bádon, the number of prostitutes was limited and put under the control of the myó-wun. And, most remarkably, King Bádon once put an adulteress into prostitution,⁸⁷ suggesting that some female criminals were recruited into such trade as a punishment. The prostitutes were settled at the outskirt of the city called Zágyin-wá.⁸⁸ At the time when Henry Yule came to Burma during the early reign of King Mìn-dòn, the social conditions of Burma seemed to be still deteriorating due to maladministration of the previous reign and the second Anglo-Burmese war. The envoy

reports that some young girls were being sold for prostitution.⁸⁹ We have a few thet-káyits, the contractual terms of which tend to indicate such a situation.

Mí Thit and Mí Hnit

Thet-káyit 1225, Thádìn-gyut waning 7⁹⁰ Mí Me of Pálwei-dàn quarter, Royal Golden City, states, "I would like to sell my daughters, Mí Thit and sister Mí Hnit to be kyuns for a sum of 150 kyats of the 25 kyat-kè⁹¹ silver. The buyer shall have the right to step over, trample upon, and take them to wives. They also shall accomplish any task assigned to them. If they abscond, or are taken away by their old master or by a ruler, the guarantors, Mí Gùn, Mí Hmon, Û Hsaing, the attendant, and Û Gaung shall be responsible for repayment of 150 kyats of the bondage loan plus the kyun's labor values.

When it is stated to the royal clerk, Mìn Kyaw Mìn Tin, the royal clerk buys them outright, giving 1 viss 9 kyats of the 1 kyat-tet-daing⁹² silver plus 11 kyats of alloy in order to get 120 kyats of ywet-ni silver, the equivalent of 150 kyats of the 25 kyat-kè silver, to Mí Me and the guarantors, Mí Gùn, Mí Hmon, Û Hsaing, and Û Gaung.

When Mí Thit and sister Mí Hnit are bought outright, the witness is Maung Shwei Sò, son of Pàn-nyo village headman; the assayer and weigher, Maung Lu Thit, the guard⁹³man of north Ma-yábin; and the writer, Û Hlaing of Ava.

I am not saying that this is a thet-káyit of the sale of a young girl for prostitution. But it contains seductive terms agreed upon by the borrower or seller. And such terms were used only for the sale of unmarried young girls in the royal city. Moreover, the use of "sell outright" or "buy outright" suggests that these kyuns were non-redeemable.

If otherwise, the kyuns were redeemable. The majority of the thet-káyits consisted of such types. Certain terms were agreed upon by both parties. In such a case the creditor was not an absolute

master, nor the kyun a chattel slave. In connection with the relationship between the master and the kyuns, an Italian missionary, Rev. Father Sangermano, who came to Burma in 1782 and lived for some years in the royal city and in Rangoon, gives the following account:

The slaves are, for the same reason, treated as children, and as forming part of the family of their masters; indeed it is not a rare thing for them to become the sons-in-law of their master. But, it must be remembered that slavery is not for life in these parts. If a man can save sufficient to pay the debt for which he was enslaved, he becomes free. It often happens that a man will sell his children, or his wife, or even himself, to pay taxes and imposts; though these transactions should be looked upon rather as pledges than sale, as the slavery thus entered into is never perpetual. Hence none but the slaves of the pagodas and those who are employed to burn the dead, are considered as infamous, and with these alone not one will contract marriage.⁹⁴

However, there were also some runaway cases. In Wùn-byeí, for example, six out of forty-five kyuns during 1848-1885 were found making attempts to abscond, some cases involving theft.⁹⁵ In Le-zin, only one out of twenty-five kyuns was found making an attempt to run away. Generally speaking their masters were lenient to their kyuns. The kyuns, on the other hand, had rights to redeem themselves at any time after the lapse of contracted years. They could also seek new masters who they thought were more good natured.

Hpáyà Kyuns

Throughout the classical period of the Burmese history, thousands of kyuns were dedicated to religious institutions by the kings, the ministers, and the devotees. Endowments of lands to the

temples and monasteries were also enormous. Pagan's downfall was, therefore, in part attributed to this enormous land endowment together with the loss of labor as a result of dedicating kyuns to the religion.⁹⁶ In the later period, the kings cautiously controlled the religious institutions and the lavish endowments of land and labor to the Buddhist Church. In the Kòn-baung period, such endowment by people (except the king himself) seemed to be forbidden. The kings, too, did not lavishly dedicate lands and kyuns to the pagodas and monasteries which they built.

In the Kòn-baung period, the kings, whenever they deemed it necessary, recruited the criminals who were condemned to death into the hpáyà-kyun-ású. Therefore, they were considered unclean, and consequently they became outcasts. The glebe lands and the hereditary hpáyà-kyuns, on the other hand, were declining for a variety of reasons: the documented inscriptions were being destroyed; some glebe lands slipped into secular control; and some hpáyà-kyuns fled their village. The Shwei-tha-lyaung pagoda inscription reads as follows: "Of one hundred and twenty-five payakyuns (hpáyà-kyuns) only thirty remained, and out of twelve hundred and thirty-six pes (2, 187.72 acres) originally given to the pagoda, only ninety-four remained."⁹⁷

Apart from the hpáyà-kyuns, there were two other types of religious kyuns, the pí-tákat-kyuns or the kyuns of the Buddhist Scriptures, and the kyaùng-kyuns or the kyuns of the monasteries. The hpáyà-kyuns and the pí-tákat-kyuns were non-redeemable, whereas the kyaùng-kyuns were otherwise. In the payroll of

servicemen during the times of Kings Mìn-dòn and Thi-bàw, it is recorded that there were fifty pháyà-kyuns who got 407 kyats a month (8.14 per head),⁹⁸ eleven pí-tákat-kyuns who got 115 kyats a month (10.45 per head)⁹⁹ and 170 kyaùng-kyuns who got 1418 kyats a month (8.34 per head).¹⁰⁰ As far as the hpáyà-kyuns are concerned, the number mentioned above does not represent the whole population. They were the ones assigned to famous pagodas around the royal city.

NOTES

¹J. S. Furnivall, "Safety First: A Study in the Economic History of Burma," JBRBS 40, pt. I (1957): 26.

²U Tin, Myan-ma-mìn Ok-chok-pon Sa-dàn, 5 vols. (Rangoon: Báho Pon-hneik-taik, 1970), 3:43-48; also see King Bádon's edicts dated 25 December 1783 and 20 April 1788 in Than Tun, ed., ROB (1986), 4:305-306, and *ibid.* (1987), 5:433-34.

³G. E. Harvey, British Rule in Burma (London: Faber and Faber, 1946), 23; Frank N. Trager and William Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàn 36; and also see Frederica M. Bune, ed., Burma: A Country Study (Washington, D.C.: American University, Foreign Area Studies, 1983), 14.

⁴D. D. Kosambi, Ancient India: A History of Its Culture and Civilization (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), p. 15.

⁵U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 2 (1965): 35.

⁶Dr. Thaug, "Burmese Kingship During the Reign of Mindon," JBRBS 42, no. 2 (1959), 172; also see J. George Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 89.

⁷Maung-daung Hsáya-daw, Ámei-daw Hpyei (Mandalay: Pádei-tha Pítakat Press, 1961), pp. 124-28.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹JBRBS 42, pt. 2 (1959): 172.

¹⁰Judson's Burmese English Dictionary, revised and enlarged by Robert C. Stevenson and Rev. F. H. Eveleth (Rangoon: Baptist Board of Publication, 1966), p. 927.

¹¹U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet Máha Ya-záwin Daw-gyì, 3 vols. (Rangoon: Le-di-man-daing Press, 1967), I:530; also see Tháyei Thin-hkáya, Tha-dí-ná Pyó (Rangoon: Han-tha-wádi Press, 1900), pp. 13-15.

¹²Michael Aung-Thwin, "Prophecies, Omens, and Dialogue: Tools of the Trade in Burmese Historiography" in David Wyatt and Alexander Woodside, eds., Moral Order and the Question of Change, Essays on Southeast Asian Thought (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies, Monograph Series No. 24, 1982), p. 83.

¹³Maung-daung Hsáya-daw, Ámei-daw Hpvei 122-28. Any evidence of land endowment and donation of kyuns to the sasana or Buddhist Church by the people is not yet found in the period under study.

¹⁴Than Tun, ed., ROB 4: 604.

¹⁵King Bádon's edict dated 15 December 1810. Mandalay Archaeological Survey Department Manuscript Collection (hereafter MADC), no. 4287.

¹⁶See King Bádon's edicts dated 8 February 1806, 20 February 1806, 27 April 1806, 28 April 1806, 10 May 1806, 28 June 1806, 6 July 1806, 12 July 1806, and many others in Than Tun, ed., ROB 5:788, 805, 864, 865, 874, 914, 919, 923, 939, 943, 960, 972, 978, 984-86, 991, 992, 997, 999, 1002, 1004, 1010, 1014-15, 1020, 1023, 1026-27, 1042; also see King Bádon's edicts dated 22 September 1808, 14 March 1810, 2 December 1810, 15 December 1810, 13 January 1811, 6 February 1811, 8 January 1812, and 11 January 1812 in MADC, no. 4287.

¹⁷J. G. Scott, Burma From the Earliest Times to the Present Day (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1924), p. 295; Henry Yule, A Narrative of the Mission to the Court of Ava (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 256-57.

¹⁸U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 3:39-40.

¹⁹U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 3:105.

²⁰U Tin Ok-chok-pon (1983), 5:24.

²¹J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 1, vol. 2: 89.

²²*Ibid.*

²³Párábaik MSS, nos. 1046 and 1411.

²⁴U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 2:598.

²⁵NLC, no. 1046, dated 10 May 1865.

²⁶Wùn-byéí Párábaik MS Collection (hereafter WBC), dated 5 July 1863.

²⁷Paul Bennet, Conference Under the Tamarind Tree: Three Essays in Burmese History (New Haven: Yale University, Southeast Asian Studies, Monograph Series No. 15, 1971), p. 225.

²⁸U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 2:33-34; also see Michael Aung-Thwin, "Hierarchy and Order in Pre-Colonial Burma," Journal of Southeast Asian Studies (hereafter JSEAS), 40, no. 2 (September 1984): 225.

²⁹JSEAS 40, no. 2:225; also see Michael Aung-Thwin, "Jambudipa: Classical Burma's Camelot" in Ishwaran, ed., Contributions to Asian Studies, vol. 16 (E. J. Brill, 1981), pp. 43-44.

³⁰U Maung Maung Tin, Shwei-nàn-thòn Wàw-ha-rá Ábeik-dhan (Rangoon: Buddha Sasana Áhpwé Press, 1975) pp. 11, 244; also see U Ba U, Myan-ma Ok-chok-yèi Pyin-nya (Mandalay: Báho-si Press, 1940), p. 21.

³¹U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 2:148-49.

³²Dr. Yi Yi, "Kòn-baung Hkit Sit-tàn-myà," JBR 49, pt. I (1966), 74-76.

³³U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 4:112.

³⁴Maung Htin Aung, The Stricken Peacock (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), p. 2; also see John Nisbet, Burma Under British Rule 2:237.

³⁵Maung Maung Gyi, Burmese Political Values: The Socio-Political Roots of Authoritarianism (New York: Praeger, 1983), p. 33; also see J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 469.

³⁶Than Tun, ed., ROB 1:2 and 149.

³⁷Maung Htin Aung, Burmese Law Tales (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 6.

³⁸J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 504.

³⁹U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 3:171-72; and J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 472-74.

⁴⁰J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 477.

⁴¹U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 4:28; and J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 477.

⁴²U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 4:50.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴⁴J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 491-95.

- ⁴⁵U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 4:63-68.
- ⁴⁶J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 504-509.
- ⁴⁷Daw Mya Sein, The Administration of Burma (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 35-37.
- ⁴⁸J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 472-83.
- ⁴⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 504-507.
- ⁵⁰Michael Aung-Thwin, "Hierarchy and Order in Pre-Colonial Burma," JSEAS, 40, no. 2 (September 1984), 221.
- ⁵¹U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 3:41-42.
- ⁵²U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet I:415.
- ⁵³King Bádón's edict dated 8 February 1810, MADC 4287.
- ⁵⁴*Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵Rev. Father Sangarmano, A Description of the Burmese Empire, trans. by William Tandy (Rangoon: Government Press, 1885), p. 78. Henry Yule, A Narrative of the Mission to the Court of Ava (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 142.
- ⁵⁶G. E. Harvey, History of Burma from the Earliest Times to 10 March 1824: The Beginning of English Conquest (London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1967), p. 346.
- ⁵⁷King Bádón's edict dated 15 May 1810, in MADC, no. 4287.
- ⁵⁸King Bádón's edict dated 19 October 1808, in MADC, no. 4287.
- ⁵⁹Father Sangermano, Burmese Empire 56. J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 267-68. Moshe Yegar, The Muslims of Burma (Otto Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1972), pp. 1-28.
- ⁶⁰"Myei-dù-myó Sit-tàn of 1803" U Maung Tin (Mandalay) Collection (hereafter MMTC). J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 1, vol. 2: 268.
- ⁶¹King Bádón's edict dated 11 January 1807, in MADC, no. 4287.
- ⁶²Than Tun, ed., ROB 5: 711.
- ⁶³King Bádón's edict, dated 15 June 1801 in Henry Yule, Mission to Ava 142-46.

⁶⁴King Bádon's edict, dated 7 June 1801 in Than Tun, ed., ROB 5:696.

⁶⁵Párábaik MS, Pin-tin (in Kán-bálu township) village monastery Collection. This document tells us that King Bádon bought people to be crown farmers. They were assigned to Kan-ni crown lands. During the reign of King Mìn-dòn, they were put under the charge of Máha Mìn-gaung Thu-yein, the Governor of Páhkàn-gyì by a royal edict dated 17 March 1862.

⁶⁶U Maung Maung Tin, Shwei-nàn-thòn 81.

⁶⁷U Khin Maung Kyi and Daw Tin Tin, Administrative Patterns in Historical Burma, Southeast Asian Perspectives No. 1 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, February 1973), p. 31. J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 149. NLC, no. 1046, dated 8 December 1854, 5 March 1855, and 30 November 1860.

⁶⁸J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 422.

⁶⁹King Bádon's edict dated 28 April 1810, in MADC, no. 4287.

⁷⁰U Maung Maung Tin, Shwei-nàn-thòn 81; U Tin, Ok-chok-pon, 3:49.

⁷¹King Bádon's edict, dated 4 June 1806 in Than Tun, ed., ROB 5:891.

⁷²U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 3:41-42.

⁷³Major Burney, "On Population of the Burma Proper," JBRs 31, no. 1 (1941), 23.

⁷⁴NLC, no. 1239.

⁷⁵JBRs 31, pt. I (1941): 25-26.

⁷⁶U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 4:4-6; JSAS 40, no. 2 (September 1984): 230-31; J. S. Furnivall, An Introduction to the Political Economy of Burma (Rangoon: Peoples' Literature Committee & House, 1957), pp. 31-41; and J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 472.

⁷⁷U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 5:33-34.

⁷⁸See "The statement of Kábaing village headman" in the Sit-tàns of Kyábìn Township Submitted to the Officer in Charge of the Riverine District Headquartered at Mìn-hlá in 1863, Párábaik MS, Salin U Hla Hpei's Collection. Also see Frank N. Trager and William J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns 329.

⁷⁹Sálin Hsáya-daw, Páreik-kyì Neik-tháyá (Rangoon: Han-tha wádi Press, 1968), p. 285.

⁸⁰Maung Htin Aung, trans., Epistles Written on the Eve of the Anglo-Burmese War. [Original title is The Epistles of Kyì-gan Shin-gyì.] (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), p. 23.

⁸¹King Bádon's edict dated 24 November 1807, in MADC, no. 4287.

⁸²Taung-dwìn-gyì U Hla Hpei's Párábaik MS Collection (hereafter LPC) dated 28 September 1809; also see King Bádon's edicts dated 28 August 1787, 5 November 1787 and 14 November 1787 in Than Tun, ed., ROB 4:581, 641 and 653.

⁸³There are several thet-káyits that came into existence when people were required to give cash contributions for military campaigns. See palm leaf MSS of Le-zin village Collection (hereafter LZC) dated 24 May 1854; Párábaik MS of the Rangoon Universities' Central Library, no. 151113 (hereafter RUCL) dated 3 September 1792; Párábaik MS of Kyauk-ka (Paük) village Collection (hereafter KKC) dated 27 March 1866; and Párábaik MS of Yei-ù U Thaung's Collection, no. 5 (hereafter YTC) dated 12 April 1852.

⁸⁴Rev. Father Sangermano, Burmese Empire, 126.

⁸⁵King Mìn-dòn's edict dated 17 March 1862, Párábaik MS, Pin-tin village (Kán-bálu) monastery Collection (hereafter PTC).

⁸⁶U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 3:541-42; also see the same author, Shwei-nàn-thòn 218.

⁸⁷King Bádon's edict, dated 10 July 1806 in Than Tun, ed., ROB 5:921; U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 4:30; and Than Tun, trans., "The Royal Order (Wednesday, 28 January 1795) of King Bádon," Journal of Asian and African Studies 26 (1983): 191.

⁸⁸King Bádon's edict dated 27 July 1783 in Than Tun, ed., ROB 4:269.

⁸⁹Henry Yule, Mission to Ava 161.

⁹⁰October 1863.

⁹¹A kind of silver which is 25 percent less pure than the standard silver called ywet-ni.

⁹²A kind of good silver that is 10 percent purer than the standard ywet-ni; i.e., 1 unit of ywet-ni was worth 0.9 units of 1 kyat-tet-daing silver.

⁹³WBC.

⁹⁴Rev. Father Sangermano, Burmese Empire 126.

⁹⁵WBC, 24 May 1859, 25 April 1862, 26 February 1868. See also Chapter 5.

⁹⁶Michael Aung-Thwin, Pagan, Chapter 9.

⁹⁷J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 443.

⁹⁸Maung Maung Tin, Shwei-nàn-thòn 164.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 147.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, p. 167.

CHAPTER 2

LATER KÒN-BAUNG ECONOMY: AGRICULTURE

The king held ultimate ownership of all land. The people, on the other hand, were regarded as the nominal holders of the land to the extent permitted by the crown. In other words, they were regarded as the free tenants of the king; they could manage and alienate the land that they held, within their social institution. The king exacted the tithe of the produce from the people not as land revenue, but as land rent.¹ As an ultimate landowner, the king could take the land back from the people for no reason. But such forfeiture seldom took place unless people became involved in crimes or rebellions. However, though the landholders enjoyed the right of alienation, they were not permitted to donate their lands to the sasana or the Buddhist religion.

In the Kon-baung period, three types of landholding prevailed: the state lands (mìn-myei or áya-daw-myei), the religious lands (wut-tágan-myei), and the private lands (bò-bábaing-myei). Apart from these types of landholdings were the lands called myei-lut or wastelands. Anyone could freely reclaim the wastelands under cultivation. Such reclaimed lands were called dhámá-ù-chá-myei or land acquired by right of first clearing. The holder could alienate them except for the outright donation to the religion.

State lands were classified into four types: the lands owned by the king (nàn-zin-áya-daw-meyi), the lands owned by the chief queen (yùn-baung-pa-myei), the lands confiscated from the people who allegedly committed treason (theìn-zú-pa-myei), and the lands taken into state ownership because of the failure of heirs (zon-thei-ámwei-byat-myei).² The first two types were located mostly in the fertile perennial tracts of Mádaya, Mandalay, Shwei-bo, Kyauk-hse, and Mìn-bù. The other types spread all over central and lower Burma, especially along the Chindwin, Irrawaddy, and Sittang river valleys. The state lands could also be acquired by royal orders declaring such wastelands to be the crown reserves.³ These state lands were important not only to the Kòn-baung economy but also to politics and administration. This concern will be discussed in detail under "land distribution."

Religious lands were fairly extensive in Burma. From the time of Aniruddha--popularly known as Ánaw-yáhta (1044-1077)--throughout the classical period, the kings, nobles, and commoners lavishly dedicated lands and kyuns to the religion. The glebe lands were, of course, exempted from taxation, and the religious kyuns, too, from corvee labor and military service. After dedication, lands and kyuns could never be withdrawn. According to Michael Aung-Thwin, 172,445 pes of glebe lands (305,538.1 acres)⁴ and 15,257 religious kyuns were dedicated to various pagodas and monasteries throughout the Pagan period up to A.D. 1301.⁵ It is, therefore, said that the country's wealth and strength were eventually depleted by these lavish endowments of lands and kyuns to the religion.

In the Kòn-baung period, the kings, therefore, did not allow the people to donate their lands and kyuns to the religious institutions.⁶ King Bádon even made attempts to confiscate some religious lands the owners of which, the pagodas and monasteries, had perished. But when he made consultations about his plan with the Primate, the Tha-thánabyú Hsáya-daw, the latter opposed his plan.⁷ King Bádon's plan came to naught. However, evidence shows that he tacitly encouraged the people who tried to bring the glebe lands into their control.

The religious lands were of three kinds. The first was the land dedicated to the pagodas and temples (hpáyà-myei); the second was the land dedicated to the Buddha's Teachings or the Sacred Scriptures (pí-tákat-myei); and the last was the land dedicated to the monasteries (kyaùng-myei).⁸ Moreover, we also find a very interesting type of landholding about which the scholars seem to be unaware. This was the land dedicated to the nat or spirit which came to be known as the spirit land (nat-myei). Like the glebe lands, the spirit land was exempted from taxation.⁹ It was, therefore, included as a type of religious land. But, we do not find much spirit land, possibly because of our limited knowledge in this area. All of these religious lands were called wut-tágan-myei. No tax was levied on these lands when worked by the religious kyuns. However, when non-related people worked on these lands, five kyats per pe was levied as a tax.¹⁰

The private lands were categorized into three types: (1) the land acquired by the right of first clearing, called dhámá-ù-chá-myei;

(2) the land given outright by the king, called mìn-peì-myei; and
 (3) the land bought with money, called ngwei-we-ngwei-paung-myei.
 Known as ancestral land (bò-bábaing-myei), since it was transferable and inheritable¹¹ these were the lands from which the state exacted revenues and at times fell into mortgages. Each village had extensive lands, including reserves for cultivation, within its jurisdiction. According to social custom, these lands could be acquired by means of reclamation and purchase within one's village jurisdiction. However, the land could not be sold outright to an outsider unless the other party was the overlord. Land was plentiful, and only labor was scarce. Most people were peasant proprietors, and it was useless to possess many pes of land without labor. Under such conditions a large landowner class could not come into existence.

Distribution of Land

The Kòn-baung economy was largely agrarian, the practice of which consisted of wet cultivation (le), dry cultivation (ya), vegetable cultivation on the alluvial lands along the river banks where monsoon floods annually take place (kàing-kyùn), and gardening (ú-yin). People worked on their lands for sufficiency alone; no cash crop cultivation or market-oriented economy ever existed in their customary society before the reign of King Mìn-dòn. They lived in villages under the charge of hereditary chiefs, and every village had its communal lands called áthi-myei or bon-myei. The community members who had no lands or fewer lands could reclaim new plots of land and bring them under cultivation.

People who were engaged in agriculture can be classified into three types: namely, the crown farmers, peasant proprietors, and tenants. They were the backbone of the Kòn-baung economy and society, which never had a landed gentry class.¹² In the country, only the king and his chief queen owned extensive estates. King Thi-bàw (1878-1885), the last king of the Kòn-baung dynasty, owned 145,906.75 pes (510,673.6 acres)¹³ and his chief queen owned 6,128.75 pes (21,695.78 acres) of rice lands.¹⁴ All these crown lands were located in the fertile perennial tracts where irrigation was accessible. Some of the crown lands in the vicinity of the capital city were perpetually assigned to the crown praedial slaves called lámaing á sú-thàs, from whom the king usually exacted a tithe of produce as land rent. But there were other lámaing-á sú-thàs who were provided with draft cattle and seeds by the crown and from whom half of the produce or so was, therefore, collected as land rent.

Another type of crown land was the áhmú-dàn-sà-myei--land granted to various service groups for their maintenance. It consisted of three types, namely, land for residence (nei-myei), land for cultivation (lok-myei), and land for maintenance (sà-myei).¹⁵ The newly-organized service groups were usually allotted lands for residence and cultivation. Others generally received lands either for cultivation or for maintenance. For military service groups, land was granted for cultivation. When they were off duty, the soldiers worked on their lands peacefully. Lands allotted to crown artisan groups were for their maintenance, and they received a certain portion of the produce from their land as land rent.

Documents relating to the allotment of land to service groups are extant in the forms of (1) patents issued to the soldiery by the Hlut-taw, (2) royal edicts, and (3) the statements of hereditary chiefs. Customarily, a private received 5 pes (8.9 acres); a platoon commander, 7 pes and 2 seiks or 7.5 pes (13.3 acres); and a company commander, 10 pes (17.7 acres).¹⁶ The lands so allotted to the crown service groups were located in central and lower Burma, especially in the districts of Martaban, Mágwèi, Mandalay, Pegu, Prome, Ságaing, and Taung-ngu.

Lands granted to crown service groups--especially foot soldiers, musketeers, cavalry units, and royal boat squadrons--were regarded as their private lands, since their holdings were transferable and inheritable. Islands in the Irrawaddy River and the inundated areas along the Chindwin and Irrawaddy Rivers were granted mostly to royal boatmen.¹⁷ The horse soldiers were settled and allotted lands in Shwei-bo, Ságaing, Kyauk-hse, Meik-hti-la, Myìn-gyan, Kyauk-pádaung, and Yámè-thìn. The members of elephant groups were also granted lands both for residence and for cultivation. Their villages were located mostly in Mádáya, Ságaing, Yàw, Mágwèi, and Prome districts.¹⁸

So far, we have no knowledge of how many pes of land were allotted to each service group. But we can work out the lands allotted to military service groups. When reorganized in 1827, the Kòn-baung army consisted of 348 company commanders (thwèi-thauk-gyi), 1,716 platoon commanders (ákyat), and 17,086 privates (áhmú-dàns).¹⁹ (See Appendix 4.) It would require 3,480 pes (6,165.9

acres) for company commanders, with an allotment of 10 pes per head; 12,870 pes (22,803.1 acres) for platoon commanders, with an allotment of 7 pes and 2 seiks per head; and 85,340 pes (151,205.4 acres) for privates, with an allotment of 5 pes per head, all of which would amount to 101,690 pes (180,174.34 acres) of land. During King Thi-bàw's reign, military strength went down to 15,750²⁰ and, therefore, much service land became unoccupied.

As far as land distributions among the social classes are concerned, no statistics are available. But we have a few documents--patents issued to the soldiery by the Hlut-taw and land-granting royal edicts--that show how land was distributed among certain social groups. In Mádáya township, there was a village (Tháyèt-tàw) where military servicemen were settled. According to a patent of land allotment in 1801, 187 military servicemen (sú-gyi-áhmú-dàn) lived in this village. The village tract covered an area of 449.5 pes (796.42 acres) of cultivable land. The patent of land allotment²¹ (kyò-làn) in 1801 gives the following data:

Landholder	No. of <u>pes</u> owned	
Lord of Ságaing (Heir Apparent)	15	(26.6 acres)
Lord of Bassein	5	(8.85 acres)
Eater of Hlaing-tet town	1.5	(2.7 acres)
Eater of Pauk-myaing town	1.5	(2.7 acres)
Eater of Málun town	2	(3.5 acres)
Shwei Taung Pyan Chi (Groom of Royal Apt.)	14	(24.8 acres)
Groom of the Front House	5.5	(9.7 acres)
Mání Ban-dhú (an official in religious affairs)	5	(8.9 acres)
Eater of Mádáya town	13.25	(24.5 acres)
Ngá Shwei Kyaw (Headman)	11	(19.5 acres)
Toddy palm grove	2	(3.5 acres)
Village area	69.75	(123.5 acres)
Fifty-seven military servicemen	304	(538.1 acres)

As the evidence shows, the village had 449.5 pes (795.6 acres) of cultivable lands, of which some members of the royalty and the nobility owned 62.75 pes (111.1 acres) or 13.96 percent of the total land; the headman, 11 pes (19.47 acres) or 2.2 percent; the privates, 304 pes (538.1 acres) or 67.63 percent. The village area comprising the reserved communal lands covered an area of 71.75 pes (127 acres) or 15.96 percent. Every family owned at least 5 pes (8.85 acres) of land for cultivation. As the lands owned by members of the royalty and the nobility had to be rented out, some families would also work as tenants. For big families, reclamation of land could be made out of the communal lands.

In another patent of land grant issued to the Wìn-kyin musketeers, who were organized and settled at Kut village on 2 June 1801, we find that 140 were allotted 765 pes and 2 seiks (1,356.3 acres) out of 1,050 pes (1,860.4 acres) of cultivable lands measured in this village tract. The remainder was distributed²² as follows:

Landholder	No. of <u>pes</u> owned	
Ya-zá Wei-lú (an Official)	21.0 <u>pes</u>	(21.2 acres)
Zei-táyit (Governor)	6.5 -	(11.5 acres)
Ngá San Tò (Land Surveyor)	20.0 -	(35.4 acres)
Nan-dá Wei Thaw (Herald)	6.0 -	(10.6 acres)
Groom of the Royal Apartment	6.0 -	(10.6 acres)
Thirí Shwei Taung (an Official)	6.0 -	(10.6 acres)
Tha Wut Hti (an Official?)	6.5 -	(11.5 acres)
Clerk to the Land Surveyor	6.5 -	(11.5 acres)
Village area	45.0 -	(79.7 acres)
Gardens	20.0 -	(35.4 acres)
Swamp	42.0 -	(74.3 acres)
Wasteland	108.0 -	(191.2 acres)

Eight officials owned or were granted 69.5 pes (123 acres) or 6.6 percent of the total land in this village, and 140 musketeers were

allotted 72.9 percent of the land. Wasteland was also extensive and people could at any time reclaim new lands for cultivation.

Another land grant to the Pwè-daing-kyaw Boat Squadron also reveals the distribution of land ownership in the Kálà-myó tract. In this tract there were 242 pes (428.78 acres) of cultivable lands of which 142 pes were allotted to the Pwè-daing-kyaw Boatmen. Some royal family members and officials also owned lands²³ in this tract as follows:

Landholder	No. of <u>pes</u> owned	
Lord of Ságaing (Heir Apparent)	1.5 <u>pes</u>	(2.7 acres)
Mìn Hla Kyaw Htin (an Official)	30.0 -	(53.1 acres)
Nei-myò Zei-yá Kyaw Htin (an Official)	13.0 -	(23.0 acres)
Ex-Clerk to the <u>Lámaing-wun</u>	20.0 -	(35.4 acres)
Eater of Málun town	6.0 -	(10.6 acres)
Eater of Hlaing-tet town	1.0 -	(1.8 acres)
Headman of Madáya town	2.5 -	(4.4 acres)
Groom of the Front House	1.5 -	(2.7 acres)
Gardens	6.5 -	(11.5 acres)
Residential area	18.0 -	(31.9 acres)

The absent land owners, i.e., the Heir Apparent and other officials, owned 31.2 percent, whereas the Royal Boatmen owned 58.7 percent of the land. No reserved or communal lands were granted to them.

As is already known, before the introduction of the paid salary system in the time of King Mìn-dòn, land was the main source of income for all servicemen. Royalty and nobility were granted towns and villages as their appanages, from which they enjoyed revenues. Sometimes they were also granted lands. The wun-zà-myei were the lands granted to nobility.²⁴ They used to acquire lands by reclamation and/or by purchase. However, evidence concerning the land-grant to officials in the later Kòn-baung period is, so far, not

found in bulk and we can not guess what portion of land was in the possession of the noble class.

So that the reader can see a broader perspective of the land distribution, the focus of my study shifts from a village tract to a township. Fortunately, we have a Taung-dwìn-gyì district sit-tàn of 1783, recorded on corypha palm leaves, the copying date of which is 22 April 1872.²⁵ Even though the headman of Taung-dwìn-gyì states that there were five towns and ninety-nine villages, actually there were 142 villages.

The sit-tàn of every town and village tells us whether or not there existed any crown and religious land in its jurisdiction. The amount of land under cultivation was shown by yokes of buffalo work. Sixteen villages contained glebe lands, comprising 160 yokes of buffalo work. Crown lands were found in three villages, numbering ninety-three yokes of buffalo work. The rest, presumably private lands, amounted to 1,837 yokes of buffalo work. According to a British record, a yoke of buffalo can work eight to ten acres of wet cultivation (le), and twelve to fifteen acres of dry cultivation (ya).²⁶ However, the sit-tàns do not clearly distinguish between le and ya or wet cultivation and dry cultivation. In converting the above-said lands into acreage, I use the overall average number eleven of eight to ten, and twelve to fifteen acres that a yoke of buffalo can work both in wet and dry cultivation lands. Thus, the distribution of land in this district is as follows: 1,023 acres of crown lands, 1,760 acres of glebe lands, and 20,207 acres of private lands. In other words,

private lands occupied 87.9 percent, glebe lands 7.65 percent, and crown lands 4.45 percent.

What about land distribution in the whole country? To figure it out among various institutions and the social classes, I studied 413 sit-tàns collected from various parts of Burma proper and the Myei-lat-dei-thá of the southern Shan state. Of them, 127 sit-tàns reveal the existence of glebe lands. However, the majority of them do not give figures, and their statements concerning glebe lands are very vague. It can, therefore, be assumed that the glebe lands declined as the pagodas and the monasteries to which they were dedicated perished. In the later Kòn-baung period, no endowment of land, except by kings, is ever witnessed. Moreover, the religious lands gradually and stealthily fell under secular control. In short, it can be assumed that the religious lands in the Kòn-baung period were not as extensive as in the classical period.

Land Values and Crops

Land was the prime source of livelihood in the Kòn-baung period. Burmese people valued the land as a sort of permanent property²⁷ because it could not be taken away by robbers and bandits. For this reason alone, the Burmese people preferred acquiring land to amassing gold and silver or to investing their wealth in trade. However, land speculation in the strict sense did not take place throughout the ages. This tradition can be attributed to the factors of social customs and the self-sufficiency-oriented economic system.

As far as the land value of the later Kòn-baung period is concerned, there was no standard value since the triangular relationship of labor, production, and market in a broader basis did not exist. Furthermore, land measure and the monetary system were rather vague and unsystematic. For example, people who bought and sold lands did not clearly state either the actual size of land or the quality of the silver currency.

The measure of land was usually depicted in such a way that it could be (1) worked by so many transplanters (2) sown in so many baskets of paddy or sesame seeds, (3) transplanted so many wisps, and (4) harvested to yield so many baskets of such-and-such crops. In Mìn-bù district, the land measure of le or rice field referred to the number of working hands needed in a day's work of transplantation. The evidence shows that land value was fixed on this basis.

Strictly speaking, these were not real land values, although the words "yaùng" for "sell" and "we" for "buy" were used in the land sale and mortgage thet-káyits. Certainly the value of land depended upon several factors, such as the type of land, whether it was rain fed or irrigated, the proximity to canals or reservoirs, productivity of land, and the socio-economic and political conditions of the country. As can be seen in Table 5, land values soared in 1821 and 1885, possibly due to political turmoil. Between 1821 and 1826, Burma waged wars in Assam and Manipur, the tributary states of Burma, which led to the first Anglo-Burmese war in 1824. The war ended with the Yan-dábo Treaty in 1826. In 1885, the third

Table 5
Land Values in Mìn-bù District

Year	Location	Size (working hand)	Value	Value per hand
1814	Le-gaìng	30	250.0	8.33
1817	-	30	420.0	14.00
1821	-	10	280.9	28.9
1822	-	40	500.0	12.5
1828	Sálin	19	30.0	1.58
1829	Le-gaìng	25	300.0	12.00
1839	Sálin	25	170.0	6.8
1856	Ságú	25	380.0	15.2
1885	Le-gaìng	50	1150.0	23.0

Source: Párábaik MS, Le-gaìng Mìn Nwe Collection (hereafter MNC), dated 17 March 1814; 22 March 1817; 23 July 1821; 14 June 1822; Párábaik MS, no. 107, Sálin Thu-gaùng Collection (hereafter STC), dated 30 October 1828; MNC, dated 3 March 1829; STC, no. 156, dated 22 April 1839; MNC, dated 22 April 1856 and 11 July 1885.

Anglo-Burmese war broke out, and the result was that Burma totally lost its independence. During these wars, all able bodies were drafted to go to war. Some individuals, therefore, had to seek more loans on the security of their lands.

In Mon-ywa and Chaùng-ù townships the spatial measure of paddy land is stated by the number of seedlings in wisps transplanted in a field. The value of land was fixed on this basis. Since there was no irrigation for cultivation of rice lands, the majority was rain fed. The cultivators relied upon the monsoon rain. The paddy lands located near the perennial brooks or reservoirs would naturally be more valuable than others. We have some evidence, gleaned from the land mortgage thet-káyits, that reveals the land values. (See Table 6.)

Mon-ywa and Chaùng-ù townships were the areas where dry cultivation (ya) prevailed. In ya, sesame, millet, cotton, etc. were grown. The size of a ya was measured by the number of baskets of seeds which were sown. The value was set on this basis. (See Table 7.)

The last decade of King Bádon's reign, 1810-1819, was subject to much economic hardship and social unrest. The king sent troops to the princely kingdoms of Assam and Manipur to intervene in the domestic affairs of these states.²⁸ King Bádon's aggressive wars depleted the country's wealth and manpower. Many people were driven into destitution. The increases in the number of indebted people, soaring land values, and social unrest were related. The

Table 6
Land Values in Mon-ywa and Chaung-ù

Year	Location	Size (number of wisps)	Value	Value per 200 Wisps (per acre)
1808	Ywa-pale	450	50.0	22.22
1811	Le-zin	550	265.0	96.36
1813	-	400	79.7	39.85
1815	Chaung-u	1,000	945.0	189.00
1820	Mon-ywei	200	200.0	200.00
1827	Kon-ywa	3,000	190.0	12.66
1843	Ngakin	2,000	164.0	16.4

Source: Palm Leaf MS, Le-zin Collection (hereafter LZC), dated 15 May 1808, 28 June 1811, 10 June 1813; Palm Leaf MS, Nwà-hteìn Collection (hereafter NTC), dated 27 January 1815; WBC, dated 29 November 1843.

Table 7
Ya Values in Nwà-hteìn Tract

Year	Size (in basket)	Value	Value per basket
1810	1	140	140
1814	.75	75	100
1818	1.75	500	285.7
1820	1	140	140
1827	.75	120	160
1830	.25	25	100
1831	.25	30	120
1854	.625	40	64

Source: NTC, dated 17 June 1810, 9 May 1814, 28 July 1818, 26 June 1820, 31 March 1827, 25 October 1830, 21 April 1831; LZC dated 24 May 1854.

money loan and the land mortgage thet-káyits reveal these facts, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

The Price of Crops

Paddy rice has long been the staple crop of Burma. In the Kòn-baung period, it was extensively grown in Shwei-bo, Mádaya, Mandalay, Kyauk-hse, and Mìn-bù townships. Shwei-bo was one of the major rice-growing areas only in the Kòn-baung period. Irrigated cultivation prevailed in other areas since (or before) the classical time. Rice growing fields, called le, were found mostly in the Kòn-baung mortgage deeds. Though Burma produced a fair amount of surplus rice, export was not allowed except by the state. Rice received by the government as revenue or as land rent was stored for three years so that it could be distributed to poverty-stricken people in times of war and famine. There is evidence that the government distributed rice to people threatened with famine.²⁹

In some regions where irrigation was not accessible, ya or dry cultivation was practiced. The crops grown in ya are sesame, millet, cotton, etc. In central Burma--present-day Mandalay, Mágweì, and Ságaing divisions--ya cultivation was predominant. Of the ya products, only cotton was exported to China.³⁰ In the thet-káyits the sale or mortgage of ya land was limited because it was not as productive as the le.

In the inundated areas along the Chindwin and Irrawaddy Rivers, vegetable cultivation was predominant. Beans, chili, onions, peas, tobacco, tomatoes, etc. were grown³¹ on this land, referred to as kaing-kyùn. The cultivators in such areas were generally better

off because their kaing-kyùn land was very productive and they had access to easy communication for trade. Very little of the kaing-kyùn land was mortgaged, suggesting a sign of prosperity.

Gardening was confined to irrigated areas and inundated tracts. The townships of Mádaya, Mandalay, and Kyauk-hse had gardens owned by the royalty and the nobility. Betel vines, areca nuts, coconuts, mangoes, plantains, etc. were grown in the gardens. Around Mandalay, the last royal city of the Kòn-baung dynasty, there were twenty-four royal gardens.³² As a stray document reveals, in 1822-23 the royal gardeners sold out the royal garden products--plantains and papayas--to the people.³³

As far as we know, no cash-crop except cotton was ever cultivated in the Kòn-baung period until the time of King Mìn-dòn. After the Second Anglo-Burmese War of 1852, Burma lost the very productive, littoral province of Pegu and the Irrawaddy deltaic region. Upper Burma relied upon Pegu and the Irrawaddy deltaic region for rice and fish products. But when it fell to the British in 1853, King Mìn-dòn was compelled to introduce economic reforms. Thus a cash-crop economy became prevalent.

In Kòn-baung Burma, statistics concerning the price of crops in domestic trade are not available. People preferred bartering goods to buying and selling with money. Therefore, the price of certain crops found in various sources, mostly in the thet-káyits, cannot be regarded as the market price of that time. Nonetheless, they are of historical value. Table 8 lists paddy prices and provides the reader with a basis to estimate the economic conditions of that period.

Table 8
Price of Paddy (1819-1885)
(for 100 baskets)

Year	Price (in <u>kyat</u>)	Reference
1819	90.5	In-lei (southern Shan state)
1824	100.0	Shwei-bo
1829	60.0	Byan-gyá (Yei-ù township)
1834	40.0	Yei-ù
1837	22.0	Le-zin (Mon-ywa township)
1844	100.0	Byan-gyá
1849	50.0	-do-
1854	100.0	Yei-ù
1859	150.0	-do-
1864	50.0	Ava
1869	60.0	Amarapura
1875	130.0	Le-gaing (Pwin-byu township)
1879	100.0	Taung-dwin-gyi
1885	90.0	Sálin

Source: Párábaik MS, Thein Than Tun Collection (hereafter TTTC), 25 February 1819; párábaik MS, Yei-ù U Thaung Collection (hereafter YTC), 31 October 1824; párábaik MS, Byan-gyá Collection (hereafter BGC), 13 February 1829; YTC, 5 March 1834; LZC, 30 January 1837; BGC, 18 August 1844; *Ibid.*, 23 April 1849; YTC, 19 August 1854; *ibid.*, 25 June 1859; palm leaf MS, Ava Ko Leì Collection (hereafter KLC), 27 July 1864; NLC, no. 1411, 1 August 1869; MNC, 30 June 1875; párábaik MS, Taung-dwin-gyi Hla Hpei Collection (hereafter LPC), 10 May 1879; STC, no. 107, 10 March 1885. (For complete information, see Appendix 3.)

During the last decade of King Bádón's reign, 1810-1819, the price of paddy soared greatly. In 1804, it went up to 200 kyats per 100 baskets;³⁴ in 1808, 250 kyats;³⁵ in 1812, 400 kyats;³⁶ and in 1815, 200 kyats.³⁷ (See Figure 1.)

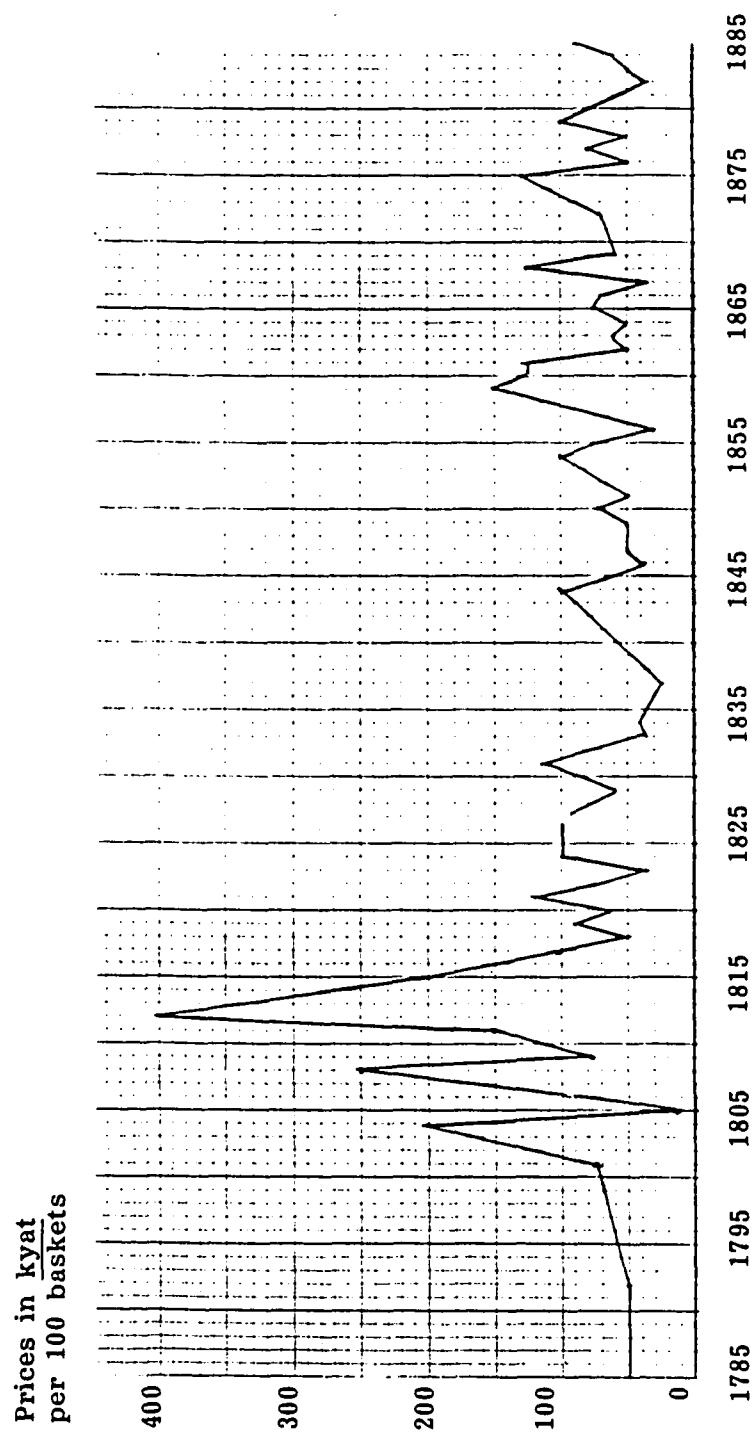
The thet-káyit documents also reveal the prices of other crops, although these occur less often. In many parts of upper Burma where dry cultivation (ya) was predominant, millet was quite extensively grown as it was the staple crop of the poor people. However, we do not find ample evidence concerning the price of millet. Moreover, the information is documented only by the thet-káyits of Le-zin village, and it is extremely limited. The price which was current in that village in 1844 and 1855 was 50 kyats per 100 baskets.³⁸ In 1861, the price went up to 62.5 kyats.³⁹ When compared to the price which was current in 1785 in the capital, Amarapura (less than 15 kyats per 100 baskets),⁴⁰ we can say that it was soaring over three and four times.

Other crops were areca nuts, varieties of beans and peas, chili, onions, palm sugar, pickled tea leaves, and tobacco. Each of them occurs once in the thet-káyits. Therefore, we cannot determine the current prices of these items. (See Table 9.)

Tenancy and Sharecropping

In the Kòn-baung society land mortgaging was "extremely common," but "the morgagee was bound to agree to redemption at any period after the lapse of three years."⁴¹ Those who could not redeem their mortgaged lands automatically became landless farmers.

Figure 1
Paddy Prices in the Kòn-baung Period,
1785-1885



However, since labor was scarce, the mortgagors were permitted to work on their mortgaged lands either as tenants or as sharecroppers. Tenancy was of three kinds. In Mr. Parson's words, the types of tenancy were as follows:

(1) The asu-cha tenant, who bears all the cost of cultivation and pays a fractional share of the gross produce of the land. In this group falls also the tenant or occupier of state lands.

(2) The kon-hpet or partner tenant, who bears a portion only of expense of cultivation and pays as rent a portion of the gross produce.

(3) The asu-ponthe tenant, who pays a fixed rent in kind and bears all the expense of cultivation.⁴²

Table 9

Prices of Other Crops

Crops (year attached)	Price (in <u>kyat</u>)	Reference
Areca nuts (1821)	200.00	per 100 viss
Chili (1821)	10.00	-do-
Green peas (1827)	39.5	per 100 baskets
Onions (1832)	7.5	per 100 viss
Palm sugar (1878)	8.00	-do-
Pe-gyi beans (1854)	30.00	per 100 baskets
Soy beans (1827)	15.75	-do-
Tea leaves (1806)	50.00	per 100 viss
Tobacco	27.00	-do-

Source: YTC, no. 26, 27 August 1821; MNC, 1821; TTTC, 2 May 1827; párábaik MS, Taung-gwin Monastery (Mandalay) Collection (hereafter TGC), 26 April 1854; TTTC, 3 June 1832; párábaik MS, Nwe-táme U Kyaw Hkin Collection (hereafter NKC), 22 November 1878; TTTC, 26 June 1827; LZC, 21 April 1806 and 30 January 1837.

In land mortgage thet-káyits one can see such agreements. Usually the mortgagors asked for permission to work on the mortgaged lands as tenants. This sort of practice was very common in Mon-ywa township. Some cultivators agreed to pay a fixed tenancy rate after mortgaging their lands. In one thet-káyit, a cultivator mortgaged his land for a sum of 83.33 kyats of ywet-ni silver. When he was tenanted, he agreed to pay 100 baskets of paddy as land rent.⁴³ In another thet-káyit, a tenant agreed to pay 300 baskets of thoroughly winnowed paddy at the residence of the landlord, who lived in the royal capital over 50 miles up the Irrawaddy River.⁴⁴

In the irrigated areas either the tenant or the landowner had to pay water-rate. If it was debited to the tenant, the land rent would become less; or, if the landowner furnished the seed and paid the water-rate, the land rent was half the produce.⁴⁵ In areas where irrigation was not available, the usual land rent was either one-fifth or one-fourth of the produce. But it would be one-half if the landowner supplied the seed.⁴⁶ In ya-dominated areas, landowners seldom supplied their tenants with the seed and they usually took from one-fifth to one-tenth of the produce.⁴⁷

At Wùn-byeí, the mortgagors used to keep working on the lands they mortgaged as tenants. They agreed to pay as land rent a fixed amount of the produce no matter what the land yielded. Such practice was called ású-pon-thei--fixed tenancy rate. Of the 21 land mortgages so far extant, 16 are found to be of such a type. It is noteworthy that some peasant proprietors took loans from the money-lenders without pledging their lands. But they agreed to pay a fixed

amount of paddy not as land rent but as an interest on the loan. The customary interest rate was 60 baskets of paddy per 100 kyats a year.⁴⁸ Another thing to be noted in this circle is that interest on the loan could be paid in either cash or in crop.

Moreover, sharecropping loans called lok-hpet-chei-ngwei were also prevalent in this village tract. This indicates that land was plentiful, whereas labor was scarce. One who agreed to work as a tenant could receive such a loan from the landowner free of interest. If the debtor could not repay the loan, he would remain a sharecropper of the landowner, and his labor commuted the interest payable on the loan. But the sharecropper bore all expenses and paid half of the yield to the landowner. This type of relationship was called táyauk-táhnán-zà (each-party-eats-each-ear-of-grain system). The following is a deed of sharecropping contract from Mon-ywa township:

Ninth waning moon of the month, Káson, year 1225 B.E.⁴⁹ Mí Taw and husband Ngá Hpyu, a private of the North Ma-yábin Regiment, who reside at Mìn-ywa village state: We shall agree to work as a sharecropper on the land of the Sáyei-daw-gyi (Great Clerk to the Council) with our eight draft oxen and two yokes of cattle at our own expense. We shall also pay one-half of the yield provided that the Sáyei-daw-gyi lends us a sharecropping loan of 80 kyats of the twenty-five kyat-kè silver.⁵⁰ We promise that both parties must be benefitted. If we fail to comply with our promise and any damage inflicts upon the Sáyei-daw-gyi, we shall submit our son, Ngá Hkaing to be a kyun.

Thereupon, Mìn Kyaw Mìn Tin, the Sáyaì-daw-gyi lends Maung Hpyu a sharecropping loan of 80 kyat. The witnesses are Maung Hkè and Maung Lìn of Mìn-ywa village. The weigher and assayer of the silver is Maung Shwei Le, and the draftsman, Maung Kaung.⁵¹

Peasant proprietors, whenever they were faced with economic hardship due to failure of rain, political unrest, natural calamity or epidemics, used to mortgage their lands. Thus they became tenants. People who did not possess land or other valuable property resorted to sale of their children, wives, or themselves. They became kyuns or non-pecuniary workers of the landowner or creditor. Kyuns were employed mostly in agriculture.

Debtor-kyuns could always be redeemed. Records indicate that they were sometimes redeemed by kings who wanted to emulate the historic kings or Bodhisattvas. For example, on 13 July 1883 King Thi-baw redeemed 1,394 kyuns paying over 40,000 kyats to the kyun owners. It was done with the advice and supervision of the Kìn-wun Mìn-gyì. Of the kyuns, 1,154 were in their teens.⁵²

In summary, the Kòn-baung economy rested mainly on agriculture; people were mostly agriculturists. They grew crops for sufficiency's sake only. Until King Mìn-dòn's time no cash-crop prevailed except cotton, which was exported largely to China via Bhamo. When lower Burma, the major rice-growing region, fell to the British after the second Anglo-Burmese War in 1853, King Mìn-dòn was compelled to introduce reforms. He adopted a coined currency system and encouraged cultivators to grow cash crops by granting funds in advance. A regulation concerning the reclamation of land was also passed with a view to economic development; but the primitive mode of agriculture, the main objective of which was for self-sufficiency, still prevailed. Moreover, land mortgaging, which was a sign of poor economy, was very common in the society. As for

the distribution of land among social classes, there was no landed gentry class. But there were many small landowners in every region who employed debtor-kyuns on their lands. Therefore, economic development was never witnessed in the K`on-baung period.

NOTES

- ¹Maung-daung Hsáya-daw, Ámei-daw Hpyei, pp. 124-28.
- ²U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 5: 25-32; J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 1, vol. 2: 429-34; John Nisbet, Burma 1: 275.
- ³J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 1, vol. 2: 429.
- ⁴In converting the pes into acreage, I apply Sir George Scott's information of 1.77 acres = 1 pe. See J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 1, vol. 2: 168.
- ⁵Michael Aung-Thwin, Pagan, p. 187.
- ⁶Maung-daung Hsáya-daw, Ámei-daw Hpye, p. 124.
- ⁷*Ibid.*, p. 127.
- ⁸U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 5: 35-38.
- ⁹F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, pp. 261, 359.
- ¹⁰J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 1, vol. 2: 432-34.
- ¹¹U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 5: 25.
- ¹²Maung Htin Aung, The Stricken Peacock, p. 2.
- ¹³A royal pe roughly equals 3.5 acres.
- ¹⁴U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 5: 24-25.
- ¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 32-33; and J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 1, vol. 2: 430.
- ¹⁶Land Grant to Shwei-pyi Musketeers, January 11, 1826, Párabáik MS, Min Hla Gon Yaung (Mandalay) Collection, no. 7 (hereafter MGC).
- ¹⁷Land Grant to Pwè-daing-kyaw Boat Squadron, May 31, 1802, WBC, no. 13.
- ¹⁸Mágweì-myó Dhánèt-pála (elephant catchers) Sit-tàn, 17 January 1784, RUCL, Palm Leaf MS, no. 45194; Chaung-ku village Sit-tàn, n.d., Burma Historical Research Department, no. 94; and MGC, no. 13.

¹⁹List of Thwèi-thauk-gyì, Ákyat, and Áhmú-dàn organized at various towns and villages in 1189 B.E. and 1212 B.E., NLC, Parábaik MS, no. 1239.

²⁰U Tin, Ok-chok-pon, 4:245-49; and J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 498-99.

²¹WBC, no. 13, and J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 439.

²²WBC, no. 13.

²³WBC, no. 13.

²⁴WBC, no. 13; also see J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 435.

²⁵Shwei-daik-áwin Taung-dwìn-gyì Ne-myei Sit-tàn, Palm Leaf MS, Taung-dwìn-gyì Museum Collection, no. 368.

²⁶J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 442-43; F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns 43; and J. Nisbet, Burma I: 305.

²⁷J. A. Steward, C. W. Dunn, and Hla Pe, A Burmese-English Dictionary, part 2 (London: Luzac & Company, 1960), p. 72.

²⁸U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 2: 189-197.

²⁹Ibid., p. 128.

³⁰J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 364.

³¹Shwei Taung Nan-dá Thu, Mweí-nùn Yágan, 2nd ed. (Rangoon: Han-tha-wádi Press, 1966), pp. 86-87.

³²J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 1, vol. 2: 424.

³³1184 hkú, Wa-gaung-láká-sáyweí, Nat Shin Àw Za Ú-yin daw-ká thì-myò-pin-myò-dó-ko 1185 hkú, Náyon-lábyeí-kyaw 13 yet-neí-taing, U-yinhmù-dó-yaung-yá-ngwei-daw-sáyin (Crown money received from the sale of Nat Shin Àw Za garden products, conducted by the royal gardeners starting from the month, Wa-gaung, 1184 until the 13th waning moon of the month, Náyon, 1185) Parábaik MS, Mandalay University, History Department Collection (hereafter MUHC).

³⁴WBC, 24 May 1804.

³⁵KLC, 13 June 1808.

³⁷YTC, 30 April 1812.

- ³⁷YTC, 23 May 1815.
- ³⁸LZC, 3 May 1861.
- ³⁹Ibid., 10 May 1861.
- ⁴⁰King Bádón's edict, 16 May 1785, MUHC, párábaik MS, no. 23.
- ⁴¹J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 444.
- ⁴²J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 351.
- ⁴³WBC, 27 April 1832.
- ⁴⁴Ibid., 27 June 1844.
- ⁴⁵J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 351.
- ⁴⁶Ibid.
- ⁴⁷J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 352.
- ⁴⁸WBC, 17 January 1866.
- ⁴⁹2 May 1861.
- ⁵⁰Twenty-five percent worse than the standard ywet-ni; i.e., 1 unit of ywet-ni silver was worth 1.25 units of 25 kyat-ke silver.
- ⁵¹WBC, 2 May 1861.
- ⁵²U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 3:606-607; and also see U Ba Shin, "Ánauk-naing-ngan-yauk-á-ù-zòn-myan-ma-than-ámat-kyì," Myan-má-swe-zon-kyàn, 12 vols. (Rangoon: Burma Translation Society, 1954), I: 332.

CHAPTER 3

LATER KÒN-BAUNG ECONOMY: TRADE

In later Kòn-baung Burma, trade was, as the evidence shows, rather limited and bartering was prevalent. There were two principal factors which determined Kòn-baung trade: Burma's geographical position and social customs.

Three different regions are apparent in Burma's geographical position. The highlands and mountain ranges fringe central Burma, the Irrawaddy River valley on the west, north, and east; the dry zone is in the center; and the coastal and deltaic regions are located in the south and southwest.¹ The Irrawaddy River flows over 800 miles from the northern tip of Burma into the Bay of Bengal, forming a vast river valley and a rich deltaic region. It gives easy access to communication. The Burmese royal capitals of Pagan, Pinya', Ságaing, Ava, Amarapura, and Mandalay, the political centers of historical Burma, were founded on its banks. These cities are not far away from the confluence of the Chindwin with the Irrawaddy. Of course, the Irrawaddy was, and still is, the life-line of Burma. From the royal capitals one could go up the river to Bhamo, a frontier town where trade with China took place, and down to Rangoon, a major seaport, to the outside world. Moreover, the rice-growing areas of Shwei-bo, Mádaya, Kyauk-hse, and Mìn-bù are also located close to the Irrawaddy River and the royal capitals.

The Irrawaddy has many tributary rivers, of which the Chindwin, the Mu, and the Myit-nge are worth discussing briefly. The Chindwin is navigable year-round for roughly 300 miles. It was once the main route to the jade mines and to the two princely kingdoms of Assam and Manipur, both of which were Burma's tributary states before 1826.² The Mu flows through the rice-growing area of Shwei-bo and empties into the Irrawaddy about 40 miles below the capital, Mandalay. It is navigable by country boat in high water. The Myit-nge, with its tributary riverlets that flow through the Kyauk-hse district, joins the Irrawaddy near Ava; it is also navigable for some distance. Local trade developed along these rivers.³

Because of easy access to communication, Burma's domestic trade developed mainly at the capital city and along the Irrawaddy River. Large merchant boats capable of carrying 100-200 tons of cargo, laden with rice, salt, dried fish, and fish paste (ngápí), set sail from lower Burma to up-country towns and villages. There were also boats laden with petroleum, cotton, jaggery or palm sugar, tamarind fruits, and other upper Burma products floating down the river to deltaic towns and villages.⁴ The major trading center of lower Burma was Rangoon; of central Burma, the royal city; and of northern Burma, the town of Bhamo.

According to British reports there were towns on the Irrawaddy where trade prospered. For example, Yei-nan-gyaùng was famous for its petroleum trade. A British envoy on his way to Amarapura reported that "the inhabitants were well-dressed. Many of them had

gold spiral ear ornaments and were undoubtedly rich from the great trade they carry on the earth-oil."⁵ While the envoy was there, there were thirty-three large merchant boats and many other small ones anchored to load the earth-oil. The inflow of wealth from this trade, it is said, amounted to 711,750 kyats or 889,687.5 sicca rupees.⁶ Myìn-gyan was another town on the Irrawaddy, from which cotton was exported largely to British Burma.⁷

Apart from waterways, Kòn-baung Burma had no means of travel except for a road linking Mìn-bù, situated on the right bank of the Irrawaddy in central Burma, and Àn, a gate-way to the Bay of Bengal in the Rakhine province. The road was built by King Bádon in 1816 at a cost of 20,000 kyat weights of silver.⁸ Having no highways, the hinterland areas were rather isolated; the people strived for self-sufficiency and therefore only a localized small trade was conducted. Goods were carried by oxen-drawn carts.⁹ Pack mules were also used.¹⁰ Of course, peddlers were more common.

In the inland trade the Shan people are said to have been great traders. They traveled all over Burma for trade, as far west as Dwa-ya-wádi (Dvaravati) or Sandoway of the Rakhine province. A Shan trader by the name of Ngá Pan once reported to King Bádon in 1816 that the Governor of Dwa-ya-wádi was very corrupt, to the detriment of the traders. The report resulted in the dismissal of the Governor from his office.¹¹ As evidence shows, the Shan traders frequented the Taung-dwìn-gyì district too. We find that people in this district sometimes used the Shan weights in their business transactions.¹² The Shan people were mostly highlanders, and there

were many passes and tracks that came down to the plains. The Nat-hteik pass and the tracks of Hsinwi, Hsipaw and Hsum Hsai were the major trade routes from the northern Shan states to the Burmese capitals. The other passes were along the line of the Shan hills stretching from Bhamo to Taung-ngu, through which the Shan traders came down to the plain.¹³

As far as we know, the Shan products were coarse papers, soy beans,¹⁴ cheroot leaves,¹⁵ and, most importantly, dried and pickled tea.¹⁶ During the reigns of Kings Mìn-dòn and Thi-bàw, tea was declared a royal monopoly.

In upper Burma and elsewhere in the Shan states, industries such as silk weaving,¹⁷ lacquerware,¹⁸ pottery,¹⁹ and blacksmithing²⁰ produced articles to meet the local demand. In the local and inter-regional trade, these articles were bartered for certain crops or sold for money at the local markets or at local pagoda festivals.

In central Burma, where political centers were established for centuries, trade was confined mostly to the royal city and to some other towns located on the Irrawaddy. Of course, trade was dominated by a few merchants, the largest bidders of the monopolies farmed out by the Hlut-taw.²¹ Some high-ranking officials were also engaged in such business either by royal commission or by self-motivation.²² Furthermore, the servicemen of the royal navy also performed trade in their boats along the Irrawaddy with permission of the Hlut-taw. For this privilege, they paid with a certain number of imported muskets or other military-related materials, such as niter,

lead, swords, and lances.²³ As for petty traders and pedlars they were bound to pay tolls and 10 percent ad valorem duties at the landing stages for their goods.²⁴ Customarily, toll fees were collected according to the size of the cargo boats they used in trading.²⁵ In some areas, brokerage fees were also collected from both vendors and purchasers at the point of sale.²⁶

Other than the river routes there were no roads; only the cart tracks that linked one village to another were accessible. In such areas people were naturally compelled to practice self-sufficiency since regular trade with other regions could not be carried out in the rainy season, except for a few peddlers who sometimes frequented these places.

In the coastal and deltaic regions were the Rakhinese, the Mons, and the Karens. Like the so-called Burmese áthis, they were mostly cultivators. Fishing and gardening were also carried out fairly extensively. The big merchants at Rangoon were not the Burmans or other indigenous people, but the foreigners. We have no evidence of local trade, but that does not mean there was none. These regions were very fertile and productive, although thinly populated. Because of wars and insurrections people fled their towns and villages, taking refuge in neighboring countries.²⁷ As a matter of fact, both local and interregional trade could hardly flourish during the later part of the eighteenth century. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, inter-regional trade between upper Burma and the deltaic region and the Rakhine province again came alive.

Local Trade

At every town in upper Burma and the Shan states there was usually a market called zei, where small-scale local trade was conducted. Not all of the zei were held every day. Some were held every fifth day, some every pre-sabbath day, and some every fifteenth day. On the market day (zei-nei) country people came to town bringing their products. The goods bought or sold were not numerous but included four essential categories: food and food stuffs, clothing, household utensils, and farm implements. For the people of upper Burma and the Shan states, the most essential food stuffs were fish paste (ngapi) and salt, both of which were imported mostly from lower Burma. Another imported item was clothing; homespun cotton-cloth was also available in the market. Household utensils and farm implements were usually locally made or imported from neighboring districts.

Artisan villages were located in every district. Evidence concerning cloth-weaving, salt-boiling, pottery, metal-working, cart-making, boat-building, etc. abounds. I shall discuss some industries in various localities. In the northern Shan states, we find industries producing such goods as silk and woven cotton, paper, pottery, hats and shoes, etc., mainly for local use. Also, plantations producing tea and thánat-hpet or cheroot wrapping leaves (cordia myxa) were extensive. These products were exported to various parts of Burma. In the southern Shan states, betel-boxes, cups, lacquer-ware, párábaiks, iron-ware, paper umbrellas, and silk cloth were produced.²⁸

In central Burma one can find villages where artisans produced various kinds of handcrafts. For example, Ságaing is still well known for its metalwork and pottery. Gold and silver smiths produced rings, bracelets, buttons, studs, necklaces, cups, earrings, anklets, hair-pins, combs, and the like. Brass works, including spittoons, betel-boxes, cups, bowls, and trays, were made. Blacksmiths produced heavy knives, axes, hinges, scythes, ploughshares, nails, tires for wheels, and so forth.²⁹ Páhkoku, situated on the right bank of the Irrawaddy above Pagan, was famous for its boat-building. It could supply the needs of the Irrawaddy population.³⁰ Cart-making in Myó-tha³¹ and Taung-dwìn-gyì³² was also fairly extensive; those communities could furnish carts to the whole of Páhkoku and Taung-dwìn-gyì as well as to their adjacent districts. One remarkable industry in Taung-dwìn-gyì was that of byat--household dishes such as platters, trays, bowls, and utensils turned out of wood and lacquered over.³³ Glazed pottery of Kyauk-myaung in Shwei-bo district,³⁴ lacquerware of Pagan,³⁵ and silk-weaving of Sále³⁶ and Yámè-thìn³⁷ were well known.

Country fairs or pagoda festivals were held once a year at different places and seasons according to locality and played a very important role in the local trade. People brought their products to the festival from far and near. In Hsipaw township there is a village called Maw Kio. At the head of the village stands a famous pagoda, the festival of which is always celebrated for ten days in March. J. G. Scott depicts the scene of this festival vividly:

Scores of Burman carts and a few hundred of Burmans came up specially for the fair. They bring up with them both necessities of life and luxuries for sale. English cotton and silk goods, and small images of Gaudama, betel-boxes, umbrellas, scissors, spoons for curry, gongs, enameled iron plates, sandals, tobacco, cigarette papers, and tinned milk. Chinamen attend with little red and white felt carpets which are found in most shan houses, with straw hats and iron pans if they have come from China, and with English goods of all kinds if they have come from Mandalay.... Pottery men from Mon Kung sell their pretty pale greenish coloured water-pots and vases for offering flowers at the pagoda. Others from there and from Kehsi Mansam do a large business in iron-work, dhas, hoes, hatchets and ploughshares. Many Shans and Palaungs lay their annual stock of necessities, hoeing tools, shoes, choppers, and clothes at this Maw Kio festival.³⁸

One can see how important a role the country fairs or pagoda festivals play in Burma's local trade.

In the later part of the Kòn-baung period it is reported there were ninety-five pagoda festivals or country fairs in various parts of upper Burma and the Shan states which the Burmese government sponsored and collected rental dues for booths. The annual inflow of revenue from these pagoda festivals amounted to 15,919 kyats. Because of their importance to local trade, I shall mention the localities where the annual pagoda festivals and country fairs were held with reference to those which the government sponsored (see Table 10).

The festivals were held mostly in Tábaùng (February-March). At that time the agricultural season was over. Peasant farmers were free to relax, and they also earned some amount of money by selling their surplus crops. They went to local pagoda festivals not only for relaxation and for merit-making, but also for buying things they

Table 10
Government Sponsored Pagoda Festivals

Locality	Number of Annual Festivals
Álon -----	19
Ámyín -----	1
Ava -----	2
Bágyi-taik -----	11
Bhamo -----	2
Di-pè-yín -----	5
Hsin-byu-gyùn -----	1
In-daing-gon -----	1
Ìn-lei -----	1
Kyauk-hse -----	3
Kyauk-pádaung -----	1
Myaing -----	1
Myín-mu -----	1
Ngásín-gù -----	5
Pagan -----	9
Páhkàn-gyì -----	10
Pauk-myaing -----	1
Pìn-tàlè -----	1
Pìn-yá -----	1
Ságaing -----	3
Ságù -----	1
Sálei -----	2
Shwei-pyi-yan-aung -----	3
Taung-ngu -----	4
Ti-gyáing -----	1
Wet-Let -----	2
Yádána-thein-gá -----	1
Yàw -----	2

Source: J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I,
vol. 2: 426-28.

needed. So we can say that Tábaùng (February-March) was the month in which local and inter-regional trade reached its zenith.

There were also places where pagoda and spirit festivals were held annually. In Myei-dù, for example, annual feasts were held at Shwei-gu-myin pagoda in Tágu (March-April). One document states that the festival in 1881 did not have a bustling crowd like previous years because many traders did not come to do business in that year. As a result, the revenue fell dramatically.³⁹ The decline is thought to be related to state policy. The Burmese government reintroduced the royal monopoly system in 1881. Because of this action, upper Burma's trade with British Burma fell in 1881 and 1882.⁴⁰

Local trade usually flourished at market towns or places where annual feasts for pagodas and spirits were held. The articles available in markets and fairs were mostly locally made and were essential items for the peasantry and the artisans. Since the economy was one of subsistence, the trade was also only for necessities. Of course, there were several factors that hindered trade development. Here I would like to place emphasis on traditional economic performance. In the country there were no big Burmese merchants who could manage foreign trade or trade with British Burma except for the king, who declared certain crops and minerals to be royal monopolies, and a few foreign merchants.

Royal Trade and Monopolies

In the Kòn-baung period, the kings either directly controlled the trade or farmed out the monopolies of certain merchandise or crops in order to obtain more revenues from trade. As the evidence shows,

the monopolization of certain crops and merchandise was introduced by King Bádon, who made all possible efforts to improve the economy and the military even though none of them was fully realized. Many edicts issued during the later part of his reign, 1800-1819, reveal that he placed much emphasis on commerce.⁴¹ It was also he who first farmed out monopolies to the highest bidders. Moreover, he commissioned his officials to engage in commerce. Thus the government controlled the domestic trade.

The center of trade in Burma was Amarapura, the royal city. There were 150,000 households in its precincts.⁴² Four markets (pwès) were established in the cardinal quarters of the city. In the north was the Mádè market; in the east, the Zaùng-kálàw market; in the south, the Páleik market; and in the west, the Kyùn-daw-yìn market.⁴³ The Mádè was the busiest one. It was always congested with Chinese and Shan traders, pack mules, and bullocks. In the river there were merchant boats ready to set sail up to Bhamo and down to Rangoon. The tax farmers in the markets were officials; they, too, engaged in trade. It is apparent that trade was in the hands of a few merchants who bought monopolies farmed out by the Hlut-taw.

For example, Mìn Kyaw Thi-há Thu was a chief royal granary officer who, in 1808, was commanded by the king to supervise a group of merchants and brokers permitted to deal collectively in imported diamonds, gems, birds' nests, and areca nuts in the royal city. In this business firm, which consisted of 13 shareholders, there was one Yan Aung Kyaw Htin--a government official. The firm

paid 100 viss (5840 oz) of silver a year for the monopoly of the above-said items.⁴⁴

A crown service group also included some self-motivated merchants. A steersman of the Mìn Nan Si royal boat from Ságaing was a trader. He was permitted to run a trade in 1807 along the Irrawaddy. For this privilege he paid 1,000 viss of lead and 1,000 viss of niter a year.⁴⁵ Another group of steersmen from Pegu was granted the right to monopolize the trade of forest products that consisted of planks, lac, orpiment, and catechu.⁴⁶ Petty traders who conducted trade along the Irrawaddy by the permission of the Hlut-taw were bound to pay as taxes three imported muskets for each large cargo boat, and one for each small cargo boat per annum. In 1806, forty-four merchants, who since 1783 had conducted the trade on the Irrawaddy, in 212 large and 1,856 small cargo boats, became financially ruined because of natural disasters and, therefore, surrendered their permits to the Hlut-taw. In their place came another forty-three merchants who used in their trade 87 large and 1,633 small cargo boats.⁴⁷

Some merchants were allowed to monopolize the trade of certain goods in the royal capital. By 1810, Ngá Shwei Pú was the sole dealer of cooking oil in the capital. He paid 150 kyat weight of gold (87.6 oz) a year for this monopoly.⁴⁸ However, he was beaten in 1812 by another merchant who bought this monopoly, paying 220 kyat weight of gold (128.48 oz) and 220 viss of cooking oil to the Hlut-taw per annum.⁴⁹ Paddy, varieties of peas, and Indian millet were in 1810 monopolized by two merchants, Ngá Shwei Pú and Ngá Shwei

Kyaw. For this privilege, they paid the government 1,200 kyat weight of silver (700.8 oz) plus 2,160 baskets of unhusked rice a year.⁵⁰ But, when they were contested by other merchants, they raised their payment up to 4,500 kyat weight of silver (1,628 oz) for the year 1811⁵¹ in order not to lose the privilege.

Tapping toddy palm (palmyra palm) and boiling palm sugar--called jaggery--was, and still is, one of the major industries in which many rural people of central Burma are engaged. The importance of this industry to the Kòn-baung economy ranked next to agriculture, perhaps since the Pagan period.⁵² The sit-tàns reveal that there were many church-owned toddy palm groves. In Taung-zìn village, for example, there were 49 toddy palm groves, of which 9 were owned by the Shwei-zì-gon pagoda and 17 others were owned by some religious institutions.⁵³

Toddy palm sugar or jaggery was one of the major export goods of upper Burma, especially during the reigns of Kings Mìn-dòn and Thi-bàw. Being very profitable, jaggery was listed as a royal monopoly. In 1810, King Bádon granted a merchant by the name of Ngá Shùn the right to monopolize jaggery trade in Amarapura, for which the latter paid as a tax 2,500 kyat weight of silver (1,460 oz) a year.⁵⁴ Out of the royal city, especially along the Irrawaddy, the monopoly of jaggery trade was in the hands of Ngá Htùn Wá and Ngá Shwei Thà, who were co-dealers. They bought all available jaggery produced in the Páhkàn-gyì district to export to other places. They ran this trade with 30 large and 20 small cargo boats. For this

monopoly, they paid 48,000 viss of jaggery (78.21 tons) to the Hlut-taw every year.⁵⁵

When King Mìn-dòn declared seven items as royal monopolies, jaggery was one of them.⁵⁶ King Thi-bàw maintained these items as royal monopolies. By 1882 the jaggery monopoly was granted to a China man, who for this privilege paid the king's government 210,000 kyats a year. It is said that he doubled his payment for this monopoly.⁵⁷ So one can guess how profitable the jaggery trade was. Because of much profit, King Thi-bàw did not abolish the royal monopoly system even though the government of British India made protests and demanded its abolition.⁵⁸

Extensive tea plantations were located in the northern Shan states.⁵⁹ Since the early Ava period (1287-1555) the Burmese people became used to eating pickled tea leaf.⁶⁰ Eventually, tea trade also burgeoned. In the early Kòn-baung period, King Bádon was first to grant the right for the monopoly of tea trade in Amarapura to merchants who offered the largest bid. One of his edicts reveals that the dealers in 1810 paid duties in gold amounting to one viss (58.4 oz) a year.⁶¹ Kings Mìn-dòn and Thi-bàw also made it a royal monopoly. In 1855, upper Burma exported 473,441 pounds of tea leaves to British Burma, the value of which amounted to 44,208.2 kyats.⁶² During King Thi-bàw's time, the tea trade monopoly was assigned to a royal steersman who paid for it a large sum of money to the crown for it, thereby becoming the sole vendor and distributor. When the trade was at its zenith in 1879, he gained as much profit as 54,008 English pounds.⁶³

Other than crops, earth-oil (petroleum) was important in both internal and external trade. The British envoys⁶⁴ paid much attention to it. According to Captain Hiram Cox, 'he earth oil production yielded "a direct revenue to the king of 136,252 sicca rupees per annum" out of the total inflow of 889,687.5 sicca rupees.⁶⁵ In 1812, a merchant, Ngá Lok, was granted a monopoly of peas, sessamum, and earth-oil, for which he paid as taxes 140 kyat weight of gold (81.76 oz) per annum.⁶⁶ During the time of Kings Mìn-dòn and Thi-bàw, the monopoly was granted to a native of India known as Moola Ibrahim. He was one of the most successful concessionaires holding large contracts not only in earth-oil but also in teak, cotton, and sessamum seed.⁶⁷ During the year 1878-79, he gained a fortune of 61,448 English pounds from the earth-oil trade alone. But when the British Resident left Mandalay, his trade fell to 35,632 English pounds due to political instability.⁶⁸ Of course, the British merchants clamored against the royal monopoly since the early 1860s and even demanded their government annex independent Burma.⁶⁹

The introduction of trade monopolies and tax farming were of much relevance to, and inseparable from, each other. These practices came into existence along with the migration of Chinese merchants to Southeast Asian countries.⁷⁰ In the case of Burma, trade with China took place intermittently at frontier towns like Bhamo, Hsenwi, and Kaùngton. But, for some decades, this frontier trade collapsed because of hostility between the two countries. However, during the reign of King Bádon, the Chinese merchants and the governor of Yunan province made vigorous efforts to reestablish

relations with Burma. Missions were sent back and forth for this purpose. Some are said to be fake missions or missions sent by the governor of Yunan and disguised as those of the Emperor. The missions presented three so-called Chinese princesses to the Burmese king.⁷¹ Their attempts and objectives met with success. Land trade between the two countries resumed and flourished. Many Chinese came and settled at places "where economic opportunities were particularly good."⁷² They were engaged mostly in trade, both domestic and foreign. Some mined jade and silver in the Kachin and the Shan states.⁷³ Of course, they dealt with all the profitable business that the Burmese and the indigenous people overlooked.

The Burmese people historically were not big merchants. They usually operated the trade "on the fringes of subsistence economies and [were] pinched in the narrow social space between lord and peasants."⁷⁴ Because of Chinese immigrants, a cash crop economy came into existence in the later Kòn-baung period. The Chinese merchants bought a great deal of cotton. And to meet this demand, the Burmese cultivators in central Burma grew more cotton. Moreover, it is also thought that the Chinese introduced rubber plantations in upper Burma in the late nineteenth century. They also refined sugar, and their product was as good as that of Bengal,⁷⁵ the original home of that industry.⁷⁶ Even the Burmese word thágyà, for sugar, may be a corruption of the Indian word sakara, which "generally denoted the white variety of crystallized sugar."⁷⁷ King Bádon organized some Chinese people into a sugar-refining

service group. Like the other royal service groups, they were allotted land for cultivation.⁷⁸

The Chinese merchants served as middlemen between the rural peasantry and the noble class. The cash crop economy and the trade monopoly, together with tax-farming, were, of course, their contributions to Burmese society and administration. Not only in Burma, but also in other southeast Asian countries, they "based their wealth on new economic patterns of foreign and domestic trade, tax-farming, and commercial agriculture."⁷⁹ They bought all possible privileges from the native governments in order to operate their money economy. Jade⁸⁰ and silver mining⁸¹ in the Kachin and the Shan states, salt trade and tax-collecting along the upper Irrawaddy and the Chindwin,⁸² jaggery⁸³ and rubber⁸⁴ monopolies were under their control during King Thi-bàw's time. Cotton trade had also been in their hand for decades until King Mìn-dòn declared it a royal monopoly in 1864.⁸⁵

The Kòn-baung kings, starting from Bádón, came to realize that the revenue in cash could be easily obtained in lump sum by selling trade monopolies. When Pegu fell to the British in 1853, it became a major trading partner of independent Burma from that time until 1885; King Mìn-dòn was compelled to control the trade by declaring royal monopolies of some export items in order to get more revenue. Furthermore, he also farmed out the rights to collect tolls and customs duties on forest products and salt along the Irrawaddy and Chindwin Rivers. The British government, on the other hand, demanded that the Burmese government abolish the monopoly system

even though the British merchants enjoyed a lion's share of the trade of upper Burma.⁸⁶ The Bombay Burma Trading Corporation (BBTC) was, for example, granted the right to extract teak and other wood from the Burmese forests, and the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company to run its steamers along the Irrawaddy and Chindwin Rivers to their upper reaches.⁸⁷

Insofar as the tax-farmers are concerned, they were mostly the royal household officials, including those of the chief queen and queen mother. They therefore referred to themselves as the kyundaw-myò--hereditary royal household slaves, i.e., the very trusted royal household officials in proximity to the king. The tax-farmers were known as pwè-oks--administrators of the markets or tax collectors. In one thet-kayit we find that in 1858 an administrator of the four markets of the royal city (lèi-myó-pwè-ok), who was urgently in need of money to pay the revenues in advance for the markets he administered, borrowed one viss of gold (56 oz) from the queen mother. Then, she ordered her steward to lend out the requested amount of gold without charging interest on it.⁸⁸

The administrator of the Taung-làn Shàn-pwè and the Dèi-wùn-pwè of the royal city was a favorite of King Thi-bàw's chief queen. For this privilege he paid the king's government 165,000 kyats a year.⁸⁹ A group of other kyundaw-myò was sanctioned to collect tolls from the ox-drawn carts coming into the precincts of the royal city. They paid a revenue of 61,000 kyats a year for this farm.⁹⁰

In 1879 three rich men were assigned to collect tolls and 10 percent ad valorem duties from forest products along the Chindwin River.⁹¹ A great royal clerk by the name of Mìn Htin Mìn Hlá Ya-za was also granted the same right in the same year along the Irrawaddy.⁹² The forest products listed were bamboo, bamboo mats, buffalo and bullock hides, cane, cotton, cutch, elephant tusks, fibrous tree barks, gum, lac, madoler marinda citrifolia, párábaiks (coarse folded book), planks, pwè-lyet (product of dammer bees deposited in hollow trees), soapstones, and bee wax.⁹³ How much annual payment they made to the government for the monopoly of these items is not known to us. Traditionally, 5 percent ad valorem duty on forest products was collected.⁹⁴

The systems, that is, monopolization of some goods or crops and tax-farming, brought forth both advantage and disadvantage. It is correct to say that the advantage went to the government or the crown; the disadvantage went to the petty traders and the people in general. Because of these systems, lump sum revenues in cash flowed into the royal treasury. In 1884 the revenues from the sources of the forest, customs, markets, ferries, and the like totaled 3,748,903 kyats.⁹⁵ But due to lack of a budgeting system on the one hand, and the absolute monarchy on the other hand, the Kòn-baung kings spent the revenues as they liked. King Mìn-dòn, for example, spent 226 million kyats on religious matters.⁹⁶ King Thi-bàw's chief queen used it to buy diamonds⁹⁷ and European articles.⁹⁸ Therefore, the king's government was faced with bankruptcy. There were instances in which the government

servicemen, including some Europeans employed in factories, could not draw their salaries for a year or so.⁹⁹

Foreign Trade

Burma's foreign trade in the Kòn-baung period had never been fully developed. There were several factors that hindered the trade. Burma's geographical position constituted one factor, in that its seaports were away from the east-west seaborne trade route. Another factor was the Burmese monarchy. The king and the ruling elite did not foresee, or ignored, the dynamic force of world trade that could change the country's subsistence-agrarian economy; they clung to their old customs and traditions as before. Prohibition of the export of rice and precious metals, the high port access fees and custom duties, and the demand for gifts from foreign merchants and ship captains were also factors hindering trade.

Port Fees and Custom Duties

At the Burmese seaports, foreign merchant ships were bound to pay various charges, both in kind and in cash, aside from gifts. The port charges were levied according to the tonnage of the ship, which varied from ten to five hundred kyats. As for pilotage fees, ten kyats per foot of draft was customarily demanded. Moreover, as custom dues on imports, 10 percent in kind was levied for the king, and another 2 percent for custom officials.¹⁰⁰

After the first Anglo-Burmese war, Major Burney, the British Resident, insisted that the Burmese government reduce its port dues, referring to King Bádon's reduction of port dues. In 1804, the king reduced port dues on the merchandise to 5 percent. An additional

1 percent could be collected for the custom officers. "On textile," Burney says, "five bales were fixed flatly as custom dues; on coconuts five hundred in kind had to be paid."¹⁰¹ During his reign, some merchant ships frequented the ports of the Rakhine province.¹⁰² It thus seems that the king had a strong desire for the development of external trade. In 1806, an American ship on its way to Calcutta was driven out of its route to Rangoon by a storm. The ship's captain was exempted from port visitation dues and invited to the royal city. He was received cordially and was conducted to some pagodas and monasteries.¹⁰³ In 1812, King Bádón granted some foreign merchants a free port visitation at Rangoon.¹⁰⁴

King Bádón's modification of port visitation dues and customs duties was effective in 1813, and charged all merchant ships were charged a flat rate of 1,600 kyats to be paid both in cash and in kind. But, later, a slight reduction was made for 450-ton vessels. According to this new regulation, such a vessel was required to pay¹⁰⁵ the following dues:

for permission to land cargo	Rs.	4.5
one piece of Indian cloth	-	10
-do-	-	8
cash	-	4
two handkerchiefs	-	2
cash	-	4
feast for certain officers	-	62
permission to unload cargo	-	4.5
anchorage and pilotage inwards	-	394
measurement dues	-	700
offering to king's warehouse	-	50
two pieces of Indian cloth	-	24
two handkerchiefs for an order for		
ship to depart	-	2
cash for an order for ship to depart	-	9
for rendering account for import and		
export charges	-	5

three handkerchiefs for an order to reship guns, etc.	-	3
presents to the king's linguist	-	50
eight handkerchiefs for watchmen	-	8
eight handkerchiefs for watch-house	-	8
pilotage outwards	-	150
Total		1,500

From 1817 to 1822, the average number of ships that made annual portcalls at Rangoon increased to forty. The actual number of ships in 1822 was fifty-six,¹⁰⁶ so the trade can be said to have been steadily burgeoning. However, a British merchant remarked that "in those days Burma may be said to have had almost no external commerce at all."¹⁰⁷

During the first Anglo-Burmese war, Rangoon fell to the British for two and one-half years--from 2 June 1824 to 9 December 1826. The British occupation forces collected 2 percent ad valorem duties on teak export. On all other articles, whether exported or imported, they collected 8 percent ad valorem duties.¹⁰⁸ When the Burmese administration was restored at Rangoon, the prohibition of the export of rice and precious metals was also reenforced. One historian noted the following:

For some years after the war, moreover, the heavy taxation necessitated by the large indemnity payable under the treaty of Yandabo handicapped trade; and also the trade of Rangoon suffered because no custom dues were levied along the Arakan and Tenasserim frontiers which could undersell the Rangoon merchants.¹⁰⁹

During the 1830s, Major Burney, the British Resident, made vigorous efforts to persuade the Burmese king to modify port and custom dues.¹¹⁰ In one of his letters, Burney pointed out that King Bádón had reduced port and custom duties and, therefore, "the

common merchants...showed their gratitude by praying for the increase in his Majesty's glory and for his longevity well beyond the centenarians's life-expectancy."¹¹¹

However, it seems that he received no response from the Burmese government. He wrote another letter to the governor of Rangoon. In the letter, he says:

I request you to reduce the existing port dues, anchorage and pilotage included, for two years as an experiment. I also give my solemn pledge to send letters to Bengal, describing the improved trade conditions here, so as to attract the attention of big merchants overseas to your ports, thus stimulating Rangoon's foreign trade and increasing your revenue.¹¹²

With wounds of the first Anglo-Burmese war not yet healed, the Burmese government did not heed the advice of Burney, whose very presence at the capital was thought undesirable and harmful. In short, the external trade at Rangoon, or of Burma in general, was declining after the first Anglo-Burmese war, particularly because of the imposition of heavy duties. The emergence of free ports that flanked Rangoon was also a major factor that felled Burma's foreign trade during the two wars.

Foreign Merchants in Burma

According to documents so far extant, no Burmans or ethnic minorities were found to be directly engaged in foreign trade. Moreover, there had been not a single Burman ever appointed as collector of customs at Rangoon throughout the Kòn-baung period. This might be due to the language barrier or the lack of foreign trade experience. Therefore, the Burmese kings appointed Spaniards, Portuguese, or Armenians as collectors of customs

(ákauk-wun) at the Rangoon port. King Ságaṅg, for example, appointed Mr. Lanciogo, a Spaniard, as his collector of customs. During the first Anglo-Burmese war, Mr. Lanciogo was arrested and detained on suspicion of being a British spy. But, when the war was over, he was reappointed to his former post. Later he was replaced by Antony Caramatta, a Portuguese.¹¹³ These actions show that the Burmese government did not try to understand international trade, instead relied upon foreigners.

When the Burmese people could not afford or manage foreign trade, it naturally fell into the hands of foreigners. There were many foreign merchants, the majority of whom were Muslims; others who controlled Burma's foreign trade at Rangoon were Armenians, English, French, and Portuguese.¹¹⁴ Among them, some Muslims received royal favor. In 1797, King Bádon granted Boodham, a Muslim, "the exclusive privilege of monopoly,"¹¹⁵ but the British regarded him as an "insolent unprincipled villain."¹¹⁶ For the most part, the foreign merchants settled at Rangoon. However, there were some who came up to the capital in order to win royal favor and/or to gather information for the government of British India. During the time of King Bádon, there lived two big merchants in Amarapura; one was Mr. Augusar, an Armenian, and another was Mr. Reeves, an Englishman.¹¹⁷

Among the English merchants who came to Burma for trade, Henry Gouger, who the Burmese people called Gu Ze,¹¹⁸ is worth mentioning, not only because of his trade but also because of his role in the first Anglo-Burmese war. Advised by his "intelligent

merchant," and furnished with "a few thousand pounds" by Mr. Mackenzie (Captain Mackenzie?), he came to Burma to conduct trade at the royal capital in June 1822. At the outbreak of the war in 1824 he was arrested and imprisoned on suspicion of being a British spy until the British intruding armies reached Yan-dábo. His properties were also confiscated. But, when the Burmese government sent a mission for a peace talk, he (together with Dr. Price) was employed to interpret and translate the documents of the treaty.¹¹⁹

According to the Yan-dábo Treaty, the Burmese government was compelled to pay as war indemnity a sum of ten million rupees. In the draft treaty the rupee meant the Madras rupee, which was inferior in value to the sicca rupee. Mr. Gouger suggested that the British general demand sicca rupees instead. Then he ruminated on his triumph, observing that "indeed, by an extraordinary accident, I was the means not only of aiding the General, but also of enriching the exchequer of the East India Company to the amount of nearly seventy thousand British pounds in a manner that was not the less gratifying to me because it came from the pocket of my later oppressors."¹²⁰

When the war was over, he recovered his property with two years' interest rate.¹²¹ According to a Burmese document, he was paid back 2,437.75 kyat weight of gold (1,424 oz) valued at 48,759.25 kyat weight of good quality silver plus 8,591.25 kyat weight of the same quality as interest, altogether totaling 57,350.5 kyat weight of good silver.¹²² He was appointed chief police officer at Rangoon by the government of British India while the city was under the rule of

the British intruding armies and during the period when the Burmese government could not pay the last installment of the war indemnity.¹²³

During the time of the two wars (1825-1852), trade was apparently declining. However, there were still a few foreign merchants in Rangoon who controlled trade. They were Arabs, Armenians, English, Greeks, and Indians.¹²⁴ The Burmese merchants bought merchandise from them, mostly on credit, and distributed or transhipped the goods to petty local merchants.¹²⁵ In the capital the outstanding foreign merchants were Mr. Lanciango, a Spaniard; Mr. Sakies, an Armenian whom the Burmese people called Tha kyit;¹²⁶ and Mr. Lane, who was an Englishman.¹²⁷ The former two merchants were once officials in the Burmese government.

Trade with British Burma and the Outside World

After the second Anglo-Burmese war in 1853, Burma lost the very rich littoral province of Pegu, including the Irrawaddy deltaic region. After that period, independent upper Burma became a landlocked country. Because of its lack of direct access to the outside world, the government of upper Burma was compelled to rely upon British Burma both as an outlet for its surplus products and as an inlet for merchandise from outside. Independent Burma and British Burma were naturally interdependent, simply because each produced the necessities of the other. British Burma produced rice, fish paste (ngápí), salt, etc., and independent Burma produced cooking oil, cotton, jaggery, petroleum, varieties of peas, tobacco, wheat, etc.¹²⁸ Each traded its produce with the other.

After lower Burma became a part of British territory, Burma's trade with it burgeoned more than ever before. This flourishing trade was due to three factors: no language and culture barrier, since the inhabitants were of the same heritage on the same land even though the government institutions were different; introduction of coinage systems in both parts of Burma; and the use of steamers along the Irrawaddy and Chindwin Rivers, speeding the flow of trade. King Mìn-dòn granted the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company the right to run its steamers along the Irrawaddy up to Bhamo.

So far as the royal monopolies of King Mìn-dòn are concerned, there are several factors. The second year of his reign was a lean year. Because of poor rainfall, the price of rice soared, and the people were faced with famine. The king sent many of the specially built boats to British Burma to buy 100,000 baskets of paddy rice. The king then sold rice to the people "at below-cost price."¹²⁹ From November 1854 to November 1855, the import of paddy and rice was still high. During this time, 43,000 tons (or 1,719,436 baskets) of paddy and 18,600 tons (or 742,191 baskets) of rice were imported. The value together totalled over one million rupees.¹³⁰

The trade deficit of 1855 was alarmingly large for a war-torn Burma. The export value for the three quarters from February 1 to November 1, 1855 was about one million, whereas the import from British Burma reached a value of over three million rupees during the year 1854-1855.¹³¹ Perhaps due to this unbalanced trade, King Mìn-dòn got the idea of controlling the trade. The fact that the Burmese people were not rich enough to run and manage a trade was

probably another reason for the king to declare certain crops and products royal monopolies. The items listed as such were cotton, cutch, jaggery, petroleum, rubies, tea, and timber.¹³²

Independent Burma's export items were, in order of importance, sesamum oil, jaggery, silk goods, cotton, piece goods, vegetable products, pulse, cutch, tea-leaves, tobacco, petroleum, teak, timber, wheat, sweet-oil, lacquered boxes, orpiment, hardware, párábaiks, fruits, dyes, etc. Ponies and water buffaloes were also exported. According to the British reports, as many as 41,588 head of cattle and 1,322 ponies were exported in 1881 from the Shan states.¹³³ In 1885, the governor of Yàw province granted permits to cattle traders for export of water buffaloes to Rakhine province--a province ceded to the British after the Yan-dábo Treaty. As the evidence shows, 452 head of water buffalo were exported from Yàw to Rakhine in that year.¹³⁴

Other than the Irrawaddy River route, there were land routes from the Shan states to Tenasserim, from Taung-dwìn-gyì to Taung-ngu, and from Mìn-bù and Sálìn to Rakhine. Between Taung-dwìn-gyì and the Sittang River there were twenty-four customs houses, and fifteen were located in the Nìn-gyàn (Pyìn-mána) district. The custom duties collected from these stations in 1884 amounted to 60,000 rupees.¹³⁵ (See Table 11.)

Burma's trade with the outside world during the reigns of Mìn-dòn and Thi-bàw was almost nil, except with China in the early 1850s. The Chinese caravans of traders from Yunan province of western China usually came to Burma between January and April.

They carried on their pack mules and horses such items as gold-leaf, silver, copper, zinc, quicksilver, cast-iron pots and pans, dried fruits, silks, etc.¹³⁶ In return, they bought mostly cotton, raw silk, and jade. During the year 1853-54, Burma's cotton export to China was estimated to be worth two million kyats.¹³⁷ But with the outbreak of the Panthey rebellion in Yunan in 1855, trade between the two countries collapsed.¹³⁸ In short, though the trade with China in the early years of the later Kòn-baung period was somewhat impressive, it was ruined from 1855 up to the end of the Álaùng-mìn-táyà dynasty.

Table 11

Volume of Trade During the Reign of
Mìn-dòn and Thi-bàw (in rupees)

Year	Import	Export	Total
1853-54			1,135,687*
1854-55			3,198,391
1855-56			2,173,162**
1863-64			11,289,338
1865-66			15,599,053
1867-68		about	12,900,000
1873-74	12,976,450	12,921,790	25,898,240
1878-79	17,609,625	19,209,140	36,818,763
1883-84			49,246,720
1884-85			51,114,980
1885-86			40,334,050

*The values of first and second quarters were excluded.

**The values of third and fourth quarters were excluded.

Source: J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2:

462; Henry Yule, Mission to Ava 202.

NOTES

¹Frederick M. Bunge, Burma 3; and J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 1, chap. 1.

²Kyauk-sein Ú-pádei (Jade Mines Regulations of King Mìn-dòn), n.d., NKC, párábaik MS; D.G.E. Hall, ed. with Introduction, Glossary and Notes, "R.E. Pemberton's Journey from Manipoor to Ava, and from Thence Across the Yooma Mountains to Arracan" (14 July-1 October 1830), JBR 43, 1 (1960): 7-40; and Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 264.

³J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 1:10-11.

⁴Henry Gouger, Two Years Imprisonment in Burma, p. 19; and Howard Malcom, The Burman Empire, p. 79.

⁵Hiram Cox, Journal of a Residence in the Burmese Empire, and More Particularly at the Court of Amarapoorah (London: John Warren, 1821), p. 33.

⁶Ibid., p. 44.

⁷Albert Fytche, Burma Past and Present, 2 vols. (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1878), 2: 260.

⁸Zei-yá Kyaw Htin, Mit-zí-má Dei-thá Áyei-bon (An Account of the Burmese Embassy Sent to India on December 8, 1812), palm leaf MS (London: India Office Library, Commonwealth Relations), Chevilliot Handlist No. 3449, pt. II, ghu reverse.

⁹The Pìn-yá-myó Sit-tàn of 1783, párábaik MS, MMTC.

¹⁰TTTC, 22 March 1830.

¹¹Zeiya Kyaw Htin, Myit-zí-má, ghi reverse.

¹²LPC, 15 February 1856.

¹³J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 1: 27.

¹⁴Ibid., pt. 2, vol. 1: 195; ibid., pt. 2, vol. 3: 368.

¹⁵Ibid., pt. 2, vol. 1: 224 and 235.

¹⁶Ibid., pt. 2, vol. 1: 225 and 414.

¹⁷Ibid., pt. 2, vol. 3: 368 and 386; *ibid.*, pt. I, vol. 2: 372-376.

¹⁸Albert Fytche, Burma Past and Present 2: 258.

¹⁹J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 2, vol. 3: 140.

²⁰J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 2, vol. 3: 51.

²¹King Bádón's edicts, 22 September 1808; 14 March 1810; 2 December 1810; 15 December 1810; 13 January 1811; 6 February 1811; 8 January 1812; and 5 August 1813, MADC, no. 4287. and U. Tin, Ok-chok-pon 3:139-140.

²²King Bádón's edict, 22 September 1808, in MADC, no. 4287.

²³King Bádón's edict, 26 August 1807, in MADC, no. 4287.

²⁴The Pìn-yá-myó Sit-tàn of 1783, MMTC.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, p. 341.

²⁷F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, pp. 65, 329.

²⁸J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 2, vol. 1: 195, 202, 226; *ibid.*, 2, 2:8-10; *ibid.*, 2, 3: 386.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 2, 3: 51, 368.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 2, 2: 723.

³¹J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 2, vol. 2: 723.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 113.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*Ibid.*, 2, 3: 140.

³⁵Albert Fytche, Burma Past and Present, 2: 258.

³⁶Yi Yi, "Kòn-baung-hkit-ù Myó-ne-ok-chok-pon," Lu-hmú-yèi Theik-pan-gya-ne I, 2 (1968): 356.

³⁷J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 2, vol. 3: 368.

³⁸J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 2, vol. 1: 229

- ³⁹YTC, párábaik MS, no. 29, 28 February 1882.
- ⁴⁰John Nisbet, Burma I:55.
- ⁴¹Than Tun, ed., ROB 5:721, 737, 788, 805, 864, 865, 873-74, 883, 885, 887, 895, 906-9, 910-11, 914, 916, 919, 923, 925, 932, 939, 943, 946-48, 951-52, 956, 960, 963, 964, 972, 978, 981, 984-86, 991-92, 997, 999, 1002, 1004, 1007, 1009-15, 1020, 1023-24, 1026-27, 1031, 1042.
- ⁴²Amarapura Ein-chei-sayin, párábaik MS, Kyaw Aung San Htà Monastery (Amarapura) Collection.
- ⁴³King Bádón's edict, 10 May 1806 in Than Tun, ed., ROB 5:873.
- ⁴⁴King Bádón's edict, 22 September 1808, in MADC, no. 4287.
- ⁴⁵Ibid., 26 August 1807.
- ⁴⁶King Bádón's edict, 15 November 1810, in MADC, no. 4287.
- ⁴⁷Than Tun, ed., ROB 5:788, 805, 864, 874, 887, 914, 919, 923, 939, 943, 946, 960, 972, 978, 984-86, 991-92, 997, 999, 1002, 1004-5, 1009-10, 1014-15, 1020, 1023, 1026-27, 1042.
- ⁴⁸King Bádón's edict, 2 December 1810, in MADC, no. 4287.
- ⁴⁹Ibid., 8 January 1812.
- ⁵⁰King Bádón's edict, 13 January 1811, in MADC, no. 4287.
- ⁵¹Ibid., 6 February 1811.
- ⁵²G. H. Luce, "Economic Life of the Early Burma," JBR 30, pt. 1 (1940): 295-96 and 321-22.
- ⁵³F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, pp. 276-77.
- ⁵⁴King Bádón's edict, 8 January 1812, in MADC, no. 4287.
- ⁵⁵Ibid., 11 January 1812.
- ⁵⁶The Times, 8 February 1867, p. 9; 22 August 1871, p. 4; and 22 December 1881, p. 7.
- ⁵⁷Ibid., 8 February 1867, p. 9.
- ⁵⁸The Times, 22 December 1881, p. 7.

⁵⁹J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 356-58.

⁶⁰Tei-zàw Tha-rá, Shwei-hìn-tha-mìn-pyó (Rangoon: Han-tha-wádi Press, 1965), para. 65.

⁶¹King Bádón's edict, 14 March 12810, in MADC, no. 4287.

⁶²Henry Yule, Mission to Ava 361.

⁶³The Times, 28 December 1880, 5.

⁶⁴Michael Symes, Hiram Cox, Henry Yule, Arthur Phayre, R. P. Pemberton and others.

⁶⁵Hiram Cox, Burmese Empire 44. (Sicca rupee means a kind of Indian coin.)

⁶⁶King Bádón's edict, 8 January 1812, in MADC, no. 4287.

⁶⁷Oliver Pollak, Empires in Collision, Anglo-Burmese Relations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), p. 124; The Times 28 December 1880, p. 5.

⁶⁸The Times, 28 December 1880, p. 5.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 14 July 1864, p. 5.

⁷⁰David Joel Steinberg, ed., In Search of Southeast Asia, a Modern History (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1985), chaps. 13 and 22.

⁷¹G. E. Harvey, History of Burma from the Earliest Times to 10 March 1824 (London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1967), pp. 278-80.

⁷²David J. Steinberg, Southeast Asia, p. 214.

⁷³Rev. Father Sangermano, Burman Empire, pp. 172-75.

⁷⁴David J. Steinberg, Southeast Asia, p. 213.

⁷⁵JBRs, 30, pt. 1 (1940): 295.

⁷⁶Lallanji Gopal, "Sugar-Making in Ancient India," Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient 7 (1964): 78.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸King Bádón's edict, 11 January 1807, in MADC, no. 4287.

⁷⁹David J. Steinberg, Southeast Asia, p. 112.

- ⁸⁰Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 146.
- ⁸¹Rev. Father Sangermano, Burman Empire, p. 174.
- ⁸²Taw Sein Ko, Selections from the Records of the Hludaw (Rangoon: Government Printing, 1889), pp. 88-89.
- ⁸³The Times, 12 December 1881, p. 7.
- ⁸⁴Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hludaw, pp. 84-85.
- ⁸⁵Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, pp. 143-48.
- ⁸⁶The Times, 8 February 1867, p. 9.
- ⁸⁷Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hludaw, pp. 86-87; and Oliver B. Pollak, Empires in Collision, p. 144.
- ⁸⁸WBC, no. 21, 11 March 1858.
- ⁸⁹Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hludaw, p. 89; J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 2, vol. 2: 151-52.
- ⁹⁰Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hludaw, pp. 90-91.
- ⁹¹A patent issued to three rich men by the Hlut-taw on 20 February 1879, in YTC.
- ⁹²A patent issued to a great royal clerk by the Hlut-taw on 15 March 1879, in YTC.
- ⁹³Letters of the Hlut-taw, 20 February 1879, 21 February 1879, 15 March 1879, and 9 April 1879, in YTC.
- ⁹⁴U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 5:3.
- ⁹⁵J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 424-25.
- ⁹⁶U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 3: 343.
- ⁹⁷Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hludaw, p. 76.
- ⁹⁸Gwendolen Trench Gascoigne, Among Pagodas and Fair Ladies (London: A. L. Lanes & Co., 1896), p. 154.
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- ¹¹⁰Thaung Blackmore, Burney Parabaiks, pp. 35, 37.
- ¹¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 45.
- ¹¹²*Ibid.*, p. 46.
- ¹¹³B. R. Pearn, Rangoon, p. 131.
- ¹¹⁴Rev. Father Sangermano, Burmese Empire, p. 175.
- ¹¹⁵Hiram Cox, Burmese Empire, pp. 57, 83.
- ¹¹⁶*Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 146, 317, 354-55.
- ¹¹⁸Burmese Record of the Yan-dábo Treaty from the Peace Talk to the Final Settlement of the Last Installment of the War Indemnity. Parábaik MS, YTC; it was bought and is now kept by the Rangoon Universities Central Library (hereafter Yan-dabo).
- ¹¹⁹Henry Gouger, Two Years Imprisonment in Burma, pp. 186, 276.
- ¹²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 298.
- ¹²¹*Ibid.*, p. 299.
- ¹²²Yan-dábo.
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- ¹²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 29.
- ¹²⁶Yan-dábo.
- ¹²⁷JBRs 43, I (1960): 46.
- ¹²⁸Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 361.
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- ¹³⁰Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 362.
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- ¹³²D. G. E. Hall, "New Light Upon English Relations with King Min-don," JBRs 18, I (1928): 7; Oliver B. Pollak, Empires in Collision 124.
- ¹³³Archibald Ross Colquhoun, Amongst the Shans (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1970), p. 278.
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- ¹³⁶Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 148.
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CHAPTER 4

ELITES AND MONEY-LENDING IN THE LATER KÒN-BAUNG PERIOD

Except for a few áthis and foreign merchants at the royal city and at Rangoon,¹ the overwhelming majority of the moneylenders were royalty, nobility, and hereditary chiefs. This practice had been well established since the Pagan period (1044-1287). Several lithic inscriptions erected by the donors after they had built pagodas, temples, and monasteries reveal this fact.² But it must be admitted that the interest rate charged on the loans is not known. A learned poet, popularly known as Kan-daw Mìn-kyaùng Hsáya-daw, urged people in the early sixteenth century to amass fortunes through money-lending. According to him, the increase could more than double the principal within months.³ Loan sharking was, since then, a legal practice. Poor people once enmeshed in debt could hardly come out of it because of high interest rates, on the one hand, and the subsistence-basic agriculture, the productivity of which was uncertain due to unpredictable rain and the application of primitive techniques, on the other.

Burmese Dhammá-thats (coded civil law) allowed usury to the extent that an increase could become equal to the principal. And as far as the interest rates are concerned, common people were permitted to take an interest of 1 percent a month; nobility, 2 percent; rich

men,⁴ 4 percent; and merchants, 5 percent.⁵ "When the interest in the space of two or three years comes to be equal to, or greater than the capital, the debtor is no longer bound to restitution."⁶ However, many a usurer knew loopholes in the law. When the debtor could not settle the debt on a fixed date, the creditors then used to make a new thet-káyit for the sum total of the principal and the interest. Moreover, the law favored the moneyed men. They could arrest their debtors and put them in confinement (tàn) if the latter failed to repay the loan or absconded. The debtors were bound to pay not only the debt but also the other court costs incurred by the creditors for the recovery of debt.⁷ Evidence abounds in the thet-káyits; a discussion will be made in detail later.

However, there were royal orders (ámeín-daw) that protected the debtors from being molested and exploited by the creditors. For example, King Bádon adopted in 1782 a principle of settling debt. The king affirmed that a debt had to be repaid. But a poor debtor was allowed to pay in installment "as a widow tackled her burdens" (mok-hsò-má-wun). The creditors were, on the other hand, forbidden to exact interest the total amount of which exceeded the principal (ápin-htet-áhket-mási-yá).⁸ Lawsuits for debt against the peasantry or the arrest and confinement of them in the growing season were denied.⁹ Moreover, debt cases against the wives of soldiers were not to be brought before the court while their husbands were away on duty.¹⁰ King Mìn-dòn went further than that. He granted amnesty on 19 January 1868 to the ex-rebels of Myin-gùn and Myìn-hkon-daing Princes, who escaped to British Burma after an

abortive coup. They, therefore, came back to their native villages. They were also granted an immunity from taxation and corvee labor for five years. During that period, any pressure on, or lawsuit against these returnees for the recovery of debts was barred.¹¹ In short, the Dhammá-thats favored the moneyed men; but the kings protected poor people from being severely exploited and exacted interest on the loan that exceeded the principal.

Interest Rates and Security

Interest rates varied according to the nature of loans, local customs, and the time and condition. Generally speaking, money loans can be classified into two categories: a loan on security, and a loan without security. The interest on a loan on security was usually charged 2.5 percent a month, or otherwise, 5 percent a month. However, money-lenders preferred the former to the latter. In urban areas, loans were made on the security of either jewelry, labor (kyun), or land. If kyun or land was pledged or mortgaged, the debtor was not obliged to pay interest on the loan, because the creditor could exploit the labor of kyun or enjoy a certain portion of the produce from the land until the loan had been repaid. There was also a custom that some debtors used to hypothecate their land, paying the monthly interest instead of surrendering the right over the land. Such a loan was called myei-hmàn-ngwei-tò, meaning "pay the interest on the hypothecated land" or non-usufructory mortgage loan. This custom was prevalent in the Mon-yweì village tract in Mon-ywa township. However, the creditor had the right to take over

the hypothecated land unless the debtor satisfied his creditor with the monthly interest.¹²

A loan without security was less common even though a high interest rate could be demanded on it. Moreover, if such a loan was made, it was only on a short-term basis. The debtor was bound to pay back the loan within days or a few months. To the best of my knowledge, large loans were never made without security, except by the kings to their governors and the tributary sawbwas (the Shan hereditary chiefs).¹³ In such loans, usury was apparent. The borrowers, because of their desperate want of money, were compelled to pay a flat 10 percent increase called áhmyaw (lit. expecting or longing for) plus a monthly 5 percent interest called átò.

In Ìn-lei--a region located in the Yawng-hwe township where people were mostly engaged in silver mining--the mortgaging of land was rare, but taking loans with interest was very common. The money-lenders used to charge high interest on the loans. Both áhmyaw (flat 10 percent increase) and átò (5 percent interest a month) were usually demanded.

Furthermore, there was also a custom that a debtor could pay back the amount of the loan, but in better quality silver, instead of paying the interest on it. In such cases, repayments were to be made within days. Let me cite how this system worked. In one thet-káyit dated 18 September 1828¹⁴ a person took a loan of fifty kyat of the ten kyat-kè silver (10 percent less pure than the standard ywet-ni silver; i.e., one unit of ywet-ni silver was worth 1.1 units of the ten kyat-kè silver) with an agreement that he would

pay back the same amount with the two mat-kè silver (5 percent less pure than the standard ywet-ni silver; i.e., one unit of ywet-ni silver was worth 1.05 units of two mat-kè silver) within ten days. Or he would pay fifty-five kyat of the ten kyat-kè silver within ten days if he could not get the specified kind. The standardized silver for use as currency was called ywet-ni, meaning red leaf or red flowered silver. When we speak of different silver currencies in terms of ywet-ni, fifty kyat of the ten kyat-kè silver would be equal to 45.45 kyats, and the same amount of two mat-kè silver, 47.62.¹⁵ The debtor was to pay 2.17 kyat interest for a loan of fifty kyat per ten days. It meant that he was charged 13.02 percent interest per month. And the ywet-ni equivalence of fifty-five kyat of the ten kyat-kè silver, when worked out, is fifty kyat. If, therefore, the debtor could not pay back the loan in time, he would have to pay a large increase.

In another thet-káyit dated 12 October 1824,¹⁶ a person borrowed three kyat two mat of the twenty kyat-kè silver (20 percent less pure than the standard ywet-ni silver; i.e., one unit of ywet-ni silver was worth 1.2 units of the twenty kyat-kè silver) and agreed to settle it with two mat-kè silver (5 percent less pure than the standard ywet-ni silver) within two months. When we work out these different types of silver into ywet-ni value, three kyat two mat (3.5 kyat) of the twenty kyat-kè silver is equivalent to 2.92 ywet-ni, and the two mat-kè, 3.33 ywet-ni. It, therefore, can be interpreted that the debtor was obliged to pay 7.2 percent interest a month. In other cases, the money-lender charged 5 percent interest per ten days.¹⁷

The interest rate demanded on the loans in In-lei was not only high but also unprincipled. Usury was apparent here, although the loans were not big nor made on a long-term basis either.

The interest rate charged was less when the borrower secured the loan with plain gold. Usually 2.5 percent a month was demanded from the borrower.¹⁸ The money-lenders preferred plain gold to jewelry as security for the loans they made. Why was it so? It could be attributed to (a) the stability of gold value; (b) the multi-usefulness of it as, for example, a medium of exchange, ornaments, gold leaves to be applied to pagodas and other religious objects; and (c) the expert knowledge of the money-lenders on gold. On the other hand, they were not experts in reading the quality of gems. Moreover, people were prohibited from wearing jewelry except plain gold and silver ornaments.¹⁹

As for small loans without security, both áhmyaw (10 percent flat increase) and átò (5 percent interest a month) were customarily charged. As the evidence shows, the money-lender did not take any more interest on the loan when the total amount of it came up to be equal to principal, or a little more. In one thet-káyit, a person was charged forty-six kyat of interest for a period of over two years on a loan of fifty kyat. In Wùn-byeí village tract, there was no custom of demanding an áhmyaw (10 percent flat increase on a loan of which no pledge was made). Only 5 percent interest a month was charged.²⁰ We also find that the money-lender took 2.5 percent interest from some people.²¹

The loan period was usually a year or so, presumably because the borrowers were mostly, if not exclusively, peasant farmers who were assumed to be able to settle their debt only when their crops were harvested. As a matter of fact, the payment of interest in kind--especially in paddy--was prevalent in this village tract. So far, we find four types of interest payable in kind: thirty baskets,²² sixty baskets,²³ eighty baskets,²⁴ and one hundred baskets²⁵ per one hundred kyat of loan a year. The most common interest rate was six baskets of paddy per ten kyat a year. The demand of high or low interest rate is thought to be somehow related either to the leniency of the money-lender or to the socio-economic conditions of the people. There were cases where the money-lender granted remissions of the surplus interest that exceeded the principal in order to comply with the law. To perceive the nature of usury and the effectiveness of the law against usury, the amount of loans and the increases paid or payable to and remitted by the Wùn-byei Sáyei-daw-gyì (great royal clerk) family are tabulated in Table 12.

Many of the debtors could not pay both the principal and the interest for some years. Then the creditor worked out the total amount of increases payable by the debtor and demanded the sum total of the principal and the increase, remitting the surplus that exceeded the principal. In Table 12, we see that the amount of interest remitted by the creditor was, in three cases, larger than the principal. We also find that the total amount of interest paid or demanded was larger than the principal. But in several cases, the creditor took paddy as an interest that can also be considered as land

rent since the borrower used to pledge his land for the loan.

In land mortgages, the creditors received a fixed amount of produce at every harvest time regardless of the yield of the mortgaged land. Unlike money-loans on interest, there was no law forbidding the money-lenders to take crops as rent, even though the value of crops paid exceeded the principal. Moreover, the creditor had the right to manage the land. Therefore, the money-lenders always accepted land as security. The cultivators also preferred mortgaging land to taking a loan on interest because they could work on the land as tenants without losing the right to redemption.

Table 12

Remission of Surplus Increases by the
Wùn-byeí Sáyeí-daw-gyí Family

Year	Loan in <u>kyat</u>	Interest rate per hundred <u>kyat</u> a year	Amt. of Interest paid or payable	Amt. of Interest remitted
1867	150	not known	not known	160.1 <u>kyats</u>
1868	77.5	80 baskets of paddy a year	143.25 baskets of paddy (114.6 <u>kyat</u>)	290.75 baskets of paddy (232.6 <u>kyat</u>)
1868	200	60 baskets of paddy	200 baskets of paddy (180 <u>kyat</u>)	40 baskets of paddy (36 <u>kyat</u>)
1869	50	17 percent a year	51 <u>kyats</u>	52 <u>kyats</u>
1871	100	60 baskets of paddy a year	234 baskets of paddy (163.98 <u>kyats</u>)	60 baskets of paddy (46.25 <u>kyats</u>)

Source: WBC, 9 November 1867, 27 March 1868, 26 February 1868,
16 April 1871.

Labor was also accepted as a form of interest. People who rendered service for which no wages were received were called debtor-kyuns, and they were mostly employed on the farms. But some rendered other forms of service. For example, a woman in Han-tha village, Shwei-bo district, was obliged to dye thirty kyat weight of cotton hanks in indigo (monthly?) for her creditor who lent her four baskets of paddy.²⁶ A man from Wùn-byeí village had to furnish 1,000 sticks of firewood monthly to his creditor for a loan of ten kyat weight of silver.²⁷ Another woman from Le-zin village was compelled to weave a roll of warp monthly for her creditor for a loan of sixteen kyat one mat (16.25 kyat) silver.²⁸ Another man from Wùn-byeí was bound to massage his creditor every day for a loan of fifteen kyat.²⁹ So the creditors took any form of interest, either in cash, or in crops, or in service.

Like money loans, paddy loans were also very common in rural areas. A poor peasant could take such a loan from his landlord or from a local chief with an agreement to pay it back at the harvest time together with an increase either in cash or in kind. In the paddy loan thet-káyits, the value of paddy was always mentioned. It meant that the borrower was to pay the amount of cash or baskets of paddy equivalent to the value of cash mentioned in the deed. As for the increase, the borrower had the option of choosing what kind of payment he should make, that is, in cash or in crop. The interest rate of paddy loan varied according to locality and the nature of the money-lenders. We have already mentioned the interest rates in Wùn-byeí village. Unlike the money-lender of Wùn-byeí, who was an

official of close proximity to the king and who lived in the royal city away from his economic base, the money-lenders of Sálín and Byan-gyá were lenient to their debtors because they were in a form of a closely knitted patron-client relationship. The Sálín money-lenders who were known as thu-gaùngs charged only two-and-a-half baskets of paddy per ten kyat of the loan a year.³⁰ And the Byan-gyá money-lenders used to take half of the loan as interest.³¹ Although the interest rates varied according to the local customs, all money-lenders accepted any form of interest, either in cash or in crop or in labor service.

Officials and Money-Lending

Most money-lenders were members of the royalty and the nobility; big loans were available from them. Some junior officers and provincial chiefs who happened to take loans to meet their emergency needs in the royal city went to them. For such loans, the borrowers were required to pledge either jewelry or land. Usually the loan period was short, not longer than two or three months. The customary interest rate was 5 percent a month. A brokerage fee (pwè-hká) of 1 percent was sometimes payable either by the lender or by the borrower when large loans were made or taken.³² Such customs seem to have been most common in land mortgages.

Although it is a known fact that almost all members of the royalty, ever since they were granted fiefs and had become lords of the people in the districts, were money-lenders and land speculators, we do not so far find ample documents, that is thet-káyits, that belonged to them. It seems that their records perished with their

downfall after the British annexation of Burma in 1886. As a matter of fact, my discussion on this subject will be limited to some extent.

In Kòn-baung society, it was the royalty who could reclaim lands to a greater extent, because they owned a kyun labor force. Some kyuns were received as royal gifts;³³ some were bought with money.³⁴ These kyuns were employed in the farms. A Tagaung Princess, daughter of King Bádon, employed her kyuns in clearing a forest for cultivation lands.³⁵ The eater of Dálá town reclaimed many unoccupied state lands.³⁶ Land purchase was also common among the royalty. A queen of King Bádon bought one hundred pes (177 acres) of paddy lands in Mádáya township.³⁷ The Páhkan Prince, who was a brother of King Bádon, bought lands from a foreigner--presumably an Armenian--who had the title of Bàw-gá Bálá, which was bestowed upon him by the king.³⁸ The title reveals that the holder was a rich man.

During the time of King Bádon, the money-lending business of some members of the royalty was assigned to an official by the name of Kyaw Htin Nan-dá Si-thu for collection of payments from the borrowers. The royalty to whom this Kyaw Htin Nan-dá Si-thu was assigned were the Kut-ywa Princess, the Mìn-dòn Prince, the Myá-daung Princess, the Nyaung-yàn Prince, and his mother.³⁹ Loans lent out by the mother of the Nyaung-yàn Prince amounted to over seventy (viss?).⁴⁰ Prince of Páhkan, too, made loans.⁴¹ But, their thet-káyits are no more extant. However, we have some stray thet-káyits that belonged to some royal family members, namely the Hlaing-tet Prince,⁴² the Mò-nyìn queen of King Págan,⁴³ the

Zábwè-daung queen of King Mìn-dòn,⁴⁴ Queen mother of King Mìn-dòn,⁴⁵ and the Hlaing-tet Princess.⁴⁶ Queen mother of King Mìn-dòn once made a gold loan amounting to 99.5 kyats (58.1 oz) to her maid-of-honor who took it for her brother-in-law, a royal tax collector of the four markets in the capital.

Some royal family members are also found among the debtors. For example, a son and a daughter of the great Páhkàn Prince Páhkàn Mìn-thà-gyì, who was a son of King Bádon, mortgaged their inherited land to a Commandant of the Shwei-nàn-yò Lámaing Regiment for a sum of 888 kyats.⁴⁷ Before King Mìn-dòn's time, the son was granted a Min-gála-don town near Rangoon, as a fief. He lost it when lower Burma was annexed to the British territory after the second Anglo-Burmese war. During King Mìn-dòn's time he was no longer granted a fief. In another deed of land mortgage, an outstanding prince by the name of Pyin-zi Mìn-thà, a composer and poet, also mortgaged his inherited lands for want of money.⁴⁸ Other mìn-thàs (princes) are also referred to in the thet-káyits. We can not identify them as they were distant relatives of the king.

Why were these princes in dire want of money? Were they denied fiefs because they were not close enough to the king? Or did they need money because of the polygamy they practiced which required greater income to maintain? The thet-káyits concerning the royalty do not say why the borrowers needed money, although the others concerning common people do. The thet-káyits concerning the common people say that the borrowers needed money either to repay a debt, to redeem a family member sold to another person, to make an

investment in a particular business or trade, to pay taxes, to pay special imposts, or to pay court fees, etc. Such clauses are not found in the thet-káyits if the borrowers were members of the royalty. So we do not know exactly why they needed money. But since they were indebted like the commoners, their life was not as pleasant and easy going as the common people thought. They also had hard times and financial crises.

Excepting the great prince of Páhkàn and the Pyin-zi prince, the other princes and princesses found as debtors were, or course, not prominent figures. Some of the royalty referred to in the thet-káyits can be identified by their territorial titles, as with Hsaw-mìn-thà--the prince who held the town, Hsaw as a fief;⁴⁹ Shwei-thádin-mìn-thámi--the princess who was granted a village called Shwei-thádin;⁵⁰ and Taung-dwìn-gyaung-mìn-thà--the prince who held Taung-dwìn-gyaung town as a fief.⁵¹ There were also other members of the royalty who bore no titles, as they were not granted towns and villages as appanages like the offspring of the great Páhkan prince and the Taung-dwìn-gyaung prince.⁵²

Theoretically, hereditary offices were not transferable. There were royal orders and the Hlut-taw instructions to the hereditary chiefs, forbidding mortgaging and selling their offices. However, there is evidence that the chiefs sometimes mortgaged their offices either to outsiders or to their near relatives. They did so, surrendering their privileges as well as breaking the law and social customs. In some cases, such actions were related to the

maladministration of the central government. A mortgage of a village explains thus:

(I), Ngá Pan, headman of Ìn-ywa village, having to pay taxes and other imposts levied on the village (kyei-hmú-ywa-ta-hsaung) mortgage (my) office and estate to Maung Hmon, son of an ási-yin (a subordinate judge) for a sum of 1660 kyats weight of silver. It is agreed that (I), the mortgagor or (my) successor(s) shall have the right to redeem it at any time. The transaction is made on 5 November 1791 in the presence of: Maung Ok, headman of Myin-hkaing village; Maung Shwei Aung; Maung Nyo, the assayer; Maung Tha Yá, the weigher of the silver; Maung Nyein, the draftsman and headman of Thè-gòn village; and Maung Mìn, the writer. The brokerage fee of ⁵³12 kyats 2 mats is paid by the money-lender, Maung Hmon.

King Bádon often demanded conscripts and corvée labor for his campaigns and for the construction of a gigantic pagoda at Mìn-gùn.⁵⁴ These pressures caused many people to be economically ruined. The headman of Taung-gyà village, for example, being unable to fulfill these demands, gradually became worse off under these pressures, and made an appeal to the Hlut-taw to hand over his office to his brother.⁵⁵ Some headmen (thu-gyis), on the other hand, either mortgaged or sold their villages to outsiders. Such cases were fairly common in Taung-dwìn-gyì district.⁵⁶ In 1883, nearly at the close of the Kòn-baung dynasty, a headman of Kyì-gan village sold his office to an outsider for a sum of three hundred kyats. The latter squeezed the people by imposing excessive taxes so that they could not bear the burden. They reported the new headman's abuse of power to the Hlut-taw, whereupon an ad hoc commission was appointed to investigate the case. However, both the old and new headmen, when summoned, fled the village.⁵⁷

In the Shan states, the mortgage and sale of hereditary office appears to have been very rare, although other forms of the thet-káyits were prevalent among the people and the ruling class. In administrative records, we find that the Shan saw-bwas sometimes took loans from the kings. When some saw-bwas could not pay the loans back, the kings granted them remission.⁵⁸ One of the causes of some officials and hereditary chiefs becoming indebted may have been attributed to the practice of gift-giving to court officials. In the Kòn-baung period it seemed to be a popular practice. To receive a royal favor, or to become an official, or to erase a minor offense, one was required to make a deal with an important court official who had access to the king.⁵⁹ Some Shan officials who came to the royal city often found themselves indebted to get appointment orders (sa-gyun) from the king, to pass these orders from the Byè-daik (Inner Court) to the Hlut-taw, or to stamp a royal seal on the sa-gyuns by the Hlut-taw, etc.⁶⁰

The thet-káyits analyzed here do not reveal any evidence that the Ministers (Wun-gyis) were engaged in any sort of money-lending while they were in office. But, after retirement some did such business.⁶¹ However, we find many other officials involved either as creditors or debtors or witnesses. The creditors included these officials: the secretaries (átwìn-wun),⁶² the stewards of the royal household (ban-da-zò),⁶³ the officer in charge of the chief queen's apartments and affairs (nàn-mádaw-wun),⁶⁴ the commandant of the Shwei-nàn-yò Lámaing Regiment (Shwei-nàn-yò Lámaing-wun),⁶⁵ the chancellor of the exchequer (shwei-daik-wun),⁶⁶ the royal treasury

officer (shwei-daik-sò),⁶⁷ the herald (than-daw-zín),⁶⁸ the clerk to the council (sáyei-gyi),⁶⁹ the royal agent (kon-the-daw),⁷⁰ the bailiff (kùn-bò-htein),⁷¹ and the rich man (thu-gywe).⁷² Among them an átwìn-wun and nàn-mádaw-wun were very prominent figures.

Káni Átwìn-wun was one of King Mìn-dòn's councillors. He was known by that name because he was granted a Káni town as an appanage. He was very famous as a man of letters. He was a leading member of the Royal Historical Commission appointed by King Mìn-dòn for compilation of the second Kòn-baung-zet Máha Ya-záwin-daw-gyi (Royal Chronicle of the Kòn-baung Dynasty). In one thet-káyit this personage is found as a mortgagee.⁷³ Another person by the name of Û Yan was a nàn-mádaw-wun who was one of the káni Átwìn-wun's colleagues. He was also a librarian of the royal library. When King Thi-bàw ascended the throne he was promoted to be the governor of Ságaing Division and the officer in charge of the chief queen's apartment and affairs (nàn-mádaw-wun). As one document shows, he was a money-lender too.⁷⁴

During the 1850s and the 1860s, there was a big money-lender in the royal city. He was the Dázeik-sà Tháhkin (lord and eater of the royal seal, i.e., Chief of the Customs Department); he was also a royal steward. In one of his money loan thet-káyits dated 9 April 1858, he lent to a person 1146.75 kyats of good quality silver known as eight mù-tet-daing (8 percent purer than the standard ywet-ni; i.e., one unit of ywet-ni silver was worth 0.83 units of the eight mù-tet-daing). He took 250 kyats of interest for three months

and ten days,⁷⁵ although the actual amount of interest payable for four full months was 247.62 kyats.

On 3 May 1858, he made a loan of 3005.5 kyats of silver to a colonel of the king's bodyguards, who secured a zodiac-shaped necklace on which was mounted twenty-four diamonds. The borrower agreed to redeem it within two months. However, he could not comply with his agreement until eight months had passed. Therefore, he was bound to pay an interest of 1352 kyats 9 mùs 4 ywèis for nine months.⁷⁶ In another thet-káyit an officer from the Department of Public Works borrowed from him 150 kyats of the six mù-kè silver (6 percent less pure than the standard ywet-ni; i.e., one unit of ywet-ni silver was worth 1.06 units of six mù-kè silver) on the security of a salwe of six gold chains that weighed 14.15 kyats (8.26 oz). The interest rate was 2.5 percent a month, and the principal and the interest were to be paid back within two months.⁷⁷

As there were money-lending officials, there were indebted officials too. Unlike common people, they sometimes got indebted when they were ordered by the central government to pay untimely revenue for their districts, or when they needed to bribe their superiors or influential court officials for their promotion or for appointments to hereditary offices. The thet-káyits refer to these officials as debtors: the governor (myó-wun),⁷⁸ the royal listener or the receiver of the royal command (náhkan),⁷⁹ the groom of the royal apartment (áhsaung-myè),⁸⁰ the clerk to the council (sáyei-daw-mìn),⁸¹ the clerk to an administrative officer (wun-sáyei),⁸² clerk to the governor (myó-sáyei),⁸³ etc.

Additionally, some local officials and chiefs were noted as debtors in the thet-káyits. Some of them became indebted for want of money to pay tributes or gifts to the king or to some officials of the Hlut-taw or the Byè-daik. The headman of Sálìn town, having to present annual tribute of 5,000 kyats to the king on the Beg-Pardon day⁸⁴ held on the eve of the Buddhist Lent, took loans from several persons.⁸⁵ And another headman--the headman of Wùn-tho town, by the name of Nei Myò Zei-yá Shwei Taung, in order to present an annual tribute on the New Year Beg-Pardon day, borrowed 1146 kyats 7 mùs 1 pè from Dázeik-sà Tháhkin on the security of jewelry. The jewelry was comprised of a pair of diamond-studded gold ear-tubes, twenty-two loose diamonds, one kyat weight of gold (0.6 oz), one diamond-studded gold ring weighing 6 mùs 1 pè (0.4 oz), and one gold-rimmed emerald bayet with seven diamond pendants weighing 5 mùs 4 yweìs (0.3 oz). The interest rate was 5 percent per month; and the principal and the interest had to be paid back within three months.⁸⁶ In 1831, his successor, Nei Myò Shwei Taung Naw-yáhta, also borrowed 1100 kyats weight of silver from a thìn-bàw thu-gyì (foreign merchant, presumably an Armenian).⁸⁷ It is also assumed to have been for annual tribute to the sovereign.

It was customary in the Kòn-baung administration that the Hlut-taw and the Byè-daik passed the appointment orders only when the appointees paid transaction fees to all officials and the office staff. A Shwei-bo Myó-wun (governor of Shwei-bo), paid 195 kyats to the Byè-daik and 593 kyats to the Hlut-taw when his reappointment order was passed.⁸⁸ Where did this money come from? No doubt, it

came from the people. There was a thet-kávit that refers to a petty officer who could not settle an obligatory note in time with an excuse that villages under his charge were too exhausted to be exacted.⁸⁹

In the Kòn-baung period, some government offices and positions could be bought with money. We have a thet-kávit that reveals that a man borrowed two hundred kyats from a deputy secretary to buy a position of náhkan (lit. royal listener). He paid one hundred kyats to a royal secretary in order to obtain an appointment order. Finally he became a náhkan of Kò-daung village in 1852 by paying three hundred kyats.⁹⁰ Unfortunately he lost his position in 1853 when Mìn-dòn came to the throne. He had not yet liquidated his debts. And therefore, he surrendered his wife as a kyun to his creditor for a debt of seventy-five kyats still outstanding against him to be settled.⁹¹

Such a system as a pension or gratuity for an official after retirement from service never existed in the Kòn-baung period. Some low-rank officials seemed to suffer from economic distress when they retired from service because several thet-kávits tell of ex-officials who were indebted. Among them were: a former eater of Tágaùng town (Tágaùng myó-zà-haùng),⁹² an ex-governor of Mò-nyìn (Mò-nyìn wun-haùng),⁹³ a former commander at Mò-nè (Mò-nè sit-kè-haùng),⁹⁴ a former commander at Hkàn-bat (Hkàn-bat sit-kè-haùng)⁹⁵ a former bearer of the royal betel box (kwàn-yei-haùng),⁹⁶ a former clerk to the officer in charge of the royal granary (kyi-wun sáyèi-haùng),⁹⁷ a former telegraphic officer (kyèi-nàn-hsáya-haùng),⁹⁸ a former overseer of weirs (hse-sáyèi-haùng),⁹⁹ and so forth. These former

officials mortgaged their lands. But an ex-colonel of the Shwei-pyi Hman-kìn Regiment pawned a military badge made of gold that was called shwei-táma-ywet-htaung (projecting gold point in the form of the tragacanth leaf, set around a cap of state).¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, the big money-lenders were the high-ranking officials and hereditary chiefs.

The Wùn-byeí Sáyeì-daw-gyì Family

Wùn-byeí was a big village, situated in the present-day Mýin-mu township, over fifty miles away from Mandalay, the last royal city of the Kòn-baung dynasty. In this village, there was a family of a royal steward and great clerk (Ban-da-zò sáyeì-daw-gyì)¹⁰¹ who dominated the economy of the district through a money-lending business. This family owned hundreds of acres of lands, kyuns, and cattle. People in this district took loans either in cash or in crops whenever they needed. People relied upon this family not only as their landlord but also as their patron because the family members were influential in the central administration.

The money-lending records of this family throw light upon their genealogy and history. First of all, I would like to deal with the parents-in-law of the royal steward and great clerk. They were ù Myat Pwín and Me Yauk; they are assumed to be wealthy áthis because they possessed no office or territorial title. ù Myat Pwín and Me Yauk had a daughter named Mí Gyì, married to a rich man called ù Hsaing. After giving birth to a son, Maung Sú, ù Hsaing and Mí Gyì sought a divorce. ù Myat Pwín and Me Yauk were money-lenders

and land mortgagees; they acquired an immense fortune through this trade.

In course of time, they became richer and richer. Their richness can be measured by a yardstick of their meritorious deeds. Their documents that belonged to the late 1830s refer to them as the donors of the golden parasol (shwei-h̀tì-dága).¹⁰² In the late 1840s, they became donors of the Buddhist scripture-chest (sa-daik-dága).¹⁰³ In one thet-káyit dated 27 December 1840, Û Myat Pwín refers to himself as a builder of a pagoda (hpáyà-dága).¹⁰⁴ After his death, his wife also built a monastery at Wùn-byeí in 1879.¹⁰⁵

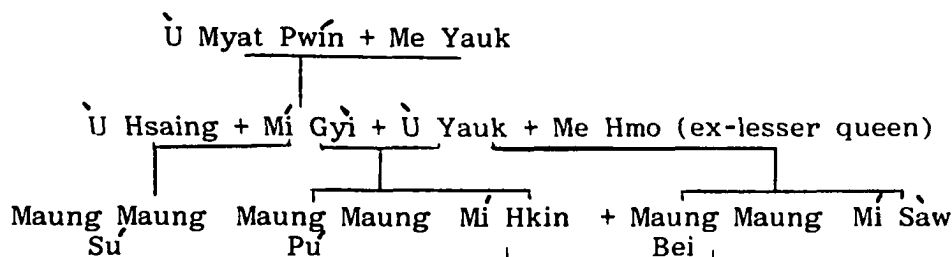
The royal steward and great clerk (ban-da-zò sáyèi-daw-gyì), whose name was Û Yauk, was a son-in-law of that couple. He is thought to be a native of Mìn-ywa village because he built a monastery there. He had been in royal service since the time of King Tha-ya-wádi. He was first appointed a bailiff (kùn-bò-h̀tèin) at Wùn-byeí. His first title was Si-thu Shwei Taung Naw-yáhta.¹⁰⁶ Another thet-káyit refers to him as a lord of three towns, viz., Kan-ni, Bassein, and Thámyin-don.¹⁰⁷ Of course, these towns were granted to Taung-dwìn-gyì Princess, a sister of the king, in 1837.¹⁰⁸ In 1843, Si-thu Shwei Taung Naw-yáhta became a steward of the Taung-dwìn-gyì Princess.¹⁰⁹

Before discussing his life-long commitment to money-lending, I would like to give a brief account of his marriage life. His wives were Mí Gyì, a daughter of Û Myat Pwín and Me Yauk; and Me Hmo, ex-lesser queen of King Tha-ya-wádi. Mí Gyì was a divorcee; she bore a son to her first husband, a rich man.¹¹⁰ With her second

husband, ù Yauk, she gave birth to a son named Maung Maung Pú and a daughter named Mí Hkin. The ex-lesser queen also bore a son, Maung Maung Bei and a daughter Mí Sàw.¹¹¹ (See Diagram 1.)

Diagram 1

Wùn-byeí Sáyēi-daw-gyi Family



ù Yauk, the royal steward, served under three kings, viz., Tha-ya-wádi (1837-46), Págan (1846-53), and Mìn-dòn (1853-78). He gradually rose to higher positions. The posts he was assigned to were those of a bailiff, steward of the Taung-dwìn-gyi Princess, clerk to a steward of the Queen Mother,¹¹² officer in charge of the royal gardeners,¹¹³ royal steward of the Queen Mother, and the royal secretary.¹¹⁴ The titles with which he was conferred were: Si-thu Shwei Taung Naw-yáhta, Nei Myò Si-thu Naw-yáhta in the 1850s,¹¹⁵ and Mìn Kyaw Mìn Tin in the 1860s.¹¹⁶ It is assumed that he died in mid-1858, because his name no longer appeared in the thet-káyits after 27 March 1868.¹¹⁷ Like other moneyed men who, according to their Buddhist tradition, acquired merit for their future life, ù Yauk, the royal steward, also built a big monastery at Mìn-ywa in the mid-1850s.¹¹⁸

Maung Maung Sú, stepson of ù Yauk and grandson of ù Myat Pwín and Me Yauk, was first a royal page, serving as a bearer of royal betel box and water jug (kùn-yei-daw).¹¹⁹ Having access to the royal family, he was soon appointed officer in charge of a royal boat (hleik-ok) and an island (kyùn-ok).¹²⁰ But, because of his involvement in a plot that was uncovered, he was exiled to Hsen-wi, located in the northern part of the Shan state. However, he was granted a pardon when his brother, Maung Maung Pú, petitioned the king. In King Thi-bàw's time he was appointed a headman of Wùn-byeí village, because his brother, Maung Maung Pú, was at that time very influential, being a steward of the chief queen (mí-báyà-hkaung-gyi-hpáyà ban-da-zò).¹²¹ Maung Maung Pú was in that office until 1889, four years after British annexation of Upper Burma.¹²²

Like his brother, Maung Maung Pú was also a royal page in his early years of service. The documents refer to him as a bearer of royal betel box and water jug.¹²³ He was later raised to a position of steward of the chief queen of King Thi-bàw (mí-báyà-hkaung-gyi-hpáyà-ban-da-zò). He held a title of Mìn Hla Mìn Kyaw.¹²⁴ He had at least four wives, among whom we know two by name: Hlàiing-tet Princess and Mí Sàw, whom he took as wife by settling her pressing debt to a lottery-house. He had one daughter by his previous marriage, and one son with Mí Sàw, who later sought a divorce from him on the grounds that he failed to accomplish the duties of a husband.¹²⁵

An introduction of lottery in the reign of King Thi-bàw really ruined many people. Maung Maung Pú was no exception. He lost as much as 50,000 kyats in the lottery.¹²⁶ However, he possessed many acres of land bequeathed by his parents and grandparents and lands acquired through money-lending. Moreover, his wife, the Hlaing-tet Princess, also owned many lands and orchards in the Mádaya township.¹²⁷

Maung Maung Bei and Mí Sàw were born of a union of Û Yauk and ex-lesser queen of King Tha-ya-wádi. They were also bequeathed lands and jewelry by their parents on both sides. When their parents passed away, they were not completely grown up; their inherited lands were kept and managed by a trustee to whom they later gave ten kyat weight of gold (5.84 oz) and some plots of land as a debt of gratitude.¹²⁸ Maung Maung Bei was also a royal page in his teens, serving as a bearer of royal sandals or slippers (hpánat-taw). He married his half sister, Mí Hkin, born of a different mother.

The family of the Wùn-byeí sáyei-daw-gyi owned several hundred acres of lands, orchards, toddy palm (palmyra palm) groves, and kyuns. Their lands were mostly located in the ten-village tract of Chaung-ù and Mádaya township. As the extant documents show, the money loans they made during the later part of the Kòn-baung period totalled 11,304.5 kyat weight of silver. Of course, it was a small portion of the total investment. The documents under study belonged to Maung Maung Pú, and, therefore, the wealth mentioned would constitute only one-fifth of the whole family property. Moreover, we

have thet-káyits the figures of which are illegible, and the thet-káyits the loan of which were gold and crops. We do not know their values. As for kyuns, they are tabulated in Table 13.

The Poppa Wun-dauk Family

Poppa Wun-dauk (Deputy Minister and Eater of Poppa town) was a man of importance in Burmese history. However, we know very little about him except a few lines sketched about him by Henry Yule. In his Narrative of the Mission to the Court of Ava in 1855, Yule writes:

The Woondouks form the third order of ministers, and may be termed the assistants of the Woongyis, with whom they sit in the Hlwot-dau, though in an inferior position. The best known to us of the Woondouks was MOUNG MHON, so often mentioned in the preceding narrative. Under the ex-king he was a Thandau-zen, and was made a Woondouk, but lost the appointment by the revolution. He was, however, selected to go on a mission to the Governor-general in 1854. The Dalla-woon (now the old Nan-ma-dau Phra-woon) was nominally chief of the Embassy; but the court mainly depended on MOUNG MHON. After his return, he was reappointed a Woondouk, and received the district of Poppa, adjoining the great mountain of that name, to eat. He is a man of undoubted ability and will probably rise to the highest office.¹²⁹

Based on his money loan thet-káyits, I shall attempt to portray the wun-dauk's life and activities both in politics and in business. The Poppa-wun-dauk was a son of Si-thu Naw-yáhta, a junior officer and a money-lender.¹³⁰ His name was ù Hmon;¹³¹ he came to be known as Poppa wun-dauk during the second Anglo-Burmese war in 1852. The exact date when ù Hmon entered into royal service is obscure. During the 1830s, he had already been in royal service; he was then a junior naval officer, taking charge of a royal boat squadron.¹³² In 1840, ù Hmon became a herald (than-daw-zín) under

Table 13

Debtor-kyuns of the Wùn-byeí Family
Found in Maung Maung Pú's Records
(Runaway kyuns are marked with asterisk)

Name	Bondage Loan	Contracting Date
Maung Thet Shei (Amarapura)	60	11 Feb. 1848
Ngá Shwei Be (Amarapura)	60	24 Mar. 1848
Mí Hlá Mìn (Amarapura)	55	21 Feb. 1851
Mí Yit (Htá-naùng-bin-hlá)	30	1 May 1851
Ngá Kyaw San (Wáyaung)	60	8 Jul. 1885
Mí Meín Má (Wáyaung)	49.9	17 Jul. 1855
Ngá Shan Pàw	60	7 Sep. 1857
Ngá Myaing	50	29 Nov. 1857
Ngá Yé Byan	100	10 Mar. 1858
Mí Mìn Shí	50	10 Mar. 1858
Ngá Ywet* (Mìn-ywa)	70	29 May 1859
Ngá Ok Kwa* and brother		
Ngá Htaung Bon (Kyaùng-zú)	100	25 Apr. 1862
Mí Bà (Mandalay)	50	5 Nov. 1862
Mí Chìn	25.6	15 Jan. 1863
Ngá Pyà, wife Mí Mìn On and son		
Ngá Kye (Let-hsaung-yu)	135	6 Feb. 1863
Ngá Shwei So (Pàn-nyo)	50	28 Aug. 1863
Mí Mìn Nyan (Hsádaung)	50	2 Sep. 1863
Mí Thit and sister Mí Hnit		
(Mandalay)	150	3 Oct. 1863
Ngá Pyo (Myei-net-kyìn)	50	19 Oct. 1863
Ngá Shwei Tu (Hsádaung)	30	6 Nov. 1863
Mí Ò Bok	30	12 Jan. 1864
Ngá Kauk (Mìn-ywa)	41.8	28 Jul. 1864
Hgá Hka	60	9 Sep. 1864
Mí Baw	75	23 Jul. 1866
Mí Shwei Myín	87.5	9 Aug. 1867
Ngá Shwei Thit, sister of Mí Èi Tha	180	9 Nov. 1867
Mí Le Yauk	116	29 Nov. 1867
Mí Myaing	100	29 Nov. 1867
Mí Bè* and brother Ngá Hman	180	26 Feb. 1868
Mí Hsaing	35	24 Nov. 1870
Mí Ngwei bwín	100	15 Mar. 1883
Mí Za Gye	100	15 Jul. 1883
Mí Pàn Zi (Pon-daing)	100	25 Sep. 1884
Ngá Hlèi	60	16 Oct. 1885
Mí Hsaing	40	24 Oct. 1885
Mí Hla Waing*, husband Nga Mya Gyi	85	date not known
Mí On Gaing*	over 90	date not known
Mí Baing Dok	not known	date not known
Total 2765.8		

the title of Máha Mìn Tin Mìn Kyaw.¹³³ It is found that his business of money-lending, land speculation, and trade in crops and clothing was a success in the 1840s--the time he was a herald. For he was in close proximity to the king and consequently influential in the administrative circle. Some provincial chiefs and junior officers who wanted help to obtain appointments or favor of the Hlut-taw ministers or of the king came to him to do some sort of business. We have promissory notes that reveal that some officials owed the herald certain amounts of money for his help in getting appointments or promotions.¹³⁴

On the eve of the second Anglo-Burmese war, the herald was promoted to the rank wun-dauk (Deputy Minister) and granted the Poppa town as an appanage to eat.¹³⁵ From the start, Burma was losing the war; more troops were sent to lower Burma to withstand the British advance. At that time, Ò Hmon, the wun-dauk, was also sent to war as an adjutant in the Lower Riverine Column.¹³⁶ But, in the royal city, there broke out a revolution headed by the Mìn-dòn and Kánaung Princes. The revolution was successful and King Págan was dethroned. The war with the British was also ended.

Under the new king, Ò Hmon, the wun-dauk lost his office for a year or so on the grounds that he was a servant of the ex-king. While he was out of office, it happened that his lands, which were located in the Madáya township, were occupied by some royal boatmen. It was customary in Burma that the property of the criminals and rebels were confiscated by the state. But Ò Hmon, who did not regard himself as either a rebel or a criminal, brought the

case before the Court. The case was investigated and found that the ex-wun-dauk rightfully owned these lands. Therefore, the Court decided in his favor.¹³⁷

This case seemed to remind the new king that a man of ability was now out of office. He was called back and sent as a deputy to Dá-lá Wun on a mission to British India in 1856.¹³⁸ When he came back from India, he was reappointed in 1856 to his former post under the same title.¹³⁹ In April 1857, he was promoted to be a governor of the lower riverine district that consisted of Málun, Taung-gwin, Páhtánágo, Myei-dè and Myin-gùn townships. The new title conferred upon him was Mìn-gyì Máha Mìn Htin Kyaw.¹⁴⁰ Although we do not find his money loan thet-káyits after 1860,¹⁴¹ we do find him in the Kòn-baung-zet Chronicle until 1871, under the title Mìn-gyì Máha Mìn Hlá Mìn Kyaw Mìn Tin.¹⁴²

The wun-dauk was a man of discipline. He was not lenient to his debtors. Debtors who could not settle loans for some years were either sued or put into confinement.¹⁴³ In 1835, he even addressed King Ságaing, while his majesty was presiding over the Hlut-taw session, for recovery of an old debt from a village headman to whom his father made a loan in 1824 with an agreement to pay back eight hundred baskets (16.428 tons) of paddy.¹⁴⁴

The wun-dauk also ran a trade in crops and cloth. He sometimes made advance payments for crops to some local chiefs and peasant farmers.¹⁴⁵ He bought and sold cotton and silk cloth.¹⁴⁶ Bales of imported cloth that could not get a good price in the royal city were shipped to the Shan state for sale.¹⁴⁷ He also owned many

lands in Máda'ya,¹⁴⁸ Yín-daw, Nyaung-yàn,¹⁴⁹ and Meik-hti-la¹⁵⁰ townships. Overseers (le-gaùngs) were appointed to manage the tenants. Crops received as rents or as interest on loans were stored in the barns built in these townships.

When the wun-dauk died, he was survived by a son named Maung Maung Gyì, and a daughter named Mí Hswei (a) Hkin Lèi.¹⁵¹ They continued their father's business. But we do not have many thet-káyits related to them. Only a few have been found so far. His father being a high-ranking official, Maung Maung Gyì was selected to serve as a royal page. He was given the title Mìn Hlá Thi-háthu. Until 1875, he referred to himself as kùn-yei-daw-mìn (bearer of royal betel box and water jug).¹⁵² In the thet-káyits made during the time of King Thi-bàw, he never mentioned his title or rank. This suggests that he was no longer in royal service.

Before I turn to another topic, I would like to cite one of his thet-káyits that reveals a type of corruption infesting the administration. The English translation is as follows:

On the 2nd waning day of Tabaung, year 1236 B.E.¹⁵³ Má Thè U, a female builder of a pagoda (hpàya-ámá) and her sons, Maung Nwà, head of the eight sections (shit-hta-ná-ok)--as a caretaker of a royal rest house, royal tea server, groom of a royal apartment, etc., and his brother, Maung Kyaw, warden of royal city gates, state:

We are in want of money to make a deal for a promotion of Maung Nwà. Please help us to get a loan of 350 kyats. We shall pay an áhmyaw of one kyat and interest of five mùs (0.5 kyat) per ten kyats a month. Both interest and principal shall be paid back in one month. If a failure of payment results in a lawsuit for recovery of the loan, one of us--Má Thè U, female builder of a pagoda, or Maung Nwà, or his brother Ko Bo Kyaw shall settle it promptly.

According to their request, Mìn Hlá Thi-háthu, the kùn-yei-daw took for them 18 Keng-tung Bè cloth at the rate of twenty kyats a piece, which altogether cost 360 kyats. When (bales of cloth) are handed over to them, the witnesses are Maung Shwei Thà, Má Ein Myè, Má Kyeì, wife of a ¹⁵⁴medicineman, and the writer Aung Kywe, a royal clerk.

The Lámaing-wun Family

Two párábaiks that belonged to the Lámaing-wun family are kept in the National Museum and Library of Burma, Rangoon, under the accession nos. 1046 and 1411. The thet-káyits throw light on the life of the Lámaing-wun, especially on his relations with other personages, such as princes, princesses, ex-ministers, Interior Ministers or royal secretaries, etc. Why was he so important even though his rank was third or fourth grade?

Lámaing-wun was an officer who had authority over the crown farmers. Kings used to appoint to this post their favorites whether or not their appointees possessed ability or valor. This Lámaing-wun was King Mìn-dòn's brother-in-law. His sister was a lesser queen of King Mìn-dòn. Because of this marriage-tie, the Lámaing-wun was powerful and influential in King Mìn-dòn's time.

The Lámaing-wun was extremely conceited about being a brother-in-law of the king. In every thet-káyit he made, he always referred to himself as a "royal brother of the Zábwè-daung queen, and royal uncle of two princesses, Pìn Hteik Hkaung Tin and Maing-lon Sú-hpáyà." He also mentioned his title and rank as "Máha Mìn Htin Ya-za, Commandant of the Shwei-nàn-yò Lámaing Regiment, herald, and Chief of the Lìn-zìn Berge."¹⁵⁵ Some officials were influential in the administration not because of their ability but

because of a marriage-tie with the king. A privy councillor who, because of his violent critiques on both the king and the administration, was often removed from his office, once improvised a piece of verse on some incompetent but influential officials, which reads "if undeserved persons became ministers by dint of presenting their sisters and daughters to the king and if these people became powerful then the country [would be] on the verge of ruin."¹⁵⁶

Naturally people flocked around a powerful man or a man of close proximity to the king in hope that they could reach a better position, or at least be secured in present social status. We find such people in the thet-káyits of the Lámaing-wun. Some were princes and princesses; some, officials; and some, artisans and merchants. The princes and princesses were mostly the offspring of the lesser queens of previous kings or ex-lesser queens. So one can see that a courtier's life was neither hereditary nor secure. And people used to seek patrons to get their life protected or secured.

In the thet-káyits we often come across the transfers of mortgaged lands from one money-lender to another by the mortgagors. It was quite reasonable if such a transfer took place when the money-lender demanded the redemption of it or when the mortgagor wanted additional money on the mortgaged land for which the lender could not afford or did not want to pay any more. But not all of the transfers were made on this ground. Some shifts from lower and less influential to higher and very influential persons should be considered another way. For example, the shifts of the mortgaged lands from some individuals to the Lámaing-wun can be said that people came to

him because he was influential for being a brother-in-law of King Mìn-dòn.

The Lámaing-wun had a son whose name was Maung Maung Gyì. During King Mìn-dòn's time, Maung Maung Gyì was a royal tea-server (láhpet-yei-daw). After the death of King Mìn-dòn, both the Lámaing-wun and his son, Maung Maung Gyì, disappeared from the court scene. They seemed to have been removed from their offices. Their heyday ended with the demise of King Mìn-dòn in 1878.¹⁵⁷

The Sálìn Thu-gaùng Family

The descendents of the Thu-gaùng family in Sálìn still treasure the records of their family history and the economic performances of their forefathers, such as money-lending, land speculation, and other activities. A few hundred documents are extant, and fortunately, I had a chance to study a dozen or so of them written in párábaiks. Though the records are sketchy, we can see the family's economic activities in the later Kòn-baung period.

Sálìn was located in Mìn-bù district. Its region was productive due to accessibility to irrigation for agriculture. In the Pagan period, Mìn-bù was also an important region.¹⁵⁸ In the early Kòn-baung period, Sálìn was headquarters for administration of the Seven Hill district. The Myó-wun or governor who was in charge of this district was appointed by kings; his office was, therefore, not hereditary. The town proper was ruled by a hereditary chief called myó-thu-gyì--headman of town. The myóthu-gyì of Sálìn and his family members were regarded as thu-gaungs. Generally those individuals who were given an office of dignity and emolument by the

king were called thu-gaùng-pyú-hkan; but none of them and their family members were referred to as thu-gaùngs.

Before the time of King Bádon, there had been in Sálìn four hereditary lines, viz., the Máha Thámàn line, the Hkaing-zà line, the Po-zà line, and the Taung-zin-zà line.¹⁵⁹ These lines came into existence in the restored Taung-ngu period.¹⁶⁰ Together they ruled the district with equal right and responsibility. But in September, 1785, King Bádon allowed only the Máha Thaman line to rule the district.¹⁶¹ After that, throughout the later Kòn-baung period, all of the myó-thu-gyis of Salin came from this line.

Regarding the emergence of the thu-gaùng family, Mr. Parsons in his Minbu Settlement Report¹⁶² says:

[Long] ago in the time of King Bodaw [Badon] a body of landed proprietors labouring under the despotic exaction of the Wun of Salin, went to Amarapura to appeal to the king, and offered a share of the produce of their fields, amounting to 3600 baskets of paddy, as an annual payment, if he would exempt them from the irrigation tax, from furnishing labour for irrigation, religious and other works, and from generally rendering personal service to officials. This prayer was granted, and 3600 baskets of paddy were annually collected and forwarded to the capital, where they were credited to the Chief Queen. These landed proprietors were also exempted from thathamedas after its introduction until King Thi-baw's time, when they were assessed. The only privilege retained after this was exemption from water rate. The owners of these Minbu lands were known as Shwe-nan-yo lamaing and were looked on as under special service to the Chief queen, though definite service appears ever to have been rendered.¹⁶³

In King Mìn-dòn's time, a change concerning payment to the crown by the thu-gaùng family took place. They were obliged to pay 5000 kyats as annual tribute.¹⁶⁴ It was much higher than the customary due, because 3600 baskets of paddy would cost no more

than 4000 kyats (see paddy prices in Chapter 2). It being so, the myó-thu-gyì (thu-gaùng) of Salin was compelled in 1867 to borrow over 3000 kyats to realize the demand. We have eight thet-káyits that the thu-gyì took loans from some wealthy personages in the capital. First, he borrowed bits of gold amounting to seventy-seven kyats in weight (44.97 oz), hypothecating wet cultivation lands.¹⁶⁵ He also had with him a gold bar of ten kyats weight (5.84 oz) and a diamond ring. Pawning these bits of gold and a diamond ring, he got 3130 kyat coins. Then he presented the annual tribute of 5000 kyats to the crown (shí-hkò-let-hsaung-daw) through the Yei-nán-tha Prince before and on the Beg-Pardon day.¹⁶⁶

Apart from the tribute to the crown, there were also other contributions to some members of the royalty. To illustrate the relations between the thu-gaùng family and the royal family, I would like to cite the spending of the myó-thu-gyì in the capital.

The spending, starting from 7th waxing day of the month, Wa-gaung, year 1229 B.E.¹⁶⁷ of 1050 kyats, of which 600 were obtained by pawning 30 kyat weight of gold (17.52 oz) borrowed from Ma Myit, 300 kyats borrowed from Má Kyok, 100 kyats paid by Nga Shwei Bei, and 50 kyats obtained by selling a bullock through Maung Tha Myat.¹⁶⁸

7th waxing day of the month, Wa-gaung, 1229. Pork to treat the people on the ceremony day of placing umbrella on top of the pagoda of the Northern Palace Queen70

10th waxing day of the same month. 3 loin cloths...53

Same day. Given to Má O--3 kyat, brokerage fees in pawning the gold--6 kyats, gift to the creditor 18 kyats, altogether totalling27

6th waxing day of the same month. 6 Basein cloths20

3rd waxing day of the same month. 4 ácheik
hta-meins (woman's cloth)10

Same day. A turban, 15 cubits long7

Same day. 28 (viss?) of rice sticks3

Same day. A salver1

Same day. Shopping groceries15

Same day. Given to Û Ta for delivery of the royal
 order (of reappointment?)16

14th waxing day of Wa-gaung, 1229. 1 ácheik cloth
5

Same day. Ni-pà cloth, 10 cubits long 1 kyat, 4
 (viss?) of sugar--3 kyats, altogether4

1st waning day of the same month. 30 viss of cooking
 oil--20 kyats, 1 viss of butter 21 kyats41

Same day. lent to Mí Hkè1

Same day. 50 stalks of bananas to present the Northern
 Palace Queen on her visit to the pagoda--14 kyats, cartage
 fee--1 kyat, 1 doll presented to Yei-nán-tha Prince--1
kyat, bullock cart fare18

Same day. Donation to the pagoda of the Northern
 Palace Queen500

9th waning day of Wa-gaung of the same year. A
 tribute to the Northern Palace Queen30

Same day. Gift to Tháhkin-gyì50

Same day. Given to maids-of-honor50

2 cotton clothes--19 kyats, 1 umbrella--4 kyats, 2
 horse head ornaments--3 kyats, and 1 loin cloth for Maung
 Htù--10 kyats, altogether70

Apart from these spendings, the myó-thu-gyí also paid a tribute of
 one hundred kyats to Yei-nán-tha Prince who received his entries of
 annual tribute money to the crown for four days. In sum total, the
myó-thu-gyí spent 8280 kyats. It was indeed a large amount of

money. If this amount was spent on buying gold in those days, it could buy as many as 241.78 oz of gold. The myó-thu-gyì could settle all debts within a fixed time.

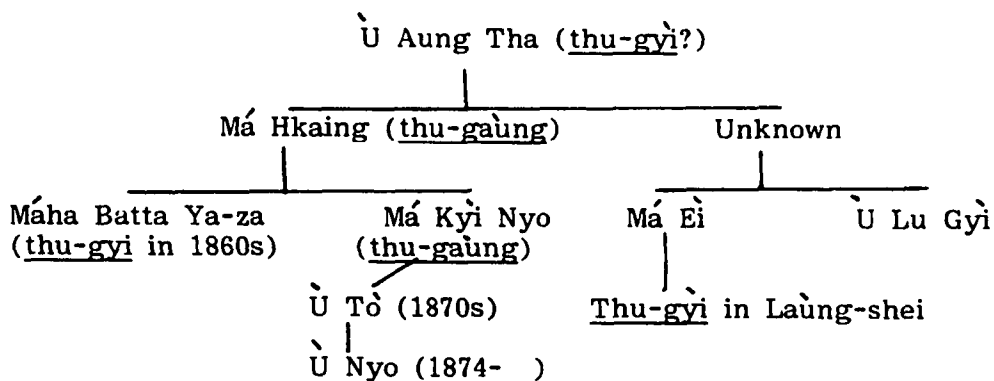
Mr. Parson also observed that:

The large landed proprietors in Salin are known as thugaungs (သူကောင်း). There is no history connected with the estates of these men. They have been gradually acquired in the course of generations by purchase or mortgage. The thugaungs have gradually come to consider themselves and to be looked upon by the people as a separate class. They intermarry among themselves and live in groups of families in superior houses surrounded by high fences, which present rather the appearance of small stockades. They expect more from their tenants than do smaller landlords, but then more is more willingly conceded them on account of their position, both agricultural and social. A few of the more influential of these landlords expect their tenants to furnish them with fuel, to help to repair their houses, assist as servants at ceremonials, and occasionally to act as night watchmen in their compounds. Some of the tenants who perform such duties receive board and lodging in the compound. There are, on the whole, as yet no abuses in the relations between these landlords and their tenants of such a nature as to call for legal protection.¹⁶⁹

Mr. Parson's view of the thu-gaùng family is found to be correct when checked with their money-lending thet-káyits. Of course, the members of this family not only intermarried among themselves but also had marriage-ties with neighboring hereditary chiefs, especially those of Páhkàn-nge and Laùng-she towns.¹⁷⁰ In the thet-káyits all members of the Sálìn myó-thu-gyì family refer to themselves as thu-gaùngs. So far we find six thu-gaùngs who did money-lending business during the years 1830-1870. They were: Zei-ya Shwei Taung (1830s),¹⁷¹ Me Mò (1830s),¹⁷² Má Tun (1840s),¹⁷³ Má Hkaing (1840s),¹⁷⁴ Má Kyi Nyo (1860s),¹⁷⁵ and Maung Tò (1860s).¹⁷⁶

As far as we know, the thu-gaùngs were lenient to their tenants and kyuns. In several cases, they did not collect interest on the loans taken by their tenants or kyuns. No pressure was made on the debtors for recovery of loans that were unsettled for years. The thu-gaùngs erected religious structures in and around Sálìn. Má Tun was a builder of a big pagoda;¹⁷⁷ Má Hkaing, a builder of a monastery;¹⁷⁸ Má Kyì Nyo, a builder of the Ngà-zin monastery.¹⁷⁹ These religious structures certainly tell something about the richness and greatness of the builders or the thu-gaùngs. So we see that the thu-gaùngs amassed fortunes through money-lending and mortgage, and a greater portion of their wealth was reinvested in merit-making for their after-life.

Diagram 2

Genealogy of the Thu-gaùng Family

Source: STC, 12 November 1875; U Tin Ok-chok-pon 4: 219.

The Le-Zin Family

"Le-zin family" simply refers to a family of Le-zin village headmen (thu-gyì). It is appropriate to refer to them as the Le-zin family since the Burmese family system has no custom of sharing a family name, and the office of village headman was hereditary. There are administrative records and money loan thet-káyits kept by the descendents of this family; we can trace their genealogy and economic activities throughout the later Kòn-baung period.

Le-zin was a fairly large village located in lower Bádon taik (now in Mon-ywa township).¹⁸⁰ It was one of the ten cavalry villages in the In-daing circle of the Let-ywèi-gyì 150 taik, that was first organized by King Áthin-hkáya Sàw-yùn in 1318 A.D.¹⁸¹ Before the first Anglo-Burmese war (1824-1826), the village belonged to a group of horse soldiers, but in the later Kòn-baung period, the village community was reorganized into a status group of the palace guards. Prior to the first Anglo-Burmese war, all the headmen of this village were referred to as the myìn-zìs--mounted officers. In the later Kòn-baung period they were called the thu-gyìs--headmen.

The Le-zin sit-tàns of 1783 and 1802 reveal that there had been a succession of seven myìn-zìs until 1802.¹⁸² Regarding the thu-gyìs, we can trace five of them.¹⁸³ Since the village was reorganized into a palace guard group, all stout youths were recruited in the Regiments of North-150¹⁸⁴ and South-150¹⁸⁵ for palace security. We have come across a couple of thet-káyits related to two palace guards who took loans before they left for the royal city to perform their duty.¹⁸⁶

In this village tract, many of the cultivated lands were owned and/or managed by a few families, close relatives of the thu-gyi and his wife. According to some records of the division of property among these family members, they owned 307 dry cultivation lands (ya) and 235 paddy lands (le). In these lists, lands given as gifts in such occasions as noviciation, ear-boring, and marriage ceremonies were not included. Apparently, the distribution of wealth--that is, the cultivated lands, the main component of the Kòn-baung economy--among the people of this village was very uneven. Three families, viz., the thu-gyi, ù Hleì, and ù Ywè, dominated the economy of this village tract (see Table 14).

Table 14
Lands Owned by Three Families
During 1859-1870

Family	<u>Ya</u>	Seeds sowable in baskets	Value in <u>Ywet-ni</u> <u>kyat</u>	<u>Le</u>	Wisps transplantable	Value in <u>Ywet-ni</u> <u>kyat</u>
1. ù Hleì	58	55.5		17	5300	-
	38	-	3152.9	28	-	1404.5
2. ù Ywè	48	49.19	-	36	5350	-
ù Than	89	76.12	-	91	13300	-
	14	-	1952	15	-	1026
3. <u>Thu-gyi</u>	44	26.0	-	31	5728	-
ù Hpyò	16	-	-	17		-

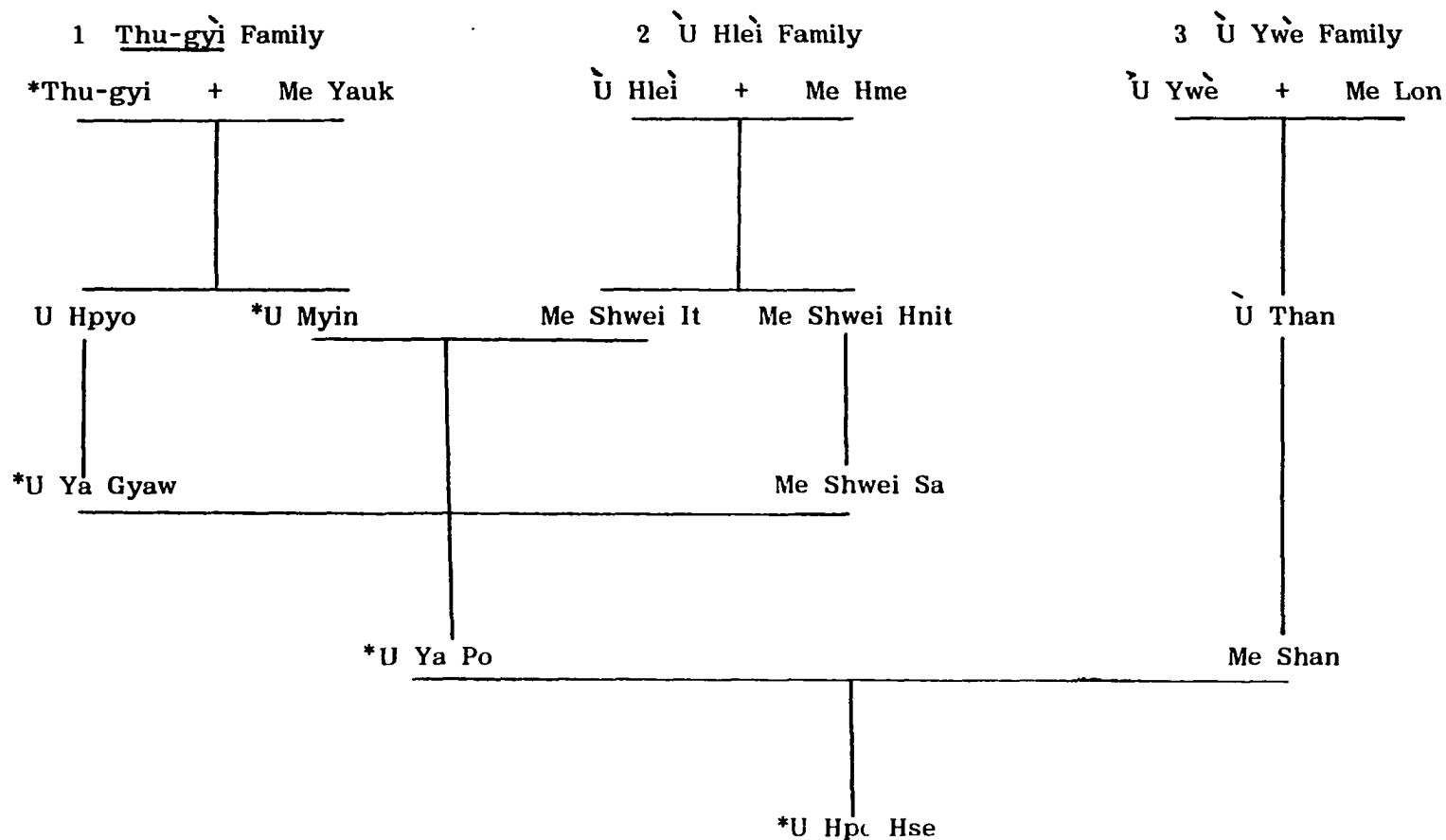
Note: Ya = dry cultivation land; le = paddy land.

Source: LZC, 14 April 1864, 1 October 1859, 18 May 1869, and 8 January 1871.

It is not easy to say how many acres of land these families owned because they did not mention the measurement or size of all lands. Only records of lands acquired through mortgage tell the size or indicate how many baskets of seeds could be sown in or of how many wisps of seedlings could be transplanted. We are told that one basket of millet sown land is equal in size to over three acres,¹⁸⁷ and that an acre of paddy land (le) could hold 45,000 tufts of seedlings¹⁸⁸ or two hundred wisps.¹⁸⁹ Based on this information one can work out the acreage of land owned by these families. The result shows that they owned 620.73 acres of dry cultivation land (ya) and 148.39 acres of paddy land (le). It can be inferred that these families could own no less than one thousand acres of both dry cultivation and paddy land.

Of course, these families were close relatives, either by blood or by marriage ties, of the thu-gyì family. (See Diagram 3.) The thu-gyì's family also had marriage ties with other neighboring village heads. As the evidence shows, the Le-zin family was influential in the region. People from many villages sought loans from this family pledging lands or labor.¹⁹⁰ During the 1860s, no fewer than fifty people had been working on their lands as tenants.¹⁹¹ Moreover evidence also indicates that over one hundred people had mortgaged their lands to this family during the first half of the nineteenth century. The majority of them no doubt worked as sharecroppers. The economic means--the land and the labor force--were under the control of this family. So people in this region mostly relied upon this family for money and crop loans.

Diagram 3
Formation of Le-zin Family



Note: Asterisked persons were the thu-gyis of Le-zin in the later Kòn-baung period.

Table 15

Debtor-kyuns of the Le-zin Family

Name	Amount of Bondage Loan	Contracting Date
Ngá Ya, wife Mí Ywè and three children: Ngá Yauk, Mí Û, and Mí Hmon (Thet-ke-gyìn)	207.6	4 Jun. 1795
Ngá Shwei Yauk (Thet-ke-gyìn-tàw)	40	11 Nov. 1803
Ngá Yan	70	21 Apr. 1806
Mí Hkè (Kan-byà-tàw)	45.5	1 Mar. 1807
Ngá Aung Nyo (Ywa-pálè)	75.55	10 May 1807
Mí Eì (Ywa-pálè)	75.09	10 May 1807
Ngá Thaíng (Myauk-yat)	43.3	20 Mar. 1809
Ngá Cho	82.65	16 Jun. 1811
Ngá Kyaw Mìn (Yei-dwìn-yat)	41	12 Jun. 1815
Ngá Shwei	42.25	17 May 1816
Mí Pò Zi	39.4	21 Aug. 1824
Mí Hko	45.5	25 Jul. 1825
Ngá Shwei Tok	43.75	12 Jun. 1826
Ngá Pwè (Thet-ke-gyìn)	121.75	30 Jun. 1826
Ngá Hsaing (Zì-gyun-tàw)	46.5	26 Jun. 1827
Ngá Paung Gyaung (Ále-ywa)	38	31 Aug. 1828
Ngá Shwei Kaùng and sister Mí Kyáw (Zì-gyùn-tàw)*	81.6	21 Apr. 1830
Ngá Tu	48.1	15 May 1833
Ngá Aung Kyaw**	36.95	21 Jan. 1836
Ngá Tá Lá*	89.9	1 Mar. 1837
Ngá Kyu	70.5	6 May 1841
Mí Mìn Yauk	15.5	18 Jun. 1842
Mí Hmat Taw	64.65	4 Jun. 1849
Mí Cho (Le-zin)	30	28 Jan. 1854
Mí Ywet	63.55	16 Feb. 1855

*Redeemed kyun

**Runaway kyun

NOTES

- ¹Thaung Blackmore, Burney Parabaiks, pp. 28-31.
- ²Michael Aung-Thwin, Pagan, Chapter 8.
- ³Kan-daw Mìn-kyàung Hsáya-daw, Làwká-thará Pyó, para. 12.
- ⁴In historical Burma, people from all walks of life could become rich, but they were not called rich men unless they were conferred with titles by the king. See U Tin, Ok-chok-pon, 2:44.
- ⁵Rev. Father Sangermano, Burmese Empire, p. 195.
- ⁶Ibid., p. 196.
- ⁷In every thet-káyit of money loan this clause is clearly mentioned.
- ⁸Than Tun, ed., ROB 4:228.
- ⁹Ibid., p. 255.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 834.
- ¹¹Royal Orders of King Mìn-dòn, 18 January 1868 and 19 January 1868, palm leaf MS, Mon-daing-bin village monastery Collection (hereafter MDBC).
- ¹²LZC, 23 February 1856.
- ¹³U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 4:176-77.
- ¹⁴TTTC, 18 September 1828.
- ¹⁵For the ywet-ni conversion method, see Toe Hla, "Burmese Monetary System in the Konbaung Period," JBR, 62, pt. 1 & 2 (1979): 59-66.
- ¹⁶TTTC.
- ¹⁷TTTC, 15 December 1828.
- ¹⁸STC, 29 July 1867, 30 July 1867, 4 August 1867.
- ¹⁹U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 2:44.

- ²⁰TGC, 24 July 1847.
- ²¹WBC, 31 October 1865, and 14 February 1867.
- ²²Ibid., 5 December 1851.
- ²³Ibid., 29 January 1867 and 26 February 1868.
- ²⁴WBC, 20 January 1861.
- ²⁵Ibid., 1 June 1833.
- ²⁶YTC, 3 November 1792.
- ²⁷WBC, 28 November 1850.
- ²⁸LZC, August 1827.
- ²⁹WBC, 25 February 1851.
- ³⁰STC, 13 March 1865.
- ³¹BGC, 13 April 1831.
- ³²STC, 1 August 1867.
- ³³Than Tun, ed., ROB 5: 415-16.
- ³⁴Ibid., p. 885.
- ³⁵Ibid.
- ³⁶Ibid., p. 981.
- ³⁷Ibid.
- ³⁸Than Tun, ed., ROB 6: 422.
- ³⁹Ibid., 5: 568.
- ⁴⁰Ibid.
- ⁴¹Ibid., 6: 422.
- ⁴²WBC, 27 August 1821.
- ⁴³Ibid., 23 June 1867.
- ⁴⁴NLC, No. 1046, 12 October 1855.
- ⁴⁵WBC, 11 March 1858.

- ⁴⁶Ibid., 15 March 1883.
- ⁴⁷NLC, No. 1046; 26 July 1854.
- ⁴⁸YTC, No. 1, 19 August 1858.
- ⁴⁹NLC, No. 1046, 30 November 1860.
- ⁵⁰Parábaik MS, Rangoon Universities' Central Library Collection, No. 140738, 4 March 1869 (hereafter RUCL).
- ⁵¹NLC, No. 1046, 26 November 1836.
- ⁵²Ibid., 27 July 1854; and ibid., No. 1411, 14 May 1855.
- ⁵³LPC, 5 November 1791.
- ⁵⁴Than Tun, ed., ROB, 4:581, 625, 641, 635; ROB, 6:437, 439, 526, 605-606.
- ⁵⁵MGC, No. 11, 22 July 1805
- ⁵⁶Shwei-daik-áwin Taung-dwîn-gyì Ne-myei-sit-tàn, palm leaf MS, No.368 (Taung-dwîn-gyì Museum Collection) kì reverse; LPC, 5 (November 1791); MGC, No. 1, 21 May 1884.
- ⁵⁷Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hlut-daw, pp. 92-93.
- ⁵⁸U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 4:176-77.
- ⁵⁹TGC, 12 July 1852.
- ⁶⁰Ibid., 26 march 1855.
- ⁶¹NLC, No. 1411, 29 September 1873.
- ⁶²WBC, 14 December 1843.
- ⁶³Ibid., 31 August 1858.
- ⁶⁴Parábaik MS, no accession number, Mandalay University Library Collection (hereafter MULC), 27 December 1878.
- ⁶⁵NLC, No. 1046, 26 July 1854.
- ⁶⁶LZC, 15 May 1820.
- ⁶⁷Ibid., 15 April 1812.
- ⁶⁸NLC, No. 1046, 17 March 1865; TGC, 25 September 1842.

- ⁶⁹WBC, 21 February 1851.
- ⁷⁰NLC, No. 1411, 9 November 1871.
- ⁷¹WBC, 6 May 1841.
- ⁷²NLC, No. 1411, 19 February 1868, 28 October 1875.
- ⁷³Ibid., 29 September 1873.
- ⁷⁴MULC, 27 December 1878.
- ⁷⁵WBC, 15 March 1858.
- ⁷⁶Ibid., 3 May 1858.
- ⁷⁷Ibid., 8 April 1860.
- ⁷⁸Thaung Blackmore, Burney Parabaiks, p. 27; STC, 22 April 1864.
- ⁷⁹LZC, 26 May 1811.
- ⁸⁰NLC, No. 1046, 21 August 1854.
- ⁸¹YTC, No. 23, 2 May 1870.
- ⁸²KLC, 4 February 1879.
- ⁸³RUCL, No. 151107, 3 June 1809.
- ⁸⁴Beg-Pardon day was held three times a year: on the new year, on the eve of the Buddhist Lent, and on the last day of the Lent.
- ⁸⁵STC, 22 July 1867, 29 July 1867, and 6 August 1867.
- ⁸⁶YTC, 9 April 1858.
- ⁸⁷Thaung Blackmore, Burney Parabaiks, p. 27.
- ⁸⁸KSC, 25 June 1845.
- ⁸⁹TGC, 12 July 1852.
- ⁹⁰Ibid., 10 March 1852
- ⁹¹Ibid., 21 September 1853, 31 December 1853.
- ⁹²NLC, No. 1046, 8 December 1854.

- ⁹³ Ibid., No. 1411, 1 August 1869.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., No. 1046, 8 December 1854.
- ⁹⁵ Parábaik MS, Kán-bálu State High School Library Collection (hereafter KBLC), 2 January 1859.
- ⁹⁶ NLC, No. 1046, 8 December 1854.
- ⁹⁷ KBLC, 2 January 1859.
- ⁹⁸ NLC, No. 1411, 1 August 1869.
- ⁹⁹ NLC, No. 1411, 1 August 1869.
- ¹⁰⁰ WBC, 7 January 1849.
- ¹⁰¹ See Maung Maung Pú's testimony in a lawsuit, WBC, 10 January 1879.
- ¹⁰² WBC, 17 May 1839.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., 13 April 1847.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁵ Maung Maung Pú's Appeal to the Court in 1879, WBC.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 6 May 1841.
- ¹⁰⁷ WBC, 14 December 1843.
- ¹⁰⁸ U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 2, 554.
- ¹⁰⁹ WBC, 14 December 1843.
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid., 16 January 1879.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid., 13 November 1866.
- ¹¹² WBC, 5 December 1851.
- ¹¹³ Ibid., 12 October 1854.
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid., 11 February 1848.
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid., 10 May 1848.
- ¹¹⁶ Ibid., 25 April 1862.
- ¹¹⁷ Ibid.

- ¹¹⁸Ibid., 8 July 1855.
- ¹¹⁹Ibid., 22 February 1876.
- ¹²⁰WBC, 22 February 1878.
- ¹²¹Maung Maung Pú's Plea to the Myìn-mu Civil Court in 1894, WBC.
- ¹²²Maung Maung Pú's letter to his superior, n.d., WBC.
- ¹²³Maung Maung Pú's appeal to the Court for his runaway kyuns, n.d., WBC.
- ¹²⁴Inheritance case, WBC, n.d.
- ¹²⁵WBC, 14 August 1885.
- ¹²⁶Plea to the Myìn-mu Civil Court, WBC, n.d.
- ¹²⁷WBC, 21 December 1886.
- ¹²⁸Ibid., 16 November 1866.
- ¹²⁹Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 246.
- ¹³⁰TGC, 8 April 1824.
- ¹³¹Maung Hmon's supplication to King Ságaing in 1835, TGC.
- ¹³²TGC, 12 June 1850.
- ¹³³Ibid.
- ¹³⁴TGC, 31 July 1848, 21 February 1849, 16 November 1849.
- ¹³⁵Ibid., 27 September 1852, 29 December 1852, 16 November 1853.
- ¹³⁶Ibid., 30 November 1853.
- ¹³⁷TGC, 11 July 1854.
- ¹³⁸U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 3:210.
- ¹³⁹Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 246; TGC, 10 January 1856.
- ¹⁴⁰U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 3:235.
- ¹⁴¹TGC, 14 May 1859.

- ¹⁴²U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 3:386-87.
- ¹⁴³TGC, 22 December 1853.
- ¹⁴⁴Maung Hmon's Appeal to the Hlut-taw, TGC, n.d.
- ¹⁴⁵TGC, 6 May 1854.
- ¹⁴⁶Ibid., 14 November 1850.
- ¹⁴⁷Ibid., 22 December 1853.
- ¹⁴⁸Ibid., 11 July 1854.
- ¹⁴⁹Ibid., 14 May 1859.
- ¹⁵⁰Ibid.
- ¹⁵¹TGC, 19 July 1870.
- ¹⁵²Ibid., 23 March 1875.
- ¹⁵³23 March 1875.
- ¹⁵⁴TGC.
- ¹⁵⁵NLC, Nos. 1046, 1411, 10 May 1865 and 15 June 1866.
- ¹⁵⁶Ma Kyan, "King Mindon's Councillors," JBR, 44, I (1961): 58.
- ¹⁵⁷NLC, Nos. 1046 and 1411, 26 July 1854, 8 December 1854, and 15 June 1866.
- ¹⁵⁸See Michael Aung-Thwin, "Kingship, the Sangha, and Society in Pagan," in Kenneth R. Hall and John K. Whitmore, eds., Explorations in Early Southeast Asian History: The Origins of Southeast Asian Statecraft. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan (1976): 218-19.
- ¹⁵⁹Than Tun, ed., ROB 4:283, 288, 481.
- ¹⁶⁰Ibid., p. 288.
- ¹⁶¹Than Tun, ed., ROB 4:481.
- ¹⁶²I have never seen that report. It is cited by J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman in GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2:432.
- ¹⁶³J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2:432.

- ¹⁶⁴STC, 22 July 1867.
- ¹⁶⁵STC, 29 July 1867.
- ¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 22 July 1867.
- ¹⁶⁷₆ August 1867.
- ¹⁶⁸STC, 6 August 1867.
- ¹⁶⁹J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 1, vol. 2:350-51.
- ¹⁷⁰STC, 29 November 1862, 12 November 1875.
- ¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, 26 March 1834.
- ¹⁷²*Ibid.*, 7 January 1832.
- ¹⁷³*Ibid.*
- ¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 5 April 1849.
- ¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 26 December 1867.
- ¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 22 October 1863.
- ¹⁷⁷STC, 5 April 1849.
- ¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 26 December 1867.
- ¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 18 November 1875, 31 October 1877.
- ¹⁸⁰Bádon was a provincial headquarters. It came to be known as Álon after a son of Álaung-mìn-táyà, who was given that town as a fief became king in 1782. U Maung Maung Tin, Shwei-nàn-thòn, p. 208.
- ¹⁸¹Than Tun, ed., ROB 2:202.
- ¹⁸²The myìn-zìs were by name, Ngá Taing, Ngá Ok Hlá, Ngá ù, Ngá Shàn Byu, In-yìn Tha-gáthu, Ngá Hmwei, and Ngá Bòn.
- ¹⁸³The thu-gyis were Ngá Myo, Yè Hlá Yan Aung, ù Myín, ù Ya Po, ù Ya Kyaw, and Maung Hpò Hse.
- ¹⁸⁴U Maung Maung Tin, Shwei-nàn-thòn, p. 210.
- ¹⁸⁵OZC, 6 May 1855.
- ¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 1 March 1837, 4 June 1849.

¹⁸⁷Correspondence with Hsáya-daw U Za Ti La, Lèi Myet Hna monastery, Yei-zágyo, Mágwei Division, on 22 September 1985 and with Yei-ù U Thaung on 4 Decmeber 1986.

¹⁸⁸J. G. Scott, Burma: A Handbook, p. 259.

¹⁸⁹Correspondence with Yei-ù U Thaung, 4 December 1986.

¹⁹⁰Villages can be found in Table 15.

¹⁹¹LZC, 1 October 1859, 15 June 1861, 14 April 1864, 18 May 1869 and 8 January 1871.

CHAPTER 5

MONEY-LENDING AND THE MONASTIC ORDER

Role of Buddhist Monks in Rural Areas

Theoretically, Buddhist monks, unlike the ministers in other religions, have no obligation to society at all.¹ Traditionally, it is accepted that monks are the ones who seek their own salvation. However, it is clear that the majority of Buddhist monks are not recluses; they are mostly devoted either to the study and teaching of the Pali canon or to meditation. Because of their being disciples of the Buddha, who observe the 227 monastic vows, monks are profoundly revered and supported by the laity with four basic necessities, that is, a monastery, food, monastic robes, and medicine. Since they are not recluses and they rely solely on the donation of the people, they voluntarily assume an obligation to teach the children of the people the rudiments of education and preach to the older people Buddhist ideals and religious practices. Thus, a relationship between the monks and laity came into existence.

The monks were influential in Burmese society. In the later Kòn-baung period, especially during the reigns of the last two kings, Mìn-dòn and Thi-bàw, their role in the society and in administration was enormous and important. Although the country became much smaller due to the Anglo-Burmese wars, the population of the monks remarkably increased. In 1787, when Kòn-baung Burma was at its

zenith, there were 17,839 monks.² In 1867, King Mìn-dòn's Burma, including Cis-Salwin Shan states was equivalent to 3 percent of the total population. The capital, Mandalay, alone had 13,227 monks.³ Of course the increase or decrease of monastic population was related to political conditions. As has been told, King Mìn-dòn came to the throne by means of revolution against his brother, King Págan, while the latter was engaged in war with the British. Therefore, when King Mìn-dòn ascended the throne, Burma was losing the war. This unfavorable condition compelled King Mìn-dòn to stop fighting. The British annexed Pegu province and the Irrawaddy delta region. King Mìn-dòn needed to reorganize the country with the assistance of the monks.

King Mìn-dòn set up an ecclesiastical administrative structure, parallel to, and identical with, his secular one. At the top there was a Tha-thána-baing--supreme head of the monastic order--appointed by the king. He was assisted by eight hsáya-daws (lit. royal teachers) of the Thudhamma Council, all of whom were the king's appointees. The headquarters of this council was at the capital. In the districts and provinces were the gàing-oks (chief monk of a particular district or province), who were assisted by the township-level heads of monks known as the gàing-dauks. All of them were called hsáya-daws. At the bottom, there were the village monastery heads called hpòn-gyis (great glory). All these monks had to check and supervise the officials on administrative matters. The officers also had to come to the hsáya-daws to ask for their advice whenever they were faced with administrative and judicial problems.⁴ There was ample evidence that

persons who received the support of these monks were appointed to local offices; and those officers whom the monks did not support any more were removed from their office by the Hlut-taw.⁵

J. G. Scott, a British colonial administrator who was well acquainted with Burmese culture and the Buddhist religion, reported that "no monk could utter a falsehood, and his word was therefore universally respected and accepted as true." He continues by saying that

he [the monk] is still cited as the best possible witness in all important transactions, such as signing of documents, the transference of land, and closing of mortgages. In civil cases especially those of inheritance...the pongyi's settlement is that most frequently sought for, and the terms are usually reduced to writing by him in a memorandum noting the heads of the settlement and signed by the parties.⁶

As the transactions of business were made in the presence of the monks, so also were the statements or confessions of the people who were involved in legal or criminal cases. In Sein-nàn village, Kyùn-hla' township, a deed of bondage loan or human mortgage was made by parties in the presence of the village abbot.⁷ Before she died, a woman released all of her kyuns, destroying the documents related to them while other properties were given as gifts inter vivos. The deed was solemnly made in the presence of monks.⁸ In a Catholic village of Chaùng-yò in Myei-dù township, such legal and criminal matters were conducted in front of the Catholic priest. He was referred to as áhpá-hpòn-gyì--Father Reverend.⁹ The Hlut-taw also instructed the officers and the local chiefs to take the statements of the parties involved in legal cases before the monks.¹⁰

Donations to the Sangha and the Sasana

The Buddhist monks in the Kòn-baung period used to address the king as the Sasana-da-yáka¹¹--Supporter or Benefactor of the religion. The chroniclers recorded the meritorious deeds of the kings, such as the constructions of pagodas, monasteries, ordination halls, libraries, and so forth. The Kings conferred titles upon monks of great reputation in the field of Buddhist Teachings and the observance of the monastic disciplines. Monks outstanding in the examinations were greatly honored; their parents were granted exemption from any form of taxation and corvee labor.¹² In King Mìn-dòn's time, several thousand monks who resided in the capital were provided with the four sanghic requisites. However, since the sangha institution was so big and over-extended, the king's support could not reach to every sangha or monk in the country. People could also build religious structures and support the monks with what the monks needed on behalf of the king (kú-tho-daw-pwà). As will be seen presently, the Kòn-baung people were fond of merit-making. Every village had at least one monastery and other several religious structures, built by local wealthy families and by the community collectively. Of course, not all people who built such religious structures were wealthy. Some spent all of their wealth accumulated throughout their life on the construction of such works. We often find in the thet-káyits indebted benefactors or donors (dága). Rev. Father Sangermano, an Italian Catholic missionary who visited Burma in the early nineteenth century, writes:

For besides given daily alms to their talapoints, they all lay something to be applied to some work of public benefit, such as a convent of talapoints, a pagoda, a hall, a portico, a pond, a bridge, or a well. They are very fond of thus signalizing their generosity, and will often deprive themselves of comforts, to have the pleasure of being benefactors to the public...And its sense of the benefit is expressed by the honours paid to the benefactors. They are saluted by the titles of Prataga, Chiaungtaga, zara taga, etc., that is benefactors to the Pagodas, convents, or halls, and these titles are as honourable with them as those of Duke or Marquess among us.¹³

There are twenty-six types of meritorious works and benefactors that I have gleaned from the thet-káyits. Based on the nature of their meritorious works, they are categorized into three groups: (1) the construction of religious edifices and the benefactors to these works; (2) the endowment of monastic institutions with priestly necessities and these donors; and (3) social welfare works and benefactors to society.

The first group consists of fourteen types of works donated by the Kòn-baung people to religious institutions.

(1) building a brick lion statue (chin-theí) as a symbolic guardian of pagoda, and one who built it, called a chin-theí-dága¹⁴

(2) building a brick dais (pálin) and one who built it, called a pálin-dága¹⁵

(3) building a cave for monks to meditate in (ú-min), and one who built it, called ú-min-dága¹⁶

(4) building a chapel or an ordination hall (thein), and one who built it, called a thein-dága¹⁷

(5) building a monastery (kyàung), and one who built it, called kyàung-dága¹⁸

(6) building a mosque (báli), and one who built it, called báli-dága¹⁹

(7) building an open porch attached to a monastery (zìn-gyan), and one who built it, called a zìn-gyan-dága²⁰

(8) building a pagoda (hpáya), and one who built it, called a hpáya-dága²¹

(9) building a brick prayer hall (taik), and one who built it, called a taik-dága²²

(10) building a privy for monks (kú-ti), and one who built it, called a kú-ti-dága²³

(11) building a roofed passage way (zaùng-dàn), and one who built it, called a zaùng-dàn-dága²⁴

(12) building a multi-roofed spire (pyat-that), and one who built it, called a pyat-that-dága²⁵

(13) building a boat-shaped structure (thìn-bàw), and one who built it, called a thìn-bàw-dága²⁶

(14) erecting a sacred flag post (tágun), and one who erected it, called a tágun-dága²⁷

The second group consists of the following dágas or benefactors to the monastic institution:

(1) bàw-dí-dága--one who planted a sacred Bo tree (Ficus religiosa)²⁸

(2) hkàung-laùng-dága--one who donated a bell to be hung in front of a pagoda or a monastery²⁹

(3) In-byin-dága--one who donated a short-legged bedstead to a monk³⁰

(4) Sa-dága--one who donated to a monastery Buddhist scriptures written on corypha palm leaves³¹

(5) sa-daik-dága--one who donated to a monastery a big chest to keep palm leaf MSS in³²

(6) shwei-hti-dága--one who donated a golden umbrella to a monastery³³

(7) thin-gàn-dága--one who donated monastic robes to a monk³⁴

The third group consists of these people whose meritorious works were beneficial to society:

(1) kan-dága--one who constructed a tank or reservoir³⁵

(2) tádà-dága--one who built a bridge³⁶

(3) yei-dwìn-dága--one who built a well³⁷

(4) yei-gyàn-dága--one who furnished a wayside water stand for refreshment of passers-by³⁸

(5) záyat-dága--one who built a rest-house³⁹

As far as the endowment of land to religious institutions is concerned, we do not find any evidence in the period under study. It is possible that the kings might have forbidden the people to donate the land outright to the religion without royal permission because they (the kings) claimed that they were the real owners of the land in the domain.⁴⁰ However, people could donate lands to monks individually as an endowment only for the monks' lifetime. The land so donated was not permanently alienated into ecclesiastical control as had been the case in the Pagan period; it remained under the management of a layman. It was also liable to taxation. The owner monk could enjoy a certain portion of the produce of the land tenanted during his lifetime. And finally, the monk was obliged to give his land and other valuable properties as gifts causa mortis to someone else or to relatives before he died.⁴¹ Therefore, lands donated to monks were never lost to the state. Moreover, people seemed to prefer to be a dága or donor of other sort, such as the hpáyà-dága--builder of a pagoda, or kyaung-dága--builder of a monastery, etc., that dignified their social status.

The motive of the economic performance of the Kòn-baung people apart from their daily subsistence was seemingly to support the religion as far as they could so that their merit became a sort of investment for their afterlife. Evidence that reveals their motives abounds. One can find them in the prayers inscribed by the donors on the pedestals of the Buddha images, on the bells, on the walls of religious edifices, on the palm leaf MS books, on the silk or cotton ribbons that were used in tying up the palm leaf MS books, on stones erected near the buildings they built, etc. As a matter of fact, we can say that the Kòn-baung people were always preoccupied with a burning desire to become a dága of any sort in their life.

We have 221 donors gleaned from a little over six hundred thet-káyits that were collected from twenty-one townships. Among them, sixty-four persons were money-lenders; forty-four, debtors or mortgagors; and one hundred and twenty-four, witnesses or the like. The majority of the money-lenders announced that they were the donors of such and such. They are always found present side by side with the local chiefs in most of the socio-economic affairs of the community. Because people admired and respected them for their meritorious works that were beneficial to the society, they were invited to all important transactions as the best possible witnesses.

The people involved in the thet-káyits were not only the Burman Buddhists but also some foreigners who professed different creeds and the native Muslims. The báli-dágas were the Muslims who built mosques for their community. We find these báli-dágas both as a creditor⁴² and as a debtor⁴³. But one báli-dága from the Mon-hlá

village is very ambiguous because it was a Catholic village.⁴⁴ It is doubtful if the draftsman or the writer mistook the Church for a mosque. However, one thing is apparent, the freedom of worship in Burma.

I would like to discuss how the gifts or donations of the people to the religious institutions benefitted the society. As has been said, people build pagodas, monasteries, libraries, rest houses, etc. They did such meritorious deeds primarily because they wanted to be reborn into a better life in their next existence. However, many people could enjoy benefits from their meritorious works. Clear evidence can be seen in education. People built monasteries and libraries, and supported the monks generously; the sangha order grew larger and larger. Every monastery became a learning center. The children of the community could at least learn the fundamentals of education. As Heinz Berchert writes, the monks fulfilled

a number of obligations within society; they acted as the literati preserving a great part of literature and higher studies, including historical and nonreligious writings. The monks taught the fundamentals of education to the villagers. It was because of them that the Theravada countries still had a higher literacy rate than European countries like⁴⁵ England in the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Even though there had been no printing presses in Burma, every village monastery had a library full of books of the palm leaf MS and parabaiks. A copyist was always employed whenever the chief monk of the monastery needed copies of new books and old ones or whenever the donor wanted to furnish the village monastery library with the Buddhist scriptures. One who paid the copyist for

his labor was called a sa-dága.⁴⁶ The palm leaf MSS were kept in gilded or mosaic chests. A person who endowed such a chest to the monastery was called a sa-daik-dága.⁴⁷ The books were mostly the Buddhist scriptures. But there were also nonreligious writings on astrology, history, law, medicine and so forth. Unless there had been such donors and unless the Buddhist monks had volunteered to teach the children of the people, illiteracy would have been much more prevalent.

The dágas who directly contributed to the society were those who built rest houses and the bridges and dug tanks and wells. Since central Burma is situated in the dry zone, summer is very hot and rain is scanty. In many hinterland areas away from the rivers, drinking water is a serious problem. To fulfill these needs, generous and wealthy people built rest-houses, tanks, wells, bridges, etc. One can see rest houses near or half-way between villages. Travelers could lodge in them free of charge. By and large, Kòn-baung people managed to survive and they used to expend their money on religious and social welfare instead of hoarding it or making investment in trade or other business.

All of these dagas supported the Buddhist religion as far as they could. Among the dagas, the one who made his son a novice or monk is highly appreciated. The Burmese belief has it that in supporting the Buddhist religion, the noblest merit that one can acquire is to recruit one's son into the sangha order by oneself. A reference is made to a popular story of King Asoka, a devout Buddhist king of India, who made his son and daughter monks and

sent them to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to propagate Buddhism there. This story inspires all Burmese Buddhist families. Still in rural areas, parents, if they bore a son, worked harder to save more money in order to make their son a novice. Those who have done such a religious performance are greatly honored and envied. We find in many thet-káyits persons, cited as reliable and respectable witnesses, who were called shin-bá⁴⁸--father of a novice, or pyin-zìn-bá⁴⁹--father of a young monk. These titles reflect their noble deeds.

Life-cycle Ceremonies

During the lifetime of a Burman, there were several ceremonies related to his personal life: the ceremony of placing a child in the cradle; the name-giving ceremony; the noviciation and ear-boring ceremony; the marriage ceremony and so forth. A lucky person could have all these ceremonies held in honor of him. In the thet-káyits we find two of them: noviciation and marriage ceremonies. In such ceremonies, gift-giving was customary; and it was made solemnly. Apart from the gift-giving thet-káyits, there were also other forms related to debts.

Gift-giving in noviciation ceremonies is a custom that still prevails in Burma. Well-to-do parents used to give their sons who were going to enter the monastic life as novices valuable gifts including cultivation lands, jewelry, and so forth. Fortunately, we have one gift-giving thet-kayit in a noviciation ceremony. When Û Ya Po, headman of Le-zin village, and his wife Shin Shan celebrated a noviciation ceremony of their son, Maung Hpò Hse, on 16 April 1873,

they endowed him with seven plots of dry cultivation land (40.5 acres), one plot of paddy land (2 acres), one emerald ring, one diamond ring, five kyat weight of gold (2.92 oz), and one hundred silver kyat coins. These gifts were given in the presence of the village elders.⁵⁰

There were many poor people who could not afford to celebrate a noviciation ceremony of their sons. To put them into monastic life as novices, therefore, some borrowed money from lenders,⁵¹ and some mortgaged their lands.⁵² It seemed that Burmese Buddhist parents hardly let their sons lead a married life without having made them novices, even though they were poor or their sons were in bondage.⁵³ Of course, because it is religious, this ceremony is the one the Burmese Buddhist parents esteem the most.

The marriage ceremony is purely secular, but it is the most important part of one's life. In the chronicles, such ceremonies of the royalty are elegantly recorded. People from different strata also celebrated these ceremonies. We have three thet-káyits related to marriage ceremonies: one belonged to the nobility; another, to a headman of a village; and another, to an ordinary áthi. They throw light upon different aspects of social life.

When a grandson of a privy councillor married a daughter of Kyan-gin township officer in 1833, his grandparents gave him a large amount of gifts in the presence of witnesses. The gifts consisted of a pair of gold ear-tubes, a pair of gold bracelets, a gold drinking cup, a gold betel-box weighing altogether 53.75 kyats (31.39 oz), three ruby rings, one diamond ring, two emerald rings, one sapphire

ring, one topaz ring, one silver betel-box weighing 12.2 kyats (7.12 oz), one silver drinking cup weighing thirteen kyats (7.6 oz), one silver spittoon weighing twenty-five kyats (14.6 oz), one silver tray weighing 32.25 kyats (18.83 oz), two silver plates weighing fifty kyats (29.2 oz), two silver spoons weighing 4.5 kyats (2.63 oz), twenty viss of silver (1168 oz), about six acres of paddy lands, about nine acres of dry cultivation lands, two ponies with saddles, bridles, etc., thirty-four head of cattle, two kyuns, one ox-drawn cart, ninety-six bales of cloth and clothing, and many other household utensils.⁵⁴

Another thet-káyit was of Maung Ya Po, headman of Le-zin village and Shin Shan, a daughter of Û Than and Me Yit. They were married on 15 June 1861. Parents of both sides were wealthy in the community. At the ceremony, Maung Ya Po's parents endowed these gifts: eight plots of paddy lands that could be transplanted 1,350 wisps of seedlings (6.75 acres), four plots of dry cultivation lands that could be sown in 6.5 baskets of millet (19.5 acres), a four kyat weight of gold bar (2.33 oz), 160 kyat weight of silver (93.44 oz), one ruby ring, one emerald ring, one set of silver betel-box weighing ten kyats (5.84 oz), and one cream-colored horse worth forty kyats silver (23.36 oz). Moreover, the parents of Shin Shan, who were the builders of a monastery at Le-zin, gave the following gifts: three plots of paddy lands (9.25 acres), six plots of dry cultivation lands (25.5 acres), four kyats weight of gold (2.33 oz), 160 kyats of silver (93.44 oz), one ruby ring, and one diamond ring. These gifts were handed over to the bride and bridegroom by the parents of both

sides as the joint property of the newly wed couple in the presence of a judge and village elders.⁵⁵

As is seen, their life was taken for granted; but there were unfortunate individuals whose married life started with debt. A young lad from Htein-gan village (in Meik-hti-la township?) took a loan of fifty kyats as he was in urgent need for the occasion of his engagement.⁵⁶ Although we have so far only a few thet-káyits concerning the marriage ceremonies, they clearly throw light upon the social life of different strata.

An undesirable, but unavoidable, ceremony of a Burman is the ceremony of funeral rites. There are a fairly large number of thet-káyits that reveal Burmese funeral customs or rites. Among the royalty and the nobility, the funerals were to be carried out in accordance with their social status as prescribed by the king.⁵⁷ Among common people, the dead were mostly buried; offerings of food to the monks and to the deceased as well were also made. A thet-káyit tells us some portions of the expense for funeral rites of an old woman as follows:

Funeral Expense of Me Kwei, Builder
of a Pagoda

<u>Items</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Cost</u>
pickled tea		12.00 <u>kyats</u>
cotton cloth	10 bales	12.00 <u>kyats</u>
cooking oil	10 viss	3.30 <u>kyats</u>
tobacco	10 viss	7.00 <u>kyats</u>
paddy rice	17.5 baskets	3.85 <u>kyats</u>

The total expense for the above items alone amounted to 38.15 kyats.

The defrayment was made by mortgaging a plot of paddy land owned

by the deceased.⁵⁸ It shows that the family members of the deceased made a food offering ceremony to and for the deceased.

Such spending was referred to in the thet-káyits as "funeral expense." For well-to-do people, the funeral expense was not a problem. They would bury the dead splendidly and do all the costly funeral rituals. In one thet-káyit, a daughter and a sister of the deceased had a dispute concerning the funeral expense of 250 kyats; the daughter who held the view that she was solely responsible for the funeral expense denied her aunt's contribution; and her aunt argued that she should also pay some portions of this expense as she was the only sister of the deceased. A settlement was reached by arbitration of the village elders that each party pay half of the expense.⁵⁹ In a village society this amount for funeral expenses was fairly large. They could afford these expenses because they came of a well-to-do family, close relatives of the Le-zin headman; and they were money-lenders in their village.

The funeral of Me Yauk, a money-lender and mother-in-law of the Wùn-byeí sáyei-daw-gyì, was even more costly. The coffin was carried in a beautifully built paper pyre. The funeral cortege left home with two musical bands; over eighty monks were offered sanghic requisites; a feast was given to both monks and village people a week after the corpse was entombed. The total cost amounted to nearly five hundred kyats.⁶⁰

Of equal importance, there were people who became indebted because of the funeral rituals. The thet-káyits that tell of these events were fairly numerous. A town clerk, having to pay back a

debt incurred to him for funeral expense and being unable to liquidate it, mortgaged a paddy land. The cost of the funeral expense was only 22.6 kyats of silver.⁶¹ The funeral expense cost a woman from Le-zin 91.41 kyats for which she mortgaged her dry cultivation land.⁶² In one thet-káyit a man, who was badly in need of money to bury his elder sister, mortgaged over eight acres of paddy lands with an agreement that he would redeem them within one year or otherwise after ten years had elapsed.⁶³ At worst, some people even became kyuns for want of funeral expense.⁶⁴ As is known, this kind of rituals was unavoidable for a family. And therefore, we find in the thet-káyits people indebted more numerously for funeral rites than for other ceremonies.

Buddhism and the State

Among the Kòn-baung kings, Bádon (1782-1819) and Mìn-dòn (1855-1878) are worthy of note in manipulating the monastic order for use in secular affairs. They used different tactics and achieved different results. Of course, there had been similarities and differences as well in their basic concepts and implementation of reforms.

When King Bádon ascended the throne by means of revolution, the country was at its zenith. Soon after he became king, he was faced with a threat posed by some monks. They were disrobed and exiled to different forests.⁶⁵ This event seemed to remind the king to purify the monastic order. At that time, there were two sects in the order: the átin or one-shoulder robe, and the áyon or two-shoulder robe. King Bádon appointed a young Maung-daung

Hsáya-daw who was leader of the two-shoulder robe sect to be the supreme head of the monastic order (tha-thána-byú-hsáya-daw), and disrobed the leaders of the other sect, even though the latter exceeded the former.⁶⁶

King Bádon held the view that monks should be secluded from society, especially from politics. He was very much concerned about the order being contaminated with bad characters. Therefore, the monks who did not know the monastic disciplines thoroughly, and who were thought to have committed one of the four cardinal sins⁶⁷ were defrocked. During his reign, he forced many monks to return to the laity. Because of his heavy hand on the purification of the monastic order, there took place an armed rebellion of the monks. This time the king did not punish the leaders. Instead, he even appointed one of the leaders his advisor after they put off their monastic robes.⁶⁸ Moreover, when the country's socio-economic conditions had deteriorated nearly to a stage of total collapse, he gave up all his religious reforms⁶⁹ because he needed the assistance of the monks to maintain law and order in the country. Since there had been no popular revolt or peasant uprisings in the time of great hardship during the years 1802-1812, we can say that the king received the cooperation of the monastic order.

King Mìn-dòn had certainly learned lessons about how his great-grandfather had attempted to purify the monastic order and used it to maintain peace and stability when the country fell into chaos. Like King Bádon, Mìn-dòn also came to power by means of revolution. At that time Burma had lost the war with the British a

second time. The richest region of lower Burma together with its access to the outside world was ceded to the British. King Mìn-dòn's Burma was, therefore, a small and landlocked country. The king well knew that he needed the help of the monks so that he could reorganize the society in order at least to withstand further British aggression. Unlike his great-grandfather, he did not want the order totally secluded from society. He cleverly politicized it, granting powers to check and supervise the provincial officials and to reorganize the society that was on the brink of collapse after having lost the war and territories to the British. And thus, the monks became involved in secular affairs more deeply than ever before.

Their involvement was in two forms, individually and institutionally. First of all I shall deal with the involvement of the monastic institution in the administration. King Mìn-dòn, who wanted to introduce some reforms, needed much help from the monastic order. The king, therefore, supported the monks with monthly dry rations. Reciprocally, the king received the support and assistance of the order. Of course, the support of the monks meant the support of the people.

During the time of King Mìn-dòn and Thi-bàw, the officers in the districts were to execute the administrative and judicial matters in conformity with the consent of the chief monks, the gàing-oks and the gàing-dauks. The monasteries were rather like administrative offices because the local and provincial chiefs came to these places to receive instructions from, and to report matters to, the hsáya-daws (the gàing-oks and gàing-dauks). The monasteries were also used as

a court house where civil--mostly inheritance--cases were heard and settled. In several cases, monks are found involved either as judges⁷⁰ or as supervisors.⁷¹ People rather liked to seek settlement by the monks; they trusted the monks rather than the professional judges. Moreover, no fee or bribe was needed when the case was heard and decided by a monk.

King Mìn-dòn organized an intelligence corps called áhtauk-taw, which consisted of people from various status groups including some hsáya-daws or monks. The king granted these monks royal seals or sealed writing pads so that they could communicate directly with the king.⁷² It is thought that some monks were sent to peripheral areas, such as the Shan states, the Yàw province, and so forth. Many ex-monks were also recruited into this intelligence corps.⁷³

King Thi-bàw sought more assistance of the monks since he was a very weak king. He appointed more hsáya-daws and granted them seals to communicate with him. Some were relied upon for information about the officials, political conditions, and so forth, that could harm the central administration. When a rebellion took place in the southern Shan state in 1884, the commander of the government forces managed to get a secret report about the strength of the rebels from a monk.

When King Min-don introduced the tháthá-mei-dá or household tax, abolishing the old system that benefited the corrupt officials to the detriment of the people, monks became powerful--more powerful than ever before because the king vested them with powers to decide all tax-related matters. Under this new system, officials were

forbidden to demand extra imposts from the people. On the other hand, people could at any time meet the hsáya-daws to tell their grievances, if any, caused by the officials. The hsáya-daws reported the corrupt officials to the Hlut-taw or the king.

Regarding the thatha-mei-da taxation, every ten-household unit was assessed one hundred kyats per annum since 1866. It did not necessarily mean that every household had to pay ten kyats equally. According to each household's economic condition, assessment was made among them by themselves. Some households paid less than average, and some, more than the average. Apart from tháthá-mei-dá tax, no other imposts were exacted from the people. Ninety percent of the tháthá-mei-dá tax collected was remitted to the royal treasury; 10 percent was retained by the village headmen as their emolument. As for the officials, they were paid fixed salaries after the abolition of an appanage system; they also could not impose extra taxes and contributions on the people. Because of the tháthá-mei-dá system, the royal treasury received more revenues. Extortion was not as rampant as before.

There were people who were granted tax-exemptions. They were the religious kyuns and the dok-hkí-tás, comprising the destitute, the disabled, the aged widows and widowers, etc. Insofar as the dok-hkí-tás are concerned, it was the hsáya-daws who decided the matter. In other words, who should be exempted from tháthá-mei-dá taxation was decided by the hsáya-daws. From the administrative point of view, the hsáya-daws were lenient; they used to recommend as many dok-hkí-tás as possible for tax-exemption. The officials

could not intervene, but they used to supplicate the hsáya-daws not to recommend all people who wanted to be dok-hkí-tás or to reconsider the list of grantees submitted to the Hlut-taw.⁷⁴ For example, the hsáya-daws of Myei-dù and Di-pè-yìn townships gave a list of people to be exempted from taxation. (See Table 16.)

Table 16

Tax Exempted People From Myei-dù and Di-pè-yìn

No.	Town/Village	No. of people exempted
1	Di-pè-yìn	371
2	Myei-dù	63
3	Shwei-kyin	45
4	Six gum-producing villages	15
5	Parents of the <u>hsáya-daws</u>	20

How many dok-hkí-tás there were in the country can not be known since tax rolls are not available. But we have some documents that reveal the number of people exempted from tax in Tu-màung village tract. In 1862, Tu-màung village had 248 households of which sixty-four households were exempted from tháthá-mei-dá tax for being dok-hkí-tás or parents of the hsáya-daws. (See Table 17.) During the early years of its introduction, the tháthá-mei-dá taxation was lenient; a household was assessed between one and five kyats, based on its economic conditions. After 1866--the year in which political turmoil came about due to the rebellion of some princes--King Mìn-dòn

raised the tháthá-mei-dá taxation to ten kyats; many people suffered greatly. A discussion about this tax raise will be made in the following chapter.

Table 17
Tax-payable and Tax-exempted Households
in Tu-maung Circle in 1862

Village	No. of households	Households exempted	Tax Collected	Average per household
Tu-maung	248	64	454.5	2.47
In-páhtò	103	27	175	2.3
Bok	76	5	161	2.27
Hná-bè-aing	51	11	101.5	2.54
Mo-taung	28	2	30	1.15

Source: MUHC (Tu-maung), 20 August 1862.

Thi-bàw's reign was very weak and fragile; most of his officials were corrupt. Moreover, potential threats to the Burmese throne were both within and without. When, therefore, King Thi-bàw felt insecure and isolated, he naturally relied more upon the monastic order. During King Mìn-dòn's reign, there was a supreme head of the order (Tha-thána-baing) and eight hsáya-daws in the Thudhamma Council. To help assist them in the ecclesiastical and other secular affairs, especially the local administrative matters, the king appointed fifty-one provincial-, district-, and township-level hsáya-daws known as the gàing-oks and the gàing-dauks.⁷⁵ These hsáya-daws played a

pivotal role between the tha-thána-baing and the local monks, between the Hlut-taw and the provincial officers, and between the officers and the people. On the other hand, they were instructed by the Tha-thána-baing and the Thudhamma Council not to be involved in the secular affairs to the detriment of their monastic vows. In the time of King Thi-bàw, the number of the Thudhamma Council was extended from eight to twelve.⁷⁶ In the later part of his reign King Thi-bàw greatly honored in his later part of the reign eighty-one monks to be hsáya-daws of various districts, conferring them with titles and seals.⁷⁷ It was supposedly because he saw an imminent danger to his throne--the danger of British imperialism.

Some monks became deeply involved in secular affairs; some served as co-administrators, so to speak, in the provinces after having been vested with powers by the kings to supervise the officials in dealing with matters related to revenue collection and judiciary; some monks became corrupt. The betrayal from strict observance of the monastic vows seemed to be much more prevalent in the time of King Thi-bàw because the king was very weak and inefficient, and the officials were very corrupt. There were monks who acquired precious metals, such as gold, silver, jewelry, etc. and currencies that they were forbidden to possess by the monastic rules. Of course, such cases were not unknown in previous reigns. A Sálin Hsáya-daw, one of the twelve members of the Thudhamma Council during the time of King Bádon (1782-1819) ridicules in his Payeik-kyi Neik-thaya (Paritta Sutta with Burmese translation, a collection of prayers used to ward off evils) the monks for acquiring money,

practicing alchemy, and for possessing economic means, such as lands, vehicles, draft cattle, boats, etc.⁷⁸ Although we do not have ample evidence, we can infer the possibilities of corruption among the monks in King Thi-bàw's time on the grounds that they were very influential in the administration, that they received monthly subsistence allowance apart from other donations of the people, and that they were deeply involved in nonreligious affairs.

In 1883, all provincial officials had to submit a written statement to their hsáya-daws (the gàing-oks and gàing-dauks) stating that they would obey the admonitions of the hsáya-daws appointed by the Tha-thána-baing, and that they would execute the orders and instructions of the hsáya-daws.⁷⁹ There were also statements made by the hsáya-daws to the Tha-thána-baing that they would insist on all the monks in their districts abiding by the monastic rules, that they would admonish the officials and the people not to do wrong deeds, and that they would report to the Tha-thána-baing about the officials who did not obey their admonitions.⁸⁰

Evidence about whether or not the monks were endowed with land at the time they were ordained has not yet been found. However, it seems to be customary for parents and relatives to give gifts to the children at the novitiation ceremony. According to Burmese customary law, such gifts could not be taken back. Nor was it included in the list of family property to be divided among the heirs when the parents died. So, some monks could own lands either by receiving them as gifts at the novitiation ceremony, or by inheritance. Such lands privately owned by monks were not

considered as religious lands; they were liable to taxation. When the owner monks died, their lands were inherited by their relatives. According to monastic rules, monks are bound to give all their personal properties away before they died. Usually their relatives got the monk's properties that did not belong to the monastic institution.⁸¹

For a monk, possession of the economic means, precious metals, etc. are against the monastic vows. There were some monks who did not strictly observe the monastic vows. Land alienation between the monks and the laymen was not rare in the Kòn-baung period. Most strikingly, the monks who sold or mortgaged their lands were called "hkin-gyìs" (lit. great masters) in the Taung-dwìn-gyì and Mìn-bù districts.⁸² To the best of my knowledge, King Bádon coined this word, presumably because the monks were not recluses and they were in many respects involved in secular affairs.⁸³ We do not know what compelled the monks to sell or mortgage their lands. Probably they needed money to help their parents or relatives who sometimes urgently needed to pay debts or taxes. A young monk from Myìn-mu had once attempted to get help from King Thi-bàw for the settlement of his parents' pressing debt.⁸⁴ One hkin-gyì of Le-gaìng mortgaged his land for relatives.⁸⁵ People used to sell or mortgage their ancestral land when it could not be divided among them. Such cases were very common. In one thet-káyit three brothers, among whom one was a novice, mortgaged their ancestral land.⁸⁶ These events suggest that there were some monks who owned lands and who did not abide by the sanghic rules.

Like laymen, some monks did money-lending even though they were forbidden by their rules. One document reveals that a monk possessed some amount of wealth. When he died, he left behind (1) three gold rings weighing $1/4$ kyat each, (2) three oxen, (3) two hundred baskets of paddy, (4) forty-eight baskets of pressed sessamum, and (5) money-lending thet-káyits the total value of which amounted to seven hundred kyats.⁸⁷ We do not know whether or not these loans were made on interest. So far no document that reveals that monks lent out loans on interest has fallen into our hand. But, we do have a thet-káyit that reveals that a husband and wife, being pressed to pay back a debt, sold their son to a monk to be his pupil-slave (an-tei-wa-thí-ká-da-thá). It reads:

On the 7th waning day of the month, Wa-gaung, year 1234 B.E., Maung Pyán and wife, Shin Shwei Mí of Ywa-thit village supplicate Û Nya Ná, the abbot of the Tha-zi monastery: We, your Reverend's disciples are very poor and being pressed to repay a debt. Please give us a bondage loan of 25 kyats silver coins for which we shall pledge our son, Ngá Bò Aung, to be your pupil-slave. Please employ and teach him as well. If our son does not obey your instructions or if he absconds, we shall pay back the bondage loan.

When it is supplicated to Û Nya Ná, the abbot of the Tha-zi monastery, Ngá Htun, a lay man who attends on Û Nya Ná, gives 25 kyat coins to Maung Pyán and Shin Shwei Mí on behalf of his master, as a bondage loan of Ngá Bò Aung. It is agreed that neither Maung Pyán and Shin Shwei Mí nor any one of their family members shall interfere in the relations between the abbot, Û Nya Ná and his pupil-slave, Ngá Bò Aung. If there take place a lawsuit over Ngá Bò Aung on account of an interference, Maung Pyán and Shin Shwei Mí shall be obliged to pay court fees and other expenses incurred to the master.

When the thet-káyit that buys Ngá Bò Aung as a pupil-slave, giving 25 kyat silver coins through Ngá Htun, is made, the witnesses are Û Eik, the builder of a pagoda; Û Yei Po; and Û Nyo Yaung. The draftsman and writer is Û Shwei Thi, the clerk to a minister.⁸⁸

In this case, the abbot did not touch the money. But, since he made a bondage loan he violated the monastic vows, because it was a secular practice. As for a kyun, he would enjoy a better life in the monastery; he could have a chance to learn at least rudiments of education.

On the other hand, it can be said that some monks got infested with secular practices--the practice of money-lending and acquiring of economic means--that were forbidden by the monastic rules. Because of the violations of these laws, the supreme head of the order, the Tha-thána-baing and the Thudhamma hsáya-daws issued in 1884 a nine-point supplementary rule for monks to comply with. Articles Two and Four are related to what we have already discussed. These two articles forbade the monks to borrow or to lend money on interest or with surety of land or kyun.⁸⁹ So, we can infer that the money-lending among the monks would have been fairly prevalent, especially during the reigns of Mìn-dòn and Thi-bàw.

Despite the fact that monks were to some extent lax in observing the monastic vows because of their involvements in secular affairs, on the whole, the people could enjoy benefits in many respects. Extortions were no more rampant than before, since the hsaya-daws were vested with powers to supervise the officials in the provincial areas. People could supplicate the hsáya-daws with grievances, if any, caused by the corrupt officials. The hsáya-daws then would reprove these officials. If the latter did wrong again, the former would report to the Hlut-taw or the king through the Thudhamma hsáya-daws. Moreover, tax remission could also be expected through

the media of the monks when a crop failure was due to drought, pestilence, flood, etc. Most importantly, people could go to monasteries to seek the monk's arbitration over their disputes without having to pay bribes.

Because of the intercession of the monks, the rebels who escaped to British Burma after an abortive coup of the Myin-gùn and Myin-hkon-daing princes in 1866, were granted amnesty by King Mìn-dòn in 1868.⁹⁰ Their properties, confiscated by the state, were returned to them. The king not only restored their former rights but also exempted them from taxation for four years. During this period, creditors were barred from suing the returnees for recovery of old debts.

The greatest contribution ever given to the society by the monks was education. Because of this contribution, monks were greatly revered and deeply respected by the people. J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, the British colonial administrators, therefore, remark:

Thus the pongyi [monks] was a power in the Government of the country, a power constituted and fostered so as to place a salutary check on the tyranny and oppression of officials on the one hand, and to reconcile the people to the existing form of government on the other.⁹¹

It can be speculated that the history of Burma would have been different if the monks were exclusively recluses. There would have been no check on tyranny and maladministration, and illiteracy would have prevailed in Burma.

NOTES

¹David E. Pfanner, "The Buddhist Monks in Rural Burmese Society" in Manning Nash and others, Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism (New Haven: Yale University, Southeast Asian Studies, Cultural Report Series No. 13, 1966), p. 83. J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 1-2.

²Maung-daung Hsáya-daw, Ámei-daw Hpyei, pp. 255-56.

³J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 1, vol. 2: 2.

⁴Ámei-daw-baung Ú-pádei-daw-baung (A Collection of the Royal Orders and Regulations), palm leaf MS, Mon-daing-bin village monastery Collection (hereafter MDBC), ki obverse, hki reverse, and ga obverse and reverse; U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 4:223-24; J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 4.

⁵Supplication of the Myei-dù regional military officer to the gaing-ok hsáya-daw, 8 December 1881, YTC, no. 29 (hka); U Tin, Ok-chok-pon, 4:219-221.

⁶J. G. Scott, Burma: A Hand Book, pp. 382-83; J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 4.

⁷Párabaik MS, Kyùn-hlá U Kyáw Shin Collection (hereafter KSC), 28 November 1884.

⁸Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hlutdaw, pp. 99-100.

⁹MUHC (Tu-maung), 2 May 1856.

¹⁰Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hlutdaw, pp. 167-169.

¹¹Maung-daung Hsáya-daw, Ámei-daw Hpyei, 110, 457, and 462; also see Epistles of the Hsáya-daws of the Di-pè-yin district, n.d., MADC, hkaw obverse and hka reverse.

¹²U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet, 3:412-13; and see U Tin, Ok-chok-pon, 4:221.

¹³Rev. Father Sangermano, Burmese Empire, pp. 124-25.

¹⁴LZC, 5 July 1835.

¹⁵NTC, 25 April 1813; LZC, 18 June 1842.

- ¹⁶KSC, 13 July 1809.
- ¹⁷TGC, 4 June 1858.
- ¹⁸I could pick out seventy-five kyaung-dágas from a little over six hundred thet-káyits of various sources, covering a period from 1780 to 1885.
- ¹⁹YTC, 26 May 1838.
- ²⁰WBC, 23 February 1856.
- ²¹Eighty-eight hpáyà-dágas are found from over six hundred thet-káyits of various sources.
- ²²TTTC, 17 March 1830.
- ²³KSC, 13 July 1809.
- ²⁴MNC, 22 March 1817; LZC, 30 June 1826.
- ²⁵WBC, 31 January 1845.
- ²⁶Settlement of land dispute, párábaik MS, Author's Collection, 20 May 1862.
- ²⁷LZC, 21 June 1831.
- ²⁸WBC, 29 November 1845.
- ²⁹KLC, 13 August 1847.
- ³⁰TTTC, 15 October 1828.
- ³¹MNC, 13 April 1829.
- ³²LZC, 26 June 1827; WBC, 11 March 1861.
- ³³KSC, 5 May 1810; TTTC, 15 June 1819.
- ³⁴LZC, 2 December 1808.
- ³⁵BGC, 14 November 1810; palm leaf MS, Mon-yweì Collection (hereafter MYC), 5 May 1879.
- ³⁶Párábaik MS, Ámyín Collection (hereafter AMC), 5 April 1797.
- ³⁷YTC, 11 December 1827.
- ³⁸LZC, 25 November 1824.

- ³⁹MUHC (lon-daw), 11 February 1882.
- ⁴⁰Maung-daung hsaya-daw, Ámei-daw Hpyei, pp. 122-30.
- ⁴¹U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 3:134; Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hlutdaw, pp. 109-112.
- ⁴²YTC, 17 August 1878.
- ⁴³TGC, 13 July 1850.
- ⁴⁴YTC, 26 May 1838.
- ⁴⁵Heinz Berchert, "Sangha, State, Society, 'Nation': Persistence of Traditions in 'Post-Traditional' Buddhist Societies" in S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., Post-Traditional Societies (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972), p. 87.
- ⁴⁶TTTC, 15 October 1828; also see Shwe Yoe (Sir George Scott), The Burman, His Life and Notions (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1963), pp. 130-31.
- ⁴⁷LZC, 10 May 1807, 26 June 1827; WBC, 11 March 1861.
- ⁴⁸SKC, 25 May 1791, MNC, 4 April 1828, TTTC, 17 March 1830, MNC, 9 July 1834.
- ⁴⁹MNC, 4 April 1828.
- ⁵⁰LZC, 16 April 1873.
- ⁵¹STC, 16 March 1866.
- ⁵²LZC, 14 June 1816.
- ⁵³WBC, 15 July 1883.
- ⁵⁴NTC, 27 June 1833.
- ⁵⁵LZC, 15 June 1861.
- ⁵⁶TGC, 14 November 1850.
- ⁵⁷See King Badon's edicts dated 10 April 1807, 8 July 1807, 28 July 1807, and 29 July 1807 in Than Tun, ed., ROB 6:414, 438, 450, 451.
- ⁵⁸LZC, 30 January 1837.
- ⁵⁹*Ibid.*, n.d.

- ⁶⁰WBC, 16 January 1879.
- ⁶¹RUCL, No. 151107, 3 June 1809.
- ⁶²LZC, 25 November 1824.
- ⁶³RUCL, No. 178438, 28 December 1856.
- ⁶⁴LZC, 13 February 1855.
- ⁶⁵Than Tun, ed., ROB, 4:233.
- ⁶⁶Mè-htì Hsaya-daw, Wun-thá Di-páni (Rangoon: Han-tha-wádi Press, 1966), p. 158; E. Michael Mendelson, Sangha and State in Burma: A Study of Monastic Sectarianism and Leadership (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 58-65.
- ⁶⁷Killing or directly causing death; theft; fornication and a vainglorious false profession of having attained the status of a Rahat. John Nisbet, Burma Under British Rule, 2: 131.
- ⁶⁸U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 3: 121-22.
- ⁶⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 122-25.
- ⁷⁰YTC, 5 April 1870.
- ⁷¹WBC, 21 August 1869, 15 January 1876.
- ⁷²U Tin, Ok-chok-pon, 4:222-24, J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 2.
- ⁷³*Ibid.*, 3: 77.
- ⁷⁴MDBC, pp. ga reverse and obverse.
- ⁷⁵U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 3: 204-207.
- ⁷⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 489-90; Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hludaw, pp. 8-9.
- ⁷⁷U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet, 3: 657-63.
- ⁷⁸Sálin Hsáya-daw, Páyeik-kyì, p. 285.
- ⁷⁹YTC, No. 31 (hka), 13 June 1883.
- ⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 17 June 1883.
- ⁸¹Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hludaw, pp. 109-112.

- ⁸²LPC, 4 May 1808; MNC, 28 April 1823.
- ⁸³Than Tun, ROB 5:515, 729, 755.
- ⁸⁴U Maung Maung Tin, Shwei-nàn-thòn, pp. 165-66.
- ⁸⁵MNC, 14 March 1827.
- ⁸⁶KSC, 25 May 1791.
- ⁸⁷Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hludaw, pp. 109-112.
- ⁸⁸NLC, No. 1513.
- ⁸⁹Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hludaw, p. 238.
- ⁹⁰See King Mìn-dòn's edicts, 18 January 1868, 19 January 1868, and "Instructions of the Thudhamma Hsáya-daws to the Gaìng-oks and the Gaìng-dauks", n.d., MADC, p. hkaw obverse and reverse.
- ⁹¹J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 2.

CHAPTER 6

MONEY-LENDING AND THE COMMON PEOPLE

The Impact of War on Money-Lending and Debt

As a Burmese saying goes, "though one's duration of life may not be 100 years, one is bound to meet 100 troubles."¹ The people of the later Kòn-baung period often faced more hard times posed by internal and external wars, or by natural calamities, that depleted or ruined the country's economy and its growth, and at times, even drove the people into destitution. The money-lending thet-káyits throw light on the socio-economic conditions of the people. A student can find in them the causes why and how people became indebted, because the borrowers or the mortgagors stated the socio-economic problems that compelled them to seek loans.

The socio-economic deterioration of the later Kòn-baung period originated in the reign of King Bádón, especially during the years 1800-1819. During this period, there were many natural disasters--droughts, fires, floods, and the like--that ruined the subsistence economy and trade.² When the government demanded corvee labor and cash contributions, the conditions of the country went from bad to worse.³ So, it is not surprising to find that during those years, robbery, theft, corruption, and extortion were rampant in the

country.⁴ People in some districts deserted their villages.⁵ Indeed, it was a period of much social unrest.

When King Ságaing, popularly known as Bágyi-daw, came to the throne in 1819, he issued a royal proclamation suspending the collection of tolls and taxes for three years, with the aim of recovering an economy that was in shambles.⁶ His efforts failed when the first Anglo-Burmese war broke out in 1824 before the country's economy could recover. As is well known, Burma fought a total of three wars with the British in the later Kòn-baung period. The first war ended with the Yan-dábo Treaty in 1826, and two littoral provinces of Rakhine and Tenasserim were ceded to the British. At the end of the second Anglo-Burmese war in 1853, lower Burma fell to the British; and finally Burma lost its independence after the third war in 1886.

The first Anglo-Burmese war pauperized the government and the people as well. When war broke out, people were bound to supply soldiers and cash contributions to the government.⁷ Poor people had to seek loans to hire soldiers or to pay contributions imposed on them. One can find examples in the thet-káyits. One Ngá Aung Bàn, the headman of Shaw-byu-bin village,⁸ having to take part in the Kàw-tha-li column dispatched to Manipur in 1824, borrowed one viss of silver with a promise to pay back paddy crop at the rate of eight baskets per one kyat.⁹ However, he could not comply with his own terms agreed upon for a period of a decade.¹⁰ At Yei-ù, where the Kàw-tha-li column encamped for some days to recruit new troops,

many poor people mortgaged their lands or sold their children for payment of war funds.¹¹

In Le-zin village, a woman by the name of Shin Kùn became indebted to pay an impost for funding the troops (záyeik-mìn-hkìn--lit. an expense of a journey on crown duty) and to pay the burial expense of her family member. Therefore, she mortgaged her millet-sown land on 25 November 1824 for a sum of 288 kyat ywet-ni silver. It is told that the burial expense cost her 91 kyats 4 mùs 4 ywèis in ywet-ni silver. The impost was 61 kyats 5 mùs.¹² It seems that she had to hire a soldier for her quota.

The Wei-tha-li column marched to Bengal via Rakhine. A man from Kyauk-ka village in Pauk township of the Yàw province mortgaged a plot of land in order to support this column.¹³ When the British intruding forces landed at Rangoon, all Burmese forces were quickly moved to this front. A Ngá San Wá, an áthi, being bound to render military service hired a man by mortgaging his land.¹⁴ There was also a man, who, being unable to pay a cash contribution, became a sharecropper of a person who paid for him. His sharecropping thet-káyit reads:

Thet-kayit 1186, Taw-thálin waning 12. Maung Yè and wife said: We cannot afford to pay 12 kyats 2 mats exacted for the recruits, the garrison [of Rangoon] and the lower riverine column. Please pay for us 12 kyats 2 mats of the 20 kyat-kè silver, and we shall work as sharecroppers with our water buffaloes and seeds, and pay one-half of the produce from both dry and wet cultivations, at your haystack.¹⁵

The aftermath of the war therefore saw two salient phenomena: the loss of the national prestige, and the trouble of people under

severe exactions. The people from the riverine districts, Seven-hill district, and from lower Burma were much more vulnerable to exactions for payment of war indemnity. It was because these regions were more prosperous in agriculture and trade than other hinterland areas.

The royal treasury was nearly empty after the first payment of the war indemnity. For the payment of the second installment, the government exacted 508,820 kyats 1 mù 1 pè ywet-ni silver (297,150.96 oz) and 1,010 kyats 3 mùs 2 yweìs (590.02 oz) weight of pure gold from the people of the lower riverine districts below Pagan down to Prome, from the Seven-hill district, and from the townships of Taung-ngu, Sit-taung, Shwei-kyin, and Kyauk-maw. (See Table 18.)

When the government had to pay the third installment, it was again exacted from the people of the delta region below Prome, and from the townships of Taung-ngu, Sit-taung, Shwei-kyin, and Kyauk-maw cash contributions amounting to 434,042 kyats 1 pè (253,480.57 oz) weight of purified silver called pwín-kwe (lit. flowery markless silver) and 160 kyats 1 mù 1 pè (98.78 oz) weight of pure gold valued at 2789 kyats 9 mus 1 pè. The total value in pwín-kwe silver amounted to 436,832 kyats.¹⁶ (See Table 19.)

For payment of the fourth installment, the government squeezed the people from all riverine districts, who paid a total amount of 533,821 kyats 3 mùs of pwín-kwe silver.¹⁷ Contributions were demanded even of government officials. It is told that a privy councillor's contribution was 1800 kyats of silver.¹⁸ We do not have statistics

Table 18

Cash Contribution of the People for Payment of the
Second Installment of the War Indemnity That
Was Paid on 21 September 1826

Type of Money	<u>kyat</u>	Weight <u>mù</u>	<u>pè</u>	<u>Ywet-ni</u> <u>kyat</u>	Equivalent <u>mù</u>	<u>pè</u>
One <u>kyat-tet-daing</u>	153,698	3	1	160,967	9	1
5,912 <u>Sicca Rupees</u>	2,184	0	0	2,402	4	0
46,693 Madras <u>Rupees</u>	32,882	2	1	36,170	4	1
One <u>kyat-kè</u>	123,313	7	1	120,306	0	*1
Two <u>mat-kè</u>	76,263	7	1	72,632	1	1
Three <u>mat-kè</u>	13,963	0	0	12,995	6	**1
Red gold (pure)	1,010	3	0	20,206	2	1

*The figure should be 112,103 kyats 4 mùs, because the ywet-ni equivalents of 123,313 kyats 7 mùs 1 pè of the one-kyat-kè are $123,313.75 \times 100/100 + 10 = 112103.4$

**The figure should be 12,988 kyats 8 mùs 6 ywèis because the ywet-ni equivalents of kyats 13,963 of the three mat-kè are $13,963 \times 100/100 + 7.5 = 12,988$ kyats 8 mù and 6 ywèi.

Source: Yan-dábo.

Table 19

Cash Contribution of the People for Payment of the
Third Installment of the War Indemnity That Was
Paid on 8 August 1828

Type of Money	<u>kyat</u>	Weight <u>mù</u>	<u>pè</u>	<u>Pwín-kwe</u> <u>kyat</u>	Equivalent <u>mù</u>	<u>pè</u>
<u>Pwín-kwe</u>	274,055	7	1	274,055	7	1
<u>Ywet-ni</u>	77,876	5	1	70,596	9	0
One <u>mat-kè</u>	33,241	4	0	29,682	4	0
Five <u>mù-kè</u>	11,700	0	0	10,130	0	0
Red gold	151	2	1*	2,789	9	1

*The total weight of gold given in the text is 169 kyats 1 mù 1 pè. But, since they were the grand total of the four different types of debased gold, I have figured out the weight of red gold and have given it here.

concerning the total contributions of government officials. It is assumed that the people might have contributed at least one-fifth of the total payment of the war indemnity. (See Table 20.) Of course, the exactions might be at least double this amount. According to Major Burney, the first British Resident in Burma after the war,

scarcely a day passes in which he [Mr. Marowly, a Denmark merchant who was at that time in Prome for trade] does not see 10 or 12 of the poor inhabitants tied up and threatened until they make some payment, and that of the money thus collected here, a fourth is taken by the petty officers and only a half of the remainder is sent to Rangoon for us, the other half being always sent up to the Queen.¹⁹

There is a bondage thet-káyit believed to be related to an exaction for payment of war indemnity. A Ngá Shwei Tok, husband of Mí Mìn Yan of Le-zin village, sold himself to be a kyun for a sum of 43 kyats 3 mats on 12 June 1826 to pay an impost to the crown (nwei-daw-hset-yan).²⁰ As had been the case at the outbreak of the war, many people became indebted and some at worst fell into kyunship after the Treaty of Yan-dábo. One can compare the conditions of Burma after the first Anglo-Burmese war to that of China after the Opium Wars, with an increase in robbery and crime. A gang of robbers attacked an Armenian merchant near Pagan in April 1831, crying out "You Kalas²¹ have forced us to pay plenty of money, we will now retake some of it."²²

It seemed that the people from Ìn-lèi region were also very much vulnerable to exactions because we find several thet-káyits of money loans taken by the village headman and the people in order to pay imposts. The headman alone took loans four times for payments of imposts: 50 kyats on 18 September 1828;²³ 75 kyats on 15 October

Table 20

Total Cash Contribution of the People for
Payment of the War Indemnity

No. From whom contributions were collected	Silver in weight		
	<u>kyat</u>	<u>mù</u>	<u>pè</u>
1 Cash contributions collected from the lower riverine districts below Pagan, from the Seven-hill district and from the townships of Taung-ngu, Sit-tàung, Shwei-kyin, and Kyauk-maw for the Second Installment (in <u>ywet-ni</u>)	159,026	4	0
2 Cash contributions collected from the Delta region below Prome, and from the townships of Taung-ngu, Sit-tàung, Shwei-kyin, and Kyauk-maw, for the Third Installment (in <u>pwin-kwe</u>)	384,465	0	1
3 Cash contributions collected from other riverine districts (in <u>pwin-kwe</u>)	533,821	3	0
4 Red gold collected from the districts of No. 1 and 2, amounting to 1161 <u>kyats</u> 5 <u>mùs</u> 1 <u>pè</u> (678.23 oz)	22,996	2	0

Source: Yan-dábo.

1828;²⁴ 35 kyats on 1 November 1828;²⁵ and 24 kyats on 15 December 1828.²⁶ And during 1826-1831 contributions were demanded of people as many as twenty-eight times. The borrowers mentioned the number of times in their money loan thet-káyits.²⁷ These exactions are believed to be related to the war indemnity.

The first Anglo-Burmese war certainly pauperized many people directly or indirectly. Because the war caused them to become indebted, their lands fell into the hands of money-lenders. Some peasant proprietors became sharecropping tenants, and tenants became kyuns. All of these problems increased Burmese distrust of foreigners.

The Second Anglo-Burmese war broke out in 1852 during the reign of King Págan. It did not, however, last as long as the first war because the Burmese troops could not match their enemies who were well-trained and armed with deadly modern weapons. Also, in the middle of the war a revolution broke out in the capital, headed by Prince Mìn-dòn and his brother Kánaung. Their revolution was successful and Mìn-dòn became king. No sooner had he become king than he declared a unilateral truce and sent a mission for peace talks with the British. This war also affected the people. A thet-káyit reveals that the headman of Kyauk-ka village in Pauk township took a loan to remit to the front,²⁸ where Burmese troops were engaged in fighting with the intruding enemy.

By the time Burma was facing the British invasion, Thailand attacked Keng-tung, a tributary state of Burma, in 1852. And so, some forces were sent to the southern Shan state to repulse the

Thais. The enemy retreated. However, they resumed their invasion in 1854. This time the enemy was defeated. Two commandants of Muang Nan and Muang Tai together with their troops were also captured alive.²⁹ There was a land mortgage thet-káyit related to this Thai invasion. A woman from Mon-ywa village mortgaged her dry cultivation land in order to support a soldier who was in Muang Nai with his unit dispatched to repulse the Thais.³⁰

Taxation and Indebtedness

One of the factors that caused the later Kon-baung people to be indebted was taxation. Customarily taxes were levied on the people; the main tax was the tithe of the produce. But later it was commuted with a fixed amount of cash called tháthá-mei-dá or household tax. From the time of King Badon until 1885, many thet-káyits refer to tax-related debts. We find in these thet-káyits not only the áthi people but also many village headmen as debtors. Of course, the headmen were not liable to taxation, but they were responsible for their villages. As far as we know, the majority of people could hardly pay taxes or imposts when they were levied during the growing season. In such cases, the headmen used to settle these problems by means of taking loans. Generally speaking, the amount of loan a headman took is assumed to be a partial amount of taxes payable to the crown by his village. A headman of Thei-li-gyaung village in Taung-dwin-gyi township mortgaged a plot of land in 1808 for a sum of 180 kyats to pay a tithe for his village and a debt.³¹ In Sálín township we find four headmen who took loans for payments of taxes by their villages: Má-ti village, fifty kyats;³² Pyá village,

thirty kyats;³³ Dwei village, thirty kyats;³⁴ and Thámàn-yìn village, fifty kyats.³⁵

It is said that when the tháthá-mei-dá tax was first levied, it was only one kyat per household. However, in practice, people had to pay more than that. For example, a record of Tu-màung village shows that a household had to pay at least 1.94 kyats on average, and some, more than three kyats. (See Table 21.)

Since there was no paid salary system, the surplus tax went into the pockets of the officials. In 1862, the people of Tu-màung village suffered economic hardship. They could not pay the taxes imposed on them. They therefore sent some village elders to the capital to borrow money from a royal secretary for payment of the tháthá-mei-dá tax. They took a loan of five hundred kyats with an agreement to pay one basket of paddy per one kyat as interest.³⁶

The thet-káyits also refer to many people who became indebted for payment of taxes. Some mortgaged or sold their lands,³⁷ and some, their family members.³⁸ When King Mìn-dòn raised the tháthá-mei-dá tax from one kyat to ten kyats per household in 1866, the rate of indebtedness soared in the 1860s. (See Figures 2 and 3.)

As has been noted in Chapter 1, there were villages that belonged to service groups. Occasionally the military servicemen were called out to perform night watch duty in the palace (eik-hpan-záung). While on duty at the capital, they were provided with paddy by the Hlut-taw. Their fellow villagers too raised a fund to support them. Every household had to contribute to this fund called eik-hpan-gyei. Some people were indebted to pay this

Table 21

Tháthá-mei-dá Tax Collected in Tu-maùng Village
in 1862

Ten-Household Leaders	No. of Households	Tax Collected	Average per Household
Ngá Yan Aung	14	47	3.35
Ngá Pwà	16	49	3.06
Ngá Pyù	13	31	2.38
Ngá Shwei Nge	11	31	2.82
Ngá Hmeì	11	25	2.27
Ngá Pyeí	14	39.5	2.07
Ngá Kàw Li	20	48	2.4
Ngá Shwei Ù	19	55	2.89
Ngá Myè	21	42	2.00
Ngá Yei	18	35	1.94
Ngá Hmeì	10	22	2.2
Ngá Aung	12	30	2.5

Source: YTC, 20 August 1862.

Figure 2

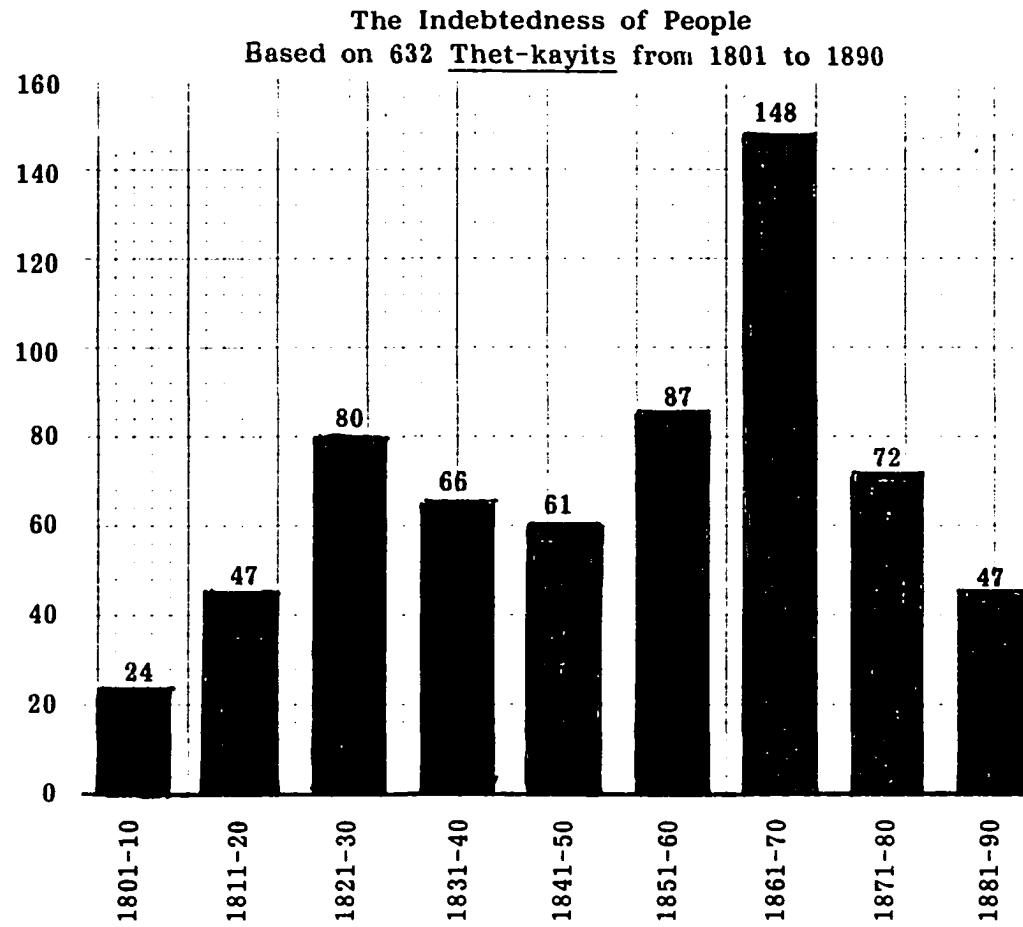
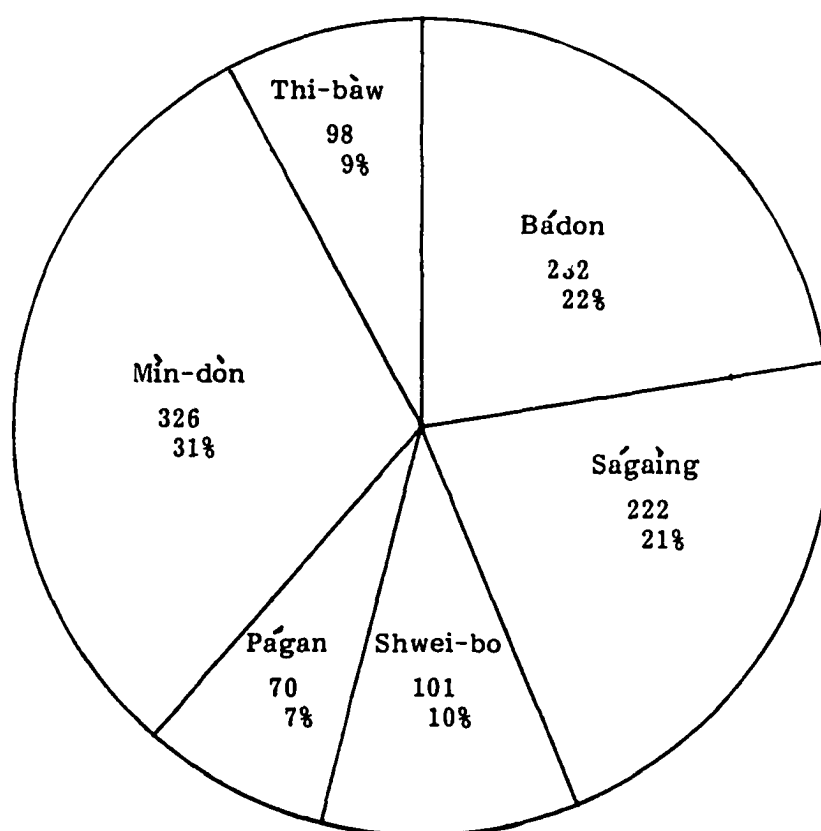


Figure 3

Distribution of 1049 Land Mortgage
Thet-kayits Under the Kòn-baung Kings,
1782-1885



contribution. We have three thet-káyits that refer to eik-hpan-gyèi: a man borrowed money on interest;³⁹ another man mortgaged his land;⁴⁰ and another man sold one family member to be a kyun.⁴¹ All these events came about in King Mìn-dòn's time. It suggests that the king's reforms did not go deep, or could not change a deeply rooted social system. Usury and human mortgage or the sale of kyuns still prevailed.

Economic Factors

Needless to say, the indebtedness of the people was related to the poor economy. But I am afraid that insofar as the assessment of the economy is concerned, it will be superficial since data regarding the national income, trade both domestic and foreign, labor force, revenues, and so forth are not available for the period under study. And so, what we mostly rely upon is the thet-káyits through which we investigate the society and its economic performances.

That people took loans to invest in business or to buy foodstuffs for immediate consumption is not rare. There were not many loan thet-káyits that debtors took for investment. The amount of loan was usually small. It suggests that the trade they conducted was also small in scale. For this purpose, some mortgaged their lands;⁴² some borrowed money on interest. It is not astonishing to find that some lost in trade. A land mortgage thet-káyit refers to a person who bought merchandise on credit and could not settle his debt.⁴³ A person sold his wife as a kyun to his creditor when he lost in a trade of cheroot wrapping leaves called thánat-hpet (Cordia myxa).⁴⁴

People engaged in trade were mostly from the riverine districts and from the Ìn-leì region. Of the many hundred thet-káyits, only fourteen are found directly related to trade. The borrowers pronounced that they took loans for investment in trade. But, since their cash loans were not large, one can surmise that the Kòn-baung people preferred the subsistence agrarian economy to trade. They seemed to be, in James C. Scott's words, "risk-averse."⁴⁵ The thet-káyits⁴⁶ that refer to trade are as follows:

<u>Location</u>	<u>No. of thet-káyits</u>
Ìn-leì (Southern Shan State)	4
Wùn-byeí (Myin-mu)	4
Amarapura	2
Sálin	2
Le-gaìng (Pwín-byu)	1
Sei-tok-táya	1

We do not find such thet-káyits in agricultural villages, like Byan-gyá, Kyauk-ka, Le-zin, Mon-yweì, and Nwà-hteìn, which were located away from the river routes.

Here I would like to put my emphasis on the Ìn-leì region. The people of this area were crown silver miners. There were also people who were engaged in silk weaving and in trade. Agriculture seemed not to be their major occupation because the practice of land mortgage was not common among them. And most strikingly, the practice of human mortgage or selling family members to be kyuns for want of money also did not prevail. Money-lending on interest was, on the other hand, very common. Many people stated that they took loans either for payment of taxes and imposts or for investment in trade. No debt-related lawsuits are so far found in this region. It suggests

that the economy of this region, when compared to that of lowland Burma, prospered to some extent. Because of the silk-weaving industries, trade of textile materials, like silk hanks,⁴⁷ cotton,⁴⁸ sley,⁴⁹ etc., and of clothing⁵⁰ prevailed. The thet-káyits also refer to some market towns, viz., `In-dein,⁵¹ Nàn-pan,⁵² Pàw-lámaw,⁵³ and Than-daung.⁵⁴ These towns were their trading centers. Moreover, they also came down to Pálek located in the vicinity of the royal capitals--Ava, Amarapura, and Mandalay--with their pack bullocks.⁵⁵

In central Burma, people were indebted for a variety of reasons. But, when we study the thet-káyits, it is found that the money-lending business boomed at the beginning of the growing season. It was not an accident. The debtors were mostly peasant farmers. They needed money at the beginning of the agricultural season to buy farm implements, seeds, draft cattle, and so forth. (See Figures 4 and 5.)

In some places where double cropping was practiced because of accessibility to irrigation, such as Sálín; or where non-agriculturists co-existed, such as Wùn-byeí; the distribution of loans are found concentrated not only in May and June, the months in which the growing season begins, but also in February and March, the months in which the agricultural season is over. During these months, country fairs or pagoda festivals were mostly held. Debt-related lawsuits that were suspended during the growing season were also resumed in these months. As for the local chiefs and headmen, they had to prepare to go to the capital to present tributes to the king in the New Year Beg-Pardon Day annually held in mid-April. And as

Figure 4
Distribution of 70 Loan Thet-kávits on Month-Basis
in Byan-gyá Village

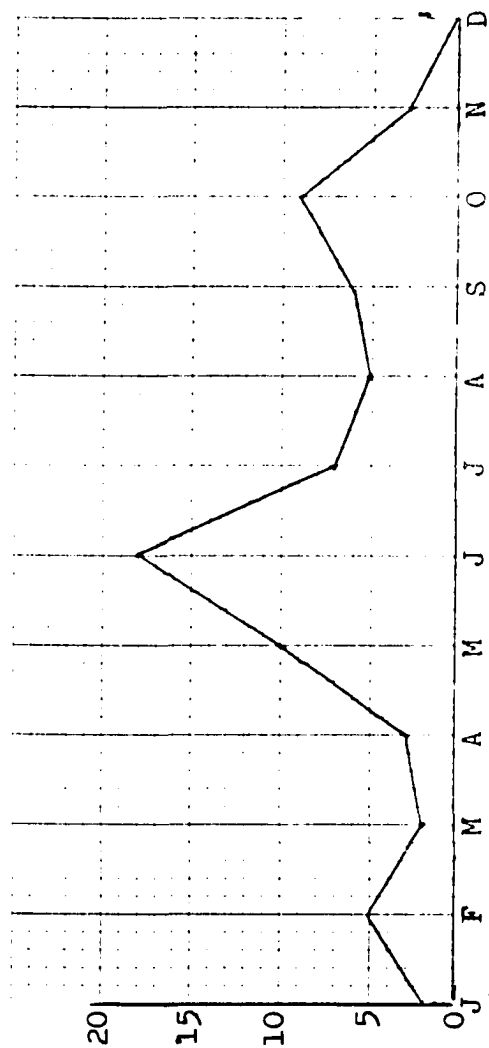
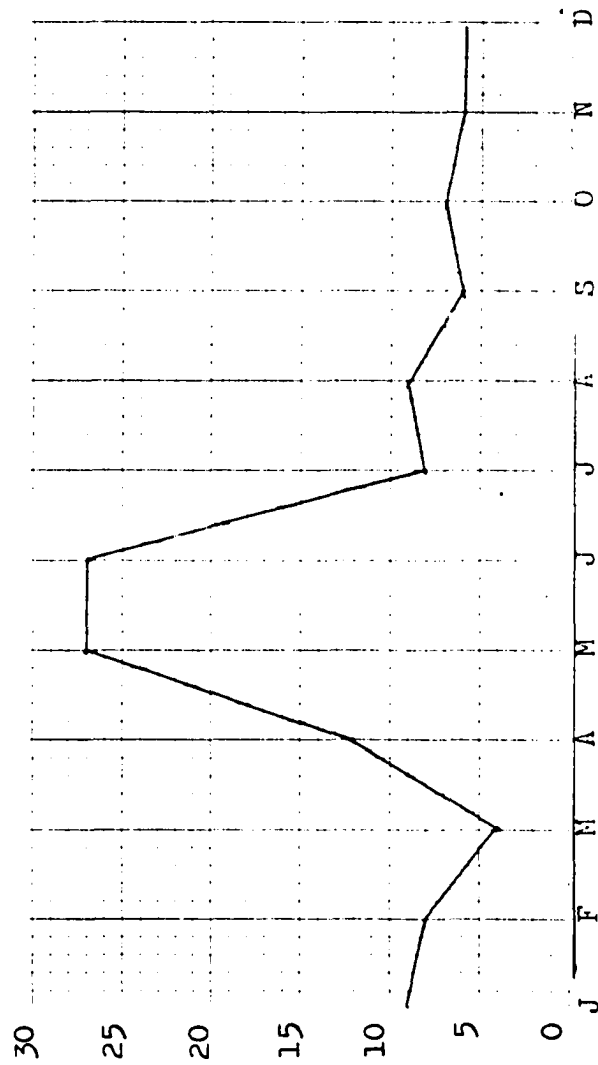


Figure 5
Distribution of 129 Loan Thet-kayits on Month-Basis
in Le-zin Village



for peasants in the irrigated areas, they grew early rain paddy in April. People therefore needed money to realize one of these demands. (See Figures 6 and 7.)

The other stray documents collected from the districts of Shwei-bo, Mon-ywa, Yaw, and In-lei also indicate that people were mostly indebted in summer. (See Figure 8.) Moreover, quite a number of thet-kayits also reveal that there were people entangled in a web of debts. They took cash or crop loans from the money-lenders again and again, pledging lands or labor or jewelry, or paying interest, until the total amount of the interest and the capital reached a ceiling beyond which the money-lenders could not lend any more. Some people were indebted because of the shortage of foodstuffs, especially paddy. In rural areas, varieties of crops were used as a medium of exchange. As a matter of fact, a paddy loan was regarded as a sort of money loan. The borrower was charged interest on it. The common interest rate was five mùs per ten kyats a month, or half amount of the paddy loan to be paid at the next harvest.⁵⁶

We find in a money-lender's memo book that a family took loans both in cash and crops seventeen times. This family also took loans from another money-lender. As far as we know, their indebtedness was caused by three factors: immediate need of paddy for consumption; for a settlement of other pressing debt; and other social factors. Since many a debtor faced similar situations, I have prepared a chronological table of loans taken by this family during the years 1808-1829. (See Table 22.)

Figure 6
Distribution of 108 Loan Thet-kayits on Month-Basis
in Le-gaing and Sálín

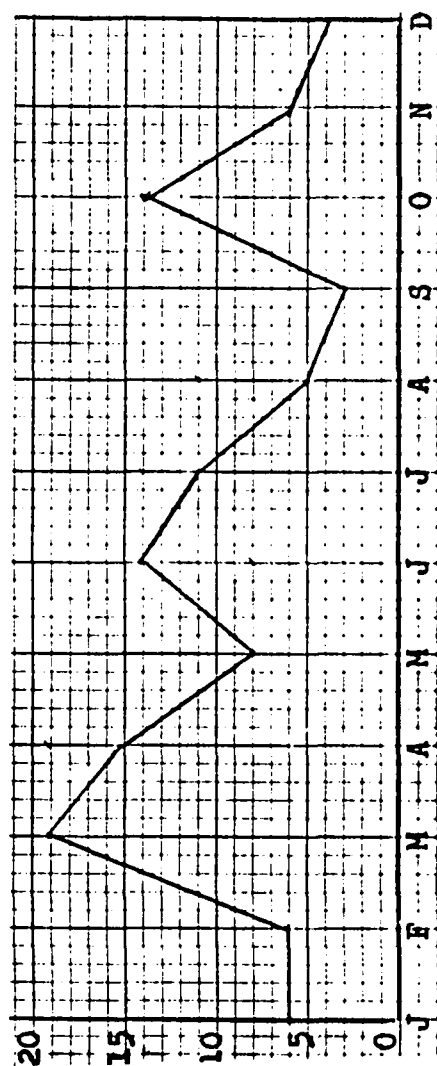


Figure 7
Distribution of 171 Loan Thet-kayits on Month-Basis
in Wun-byef Village

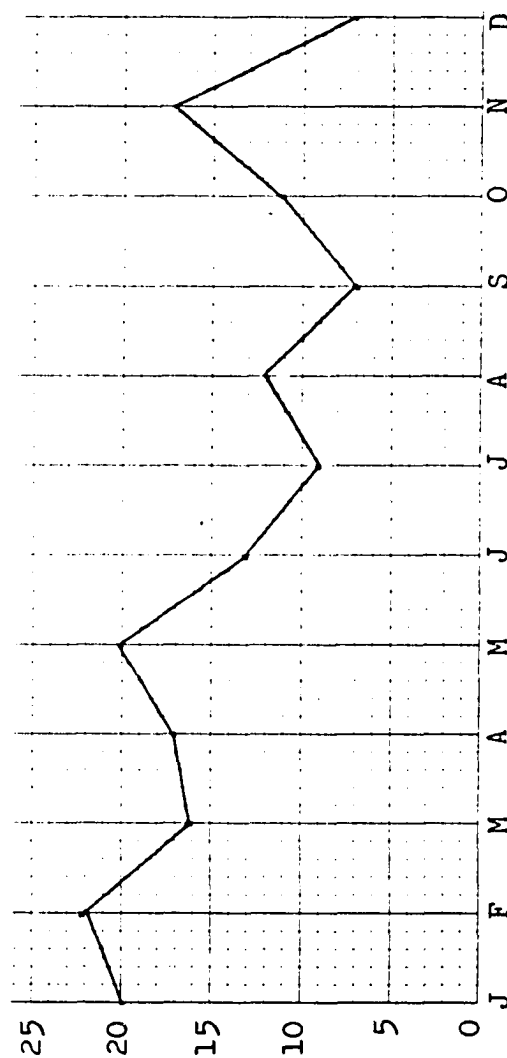


Figure 8
Distribution of 246 Loan Theṭ-káyits on Month-Basis
in Other Parts of Burma

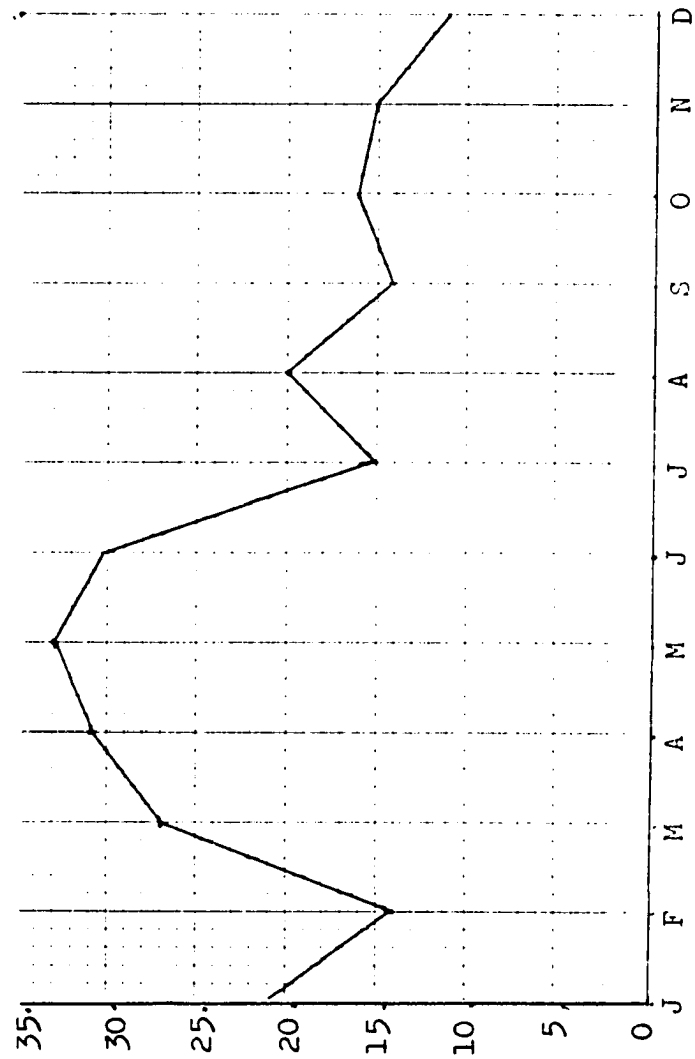


Table 22
Loans Taken by Maung Shwei Ò Family

Date	Types of loans		Remarks
13 Jun. 1808	5	baskets of paddy	cost 2.5 <u>kyats</u> in <u>ywet-ni</u>
10 May 1813	80	<u>kyats</u>	mortgaged ancestral land
10 Apr. 1818	10	<u>kyats</u>	to erect a house
17 Jul. 1818	5	<u>kyats</u>	to make a coffin for the funeral of Maung Shwei Ò
18 Jul. 1818	5	baskets of paddy	cost 2.5 <u>kyats</u> in <u>ywet-ni</u>
26 Jul. 1818	15	baskets of paddy	cost 7.5 <u>kyats</u> of 25 <u>kyat-kè</u>
20 Mar. 1820	60	<u>kyats</u>	mortgaged ancestral land
18 May 1820	10	baskets of paddy	cost 6 <u>kyats</u> in <u>ywet-ni</u>
21 Nov. 1821	10	baskets of paddy	cost 6 <u>kyats</u> in <u>ywet-ni</u>
20 Apr. 1822	20	baskets of paddy	cost 10 <u>kyats</u> in <u>ywet-ni</u>
17 Sep. 1822	10	baskets of paddy	cost 5 <u>kyats</u> in <u>ywet-ni</u>
12 Feb. 1826	5	baskets of paddy	cost 5 <u>kyats</u> of 10 <u>kyat-kè</u>
14 Feb. 1826	6.75	baskets of paddy	cost 6.85 <u>kyats</u>
25 Dec. 1828	5	<u>kyats</u>	80 <u>kyat-kè</u>
5 Jan. 1829	2.5	<u>kyats</u>	6 <u>mù-tet-daing</u>
	.25	<u>kyats</u>	5 <u>kyat-kè</u>
2 Feb. 1829	25	<u>kyats</u>	1 <u>kyat-kè</u>
26 Mar. 1829	18	<u>kyats</u>	-----

Source: KLC.

As is seen, loans were not large. But clearly this family was entangled in a web of debt. Like this family, people were indebted for a variety of reasons. Cultivators who did not own any draft cattle to work with were compelled either to buy or hire these animals. There are thet-káyits that refer to such people who took loans or mortgaged lands in order to buy draft cattle.⁵⁷ Some hired them because there were such people who lived on leasing these animals. The rent for hiring a young buffalo from 26 August to 5 December 1839 was 12.5 baskets of paddy rice.⁵⁸ The rent for a yoke of cattle in 1834 was forty baskets of paddy.⁵⁹

Most remarkably it was in the Kòn-baung period that religious lands dedicated outright to pagodas by some Kings of Pagan and Ava came into the hands of money-lenders through mortgages. The earliest evidence is found in Sálín where a woman--probably a pagoda slave--mortgaged on 2 January 1781 land endowed to the Nei-yában pagoda, to Zeiya Batta Maha, headman of the town.⁶⁰ Such mortgage of the pagoda lands was very frequent in Byan-gyá village tract. Lands found in the mortgage thet-káyits were owned by the Pagan Shin máhtì and the Gu-daw-gyì pagodas.⁶¹ And all of these lands were paddy lands. Of course, it is not surprising to find such cases since the kings tacitly encouraged the people to get control of the religious lands.

Lawsuits

Though the Burmese people were not overly litigious, there were lawsuits for inheritance, debt, divorce, adultery, assault, defamation, and so forth. When such cases were brought before the court, the

judges--usually the chiefs, the elders, professional or ad hoc judges appointed by the king or by litigants themselves--heard and tried the cases. The court usually arbitrated most of these cases.

To the best of my knowledge, the majority of the cases were related to landholding because people were mostly agriculturists and land was the major component of the economy. Generally speaking, three types of disputes were apparent: between or among the family members; between unrelated persons; and between a person and a local chief or the crown. In the society one out of five families is assumed to possess a sizable amount of land between five to ten acres. Having no practice of wills or the division of family property inter vivos, inheritance was often contested. Furthermore, polygamy practiced by the royalty, nobility, and local chiefs also caused such disputes.

Evidence concerning the contest of inheritance abounds. When the heirs came of the same parents, the division of property and related problems could easily be settled by arbitration of a village abbot,⁶² or of the village elders,⁶³ or of a judge.⁶⁴ But if the heirs came of different mothers or fathers, the contest of inheritance was hardly settled by means of arbitration; it usually went to the bitter end. I would like to refer to two such cases: one that took place among the heirs of the Hlaing-tet Prince who came of different mothers; and the other that took place among the heirs of the Wun-byeí family who had different fathers.

When the Hlaing-tet Prince died in 1864 he left valuable property and estates. There were included an insignia made of gold weighing

28.7 kyats (16.76 oz), silverware weighing 1303.7 kyats (761.36 oz) and orchards and paddy fields the value of which together amounted to 7900 kyats weight of silver (4613.6 oz). He was survived by three wives and eleven children. And there were two contesting parties--one headed by Myin-hmù Prince who was a colonel of the cavalry units, and another by the Hkaung-ton Prince. The latter group asked for the return of jewelry and estates given as gifts inter vivos to be added into undivided property for equal redivision. We see that the gifts--jewelry and estates--given to the first group on various occasions amounted to 11,585 kyats (6765.64 oz), whereas the gifts given to the second group made up only 2,597 kyats (1516.65 oz). However, the court decided that the gifts given inter vivos were legal and valid, and that only the listed remaining property was to be divided equally among the contested parties.⁶⁵

In the case of the Wùn-byeí family, the inheritance problem was complicated because both ù Yauk, the royal secretary and his wife Mí Gyì had previous marriages and children. When ù Yauk died, the division of some property was made between Mí Gyì and her step-children. Another division took place among her children born to different fathers when she died. But the bitter contest came about among them when their grandmother died in 1878. All contestants were very close to the royal family--one serving as a royal page, another as a royal steward, and another as a maid-of-honor. Therefore we find in this case many prominent figures like officials, ministers, a monk of high reputation, and the Chief Queen of Thi-bàw. She issued a note to the Hlut-taw in favor

of Maung Maung Pú of her steward and sister Mí Hkin who was also her maid-of-honor. The Chief Queen's order dated 4 January 1878 reads:

Land rents and other dues payable for the year 1879 to Ngá Pú, the steward and his sister Mí Hkin by the tenants of the Wun-byeí village tract in the Chaung-ù ten-village circle, shall not be taken by Maung Maung Sú. He is being barred from taking rents and managing the lands and tenants which are reserved to the other party, the steward and his sister. Ngá Sú shall claim his rights in the court if he wishes.⁶⁶

The evidence is not rare concerning the inheritance cases for which the contestants took loans or mortgaged their lands. A person from Ywa-thit-tàn of Kyauk-ka village, Pauk township requested a money-lender to pay the court costs for him while his inheritance case was being heard at the court, pledging a plot of his paddy land.⁶⁷ In such cases, the litigants were accustomed to taking notes of their expenses. We often come across such instances. A person from Byan-gyá village noted his spendings concerning the inheritance case in 1848.⁶⁸

Expenditure of money on inheritance case over the Leik-kyá land against Maung In. A loan of 28.55 kyats was taken from Maung Meik on the 14th waning day of Tágu, year 1209 B.E.⁶⁹ of which ywet-ni was 10.55 kyats, the ten-kyat-kè was 2 kyats, one-kyat-three-mat-kè was 14.25 kyats, and alloy to be compounded was 2 kyats.

paid for <u>myó-wut</u> (to bailiff)	2.5 <u>kyats</u>
to clerk	1.6 <u>kyats</u>
to statement writer	0.5 <u>kyats</u>
to messenger at the village	0.75 <u>kyats</u>
to messenger at the town	0.25 <u>kyats</u>
to Hsáya Chaw	0.5 <u>kyats</u>
for meal	0.25 <u>kyats</u>
Total	6.35 <u>kyats</u>
for appeal at the capital	1.5 <u>kyats</u>
clerk to the <u>wun-dauk</u>	0.5 <u>kyat</u>

to Maung Yan Lìn, bondsman	0.5 <u>kyat</u>
to lawyer for hearing two times	2.25 <u>kyats</u>
to Maung Bo for writing materials	0.25 <u>kyat</u>
buying meat	0.25 <u>kyat</u>
weight loss	0.85 <u>kyat</u>
Total	6.1 <u>kyats</u>
to Maung Po who consulted with the lawyer for appeal to the <u>Hlut-taw</u>	3.0 <u>kyats</u>
additional payment to Maung Po	3.0 <u>kyats</u>
to Maung Yan Min for meal	1.5 <u>kyats</u>
for admission of appeal to <u>wun-dauk</u>	1.5 <u>kyats</u>
for pickled tea	0.25 <u>kyat</u>
to Û Sò, tea server	0.25 <u>kyat</u>
to Maung Yan Shin	1.25 <u>kyats</u>
to Û Yei	1.0 <u>kyat</u>
expenses on food	3.3 <u>kyats</u>
weight loss	0.8 <u>kyat</u>
brokerage fee for mortgage of land	0.25 <u>kyat</u>
Total	16.1 <u>kyats</u>

Disputes over landholding rights between unrelated people were rare. However, we have a very interesting case. The litigants were a saw-bwa of Kálei and a myó-ok (a township administrative officer) of Tein-nyin; the two districts were bordering each other. The disputed lands were extensive; they yielded 13,000 baskets of paddy (266.96 tons) a year. Moreover, both parties had access to the royal family since they were once royal pages. While the case was being heard, the Myó-ok of Tein-nyin sent to the royal capital a young monk with a letter to his wife in which he instructed her to see the ministers and his majesty with presents to win favor in the case. The court could not decide it because both parties produced to the court the patents of land grant by the crown.⁷⁰ The kings used to

grant lands to their favorites or servicemen without referring to, or annulling previous grants. Therefore, land disputes often took place among the servicemen.⁷¹

Disputes between a villager and the village headman over landholding rights also sometimes took place. Traditionally a headman had power in his jurisdiction to allot or reallocate the communal lands. Sometimes the headman took land that was left vacant for some years by the occupier when the soil was exhausted. In such cases the usual arbitration of the court was an equal division of the disputed land between the two parties.⁷²

Debt-related lawsuits were fairly numerous. Because of high interest rates and the subsistence-agriculture that usually did not yield good crops under the unpredictable rain, debtors sometimes could not pay back loans or pay land rents in time. When they were pressed for payment of loans or rents they went to another moneyed man and took a new loan in order to settle the old one. Thus the debt increased in course of time. Finally many landless farmers became debtor-kyuns.

In spite of the fact that the Kòn-baung kings issued edicts for the protection of debtors from exceedingly high interest rates and from any form of torment, some people were arrested and put into confinement for unpaid debts. Generally, cases brought to the court were related to: (1) debtors who could not or did not settle the debt for years; (2) kyuns who absconded; and (3) tenants who failed to pay land rents. Conversely, the exaction and harassment of the creditor also caused the debtor to bring the case to court.

A serviceman of royal household, named Ngá E Bù, once directly petitioned the king about his grievances caused by his creditor, presenting his case while the king took a royal promenade. In his petition, it is stated that the creditor tormented the debtor by putting him and his son into confinement for a year, and by driving the debtor's family out of their house which the creditor took against the debt.⁷³

In another case, an heir of a creditor appealed to the Hlut-taw while the king was presiding over the session. His supplication reads:

I, Maung Hmon, your Majesty's slave, submit this petition with obeisance. While my father, Si-thu Naw-yahta was alive, Ngá Aung Ban, headman of Shaw-byu-bin village, and Ngá Nei borrowed in 1824, 1 viss of silver for payment of war fund collected for Kàw-tha-li column, promising to pay eight baskets of paddy per one kyat at a barn in Yin-daw town; but they failed to accomplish their promise.⁷⁴ Please help me by commanding them to pay back the loan.

Unfortunately, we do not find a court decision. This petitioner, Maung Hmon, was the one who in King Mìn-dòn's time became the Poppa Wun-dauk--deputy minister.

A herald versus a htaung-kè--officer in charge of one thousand men--was also an interesting debt case. The herald was creditor and the htaung-kè, a debtor. The latter took a loan of 150 kyats from the former with the intention of not paying it back, because when the creditor was a junior naval officer, he exacted one hundred kyats from the htaung-kè who was then a subordinate of the herald. When the case was heard, the court decided in favor of the creditor.⁷⁵

Cases of runaway kyuns were not numerous. We find a few instances in the records of the Wùn-byeí family, and only one in the records of the Le-zin family. Some kyuns absconded several times. Usually when they ran away, their family members replaced them.⁷⁶ We find that some runaway kyuns were involved in abduction,⁷⁷ adultery,⁷⁸ or theft.⁷⁹ Hard labor exacted by the masters would also cause them to run away. When a kyun absconded, one of his guarantors had to settle the bondage loan plus the kyun's labor value lost during his absence or to enter into kyunship in lieu of the runaway kyun. In Wùn-byeí, a kyun's labor value was fifteen kyats a year;⁸⁰ in Sálín, it was seventeen kyats a year.⁸¹ If such a case was brought to the court, the defendant was bound to pay the court costs too.

In every case concerning runaway kyuns, the court decided in favor of the masters insofar as they could submit to the court the thet-káyits of the runaway kyuns. Usually such cases were settled before they were brought to the court. People were extremely afraid of being put into confinement where torture and starvation were commonplace; therefore the guarantors often solved the problems by paying back the bondage loans, or by means of entering into kyunship for the runaway kyuns.

Imagine what it would be like when peasants, who were on or under the subsistence level, became indebted and their earnings were reduced from one-third to one-half. Since the loans they took never accrued to their benefit, their life deteriorated. They had to succumb to the exploitation of the moneyed men. Subsequently, land

rents or tenancy rates gradually rose. When a peasant farmer became a sharecropper he had to pay half of the yield to the money-lender as interest or land rent. When the peasant proprietors desperately wanted money, they offered favorable terms to money-lenders so that they could get loans. One-half of the produce was a common tenancy rate. However, the mortgagors sometimes made a promise that they would pay the rent whether or not the crops produced an adequate yield.⁸² Some agreed that the crops to be paid as land rent would be dried and thoroughly winnowed and carted to the creditor's house.⁸³ Some debtor-tenants even agreed that they would all pay a tithe and the crop in a standard basket called Ti-daw, royal standard measure,⁸⁴ which was 10 percent larger than an ordinary basket used among the common people.⁸⁵ But, under subsistence agriculture where implements and techniques were primitive and the rain they relied upon was uncertain, they could hardly fulfill all these commitments. Thus, the position of the peasant farmers gradually became worse--to the extent that they finally fell into kyunship.

In the thet-káyits we also come across several other legal cases among which the ein-hmú--house affairs, such as the breach of engagement, abduction of a woman, adultery, and divorce--were numerous. Cases related to assault are also found. In some thet-káyits, the borrowers or mortgagors pronounced that they wanted money to pay court cost, but they did not mention for what case they were bound to pay.

Because of the ein-hmú (sometimes the terms mein-má-hmú--woman affair, or máyà-hmú--wife affair, were also used), poor people

were compelled to seek loans to pay damages and court fees. According to context, most of the ein-hmús concerned adultery. Some men took bondage loans, putting their children into kyunship in order to pay such damages they had done.⁸⁶ Some mortgaged their lands.⁸⁷ Such cases mentioned as "woman affair" or "wife affair" are thought to be the divorce cases.⁸⁸ Usually such loans were small in amount, exceeding no more than one hundred kyats.⁸⁹

We have also thet-káyits that reveal unidentified cases heard and decided by the local courts, for which the defendants mortgaged or sold their lands or children to pay court fees and damages. These are thought to be cases of defamation or of assault. In one case, a young lad inflicted injuries upon another lad in a fight. To pay for this damage he took a bondage loan by entering into kyunship.⁹⁰ In another case, a master released a female kyun from bondage when he was going to be sued by her father on a charge of kicking her.⁹¹ It clearly indicates that the kyun masters were not absolute masters over their kyuns; they could not treat their kyuns as chattel slaves. They were liable to lawsuit if they treated their kyuns cruelly.

As is well known, the Burmese kings strictly forbade their subjects to use intoxicants. But, after the first Anglo-Burmese war (1824-26), this prohibition seemed to be loosening, because the British merchants imported opium from British India into Burma. Eventually some people became addicted to opium smoking. There was a thet-káyit that reveals an opium addict. His wife took a loan of ten kyats to cure her husband's opium addiction under the care of a medicineman. This debt could not be settled until over thirty years

had passed. Moreover, they took paddy loans several times from the same money-lender. And none of them could be repaid. Amazingly, the creditor, who was a thu-gaùng, did not press them for the recovery of these loans. Nor did he even demand the interest on these loans. When he was requested to make a new thet-káyit for the sum total of old ones, he did it willingly.⁹²

Winners and Losers

Poor people--mostly the rural peasant farmers and some crown servicemen known as áhmú-dàns--were often indebted because their self-sufficient agriculture was very much vulnerable to maladministration and natural calamities that often came about in central Burma. As has been noted above, later Kòn-baung people were often faced with the demands of contributions, corvee labor, and so forth, for which poor people resorted to mortgage of their lands and the family members to money-lenders in order to meet these demands.

Deterioration of the economy is also seen in this period due to the political instability and the frequent exactions.⁹³ Many peasant proprietors became tenants; then, landless farmers; and lastly kyuns.⁹⁴ As far as we know, lands and kyuns once mortgaged or sold were seldom redeemed. It clearly indicates that the general condition of the common people was miserable to a great extent. Conversely, money-lenders became richer and richer in the course of time.

Whenever they badly needed money, peasant farmers used to mortgage their lands, offering favorable terms to the money-lenders

lest they should not get loans from them. Generally speaking, their terms were of three kinds: interest rate, redemption time, and tenancy rate. Customarily, the mortgagees managed the mortgaged lands, that is, tenancing the land, fixing land rents, and so forth. In such a case, the mortgagor lost his right over the land for a certain period of years. Regarding the redemption time, some mortgagors retained the right of redemption at any time;⁹⁵ some fixed a definite period of time, varying from one year to ten years.⁹⁶ However, the mortgagee had the right to demand the mortgagor for redemption of the land.⁹⁷

In many a case, the mortgagor retained the management of the mortgaged land, paying some portion of the yield at harvest time to the money-lender as a form of interest. The rates so far found in the thet-káyits were thirty baskets,⁹⁸ sixty baskets,⁹⁹ eighty baskets,¹⁰⁰ and one hundred baskets per one hundred kyats.¹⁰¹ Other detailed agreements were also reached between the two contracting parties. The paddy rice to be paid as a form of interest was necessary to be sun-dried and thoroughly winnowed.¹⁰² The measure of the crops was to be made with a standard basket called ti-daw (royal measure).¹⁰³ Usually the debtors were responsible for the cartage of the crops to money-lenders' houses or barns.¹⁰⁴

Some mortgagors took back the mortgaged land to work on as tenants, paying a fixed amount of outturn whether or not the land yielded. How the tenancy rate was fixed between the contracting parties cannot be figured out. Was it based on the amount of loan?

Or was it based on the size of land? Before I give my assumption, I would like to give information gleaned from the Wun-byeí thet-káyits.

Year	Land Size (in wisps)	Acreage Equivalent	Loan (in <u>kyat</u>)	Land Rent (Paddy in Basket)
1832	900	4.5	105	100
1847	150	.75	40	40
1863	300	1.5	50	13.75
1863	400	2.0	100	30.25
1865	250	1.25	50	15
1865	350	1.75	100	35
1866	150	.75	34.6	14
1867	150	.75	50	15
1867	250	1.25	50	35
1867	250	1.25	50	15

It is said that an acre yielded about thirty baskets of paddy rice. When we work out the land rents based on this information it is found that some were reasonable and some were very high. Many debtors could not pay the rents, especially in lean years. And thus, they lost their lands to the money-lenders. Because of much profit from the land, the money-lenders even accepted the mortgage of religious lands.

The lowest stage of a man in economic decline was kyunship, and those who possessed no economic means but their labor used to sell either themselves or their family members whenever they were faced with economic crises. The kyuns in rural areas were mostly employed in agriculture. But, in urban areas, they were also employed as servants or house-maids, as porters, and at worst, as prostitutes. In the bondage thet-káyits, certain terms or rights and responsibilities of the masters and the kyuns were clearly defined, and they¹⁰⁵ were as follows:

- I. A master could employ his kyun:
 - . on the other side of a river or a creek
 - . overnight
 - . in trees short or tall
 - . on occasions of child births and funerals
- II. A master could rebuke his kyun by slapping or caning
- III. A master could seduce his female kyun and could take her to inferior wife
- IV. A kyun had to work as he or she was instructed by his or her master
- V. A kyun had to live where he or she was accommodated
- VI. A kyun could not make complaints to or sue his or her master for being provided with tainted food that caused him or her to be nauseated
- VII. A master could not demand compensation from his kyun for the loss or breakage of cups, knives, plates, and trays
- VIII. A master could not charge interest on the bondage loan, nor did he lose it for the death of his kyun
- IX. A female kyun could not marry anyone unless she was permitted by, ¹⁰⁶ or she liquidated her bondage loan to, her master.
- X. If a kyun absconded, the bondage loan together with the value of labor loss had to be paid by the seller or the guarantors.

Although in bondage, a kyun's life was no worse than that of a poor peasant who was also prone to kyunship. But most of the kyuns were in their teens. It seemed that poor parents who could not afford to reclaim lands for their grown-up children sold them to the moneyed men who needed labor to expand their agri-business. By this means the jobless problem was solved; but since the productivity of the kyun labor was enjoyed by the master and no

incentive was given to the kyuns for their efforts, the economic prosperity could not be enhanced. They were totally losers.

In Le-zin village where agriculture was a major occupation of the community, the money-lenders seemed to prefer young male kyuns because they were more suitable for farm work. On the contrary, young and unmarried female kyuns were more numerous in the records of the Wùn-byeí family who lived in the royal city. The contractual terms were also different from those of the Le-zin family, because they included seductive terms when the incoming kyun was a young female. These were not coincidental, because we find that Û Yauk, the royal secretary and head of the wùn-byeí family, had kyun-wives who bore children to him.¹⁰⁷ His son, Maung Maung Pú, also had a kyun-wife.¹⁰⁸ Under this family, eight out of forty-five kyuns made attempts to abscond, including three females. Therefore, one can assume that there might have been some sort of kyun abuse although other evidence is lacking. However, it is also found that some kyuns committed theft. They ran away taking their master's property, including jewelry.¹⁰⁹

Although we do not so far find any concrete evidence of physical cruelty of masters to their kyuns in central Burma, we do find kyun-and child-abuse in port cities of lower Burma where foreign merchants settled. An American missionary report reveals that the lives of kyuns were miserable. The Moor and Armenian masters were very cruel to their kyuns. Since they were the British servicemen under British rule, the Burmese neighbors dared not intervene. But, they (the Burmans) did report to the American missionary to

save these helpless kyuns from their cruel masters.¹¹⁰ Archibald Ross Colquhoun, who studied the slavery system among the Shans (including the Thais and Karens), makes a short and precise remark that the Christian masters treated their slaves worse than the natives did.¹¹¹

In sum, every large village in central Burma had at least one family--either the family of the headman or his relative--that conducted money-lending business. The people who were reputed as the builders of pagodas or monasteries, etc. were also money-lenders. The local economy depended upon these money-lenders since the subsistence agriculture conducted by primitive ways and means was fragile in nature and prone to failure in drought-hit years. Moreover, it was these money-lenders who utilized the emerging labor force in agriculture. Thus, the poor and the jobless became tenants, farm laborers, sharecroppers, sharebreeders, cowherds, house-maids, and so forth. But the kyuns could not enjoy the fruit of their labor; they were the worst losers.

NOTES

¹J. A. Stewart and C. W. Dunn, A Burmese-English Dictionary (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1969), p. 355.

²Sálin Hsáya-daw, Páyeik-kyi, p. 285; Than Tun, ed., ROB, 5: 895, 907, 908, and 925.

³Than Tun, ed., ROB 5: 655, and MADC, No. 4287, 10 October 1808.

⁴MADC, No. 4287, 18 February 1806, 20 November 1807, 21 January 1810, 9 March 1810, 10 February 1810, and 14 February 1810.

⁵F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, p. 329, MADC, No. 4287, 10 October 1808.

⁶U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 2: 221.

⁷KKC, 6 September 1852; RUCL, No. 25, n.d.

⁸According to context, this village seemed to be located in Meik-ti-la township. However, a village under this name is found in Madaya township. See J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. 2, vol. 3: 127.

⁹TGC, 8 April 1824.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 1835.

¹¹Párábaik MS, Pyìn-daw village (Kán-bálu township) monastery Collection (hereafter PDC).

¹²LZC, 25 November 1824.

¹³KKC, 27 March 1866.

¹⁴RUCL, No. 24.

¹⁵LPC, 19 September 1824.

¹⁶Yan-dábo.

¹⁷Yan-dábo.

¹⁸W. S. Desai, History of the British Residency in Burma, 1826-1840 (Rangoon: The University of Rangoon, 1939), p. 115.

¹⁹W. S. Desai, British Residency in Burma, pp. 64-65.

²⁰LZC. We have also other thet-káyits in WBC.

²¹Foreigners.

²²W. S. Desai, British Residency in Burma, p. 147; Thaung Blackmore, Burney Parabaiks, p. 31.

²³TTTC, 18 September 1828.

²⁴Ibid., 15 October 1828.

²⁵Ibid., 1 November 1828.

²⁶Ibid., 15 December 1828.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸KKC, 6 September 1852.

²⁹U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 3, p. 203; Sir John Bowing, The Kingdom and People of Siam, A Narrative of the Mission to That Country, 2 vols. (London: John W. Parker and son, 1857), 2: 364-67; David K. Wyatt, Thailand A Short History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 182.

³⁰LZC, 24 May 1854.

³¹LPC, 4 May 1808.

³²STC, 7 January 1832.

³³Ibid., 7 June 1833.

³⁴Ibid., 16 November 1841.

³⁵Ibid., 15 November 1843.

³⁶YTC, 5 September 1862.

³⁷NLC, No. 1046; MNC, 19 February 1875.

³⁸MNC, 1880.

³⁹LZC, 1 March 1837.

⁴⁰Ibid.

- ⁴¹Ibid.
- ⁴²MNC, 24 March 1827.
- ⁴³NLC, No. 1411, 9 November 1871.
- ⁴⁴MULC, 27 December 1878.
- ⁴⁵James C. Scott, The Moral Economy of the Peasants (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 4.
- ⁴⁶TTTC, 22 March 1827, 12 October 1828, 16 November 1828, 25 January 1830; WBC, 15 September 1849, 12 October 1854, 2 February 1864, 15 April 1865; TGC, 12 May 1846, 11 January 1847; STC, 13 March 1865, 21 October 1865; MNC, 14 March 1827; and MULC, 14 June 1816.
- ⁴⁷TTTC, 20 May 1816, 15 June 1819.
- ⁴⁸Ibid., 3 October 1829.
- ⁴⁹Ibid., 22 March 1827, 12 October 1828, 16 November 1828.
- ⁵⁰Ibid., 18 March 1816, 22 March 1827, 16 November 1828.
- ⁵¹Ibid., 20 April 1820, 22 May 1830.
- ⁵²Ibid., July-August 1831.
- ⁵³Ibid., 15 October 1828.
- ⁵⁴Ibid., 20 April 1820, 22 March 1830.
- ⁵⁵TTTC, 25 June 1830.
- ⁵⁶WBC, 4 April 1872.
- ⁵⁷LZC, 6 May 1841, STC, 27 July 1860, RUCL, No. 24, 12 June 1885, and YTC, 2 April 1837.
- ⁵⁸J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2:348, YTC, Nga-zun 2, May 1834.
- ⁵⁹YTC, Nga-zun 2, May 1834.
- ⁶⁰STC.
- ⁶¹BGC, 7 June 1796, 14 June 1797, 15 July 1805, 18 July 1809, 21 October 1827, 11 February 1829, 29 September 1829, 4 April 1834, 29 October 1837, 20 October 1840, 14 November 1840, 4 June 1841, 26 June 1842, and 6 August 1843.

- ⁶²YTC, No. Ywa-thit 2, n.d.
- ⁶³MUHC (Máso'-yein), 23 May 1832, 23 June 1868.
- ⁶⁴YTC (Hpálan-gon) 5 July 1856.
- ⁶⁵WBC, 7 February 1864.
- ⁶⁶WBC, 4 January 1878.
- ⁶⁷KKC, 9 December 1859.
- ⁶⁸RUCL, No. 151107.
- ⁶⁹2 April 1848.
- ⁷⁰MUHC, Lòn-daw 43, 8 March 1863, 5 June 1863.
- ⁷¹Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hlutdaw, pp. 112, 114, 120.
- ⁷²MGC, No. 5, 30 May 1843.
- ⁷³TGC, 11 July 1854.
- ⁷⁴*Ibid.*, n.d.
- ⁷⁵TGC, 12 June 1840.
- ⁷⁶WBC, 6 August 1858, 29 June 1859.
- ⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 10 June 1865.
- ⁷⁸See the Petition of Maung Maung Pú, n.d., and the Testimony of Mí Bè Nyo and her daughter, 4 July 1878, WBC.
- ⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 24 May 1859, 25 April 1862.
- ⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 9 August 1867.
- ⁸¹STC, 5 June 1869.
- ⁸²WBC, 27 June 1844.
- ⁸³NLC, No. 1046, 17 March 1865.
- ⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 10 May 1865.
- ⁸⁵A note to an agent, n.d., WBC.
- ⁸⁶LZC, 21 April 1830, 29 July 1833, 28 July 1854.

- ⁸⁷Ibid., 21 April 1830.
- ⁸⁸STC, 12 October 1835, 1 March 1862.
- ⁸⁹The largest loan so far found in the thet-káyits was 81 kyats 6 mus. LZC, 21 April 1830.
- ⁹⁰LZC, 31 August 1828.
- ⁹¹Ibid., 22 June 1852.
- ⁹²STC, 30 July 1833, 6 March 1846, 1 August 1848, 14 September 1849, and 26 December 1867.
- ⁹³TTTC, 20 April 1820. TGC, 8 April 1824.
- ⁹⁴RUCL, No. 151113, 3 September 1792, Ibid., No. 151107, 20 November 1787, LZC, 28 September 1809, 19 September 1824, 24 May 1854, 12 June 1826, PDC, 7 August 1836, 24 August 1836.
- ⁹⁵WBC, 21 May 1833, 9 July 1839, 27 December 1840.
- ⁹⁶NKC, 12 March 1872 (one-year term); MNC, 3 May 1878 (two years term); LZC, 17 June 1862 (three years term); RUCL, No. 178438, 15 June 1853; NKC, 11 March 1859, LZC, 22 May 1802 (four years term); MNC, 30 May 1876 (five years term); NKC, 2 July 1833 (nine years term); and RUCL, No. 178438, 28 December 1856 and WBC, 12 March 1864 (ten years term).
- ⁹⁷WBC, 21 May 1863, 19 January 1867.
- ⁹⁸Ibid., 29 January 1867, 26 February 1868.
- ⁹⁹Ibid., 17, 18, 20 January 1866, 26 February 1868, and 16 April 1871.
- ¹⁰⁰Ibid., 27 March 1868.
- ¹⁰¹Ibid., 9 April 1836, 17 May 1839, 16 January 1845.
- ¹⁰²WBC, 25 May 1866, 26 May 1867.
- ¹⁰³Ibid., 26 May 1867.
- ¹⁰⁴Ibid., 20 January 1866, 23 May 1866, 15 May 1867, 10 October 1865.
- ¹⁰⁵LZC, 4 June 1795, 12 June 1815, WBC, 24 March 1848, 1 May 1851, 8 July 1855, 3 October 1863, and TGC, 18 January 1881.

¹⁰⁶Yan-dámeik Kyaw Htin, Yei-zágyo Hkon-daw Hpyat-htòn [Decisions of the Yei-zágyo Court] (Rangoon: Han-tha-wádi Press, 1973), p. 37.

¹⁰⁷WBC, No. 5, n.d.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 14 August 1885.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 29 June 1878.

¹¹⁰James D. Knowles, Memoir of Ann H. Judson, p. 361.

¹¹¹Archibald Ross Colquhoun, Amongst the Shans (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1970), p. 189.

CHAPTER 7

KING MÌN-DÒN'S REFORMS

This chapter will examine King Mìn-dòn's revision of Burma's monetary system and his efforts at agrarian reform. For hundreds of years of its history, Burma never had a coinage; having this condition does not mean that coinage was unknown to the Burmese people. The king's treasury had coins received as taxes from external trade or as tribute from Assam.¹ In lower Burma up to Prome Indian coins--sicca and madras rupees--were current among the people. But, in central Burma people used metals as currency from the Pagan period until 1865, the year in which King Mìn-dòn introduced a coinage. Among the metals used as currency, silver was the most common and its value was determined by its quality and weight. The varieties of silver qualities and the weights will also be discussed in this chapter.

The evidence tends to reveal that one of the major factors that kept Burmese society in a subsistence-basic agriculture and away from full-blown trade with the outside world was its persistent use of lump currencies. The two Kòn-baung kings saw this defect, and made attempts to introduce a coinage system. One was King Bádon (1782-1819) whose endeavor did not meet with success. And another was King Mìn-dòn (1853-1878) whose attempt, although successful,

did not last long because his country was annexed by the British seven years after his death.

The sit-tàns, the money loan thet-káyits, the royal orders, and the tax rolls give abundant references to the Burmese monetary system in the Kòn-baung period. As before, metals comprising gold, silver, copper, and lead in various shapes were used as currencies. Gold was the most valuable; it was used only for larger payments. Of course, silver was the most common medium of exchange. For purchase of valuable things, draft cattle, lands, etc., for payments of taxes, imposts, etc., and for wages, bits of silver in weight were given out. However, in rural areas, people also used paddy rice for their small shop-purchases.²

Before going further, I would like to deal with how these metals were extracted in the Kòn-baung period. Traditionally gold was sifted in the rivers and brooks. There were several places in the vicinity of Rangoon, Pegu, Prome, and Ava where gold sands were found.³ The Sá-gà sit-tàn of 1783 reveals that gold sifters were taxed thirty kyats of copper per head a year.⁴ There were crown servicemen who were organized to extract precious metals for the crown. A Pagan king, for example, organized the Karens from Pàn-yi and settled them in Yawng-hwe township in A.D. 1174 to extract gold for the crown. Their descendents were reorganized in A.D. 1639 by a king of the restored Taung-ngu dynasty.⁵ Moreover, the Karens from the townships of Ahtaran, Bá-lù-gyùn, Kàw, Kyaàng, Martaban, Myaing, Yeì, and Záyà were recognized as the gold-flower-tax-paying people.⁶

In present-day Kátha and Kyùn-hlá townships, and also in the upper reaches of the Chindwin river, there were many villages that extracted gold. We have twelve villages that annually paid the following fixed amount⁷ of gold taxes:

Gába	8	<u>kyats</u>	9	<u>mùs</u>	1	<u>pè</u>	2	<u>yweìs</u>	(5.23 oz)
Gyò-daung	29	-	4	-	2	-	6	-	(17.21 oz)
Hkauk-sin	2	-	1	-			4	-	(1.2 oz)
Má-i	11	-	7	-			4	-	(6.84 oz)
Mála	4	-	6	-			4	-	(2.69 oz)
Maung-taing	2	-	9	-	1	-	2	-	(1.72 oz)
Maw-hka	2	-	8	-	1	-	2	-	(1.67 oz)
Maw-hkwin	24	-	5	-	1	-			(14.35 oz)
Maw-naing	84	-							(49.08 oz)
Nàn-mà	3	-	5	-			2	-	(2.05 oz)
Set-taw	17	-	6	-					(10.28 oz)
Tàw-htun	7	-	7	-			4	-	(4.5 oz)

There were also ten other gold-producing villages in the upper reaches of the Chindwin River. So far, we can identify only eight of them, viz., Hpet-nwè, Hsè-hsin, Kun-hè, Le-se, Man-sein, Mawnwè, Pa-bok, and Ú-yu.⁸ Unfortunately we do not know the amount of gold these villages were liable to pay to the crown annually.

Burmese kings were extremely concerned about the drainage of precious metals and gems to other countries. They always forbade their people to export these metals and gems. However, after the first Anglo-Burmese war, Burma paid ten million rupees worth of silver and gold ingots to the British as the war indemnity. Gold alone amounted to 98,522.15 kyats or 57,568.46 ounces.⁹ The kings were also likely to apply large amounts of gold leaf to pagodas and monasteries they built. As a matter of fact, the output of gold in Burma did not meet the demand. China exported it in the form of gold leaf. In 1854, the import of gold from China amounted to five

hundred viss or 29,216.02 ounces.¹⁰ Pure gold or red gold fetched twenty times its weight in silver.¹¹ This exchange value between gold and silver was static throughout the Kòn-baung period except in 1827, the year after the Yan-dábo Treaty.¹²

Silver-extracting villages were mostly located in the Shan state, especially in and around Yawng-hwe township. This region was known as the "middle land silver taxed."¹³ It consisted of Baw-son, Hè-kwì, Ìn-leì, Kábè, Lwe-an, Lwe-e, Mákwei, Nàn-hkon, Pin-hmi, Tha-maìng-hkàn, and Ywa-ngan villages.¹⁴ Moreover, we also find many other silver-tax-paying villages all over the Shan state.¹⁵ But, the biggest silver mine was located at Mò-màw in the northern Shan state, where 180 workers were employed in 1787.¹⁶ The silver miners were the Danus, the Karens, the Shans, and the Chinese.

In central Burma, one can find silver-tax-paying villages along the Irrawaddy River: Gwèi-gyo, Ngá-tháyauk, Tèln-nyet-kòn,¹⁷ the nine down-river villages, and the nine up-river villages.¹⁸ All of them were very old villages founded during the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries. Kyàw in the Yàw province was also such a village.¹⁹ All these villages annually paid a fixed amount of tax to the crown.

The government received silver crown revenues from some towns and villages of lower Burma too. The Karens from Hanthawady, Hpaung-lìn, Martaban, Taung-ngu, and Ti-dut paid a fixed crown silver tax.²⁰ Many silver miners were organized and settled in villages now known as Ei-la, Hpon, Kyi-daung, and Ton-gan. Every household was bound to pay ten kyats of silver to the crown a

year.²¹ But no statistics are available concerning the annual output of silver in the Kòn-baung period. We find that sometimes people could not pay the silver taxes fully. During the years 1775 to 1784, 993.25 kyat weight of gold (580.06 oz) and 6,207 kyat weight of silver (3624.89 oz) were outstanding against the gold- and silver-tax-paying villages to be paid to the crown. But King Bádôn granted them a remission.²²

Copper was no longer current in the later Kòn-baung period, although many sit-tàns reveal that it was accepted for payment of taxes to the crown.²³ Moreover, some debtors paid copper as interest on the loans they took. Such a type of money loan was called kyeì-nyún-hpyeí--interest paid in copper. Of course, this practice seemed to be not very common, because it is found only in the wùn-byeí village tract.²⁴ The value ratio between silver and copper was one to one hundred.²⁵

Lead was current in small purchases in the markets. In the thet-káyits we do not so far find the use of lead as currency. Its value was always fluctuating to a greater degree. Howard Malcom gives a full account of it.

Its general reference is about five hundred to one. It varies exceedingly, however, in its proportion; sometimes fifteen viss of lead is given for a tical, and sometimes only seven or eight, at Ava. In distant parts of the country, where the silver is more alloyed, three or four viss is given for a tical.²⁶

During the early reign of King Mìn-dòn, one hundred viss of lead was paid for six and a half ticals of good silver.²⁷ When coinage

was introduced in 1865, lead was minted out for small denominations. However, it never appears in the thet-káyits.

I shall now focus on silver, which was the metal prevalent as a medium of exchange. People used different qualities of silver, but the standard was the ywet-ni that contained 10 percent alloy. Ywet-ni means red leaf or flowered silver. It was called so because it bore "certain start or radiating lines on the surface"²⁸ after being cast into disc-like forms. Several European accounts of the Burmese monetary system can be found in their journals and travelogs.²⁹ Therefore, it need not be reiterated here. However, I would like to explain how the Kòn-baung people manipulated the different qualities of silver in their daily business transactions.

Despite the fact that there were many different qualities of silver current in Burma before coinage currency, all sorts of payments were made on the ywet-ni-basis because it was the standard. When, therefore, one was to pay for something, one's silver, if not ywet-ni, had to be assayed to establish what sort of quality it was and the ywet-ni equivalent worked out since the prices and taxes were fixed in ywet-ni. In reckoning the ywet-ni equivalents, one can apply two methods. For good-quality silver, that is, the silver better than ywet-ni, the daing-tet-nì--calculating how much alloy was needed to add to good silver so that it became equal to ywet-ni--was applied. And for debased silver, that is the silver less pure than ywet-ni, mì-hnok-nì--calculating how much impurity was needed to be fused out from the mean silver to get ywet-ni equivalent--was applied.

Generally, good silver was called daing, although it had many different qualities and names. References to good silver are given in the sit-tàns and the thet-káyits as baw³⁰ (pure silver), daing³¹ (any sort of silver that was better than ywet-ni), hkáyú-bat (a kind of good silver with "spiral lines or efflorescence on the surface"³² like a univalvular shellfish), kyu³³ (pure silver imported from China), ngábat-yei³⁴ (the silver that had the color of a sheatfish), etc. Mean silver also had many different qualities according to the percentage of alloy compounded in it. Mean silver contained more alloy than ywet-ni; that is, it was more alloyed than 10 percent. The terms like ngwei-ma³⁵ (hardened silver), ngwei-zó³⁶ (silver sprout, that contained 25 percent of alloy),³⁷ wùn-bwá³⁸ (puffy belly), are referred to as mean silver. As far as we know, there were about thirty different qualities of mean silver all of which, though forbidden by law, were current in the society.

Customarily, the quality of silver was assayed and declared by a pwè-zà or assayer at all business transactions, so that it could be worked out into the ywet-ni equivalent. The formulae the people used were $MS \times \frac{100}{100 + AP} = Y$, and $GS \times \frac{100 + AP}{100} = Y$. MS means mean silver that was worse than the ywet-ni Y; AP, alloy percentage added to ywet-ni silver; and GS, good silver that was better than the ywet-ni Y. When ywet-ni was given and equivalent value to a certain sort of mean silver was wanted, then $Y \times \frac{100 + AP}{100} = MS$ was applied; also, when Y was given, and equivalent value to a certain sort of GS was wanted, then, $Y \times \frac{100}{100 + AP} = GS$ was applied.

References to how the Kon-baung people worked out the ywet-ni values of the different qualities of silver abound in the thet-káyit. In a note of debt settlement, it is found that a debtor paid back 140 kyats of the 10 percent alloyed silver for a loan of 127 kyats 2 mùs ywet-ni.³⁹ In another land redemption thet-káyit, a mortgagor paid 61 kyats 2 mùs 1 pè of the 22.5 percent alloyed silver for a loan of 50 kyats ywet-ni.⁴⁰ And a money-lender who lent out 46 kyats 3 mùs of the eight mù-tet-daing⁴¹ writes in his memo book that he lent out 50 kyats ywet-ni.⁴² Examples of how the ywet-ni equivalents were determined by the application of the above formulae are given below:

1. For 140 kyats of the 10 percent alloyed silver, use MS

$$\times \frac{100}{100 + AP} = Y; \text{ then we get } 140 \times \frac{100}{100 + 10} = 127$$
kyats 2 mùs.
2. For 61 kyats 2 mùs 1 pè of the 22.5 percent alloyed silver, use MS $\times \frac{100}{100 + AP} = Y$; and we get $61.25 \times \frac{100}{100 + 22.5} = 50$ kyats.
3. For 46 kyats 3 mùs of the eight mù-tet-daing, use GS $\times \frac{100 + AP}{100} = Y$; and we get $46.3 \times \frac{100 + 8}{100} = 50$ kyats.

In the payments of war indemnity to the British, we see that Burma paid ingots of silver and gold comprising many different qualities. All these ingots of gold and silver were assayed, weighed, and reckoned into the equivalents of good quality silver and gold.⁴³

The ywet-ni system was very complicated. Of course, many people could not understand it. However, we have several ywet-ni computing methods and the methods of reading the qualities of gold and silver. If a cake of silver bore a mark like a chicken foot or

like a plum flower, it was read to be 10 percent alloyed. The silver cake that bore a mark like a bud of an acanthus illicifolius, called hkáya in Burmese, was read to be 7.5 percent alloyed; or that bore a mark like a flower or mimusops called cháya in Burmese, 5 percent alloyed; or that bore a mark like a jasmin flower, 2.5 percent alloyed.⁴⁴ A moderately alloyed silver bore a hairy or feathery appearance on the surface.⁴⁵ When there was no such mark, it meant that no alloy was compounded in it, or it was pure silver, or alloy compound was fused out. Such a kind of silver was called pwín-kwe.⁴⁶ Although their assaying methods and procedures for reading the quality of the metals were neither scientific nor accurate, the system, on the whole, worked in the Kòn-baung society with a fractional advantage to the money-lenders.

The British envoys who came to Burma during the Kòn-baung period carefully studied and recorded the Burmese monetary system in their journals. According to them, the Burmese assayers lacked credibility because their assessment of the allow percentage was far from accurate. Henry Yule noted these differences (see Table 23). There were pwè-zàs or brokers who made inferior silver currencies that were forbidden by royal orders of the Kòn-baung kings. Because of the complication of the system, an assayer and a weigher were always invited to all business transactions.

The silver currency weights before 1865 were important in our study. One could get cheated if one's counterpart used illegal weights. The money-lenders always declared what sort of weights they used in their business. So far, we have only three types of

weights with the effigies of certain birds and beasts mentioned in the thet-káyits. They were the Hìn-tha-lèi (sacred goose),⁴⁷ the Tò-lèi (a kind of fabulous animal),⁴⁸ and the Karáweik-lèi (a kind of mythical bird).⁴⁹ We also have other weights mentioned not by names of the birds and the beasts but by their striking features or otherwise, like the shit-hmyaún-lèi⁵⁰ (a weight with an octagonal base), the gàing-lèi⁵¹ (a weight with a mini-handle on top of it), the nàn-ù-lèi⁵² (a front palace weight), and the set-kya-lèi⁵³ (a swastika weight). In Taung-dwìn-gyì and Le-gàing, people also used Shan weights⁵⁴ whose figures and shapes we do not know.

Table 23

Differences in Percentage Between the Burmese and the
British Assessments of the Burmese Silver Currencies

Quality of Silver	Burmese Assessment of Alloy Percentage	British Assessment of Alloy Percentage
Baw	0	3-4
Hkáyú-bat	2.56	6.4
Daing	5.26	9.6
Ywet-ni	10.00	15.0

Source: Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, pp. 259-60.

As has been noted in my introduction, all Kòn-baung kings had their own weights cast early in their reigns for use in business transactions in the kingdom. According to Sir Richard Temple,⁵⁵ the Kòn-baung kings cast the following weights:

Álaùng-mìn-taya (1752-60)	<u>Hsin</u> --Elephant weight
Di-pé-yin (1760-63)	<u>Hìn-tha</u> --Sacred Goose
Bádon (1782-1819)	<u>Chin-thei</u> --Lion
Shwei-bo (1837-46)	<u>Hìn-tha</u> --Sacred Goose
Págan (1846-53)	<u>Zi-wázò</u> --the edible nest swallow
Mìn-dòn (1853-78)	<u>Hìn-tha</u> --Sacred Goose
Thi-bàw (1878-85)	<u>Tò</u> --a kind of fabulous animal

So far, we do not find any particular weight in use in the thet-káyits prior to 1794. However, a money-lender in one thet-káyit dated 20 February 1820 claimed that he used a "Hìn-tha weight cast in the year six, by his majesty."⁵⁶ The year "six" seems to suggest the Burmese year 1116 that corresponds to A.D. 1754-55. In one of his edicts, Álaùng-mìn-táyà commanded a minister in 1755 to check if the people used the standard weights and measures.⁵⁷ Moreover, Álaùng-mìn-táyà also used the Hìn-tha as his royal seal.⁵⁸ Therefore, the information we receive from a thet-káyit can be judged to be correct.

A few hundred thet-káyits that belonged to the reign of King Bádon are extant. Curiously enough, none of them reveals the fact that he (the king) cast the lion weights. During his reign, people used some weights that they referred to as the nàn-ù-lei (front palace weight), the álei-haùng (old weight), and the gàing-lei (a weight with a handle shape on top of it). Although we do not know the effigy of the weight, we are sure that King Bádon issued new

weights in the palace enclosure. And his weights had a handle-shape on top of them.

During the reign of King Ságaing, who is popularly known as Bágyi-daw, people used several different weights, among which were: the nàn-ù-lei, the álei-haung, the gaing-lei, the set-kya-lei, the shit-hmyaung-lei and the Hin-tha-lei. The use of Hin-tha-lei seemed to be more common. The evidence shows that its use prevailed not only in this reign but also in the reigns of Págan and Mìn-dòn. Of these weights, the set-kya-lei or the swastika weight was historically important. The Burmese word set-kya was derived from the Sanskrit word cakravatin, meaning world conqueror. It was believed that King Ságaing's son, who was born of the Chief Queen with auspicious marks, would become a sakravatin after succeeding his father. He thus came to be known as the set-kya prince. People who were his supporters or believers hung in their houses twenty kyat weights; and these weights were called the set-kya-lei or swastika weights.⁵⁹ People seemed to believe that they would be protected and that their economy would prosper when they hung the set-kya-leis in their houses. But when Prince Shwei-bo, who was also known as Tha-ya-wádi, ascended the throne by overthrowing King Ságaing in 1837, and put the Set-kya prince to death in the following year, the use of set-kya-lei died out.

According to Temple, King Shwei-bo cast the Hin-tha weights.⁶⁰ But we do not find any evidence in the money loan thet-káyits. Only the Tò-lei and the káráweik-lei are found in use. The Tò-lei certainly belonged to the earlier period because it was

suffixed with the word "haùng," meaning "old."⁶¹ As for káráweik-lei, it was still in use in the reign of King Págan. The evidence shows that King Págan issued the Hìn-tha-leis. In one thet-káyit, a money-lender pronounced that he used his majesty's Hìn-tha weight.⁶² One can also find in Professor Than Tun's collection a dated Hìn-tha weight bearing 1210 B.E., which corresponds to A.D. 1848. The Hìn-tha weight was still in use until King Mìn-dòn introduced a coinage currency. A money-lender from Taung-dwìn-gỳi claimed in 1856 that he used a new weight.⁶³ But he did not mention the effigy. Until 1865, people used different weights as they had done in previous reigns (see Table 24).

Table 24
Weights and Their Appearances in the
Thet-káyits (1794-1865)

Weights	Bádon 1782-1819	Ságaing 1819-37	Shwei-bo 1837-46	Págan 1846-53	Mìn-dòn 1853-78
Álèi-thit	-	-	-	-	1
Álèi-haùng	9	1	-	-	-
Gàing-lei	2	3	-	-	1
Hìn-tha	-	6	-	5	2
Káráweik	-	-	2	3	-
Nàn-ù-lei	11	3	-	-	-
Set-kya-lei	-	3	-	-	-
Shan-lei	-	1	-	-	1
Shit-hmyaúng-lei	-	1	-	-	-
Tò-lei-haùng	-	-	1	-	-

Although the Kòn-baung kings cast their own weights for the people to use in buying and selling and in other money-related matters as their standards, their people used all available weights. Of course, the Burmese weights were hardly accurate. According to the survey of Robinson and Shaw, the weights bear different measures even though they are in the same category and the same brand. They are mostly below standard measures. Weights over standard are also found.⁶⁴ Because of the different measures of the weights, fair deals could hardly be expected. Some dishonest people used to keep two sets of weights: one overstandard to use in buying and accepting the debt payments; another understandard to use in making loans and selling things.⁶⁵

Burmese weights reached as far in the east as Chiangmai, Viang Chang, etc., in the early Kòn-baung period.⁶⁶ The so-called "opium weights" in the Lanna Thai region⁶⁷ were no doubt the Burmese weights introduced probably in the 1760s and the 1770s when the Burmese forces were stationed there.⁶⁸ The use of weights as a component part of the monetary system soon died out when a coinage currency was introduced in Burma in 1865.

The Pwè-zàs

The pwè-zàs were very important in the Kòn-baung society, for they performed the tasks of both a broker and an assayer. Of course it was they who made and circulated various sorts of silver currencies. They were the experts in monetary matters. They were employed in "all mercantile transactions or other affairs involving

considerable payments."⁶⁹ Without their undertakings, no economic performance could have been done.

The sit-tàns reveal that there were hereditary pwè-zàs or brokers in many towns and villages where local or regional trade prospered; for example, Met-hkaya, Myei-dù, Pagan, Sòn, Tálók, and Taung-dwìn-gyì.⁷⁰ Some villages like Hsáìn, Let-hlaing, Kìn-dat, Ò-dein-taung, and Ywa-bò in Met-hkáya township also had hereditary pwè-zàs or brokers.⁷¹ Customary brokerage fees varied from place to place. In Myei-dù, one kyat from both buyer and vendor was charged.⁷² It seemed to be based on one hundred kyat worth sale. At Pagan, a 1 percent brokerage fee was customary, and the buyer and vendor each paid half.⁷³ In Sòn-myó, the brokerage fee was only one mù (one-tenths of a kyat) demanded from each party for one hundred kyat worth of sale.⁷⁴ In Talok, a 10 percent brokerage fee was customary from both parties engaged in a deal.⁷⁵ This would surely discourage the people from trading; this might be the reason why the Burmese people became risk-averse and clung to their traditional subsistence agriculture.

Before the introduction of a coinage system, pwè-zàs were always invited by money-lenders to assay silver currencies, lent out by, or paid in to, them. References were given to these pwè-zàs in the thet-káyits as ngwei-hkán (one who estimates the value of the silver), or ngwei-pyá (one who singles out the silver). Unlike the pwè-zàs, the ngweihkáns and the ngwei-pyás were not hereditary. They might be either an áthi or a crown serviceman. But they understood the monetary system and could read the quality of the

silver. Most of them took part more as witnesses than as brokers, without charging fees for their service.

As has been noted in Chapter 5, people who were referred to in the thet-káyits as the builders of pagodas, monasteries, mosques, ordination halls, reservoirs, rest houses, and the like were certainly the well-to-do áthis because they lacked office or territorial titles; they also performed as ngwei-hkáns and ngwei-pyás.⁷⁶ Moreover, local hereditary chiefs like the village headmen,⁷⁷ and other crown servicemen like the clerks from various departments,⁷⁸ the royal attendants,⁷⁹ and the palace security guards⁸⁰ were also invited to act as ngwei-hkáns or ngwei-pyás on the occasion of money-lending. So, it may be assumed that a place where there was no pwè-zà was a place where no trade ever prospered.

Introduction of Coinage

The Pyu of pre-Pagan Burma struck silver coins in different sizes and in different symbols from the first century A.D., although we are not sure whether these coins were currencies.⁸¹ The Mons⁸² and the Rakhinese⁸³ (Arakanese) also had coins as early as the fourth and the fifth centuries A.D. The Rakhinese coins were definitely currencies, whereas the Mon coins might be symbolic ones.

Insofar as Burma proper is concerned, the early literature of Pìn-yá⁸⁴ and Ava⁸⁵ reveals that the use of coins was probably obtained from the Arab and/or the Indian merchants with whom Burma had trading contacts for centuries--were already known to the Burmese people. Even the Burmese word "dìn-gà" for coins is derived from the Arab word "dinar" that means gold coins.⁸⁶ In the

Taung-ngu period, however, it is found that a sort of coin with a figure of Tò (a kind of fabulous animal) on the obverse and with a legend that reads "Maha Suhkam Nagaram" ("Land [of] great rest or happiness") on the reverse, was current.⁸⁷ Another form of coin that was also current was the coin with a figure of Hìn-tha (sacred goose) and the aforesaid legend.⁸⁸ All these coins were made of tin; and they seemed to be current only around Pegu. The kings of the restored Taung-ngu dynasty, whose seat was at Ava in upper Burma, were well aware of the coinage system and its advantages even though they maintained the traditional system of the lump silver currencies in upper Burma. The king's treasury had coins obtained from port cities where foreign trade prospered.⁸⁹ In short, the evidence suggests that Burmese kings of earlier dynasties were well informed about the coinage currency even though they did not make attempts to introduce it to the society.

In the Kòn-baung period, the first king who made vigorous efforts to introduce a coinage was King Bádón (1782-1819). He conceived the idea of minting coins after 1784, the year in which he annexed the Rakhine state, where coinage currency had long been well established. The king issued new coins with his seignorage seal and legend in the Rakhine province.⁹⁰ We do not yet know the amount of coinage under various denominations he (the king) had issued in the Rakhine province. As the sit-tàn of Rammawadi in 1802 reveals, the silver kyat and mat (one-quarter) coins and the copper coins of lower denominations were in vogue.⁹¹ An official by the name of Zeiyá Kyaw Htin, who was appointed governor of Dvaravati

(Sandoway) in 1816, writes in his Mit-zí-má Dei-thá Áyei-bon that the king gave three times 100 viss of silver to each of the governors of the Rakhine province to defray the cost of constructing a highway from the Àn pass to Mìn-bù. The mint produced 16,000 coins for 100 viss of silver.⁹² This information tends to reveal that the king had issued at least 48,000 kyat coins that were 37.5 percent less pure than pure silver.

In the Martaban district, rough forms of silver coins called mat-seí (one quarter coin) were the vogue as currencies. All forms of taxes were paid with these quarter coins. They were made and distributed by the Martaban governor to use as currencies in his district, covering the townships of Áhtáran, Bá-lù-gyùn, Kàw, Kyaing, Lá-gùn-byìn, Moulmein, Myaing, Wìn-yaw, and Yeì.⁹³

To the people of upper Burma and the Shan state, different qualities of silver lumps were complicatedly used as before. Some tried to deceive others by claiming their debased silver to be the standard or good silver, or by using illegal weights in buying and selling. To eliminate such mischievous acts, King Bádon realized that a coinage currency had to be introduced.⁹⁴ He commanded the governor of Rangoon to ask Calcutta (the British government) to mint coins for his country. When Hiram Cox, the British envoy, came to Amarapura, he brought with him 20,000 silver and 100,000 copper coins.⁹⁵ The king's new mint that was also brought by Cox issued new coins in mid-1797. On 21 July 1797, the coinage currency was put into circulation. From the start, people did not accept the coined currency of the king. Why was it so? Hiram Cox comments:

For 100 ticals weight of silver, two and a half percent standard, delivered into the royal mint, 60 pieces each weighing one tical, would be given in exchange; that 20 of the pice I bought from Bengal were to be given in exchange for one of those coined ticals, or 40 pices of his majesty's coinage.⁹⁶

The king's reform was not successful because people thought that the king took too much profit from the coinage. Even though he enforced the use of coinage currency with a heavy hand, people adamantly refused to accept the new coinage. Finally the king gave up his monetary reform. His successors--Sagaing, Shwei-bo,⁹⁷ and Págan⁹⁸--did not make any more attempt to reintroduce it. During their reigns, therefore, the old system continued to prevail. However, changes took place after the second Anglo-Burmese war. Lower Burma was ceded to the British and King Mìn-dòn's Burma became landlocked; the politico-socio-economic conditions pressed King Mìn-dòn to introduce reforms including a coinage currency.

The British coins were slowly penetrating into King Mìn-dòn's Burma through trading. At first, the people of independent Burma did not want to accept them.⁹⁹ But, they later came to realize that the only medium for the purchase of British goods was the use of the British currency. People tried to acquire the British coins; money-lenders made loans with the British currency. As the thet-káyits reveal, the British coins were in vogue among the people of `In-lei,¹⁰⁰ Kyauk-ka,¹⁰¹ Le-gaìng,¹⁰² Málun,¹⁰³ Mandalay,¹⁰⁴ Ngázun,¹⁰⁵ Sálìn,¹⁰⁶ and Wùn-byeí.¹⁰⁷ King Mìn-dòn would surely feel embarrassed for the penetration of the British coins into his domain.

When the king decided to introduce a coinage, he gave the reasons in his edict as follows:

1. Old system was amenable to abuses leading to ill consequences in this life and in lives hereafter,
2. The land was a trade center where overseas traders came to do business, and
3. Coinage was one of the phenomena in a [progressive] country.¹⁰⁸

A minting machine was ordered through a British merchant, William Wallace, from Ralph Heaton and Sons, Birmingham.¹⁰⁹ The opening ceremony of the mint was held on 11 November 1865.¹¹⁰ Coins minted in different denominations were: four kinds in gold; five kinds in silver; one kind in copper; one kind in iron; and two kinds in lead. Gold coins were, of course, not current. "These were made mostly for friends of the officials at the mint and are not really coins of the realm."¹¹¹

King Mìn-dòn adopted the British monetary system. Traditionally, ten mùs made one kyat; in British Burma eight mùs made one kyat. King Mìn-dòn adopted the "eight-mùs-make-one-kyat" system. When the silver kyat coins came out in circulation, the British authorities made an assay of them and checked their weight. According to their records, it was found that the average weight of King Mìn-dòn's kyat coin had 180 grains and the fineness, 0.912, whereas the British counterpart had 180 grains in weight and 0.917 in fineness.¹¹² We see that the Burmese coins almost exactly corresponded with those of the British Burma. Insofar as the denomination of the silver coins and their equivalents in other coins

are concerned, Kìn-wun Mìn-gyì (Chief Minister of King Thi-bàw) is to be cited here (see Table 25).¹¹³

The circulation of new coins did not reach rural areas until 1867. It might be because Burma had no banks for effective circulation of coins all over the country, and the domestic trade by which the new currency could be put into circulation was not at that time in a stage of development. As a matter of fact, people in some remote areas were still using the silver lumps and ywet-ni.¹¹⁴ In other areas, people used both ywet-ni and coins.¹¹⁵ Why was it so? It seemed that people had some doubt about the value and validity of the new currency, and, therefore, they used both old and new currencies.

Table 25
Silver Coins and Their Equivalents
in Other Coins

Silver Coins in Denominations	No. of Coins	Weight in Silver	Copper Coins	Iron Coins	Equivalents in	
					Lead Coins (thick)	Lead Coins (thin)
1 <u>kyat</u> coin	1	1 <u>kyat</u>	64	128	256	512
5 <u>mù</u> coin	1	8 <u>pe</u>	32	64	128	256
2 <u>mù</u> 1 <u>pe</u> coin	1	4 <u>pe</u>	16	32	64	128
1 <u>mù</u> coin	1	2 <u>pe</u>	8	16	32	64
1 <u>pe</u> coin	1	1 <u>pe</u>	4	8	16	32

Source: Wet-masut Wun-dauk, Notes on the Burmese Coinage and Currency (Amarapura U Pyin-nya Zaw-ta's MS Collection).

Unlike King Bádon who pressed the people to take his debased silver coins in exchange with their pure silver, exploiting much profit from them, Mìn-dòn did not compel his people at all to accept his coinage currency. He paid salaries with new currency to all members of the royalty and the nobility and ahmú-dàns. Monthly donations to the Hsáya-daws were also made with coined currency. Furthermore, he procured varieties of crops from the peasants, paying them with silver coins, and assessed taxes to be paid with the new currency. Thus, the king cleverly put his coins into circulation. The royal mint was run for twenty years, and it produced during these years approximately 34,418,000 silver coins in four denominations.

Table 26
Approximate Output of Silver Coins
At the Mandalay Mint

Denomination	Years		Number of coins
1 <u>kyat</u>	1965-68		25,360,000
	1869-78		800,000
	1879-85		246,000
		Total	26,406,000
1/2 <u>kyat</u>	1865-80		1,600,000
	1881-85		373,000
		Total	1,973,000
1/4 <u>kyat</u>	1865-80		2,400,000
	1881-85		466,000
		Total	2,866,000
1/8 <u>kyat</u>	1865-80		4,800,000
	1881-85		373,000
		Total	5,173,000

Source: Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, p. 89.

Changes As Result of Coinage

A British official judged King Mìn-dòn's currency reform a failure on the grounds that there was no security for the quality of metal, and no legal tender for the coinage.¹¹⁶ For this reason, Burmese coins were not accepted in British Burma; and if accepted, the coins were considered to be of lower value.¹¹⁷ Of course, even the Burmese people, who were long accustomed to silver lump currencies in weight, did not accept the full values of coins; British coins were also dealt with in the same way.¹¹⁸ Even though the reluctance of the Burmese people to accept the coins of both King Mìn-dòn and the British at par value was apparent, we can say that the currency reform of King Mìn-dòn was, on the whole, successful because his coins were current and in use in independent Burma for twenty years until the time of British annexation in 1886.

King Mìn-dòn's reform brought about changes in political, economic, and social sectors. Before this reform, members of the royalty and nobility were granted fiefs for their maintenance. Those grantees were like the autonomous rulers in their districts and provinces. People in their districts were more loyal to them than to the central government or the king, not because of their just rule but because of their abuse of power and atrocity. Extortions were rampant; the government officials squeezed the people to pay various forms of taxes and levies, the greater portion of which went into their pockets. When King Mìn-dòn abolished the fief system, introducing the paid salary system to officials of all descriptions after

the establishment of a coinage currency, the power of central administration became more consolidated.

As has been noted in Chapter 5, the thathe-mei-da taxation was successfully implemented for the new coinage system worked and the chief Buddhist monks helped supervise the officials in collecting the taxes. We see that the new taxation system benefitted the king in several ways: the increase of revenues, termination of power base of the royalty and the nobility, and consolidation of the power of the central government, especially the king. One historian, Oliver Pollak, asserts:

Thathameda reform and salaries increased central control and allegiance and diminished the power if not the titles of the local hierarchies. Local officials, now more than ever, were agents¹¹⁹ for the center rather than autonomous commanders.

Changes were also visible in the economic sector. Cash crop agriculture started to gain a foothold at this time. It brought forth the development of trade internally and externally. Since 1866, the year following an introduction of coinage, trade with British Burma burgeoned.¹²⁰ Though statistics on domestic trade are not available, it may be assumed that local and interregional trade developed because the central government sponsored many pagoda feasts or country fairs. And the new currency system also removed several obstacles, such as the use of different qualities of silver, the need for the presence of an assayer, and the standard weights and scale.

Before King Min-dôn's time, there were no workers or entrepreneurs in Burma. During his time, there emerged a new stratum of quasi-workers under the entrepreneurship of the king.

They were employed in various factories and mills, and in the ship-building industry established during the 1860s and the 1870s. However, excepting the king, the entrepreneurship did not come out in the society. There are various reasons for the lack of public entrepreneurship in Burma: the royal monopoly, the lack of capital, and the aversion of a population to risk. In Europe, during the industrial revolution, landless farmers from rural areas migrated to towns in search of jobs; they became workers in the factories. However, Burma's case was different, for the king's factory workers were mostly from service groups. They were not landless farmers, nor free men either. They received their wages in paddy. For these reasons, I call them quasi-workers. Of course they were the first workers ever engaged in factories of independent Burma.¹²¹

Leaving the social phenomena, I shall deal with the issues concerning the exchange values between the ywet-ni and the coined currency. When King Mìn-dòn minted coins and put them into circulation, he did not declare the exchange values between his coins and ywet-ni. Nor did he make an attempt to protect the debtors from the menace of money-lenders in settling old debts with new currency. Because of the lack of such protection laws, debtors were subject to the demand of their creditors. So far, we have three different exchange rates demanded from the debtors. Some individuals thought that the new currency was equal to standard ywet-ni in value.¹²² Some thought that the new coinage was of 20 percent¹²³ or of 25 percent¹²⁴ less pure than ywet-ni. The money-lenders demand the repayment of debts on one of these exchange rates.

I shall allude to some cases as to how old debts were settled with new currency. In a bondage loan, a woman borrowed money several times during the years 1836-55, securing her son as a kyun. The money-lender gave her different qualities of silver as loans¹²⁵ as follows:

Quality of silver (in percentage on <u>ywet-ni</u>)	Amount			
	<u>kyat</u>	<u>mu</u>	<u>pe</u>	<u>ywei</u>
5 percent less pure silver	10			
20 percent less pure silver	9			
2.5 percent less pure silver	5			
10 percent less pure silver	27	1		
21 percent less pure silver	3	6		4
26 percent less pure silver	2	7	1	
<u>ywet-ni</u>	3		1	
Total	64	5	2	4

In August 1871, the debtor settled her debt with coined currency; she was obliged to pay 70 kyats 4 mus with new currency.¹²⁶ When we compute all different qualities of silver into the ywet-ni value, we get 54.81 kyats in ywet-ni. It meant that 54.81 kyats of ywet-ni silver was equal to 70 kyats 4 mus of new coined currency. Supposing that the king's new currency was even equal in exchange value to the silver that was 25 percent less pure than ywet-ni; coinage equivalents of 54.81 kyats will be $54.81 \times \frac{100 + 25}{100} = 68.51$ kyats in ywet-ni, not 70.4 kyats as demanded by the money-lender. It is apparent that the creditor took 1.89 kyats more than should have been paid. It can also be assumed that the creditor took the new currency 28.5 percent inferior to ywet-ni because he computed the repayment of the debtor on this basis, that is, $54.81 \times \frac{100 + 28.5}{100} = 70.43$ kyats.

In Wùn-byei' the exchange ratio between ywet-ni and coined currency was 1:1.25. The creditors worked out the amount of repayment by their debtors on this ratio basis. When I checked their computations I found that some were incorrect. For example, a creditor took 168.75 kyats of coined currency from his debtor for a loan of 127.75 kyats in ywet-ni.¹²⁷ Of course, the equivalents of 123.75 ywet-ni should be $123.75 \times \frac{100 + 25}{100} = 154.69$ kyats in coined currency. The creditor took 14.06 kyats more than due. The poor debtor paid back the debt as was demanded. All of these incorrect computations found in the money-lender's memo books, when checked, are all in favor of him. We cannot assume that these were happenstance. The complication of the old monetary system, ignorance of the debtors, and the lack of protection law, such as the declaration of official exchange rate between ywet-ni and coined currency, seemed to be encouraging the money-lenders to do such misdeeds.

Attempts to Introduce Agrarian Reforms

As has been noted, the loss of lower Burma compelled King Mìn-dòn to introduce reforms. He is generally considered to be an enlightened despot who had "a strong sense of public duty."¹²⁸ Of course, he realized that Burma, a landlocked country since 1853, could not exist unless reforms were carried out, on the one hand, and an appeasement policy towards the British was adopted, on the other hand. We have observed his new monetary system, and now we shall look into his agrarian reforms that are relevant to our study of the money-lending practices.

There were kings in Burmese history who became popular and were admired by the people due to their achievements, especially achievements in agriculture by constructing reservoirs, dams, and canals and repairing old ones in the pockets of central Burma. They carried out these works by corvee labor of the people. And those who had access to these certainly gained benefits. But, since the projects were carried out in areas where war captives and áhmú-dàns were settled, the áthis could enjoy little of the benefits of irrigation.

Like his predecessors, King Mìn-dòn also constructed reservoirs and canals in Shwei-bo, Yei-ù, Dáze, Di-pè-yìn, Álon, Mádáya, Mandalay, Meik-hti-la, and Mìn-bù by utilizing corvee labor.¹³⁰ We find that this practice, that is the use of corvee labor, affected some people who could not render labor for various reasons and also had no savings to pay cash contributions in lieu of labor, were bound to take loans to meet the demand. A thet-káyit from Le-gaing, dated 24 February 1862, reveals that a man by the name of Ko Shwei Kyu of Shaw-byu-bin village, who was to take part in the construction of a dam under the charge of their governor, mortgaged his paddy lands of twenty transplanters work (about four acres) to the headman of Pín-le-thet village for a sum of twenty-five kyats to pay cash contribution to the dam construction.¹³⁰ It indicates that there might be other Ko Shwei Kyu-like people who became indebted due to the corvee labor system for the construction of irrigation works.

But after the introduction of a coinage currency and the tháthá-mei-dá taxation system in 1868, King Mìn-dòn abandoned the demand of corvee labor for his irrigation projects by the request of

the hsáya-daws of the Di-pè-yǐn district.¹³¹ Since then, the king spent the taxed money on his irrigation projects.¹³² Most remarkably, the king commanded officials, including a Privy Councillor, the eater of Hkàn-bat; the Minister of Agriculture who was eater of Yàw; the Commandant of the Cavalry Units; Colonel of the Thu-ye Regiment; the Governor of Tá yok; the Governor of Aung-myei-tha-zi; the Governor of Ngásín-gù; and the Governor of Ságaing, to adopt an agrarian law. They met in the extension to the glass palace and adopted the following:

1. To clear forest lands for cultivation in areas under governorship at the expense of the tháthámei-dá taxes outstanding to each area for payment to the crown
2. To lend interest-free lands from the taxed money to the farmers who need draft cattle and/or seeds
3. To exempt those farmers who work on the newly reclaimed lands from tháthámei-dá taxation for certain years
4. To buy lands from the farmers who want to sell, by giving them fair price and rent the purchased lands back to them if they want to keep working on
5. To allow people to reclaim lands out of forests either at their own expense or at the expense of the state
6. To buy reclaimed lands if the holders want to sell; rent these lands to those who want to work on them; and exempt these tenants from tháthámei-dá taxation
7. To exempt landholders who work on their reclaimed lands from tháthámei-dá taxation; to supply them with seeds; and to allow them to manage on their lands at their will.¹³³

Even though we have no statistics concerning the reclaimed lands, we can surmise that this project would work since it offered much incentive to the peasantry. According to this law, people could

evade paying tháthámei-dá tax for two years by reclaiming lands and working on them. Moreover they have managerial and alienation rights over the reclaimed lands even though the reclamation was made at the cost of the state. Of course, King Mìn-dòn gave good protection to the peasantry. In one of his early edicts he forbade the members of the royalty and the nobility from taking the lands on which peasants were working, even though they (royalty and nobility) were mistakenly granted by his majesty.¹³⁴ And when cash crop economy emerged, the king granted farmers advance loans.¹³⁵ The crops cultivated for export to British Burma were wheat, varieties of peas, sessamum, and cotton. The evidence tends to reveal that some royal agents or officials forced the peasantry to grow cash crops and sell them to the crown at the lowest price. In the late 1860s, probably in 1870, a four-point directive was issued to all clerks by the Hlut-taw, which reads:

1. not to force farmers to grow wheat, peas, sessamum, and cotton without their consent
2. to let them grow whatever crops they like
3. not to force them to sell their crops at the price fixed by the officials
4. to buy crops from those who wish to sell.¹³⁶

Most strikingly, the Hlut-taw instructed the people to report to the Hsáya-daws if the officials exacted more tithe than was due.¹³⁷

It seems to me that King Mìn-dòn's agrarian reforms were also an attempt to counter the British efforts in lower Burma. After annexation of lower Burma, the British government adopted a policy to reclaim the delta by immigrants--especially immigrants from upper

Burma. And to attract the immigrants, the British government recognized the five different systems of land occupation: the Squatter System; the Patta System,¹³⁸ the Lease System; the Grant System; and the Colony System.¹³⁹ And also, we can say that King Mìn-dòn got the idea of agrarian reform from the British. Since the British efforts could not persuade the Burmese immigrants,¹⁴⁰ King Mìn-dòn's reforms can be judged to have been successful. Even ex-rebels who escaped to British Burma in 1866 came back to their native villages after King Mìn-dòn granted an amnesty.¹⁴¹

Not all conditions favored King Mìn-dòn in carrying out reforms, especially with farm laborers. During the early Kòn-baung period, Burmese kings, like Álaùng-mìn-táyà, Myei-dù, and Bádon waged wars against the neighboring states in order to get working hands in the cultivation lands. They settled the war captives in thinly populated areas where irrigation was accessible and assigned them to state lands to work on. This was the way the Burmese kings made attempts to boost their agrarian economy. But the situation was very different in King Mìn-dòn's time when compared to those of his predecessors. He could not pursue such a policy in his time; even he himself became a prey of British colonialism. Therefore, he bought several hundred kyuns to employ on the state lands. As a matter of fact, we can say that his agrarian reforms worked successfully and "Upper Burma [was] each year becoming less dependent than formerly on the Lower Provinces."¹⁴²

The success of King Mìn-dòn's agrarian reforms reflected on trade. Burma exported several agricultural products and crops to

British Burma and China. According to Crawford, the British envoy to Burma in 1827, Burma exported to China cotton goods that were worth Pound Sterling 225,000.¹⁴³ All cotton traders and agents were Chinese. But since 1854, King Mìn-dòn took control of this trade by declaring it to be royal monopoly. Therefore, Henry Yule, the British envoy to Burma in the early years of King Mìn-dòn's reign, writes:

This is a new feature in Burmese administration. In former times kings and ministers at Ava were wont to speak somewhat contemptuously of trade and merchants. But the loss of ¹⁴⁴revenue of Pegu has put the government to novel shifts.

Of course, King Mìn-dòn seemed to be very much concerned about the Burmese economy that might soon fall into alien control unless he stepped in. As has been noted, Burma's trade, both domestic and foreign, had been in the hands of foreigners, especially the Europeans, Arabs, and Indians and the Chinese for years until the time of King Mìn-dòn. Traditionally, Burmese people were not familiar with trade, especially with the outside world. Moreover, they were not rich enough either. These conditions certainly compelled the king to constitute himself the monopolist of certain crops and minerals.

Because of the success of the reforms, a cash economy began to develop. The crops exported to British Burma were cotton, sessamum oil, wheat, pulses, and tobacco.¹⁴⁵ Upper Burma was less dependent upon British Burma for rice. But it was because of this policy that the British merchants insisted their government annex upper Burma because there was no room for them to control the trade in upper

Burma, even though they were allowed by the Burmese government to run their steamers along the Irrawaddy and the Chindwin Rivers up to their upper reaches, and to extract teak from upper Burma forests. If King Mìn-dòn had not adopted an appeasement policy towards the British, Burma would have been annexed earlier.

ENDNOTES

¹U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 4: 86.

²Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 258.

³Father Sangermano, Burmese Empire, p. 172.

⁴MMTC.

⁵Than Tun, ed., ROB 1: 422.

⁶F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, pp. 102, 105, and 113-118.

⁷Yi Yi, "Kòn-baung Hkit-ù Myó-ne Ok-chok-pon," Sa-pei-hnín Lu-hmú-yeì Theik-pan Gya-ne, vol. I, part 2 (1968): 368.

⁸Than Tun, ed., ROB 4: 532.

⁹Yan-dabo.

¹⁰Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 148.

¹¹Ibid., p. 259.

¹²Gold prices found in the thet-káyits are tabulated below:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Quality of gold</u>	<u>Value in silver</u>	<u>Reference</u>
1826	Red gold	20 <u>kyats</u>	Yan-dábo Treaty
1827	Unknown	30 <u>kyats</u>	TTTC (22 March 1827)
1844	Gold leaf	19 <u>kyats</u>	WBC (29 May 1844)
1852	-	20 <u>kyats</u>	TGC (13 August 1852)
1864	Red gold	19 <u>kyats</u>	WBD (11 June 1864)

¹³Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 258.

¹⁴The sit-tàns of the Middle Land Villages in 1783 and 1802, TTTC. Also see Aung Than (Mandalay), Lú-gába Lú-thámaing, (Rangoon: Chindwin Sa-pei, 1977), pp. 140-49.

¹⁵Than Tun, ed., ROB 1: 295-98.

¹⁶Ibid., 4: 666.

¹⁷Ibid., 4: 660; F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, p. 270.

¹⁸F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, pp. 250-58. See Than Tun, ed., ROB 1: 327-332.

¹⁹Kyàw Sit-tàns of 1783, Burma Historical Research Department Collection, MS 94.

²⁰F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, pp. 75, 80, 82, and 101.

²¹Ibid., p. 143.

²²Than Tun, ed., ROB 4: 375; also see Father Sangermano, Burmese Empire, p. 174.

²³F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, pp. 134-35, 272, 277, 279-80, 282-83, 289, 313, 322-25, 343, 359, 361, and 377. Also see Than Tun, ed., ROB 1: 179 and 190.

²⁴WBC, 30 October 1850, 29 November 1850.

²⁵F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, pp. 375-79.

²⁶Howard Malcom, Burman Empire, pp. 176-77.

²⁷Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 259.

²⁸Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 260.

²⁹Father Sangermano, Burmese Empire, pp. 172-73; Howard Malcom, Burman Empire, pp. 176-77; Desai, British Residency in Burma, p. 116; Kenneth R. H. Mackenzie, Burmah and the Burmese (London: Roulledge and Co., 1853), pp. 81-82.

³⁰Baw, being hard to test, was not accepted for payments of taxes to the government, and it was also not current. See U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 4: 87-88; Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, pp. 259-60.

³¹References are often given to this kind in the thet-káyits; it was better than ywet-ni. It also had several variations in degree of purity above the ywet-ni. See WBC, 29 November 1850, 25 November 1862, and 21 May 1863.

³²Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 260.

³³Martaban 45 hku sit-tàn, Palm Leaf MS, NLC, no. 2272, hkaw reverse.

³⁴F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, p. 270.

³⁵Sir Richard Temple, "Currency and Coinage Among the Burmese," Indian Antiquary, vol. 57 (1928): 11.

- ³⁶RUCL, no. 151107, 7 July 1776, and 21 May 1783.
- ³⁷Judson's Burmese-English Dictionary, p. 336.
- ³⁸RUCL, no. 178505, 5 September 1780; *ibid.*, no. 151113, 7 June 1780; *ibid.*, no. 151107, 17 August 1786; and also see Than Tun, ed., ROB 4: 286, 369.
- ³⁹TGC, 3 September 1851.
- ⁴⁰WBC, 29 January 1862.
- ⁴¹Eight percent better than ywet-ni; i.e., one unit of ywet-ni is equal to .93 units of the eight mù-tet-daing.
- ⁴²TGC, 24 July 1847.
- ⁴³Yan-dábo.
- ⁴⁴MULC, párábaik MS, no accession number.
- ⁴⁵Judson's Burmese-English Dictionary, p. 336.
- ⁴⁶LZC, 15 May 1820.
- ⁴⁷LZC, 20 February 1820.
- ⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 23 February 1843.
- ⁴⁹STC, 15 November 1843.
- ⁵⁰NKC, 2 July 1833.
- ⁵¹LPC, 4 May 1808.
- ⁵²LZC, 20 December 1797.
- ⁵³KLC, 28 February 1817.
- ⁵⁴MNC, 13 April 1829.
- ⁵⁵M. Robison and L. A. Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, p. 31.
- ⁵⁶LZC.
- ⁵⁷Than Tun, ed., ROB 3: 137.
- ⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 157.
- ⁵⁹Mabi Hsaya Thein, Bázat Ya-záwin (Rangoon: Èi Èi Sa-pei-taik, 1967), p. 494.

⁶⁰Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, p. 31.

⁶¹See Table 2 on p. 13. Although concrete evidence is lacking, I would like to say that King Meyi-dù, popularly known as Hsin-byu-shin, cast Tò-leìs simply because his royal seal was a Tò. See Ya-záwin Ámeín-daw-tàn, NLC, no. 18945, ku reverse.

⁶²LZC, 14 July 1851.

⁶³LPC, 12 December 1856.

⁶⁴Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, p. 34.

⁶⁵Shin Kúmará Katthápá, Dhammá-ra-thi Pyó (Rangoon: Han-tha-wadi Press, 1929), para. 130.

⁶⁶Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, p. 7.

⁶⁷See Joanee Hankins. "'Opium' Weights," Sawaddi, vol. 5, no. 3 (January-February 1929): 15.

⁶⁸In an instruction of the Hlut-taw dated 25 September 1764, the Burmese government dictated all chiefs of Chiangmai Vieng Chang, Mong-lem, etc. to use the same standard weights and measures that were used in the Burmese royal city. See Ya-záwin Ámeín-daw-tàn, p. ku reverse to kei reverse.

⁶⁹Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 258.

⁷⁰F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, pp. 192, 362, and 363, Myei-dù and Pín-yá sit-tàns of 1783, MMTC.

⁷¹F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, p. 354.

⁷²MMTC.

⁷³F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, p. 200.

⁷⁴U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 2: 180; F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, p. 362.

⁷⁵Burmese Historical Research Department Sit-tàn file.

⁷⁶LZC, 26 June 1827.

⁷⁷LZC, 6 July 1804 and 18 June 1842.

⁷⁸WBC, 19 August 1858, and STC, 29 November 1862.

⁷⁹RUCL, no. 140599, 25 June 1860.

⁸⁰WBC, 3 October 1863.

⁸¹Aung Thaw, Historical Sites in Burma (Rangoon: The Ministry of Union Culture, 1972), pp. 8-9, 14, 17; also see Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, pp. 3-12.

⁸²Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, pp. 13-14.

⁸³Sir Arthur Phayre, "Coins of Arakan, of Pegu, and of Burma," The International Numismata Orientalia (London: Trubner & Co., 1882), pp. 1-30.

⁸⁴Sátú Yin-gá Bála, Ábhidhan Ti-ka Pat [A Pali Dictionary], Rangoon: Pyi-gyi-man-daing Press, 1956), para.406.

⁸⁵Shin Máha Ráhta Tha-rá, Tádà-ù-ti Min-gála Zei-di-daw Maw-gùn (Rangoon: Set-kya-wála Press, 1959), para. 36; also see Shin Egga Thama-dí, Thú-wun-ná Myà-pyit-hkân Pyó (Rangoon: Han-tha-wádi press, 1930), para. 20.

⁸⁶Henry Yule, Hobson Jobson (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1968), pp. 317-18.

⁸⁷Phayre, Coins, p. 31; Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, pp. 37-40.

⁸⁸Wet-masut Wun-dauk, Notes on the Burmese Coinage Currency (Amarapura U Pyin-nya Zaw-ta's MS Collection).

⁸⁹U Ká Là, Ya-zawin-gyi (Rangoon: Han-tha-wadi Press, 1961), pp. 269, 306, 333.

⁹⁰Than Tun, ed., ROB 4: 621; Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, p. 64; Arthur Phayre, Coins, p. 11.

⁹¹F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese Sit-tàns, pp. 109-118.

⁹²Zei-ya Kyaw Htin, Mit-zí-má Dei-thá Áyei-bon, palm leaf MS, London; India Office Library (Commonwealth Relations), Chevalliot Handlist No. 3449, part 2, ghi reverse - ghu reverse.

⁹³F. N. Trager and W. J. Koenig, Burmese sit-tàns, pp. 109-118.

⁹⁴Than Tun, ed., ROB 4: 228, 286, 314, 369, 624.

⁹⁵Hiram Cox, Burmese Empire, p. 310; Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, p. 67.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 312.

⁹⁷King Shwei-bo (1837-46), it is said, minted coins, bearing a moon on one side and a lotus flower on the other side. So far, not a single thet-káyit that reveals the use of a coinage during his reign has yet been found. Therefore, I am inclined to say that the king's coins are thought to have been commemorative. See U tin, Ok-chok-pon 4: 86; Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, pp. 74-75.

⁹⁸King Págan (1846-52) minted coins with a Shwei-pyi-sò bird (Common Iora Aegithinatifhia) on the obverse and a legend "Year of Religion 2390" on the reverse. These coins were also commemorative. We do not find them in the thet-káyits. But we do find that the king gave three hundred coins to Bá Nàn Má, mother of Hkun Saing, a Kachin chief. The king also gave 18,170 coins to wives of soldiers. U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 3: 75, 110; U Tin, Ok-chok-pon 4: 86; Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, p. 75.

⁹⁹Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 258.

¹⁰⁰TTTC, 16 April 1862.

¹⁰¹KKC, 6 December 1859.

¹⁰²MNC, 25 February 1862.

¹⁰³TGC, 27 March 1857.

¹⁰⁴NLC, no. 1046, 10 May 1865.

¹⁰⁵KLC, 31 May 1862.

¹⁰⁶TGC, 22 April 1864.

¹⁰⁷WBC, 12 March 1864.

¹⁰⁸King Mìn-dòn's edict, n.d., MADC, no. 4287.

¹⁰⁹Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, pp. 82-83.

¹¹⁰U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 3: 327-28.

¹¹¹Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, p. 90.

¹¹²Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, p. 88.

¹¹³Wet-masut Wun-dauk's notes.

¹¹⁴WBC, 11 February 1866 and 21 November 1867.

¹¹⁵YTC, Ngá'-zun 4, 10 April 1866; YTC, no. 24, 6 June 1867.

- 116 John Nisbet, Burma Under British Rule I: 396.
- 117 Robinson and Shaw, Coins and Banknotes, p. 89.
- 118 Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 358.
- 119 Oliver Pollak, Empires in Collision, p. 118.
- 120 J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 462.
- 121 U Maung Maung Tin, Shwei-nàn-thòn, pp. 162, 175, 176, 178-82.
- 122 KBLC, 14 December 1878.
- 123 KLC, 21 January 1880.
- 124 LPC, 6 April 1869.
- 125 LZC, 21 January 1836, 13 February 1855.
- 126 LZC, 25 August 1871.
- 127 WBC, 14 June 1881.
- 128 W. S. Desai, A Pageant of Burmese History (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1961), p. 203.
- 129 U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet 3: 161, 164, 211-13, 220, 237, 239, 308.
- 130 MNC, 24 February 1862.
- 131 MDBC, n.d., gi reverse.
- 132 *Ibid.*, 6 March 1871.
- 133 MADC, 13 October 1868.
- 134 MDBC, 24 March 1853.
- 135 W. S. Desai, Burmese History, p. 204.
- 136 MDBC, n.d., gaw obverse.
- 137 MDBC, 26 November 1868.
- 138 Patta is an Indian word that means a king of land grant in small size.
- 139 J. S. Furnival, Political Economy of Burma, pp. 51-54.

¹⁴⁰See Michael Adas, The Burma Delta, Economic Development and Social Change on an Asian Rice Frontier, 1852-1941 (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), Part II, Internal Migration in the Last Half of the Nineteenth Century.

¹⁴¹MDBC, n.d. hka reverse.

¹⁴²Oliver Pollak, Empires in Collision, p. 123.

¹⁴³Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 149.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹⁴⁵Henry Yule, Mission to Ava, p. 361.

CONCLUSION

Money-lending was prevalent and deeply rooted in Kon-baung society, playing a major role in Burma's socio-economic relations. The identity of the money-lenders and the borrowers can be easily perceived: the money-lenders were almost exclusively the ruling elites, while the borrowers were the peasant farmers and áhmú-dàns. Even the kings may be described as money-lenders because they made loans to Shan saw-bwas and provincial chiefs or governors. I am inclined to say that there were some political motives behind these loans. As far as we know, some loans did not accrue and others were not paid back. Years later the kings granted their debtors a remission of loans. The kings, thus, showed their generosity to their tributary saw-bwas and governors to receive the latter's support and loyalty: it was the way they used to organize their tributary chiefs. We can say that it was a sort of top-level patron-client relationship, exchanging a reward from the king for loyalty from the tributary chiefs.

Of the lenders, the members of the royalty--queens, princes and princesses--are often found in the thet-káyits. In one of King Badon's edicts, a wun--an official was assigned to collect from the debtors payments for loans made by some members of the royalty: the Nyaung-yàn Prince, the Mìn-dòn Prince, the Myá-daung Princess, the Kut-ywa Princess, and mother of Prince Nyaung-yàn.¹ Although there was no class of landed aristocracy² or of landed gentry³ in the

society, there were people who owned a fairly large amount of land; they were the members of the royalty, the nobility, and the hereditary chiefs in the provincial areas. They acquired lands by royal grants and/or by money-lending. They were also granted districts, towns, or villages as their fiefs, and thus, they styled themselves as the eater of a district (ne-zà), or the eater of a town (myó-zà), or the eater of a village (ywa-zà). They carried out money-lending business and trading merchandise of local needs in their jurisdictions. They dominated all spheres of economic performances: agriculture, trade and money-lending business. Some áhmú-dàns and many peasant farmers were their client-debtors or kyuns. As a matter of fact, the study of the money-lending thet-káyits means the study of the society and one of its economic pattern because the thet-káyits played a pivotal role in the socio-economic relations of the period under study.

An attempt has been made to deal with the Burmese socio-economic relations under these topics: (1) Class Structure, (2) Agriculture, (3) Trade, (4) Elites and money-lending, (5) Money-lending and the Monastic Order, (6) Money-lending and the Common People, and (7) King Mìn-dòn's Reforms. They were interrelated with, and relevant to, one another since the Kòn-baung social fabric was woven with the money-lending thet-káyits. Peasants and landlords, áhmú-dàns and officials, and the saw-bwas and the king were bound with the thet-káyits. And so, the thet-káyits were a sort of fetter between the clients and the patrons. They tell us why Burma lacked a landed aristocracy or gentry class and why

peasant revolts never took place under the rule of Burmese kings. Conversely, the only major peasant rebellion broke out in 1930 while Burma was under British rule.

Why Burma Lacked Landed Aristocracy and Gentry

The literary sources of Pre-Colonial Burma tell of the existence of the social classes. Of course, they were simply the regiment-like social groupings organized by kings throughout the ages. They were called ású or áhmú-dàns meaning crown service groups. The non-áhmú-dàns were the áthis; they were not bound to any institution to render service, except the liability to corvee labor and military services when demanded by the state. Apart from these two major strata, the áhmú-dàns and the áthis, there was a lower social group that was composed of pagoda slaves and the cemetery workers. Except for the people from this group and some low-grade áhmú-dàns, people from other groups could hope to be exalted to the nobility status if the king favored them either because of their valor or talent.

The status of both royalty and the nobility was not hereditary. It was solely up to the reigning king to determine the position of a person. It was not unusual for the members of the royalty and the nobility to be ousted from their social status and offices and to become worse off, relying upon their hands to make both ends meet. We find them even in the thet-káyits. Worst of all, King Thi-bàw dedicated an ex-queen of King Mìn-dòn, and her two daughters, Mìn-gìn Princess and Pyin-zi Princess, to his pagoda, the Man Aung Yadána, in 1882 as pagoda slaves.⁴ Moreover, there was also a

custom that when a new king came to the throne, he used to confiscate the properties of the old queens endowed by his predecessor⁵ and drove out many lesser queens in order to make room for his new ones. As far as the princes are concerned, there was no fixed rule concerning their rights and responsibilities. And due to the absence of a succession law, every prince could be a pretender. Consequently, plots and palace intrigues plagued Kòn-baung politics. Massacres of kinsmen took place in every reign in the later Kòn-baung period. As a result, the members of the royalty could not constitute a formidable class; family feuds were rampant among them.

The life of court officials was also not secure. Whenever a new king ascended the throne by means of revolution or by other means, many officials were removed from their offices so that the royal favorites were to be appointed therein. Unlike China, officials were not recruited through civil service examinations. It was the king who selected and appointed officials in various departments. It was also he who dismissed them whenever he was displeased with them. But, while in office, these officials could "live in clover." They were granted fiefs, lands, titles, badges and insignias, and so forth. They were patrons of a particular ású or a regiment of áhmú-dàns, or of the people of a district. Like the members of the royalty, they also could not consolidate their position to be a class of landed aristocracy.

Furthermore, there were other factors that obstructed the emergence of a landowner class: the polygamous practice and the

lavish donations of the people to religion. Because of such practices, the properties and fortunes acquired during their life were drained away before and after their death. Therefore there was no continuity of economic development. They started their economic life from the beginning; and when they had amassed a certain amount of wealth, they then spent it on alms-giving or on construction of religious structures or on social welfare works. Their philosophy was to live a simple life with contentment, donating the surplus or the savings for the life hereafter.

Polygamy that prevailed in the officialdom is also another factor. King Mìn-dòn realized that it was this system that caused government officials to be corrupt. He attempted to limit the number of wives to officials so that corruption in the government could be brought under control. But it did not become reality when a critic argued that the king himself had to comply with that rule.⁶ How polygamy ruined administration can easily be seen in the Burmese chronicles. In one of the historical records under study, we find an official who had seven wives. He was a chief land surveyor of the Taung-ngu and Yámè-thìn districts during the early reign of King Thi-bàw. As the evidence shows, he remitted money to his wives and children several times during the years 1878-80. To the eldest son of the first wife, he remitted four times all of which amounted to 873 kyats; to a daughter of the second wife, three times amounting to 650 kyats; to two children of the third wife, seven times amounting to 580 kyats; and to three other minor wives, three times each amounting to 330 kyats each. Apart from this financial support to his wives and

children, we also find other payments to his superior and for some Hlut-taw officials that amounted to 799 kyats. He also gave valuable gifts and financial supports to other children of the first wife in the presence of the witnesses even though he did not mention the amount and the value of gifts.⁷ So one can imagine how big a family burden this official was shouldering. As a matter of fact, it is no wonder that he was one of the most corrupt officials in this district.⁸

Before introduction of the salary system, officials enjoyed the revenues from the districts, towns, or villages to which they were assigned or given as a fief for emolument of their service to the crown. They ruled there and carried out the business of money-lending and trade in their jurisdiction. In the course of time they became rich. Some administrative records reveal the richness of the officials. It was a custom in the traditional Burmese administration to submit to the government a list of property of a deceased official by the heirs for proper and legal inheritance. A junior official by the name of Mìn Hlá Kyaw Swa left behind 6520 kyat weight of silver (3809.77 oz), forty gold rings, and 180 kyat weight of gold (105.18 oz) when he died in 1806.⁹ The exchange ratio between gold and silver was then one to eighteen.¹⁰ And so, 6520 kyat weight of silver could buy 211.54 oz of gold. He would surely own lands.

A military officer (sit-kè) who died in Hsen-wi in the northern Shan state in 1806, left behind 6200 kyat weight of silver (3622.78 oz), 75 kyat weight of gold (43.82 oz), and 22 cattle.¹¹ After the rebellion of 1866 headed by two princes, Myin-gùn and Myìn-gon-

daing, one of King Mìn-dòn's ministers, who was known as the Mágweì-mìn-gyì, was found guilty of treason, and subsequently all his property including a great sum of money amounting to 1,200,000 kyats was confiscated.¹² It was really a tremendous wealth that could not be acquired by common people.

The officials realized that their life was insecure. With this view in mind, they amassed fortunes by all possible means, and spent them on meritorious works, building pagodas, monasteries, and the like while they were in office. Kòn-baung politics, removal of an official from his office usually meant that all his property was also forfeited. The evidence abounds in the royal edicts.¹³ In order to avoid such forfeiture, the officials used to spend their wealth on meritorious works that, they believed, would follow them to their next existence, accruing a thousandfold. It was also believed that by sowing the seeds of good karma or deeds, they could be reborn to a better life in another world.

From the royal city down to a remote village, many of the religious structures all over Burma were built by nobility and the hereditary chiefs, including the village headmen. To illustrate this fact I shall allude to the works of two high-ranking officials: Máha Ban-dúlá and the Kìn-wun Mìn-gyì. Máha Ban-dúlá was a very famous general during the first Anglo-Burmese war; he built several religious establishments. He built these pagodas: the Thit-sa-man in Álon; the Nei-yában in Myìn-mu; and a pagoda that is still called after his name, together with a tázaung (a structure built in front of a pagoda), a tank, and a garden in his native village. According to

his bell inscription, the pagoda and the tazaung he built in his native village cost 30,050 kyats and 36,715 kyats respectively.¹⁴ But we do not know the cost of other pagodas built in Álon and Myìn-mu. The total cost of his meritorious works would surely exceed 100,000 kyat weight of silver (58,400 oz.).

Another noble to be cited as an example in this study is the Kìn-wun Mìn-gyì. He was a famous Burmese diplomat during the time of King Mìn-dòn, having been sent two times to Europe as a head of the Burmese Embassy. During the reign of King Thi-bàw, he was appointed Chief Minister. While he was in Álon as a governor of that town, he built a pagoda known as the Yei-le-gyùn, together with a tázaung.¹⁵ At Mandalay, he built during his heyday a very grand monastery in Italian architectural style, spending on it over eighty thousand kyats.

Common people also perceived the law of impermanence taught by the Buddha. As evidence shows they were never reluctant to give alms or to spend their wealth on the construction of religious structures. H. Fielding speaks of the Burmese people in his The Soul of A People:

The inclination to charity is very strong. The Burmans give in charity far more in proportion to their wealth than any other people. It is extraordinary how much they give, and you must remember that all of this is quite voluntary....It is all given straight from the giver's heart. It is a very marvellous thing.¹⁶

The thet-káyits prove that his report is not an exaggeration because we find two hundred and thirty dágas--donors or benefactors of various sorts in six hundred and twenty thet-káyits. Among them

there were ninety-seven pagoda builders (hpáyà-dága), seventy-six monastery builders (kyaùng-dága), fourteen builders of other religious structures, nine builders of rest-houses (záyat-dága), six builders of tanks or reservoirs (yei-kan-dága), two builders of bridges (tádà-dága), and twenty-six benefactors or donors of other kinds.

We can not say that the Kòn-baung economy was seriously affected by such lavish donations. Since there was no endowment of land and labor to religion by common people, there was no loss of labor and revenue to the state. And no economic development is also witnessed since there was no investment ever made in any form of business except money-lending and small-scale land speculation. If these donors or benefactors were the entrepreneurs and their donations to religion were used in economic spheres, then socio-economic development could be expected. But the Burmese economic concept was to some extent limited to the ideas of simple livelihood, contentment, and donation of savings.

However, some of their activities really benefitted the society to a greater extent. As is known, the traditional government did not take responsibility for construction of roads and schools in the country. People in the rural areas relied upon the benefactors who voluntarily built bridges, reservoirs, and rest houses for travellers to lodge in. Their great contribution to the society was the building of monastic schools in every village where the children of the local community learned their elementary education. Because of a lack of land endowment to the sangha order, there was no monastic

landlordism in this period. Furthermore, the landed gentry class also could not emerge since the people were very fond of donation in a prodigal manner.

The Life of Peasants

When a peasant rebellion broke out in Burma in 1930, the British colonial government magnified the millennial activities of Hsáya San, the leader, minimizing the role of Burmese nationalism that was gaining momentum and hiding the worse conditions of the peasantry under British colonial rule.

Kòn-baung politics saw myriad revolts both in the center and in the periphery, including some millennial movements.¹⁷ But no peasant or popular revolt under native rule had ever taken place, even though the Kòn-baung kings are generally regarded as tyrants. People suffered a great deal under frequent demands of corvee labor and cash contributions that were mostly followed by extortions. Natural calamities also frequented central Burma, causing the people worse problems. In such conditions why did the people remain quiet?

A British colonial official answers the issue like this:

And in Burma it was only the supreme government, the high officials, that were bad. It was only the management of state affairs that was feeble and corrupt; all the rest was very good. The land laws, the self-government, the social condition of the people, were admirable. It was so good that the rotten central government made but little difference to the people, and it would probably have lasted for a long while if not attacked from outside. A greater power came and upset the movement of the king, and established itself in his place; and I may here say that the idea that the feebleness or wrong-doing of the Burmese government was the cause of downfall is a mistake. If the Burmese government had been the best that ever existed, the annexation would have happened just the same. It was political necessity for us.¹⁸

It needs to be explained how the social condition of the people and the land laws were "admirable" with special reference to the peasantry of the later Kòn-baung period. As has been noted, most of the áhmù-dàns and the áthis lived in villages. All of them were cultivators. Their houses were mostly made of bamboo and thatches. Only a few people could afford to live in plank houses. Their life was simple and austere, having only a few possessions and these were mainly farming implements: hoe, plough, bullock cart, ax, bush knife, sickle, spade, large wicker basket, a pair of oxen or buffaloes, and so forth.¹⁹ They grew paddy, sessamum, Indian millet, cotton, etc. Of course, they grew these crops for consumption; but surplus was also sold for purchase of things needed. Land was plentiful if the people could clear the jungle. During King Mìn-dòn's and Thi-bàw's times, people were allowed to occupy the vacant state lands. As for áhmù-dàns, they were allotted at least five pes (8.85 acres) of the state lands. Moreover, the lands so occupied were regarded as their private holdings.

Under the Burmese kings, land mortgaging was very common, but the mortgagor never lost his right to redemption even though many years had passed. Most remarkably, the mortgagor or his heirs could demand additional loans from the money-lender or his heir if the mortgaged land was below the current value. If the latter could not fulfill the demand, the former could also shift the mortgaged land to another money-lender. In the colonial period, such rights were denied to the peasantry by the Chettyars--the Indian money-lenders. And the mortgaged land was to be registered as a

sale; the mortgagee paid the loan for the land "far below the sale value" of it.²⁰ Thus, poor peasant farmers who were desperately in want of money were compelled to succumb to the demand of the money-lenders. Finally they lost their lands to these Chettyars.

The life of a kyun in the Kòn-baung period was not worse than that of a tenant in the colonial period. The kyun's life was secure; kyuns were provided by their masters with food, clothing, and shelter. They enjoyed certain rights; they could take loans from their masters; most importantly they could enter into new bondage with a new master whom they thought more humane. It clearly suggests that their labor was always accepted as security for the money loans.

In the Kòn-baung society, kyuns were treated well. Bruno Lasker makes a remark that it was because of the low living standard of the people.²¹ It might be partially true; but the nature of the people and the influence of Buddhist teachings were the primary reasons why the masters treated their kyuns very well. Moreover, the kyuns were not war captives. Except for a few cases of runaways, we see no trace of cruelty of their masters. In one case we find that a female kyun was released from bondage in commutation because she was kicked by a member of her master's family.²² This event clearly indicates that the physical abuse of kyuns was not approved in the society.

However, one can find the cruelty of alien masters on their kyuns in the Memoir of Ann H. Judson by James D. Knowles. He mentioned two episodes; and the first one reads:

Mee Quay is about eight years old, and, having lost her parents, was taken by an Armenian²⁵ as a slave, and treated in such a cruel manner, that the neighbors were constantly coming to us with complaints and saying that they could not eat their²⁴ rice while they saw the poor child so unmercifully beaten.

And the second episode reads:

The other little girl, Mee Shwayee, is about seven years old, and was, by her parents, made a slave to one of the magistrate's interpreters, who is a Moorman,²⁵ and, from the situation which he fills, keeps the Burmans in great fear of him, so that we never heard of this poor child until it was almost too late. The case was then represented to us with the greatest precaution, through²⁶ fear of suffering the vengeance of the wicked interpreter.

As is seen, the cruel masters were not the Burmese nor the Buddhists. And these events happened in the Tenasserim province that was then under British rule. Citing these events, the author of the Burma Through Alien Eyes suggests that the Burmese were very cruel. Of course, the author has distorted the events by omitting the facts of who the masters and informers were, and where these events took place.²⁷

People who became kyuns were from the áthi class, especially from the peasantry. Their indebtedness was usually related with one of these factors: the frequent demands of imposts, natural calamities, and the prodigal donations. As far as the kyuns are concerned, their life and material conditions were not far worse for their being in bondage except that their freedom was to some extent given up to their masters. They worked what, where, or when they were employed by their masters, in compliance with the terms agreed upon in their bondage thet-káyits.

Redemption of a kyun either by himself or by any other person was always accepted. Moreover, a kyun could regain his or her freedom: (1) when his or her master was found guilty of treason and consequently his properties were forfeited,²⁸ (2) when his or her master or mistress released him or her in order to earn merit,²⁹ and (3) when the king liquidated all debts of the people to show his mercy on his subjects.³⁰

Therefore, it is clear that the life of kyuns in the Kòn-baung period was more secure than that of debt-ridden tenants and farm laborers of the colonial period.³¹ The kyuns could survive without earning since their wants and material conditions were rather limited, and they were provided with all the basic necessities, i.e., shelter, food, and clothing.

The Monetary System and Socio-Economic Development

One of the factors that hindered the socio-economic development of the Kon-baung period was the use of silver lump currencies. For hundreds of years, Burma remained a subsistence-basic agrarian country. The peasant farmers grew crops for their consumption. They bought things with their crops. Except for payments of taxes and other imposts, they did not need to have silver lump currencies.

The qualities of their silver currencies varied greatly. In commercial transactions, the pwè-zàs or assayers were always employed to make an assay of the silver currencies to work out the equivalents of the standard ywet-ni. As the lump currencies were used in weight, the scale and the weights were also used in trade

and other business transactions. Because of such a clumsy system, people chose to barter. In the money-lending business, the system always favored the money-lenders; odds were always against the debtors.

Under the subsistence-basic agrarian economy, money-lending and land-mortgaging were very common, but the amount of loan was mostly very small. This was because the majority of borrowers were poor peasants. Moreover, since there was no big trade and other business, loans for investment were also small. Therefore, people used to hoard their money in the earth whenever they earned a surplus or spent it in merit-making. We often come across some lucky people in the chronicles or in royal orders who found treasure troves while ploughing or leveling the ground.³²

After an introduction of coinage in 1865, some changes subsequently came about in the socio-economic sphere of the Kòn-baung people. A market-oriented agriculture emerged; trade with British Burma burgeoned. Though not fundamentally, some administrative changes also took place. For example, a new taxation together with a paid salary system was introduced, abolishing the fief system. As a result, extortions were not as rampant as before, and the rural society seemed to be more consolidated than before under the protection of the monastic order. The last two kings of the Kòn-baung dynasty, Mìn-dòn and Thi-bàw, secularized the order to get assistance from it in the provincial administration. But King Mìn-dòn's reforms were "nipped in the bud" since he himself was a prey of British colonialism. Seven years after his death, the British

annexed the whole of Burma. The colonial period saw a great difference of socio-economic life between the aliens who were composed of the Europeans, the Indians, and the Chinese who dominated Burma's economy and lived in towns, and the Burmese who lived in rural villages working on the lands mostly owned by the Indian Chettyars.

NOTES

- ¹Than Tun, ed., ROB, 5: 568.
- ²John Nisbet, Burma Under British Rule, 2: 236.
- ³H. Fielding Hall says that "there were no intermediate classes" between the king and a villager. The Soul of a People (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1899), p. 116. Maung Htin Aung, Burmese Law Tales: The Legal Element in Burmese Folk-lore (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 5; Victor B. Lieberman treats the local hereditary chiefs or headmen of towns and villages as the gentry class. See Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580-1760 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 92-96.
- ⁴U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet, 3: 600-601.
- ⁵Ibid, pp. 472-73.
- ⁶JBRs, 44, pt. I (1961): 55.
- ⁷MGC, parabaik MS 2.
- ⁸R. R. Langham-Carter, "Burmese Rule On the Toungoo Frontier," JBRs, 27, I (1937): 15-31.
- ⁹Than Tun, ed., ROB, 5: 812.
- ¹⁰Yan-dábo.
- ¹¹Than Tun, ed., ROB, 5: 815.
- ¹²JBRs 44, pt. 1, (1961): 53.
- ¹³Than Tun, ed., ROB 4; 256, 458; U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet, 3: 105; JBRs 44, pt. I (1961): 53.
- ¹⁴R. R. Langham-Carter, "Maha Bandula At Home," JBRs 26, pt. 2, (1936): 126-28.
- ¹⁵Idem, "The Kinwun Mingyi At Home," JBRs 25, pt. 3 (1935): 128.
- ¹⁶H. Fielding, The Soul of A People (London: Macmillan and Co., 1899), pp. 119-20.

- ¹⁷U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet, 3: 608.
- ¹⁸H. Fielding, The Soul of A People, pp. 91-92.
- ¹⁹Toe Hla, "Pyó-kábya-myà-dwin-htin-hat-thàw Ìn-wá-hkit Sì-pwà-yeì," [The Economy in the Ava Period as reflected in the Pyó literature] Tet-kátho Pyinnya-pádei-tha Sa-zaung vol. 13, pt. 2 (1979): 61-71.
- ²⁰J. S. Furnivall, Political Economy of Burma, p. 112.
- ²¹Bruno Lasker, Human Bondage In Southeast Asia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950), p. 17.
- ²²WBC, 22 June 1852.
- ²³Underline is mine.
- ²⁴James D. Knowles, Ann H. Judson, p. 361.
- ²⁵Underline is mine.
- ²⁶James D. Knowles, Ann H. Judson, p. 362.
- ²⁷Halen G. Trager, Burma Through Alien Eyes (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1966), pp. 164-65.
- ²⁸U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet, 3: 105.
- ²⁹Taw Sein Ko, Records of the Hlutdaw, p. 99.
- ³⁰U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet, 3: 606-607.
- ³¹U Maung Maung, From Sangha to Laity; Nationalist Movements of Burma, 1920-1932 (New Delhi: Southeast Asia Books, 1980), pp. 47-49; Patria Herbert, The Hsaya San Rebellion (1930-1932), Repraised (Melbourne: Monash University, 1982), pp. 1-18.
- ³²U Maung Maung Tin, Kòn-baung-zet, 2: 273; and U Tin, Ok-chok-pon, 3: 59.

APPENDICES

APPENDICES

Five appendices are presented here: a map of central Burma; sample thet-káyits; English translation of thet-káyits, a list of the military forces organized in various towns and villages in the later Kòn-baung period; and the paddy prices in the Kòn-baung period, gleaned from the thet-káyits.

The thet-káyits are the most reliable and useful documents for the study of Burmese social and economic life. They throw light upon several dimensions of the Kòn-baung society. Generally speaking, all the thet-káyits are similar although they were made in different parts of Burma. They mostly consist of seven parts as follows:

1. Date
2. Names and addresses of the component parties
3. Causes for seeking loans
4. Detailed description of the property (land, kyun, building, jewelry, orchard, etc.) pledged or sold
5. Amount of loan or price in silver with the description of its quality
6. Terms of agreement in detail
7. Witnesses including an assayer, a weigher, a draftsman, and a writer

The thet-káyits had no signatures of the contracting parties. To date, there have been no instances reflecting fraud or related legal cases. After upper Burma was annexed by the British in 1886, there were some changes in writing a deed. Since then, all forms of thet-káyits have been called sa-gyok. Not only the Burmese dates but the Christian dates were also used. Moreover, the British stamp papers were substituted for párábaiks, corypha and palmyra palm leaf. Signatures of the contracting parties and the witnesses were imprinted on them. Thus, we see two major changes: the establishment of the British legal system and the taxation on money-lending business.

The money-lending thet-káyits can be classified into four types: (1) loans on interest; (2) loans on the security of immovable property, such as cultivation lands, orchards, buildings, etc.; (3) loans on the security of jewelry; and (4) loans on the security of human labor, for example, bondage and sharecropping loans. Money loans on interest without security were not very common. As far as the evidence shows, such loans were available only in small amounts, and usually made to clients by a patron. In urban areas, loans on the security of jewelry or other immovable property and bondage loans were common. In rural areas, land mortgages and paddy loans were most common. By this means, a type of patron-client relationship was cemented in the Kòn-baung society.

Selection of Thet-káyits

Although my focus is on the later Kòn-baung period (1819-1885), I chose thet-káyits that cover a period from 1787 to 1892. It is

because I want the reader to see the continuity and change. Moreover, the thet-káyits clearly show how people became indebted. For example, the thet-káyits under numbers (2), (3), (9), and (11) show that one of the causes of the indebtedness of the people was due to King Bádon's aggressive policy to invade Thailand. Numbers (21), (22), and (23) also show that another cause of indebtedness was due to the first Anglo-Burmese war and the war indemnity clause of the Yan-dábo Treaty. Contest of inheritance (number 30), and funeral rituals (numbers 10 and 22) also caused some people to be indebted. Some thet-káyits show the use of particular weights (numbers 14, 15, 19, 20) and the customs of brokerage fees (numbers 14, 16, and 41). Moreover, the thet-káyits that reveal the different social status groups and the use of different qualities of silver lump currencies are also chosen in order that the reader might see the broader perspective of the socio-economic pattern of the period under study.

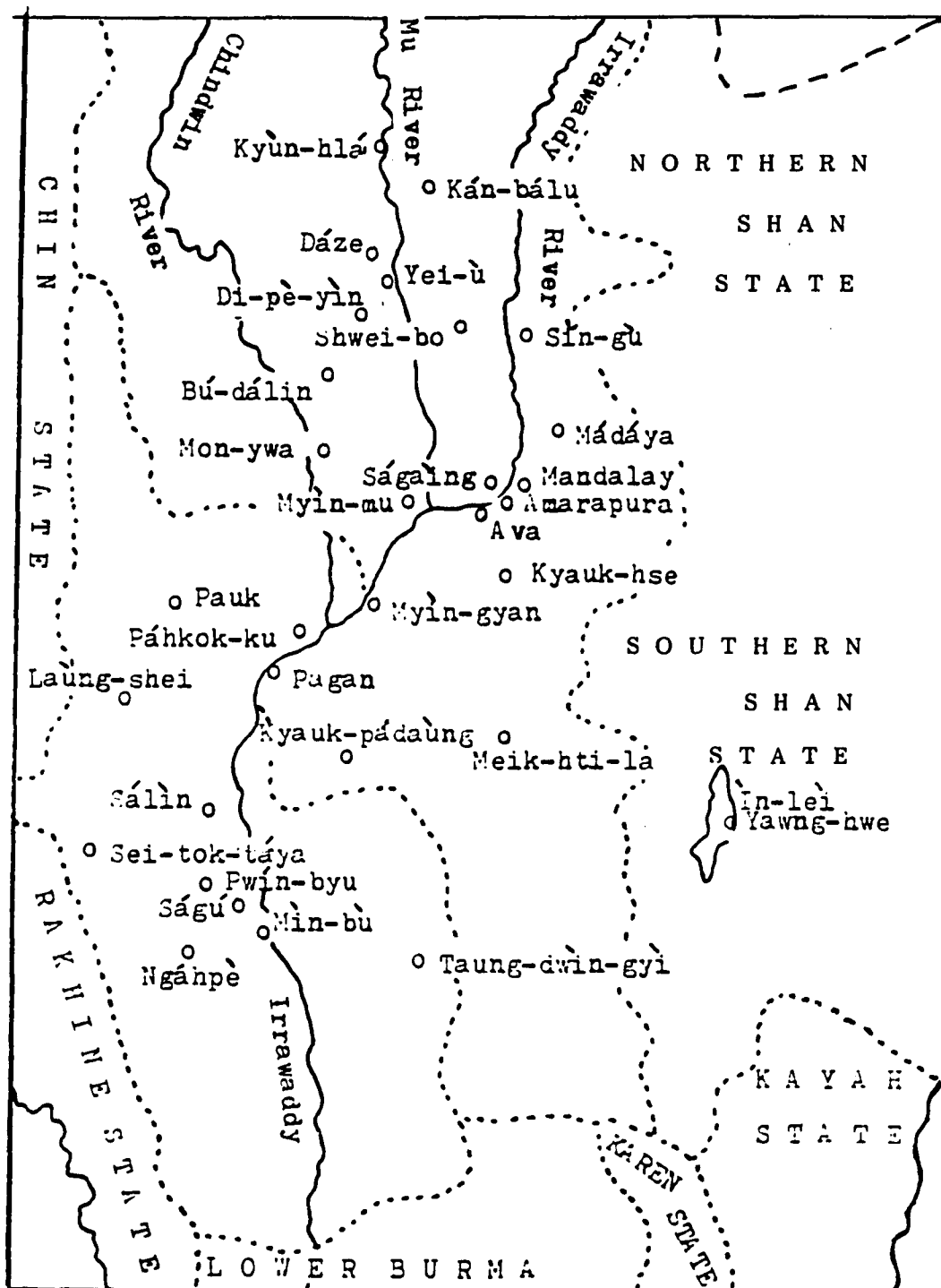
Translation

First of all, I would like to admit that I did not attempt to translate these thet-káyits word by word. Unnecessary repetitions were omitted. But, I did attempt to catch the original meaning and context. Unavoidably, I anglicized some Burmese words, like kyat-kè, mat-kè, and mù-kè that meant the portion of alloy compounded either in ten kyats or 1 viss weight of the ywet-ni silver; and mù-tet-daing that also meant the portion of alloy needed to be compounded in ten kyat weight of good quality silver to get the ywet-ni equivalent.

Arrangement

My selections of the thet-káyits total 45; and all of them are arranged simply in chronological order, without classification of their types, because the majority of them are land mortgages. The human mortgages or bondage loans are put under these numbers, (11), (23), (37), (38), (39), and (43); the sharecropping loans under these numbers, (1), (21), and (40); a loan on the security of jewelry, under number (41); a loan on the security of a bullock, under number (44); and the glebe land mortgages, under the numbers (4) and (33).

APPENDIX 1
MAP OF CENTRAL BURMA

Map of Central Burma Where Thet-kayits Were Located

APPENDIX 2
SAMPLE THET-KAYITS

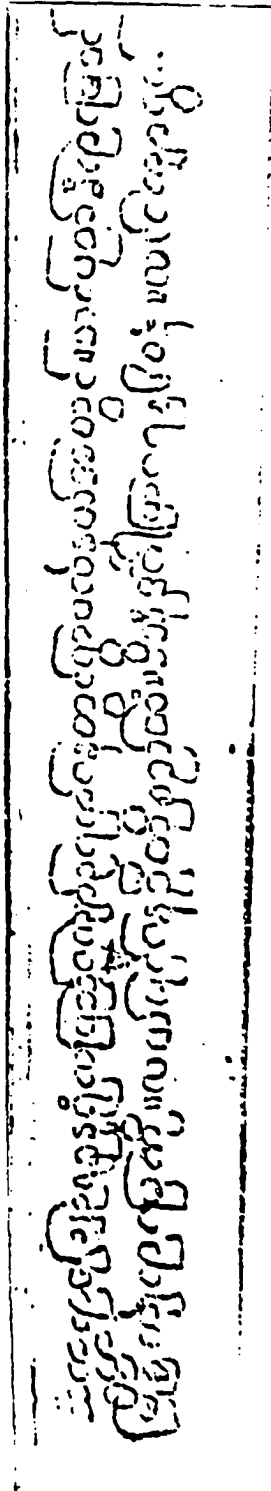
A Land Sale Thet-kayit Written on a Corypha Palm Leaf
(original size)

(English Translation is given on p. 342)

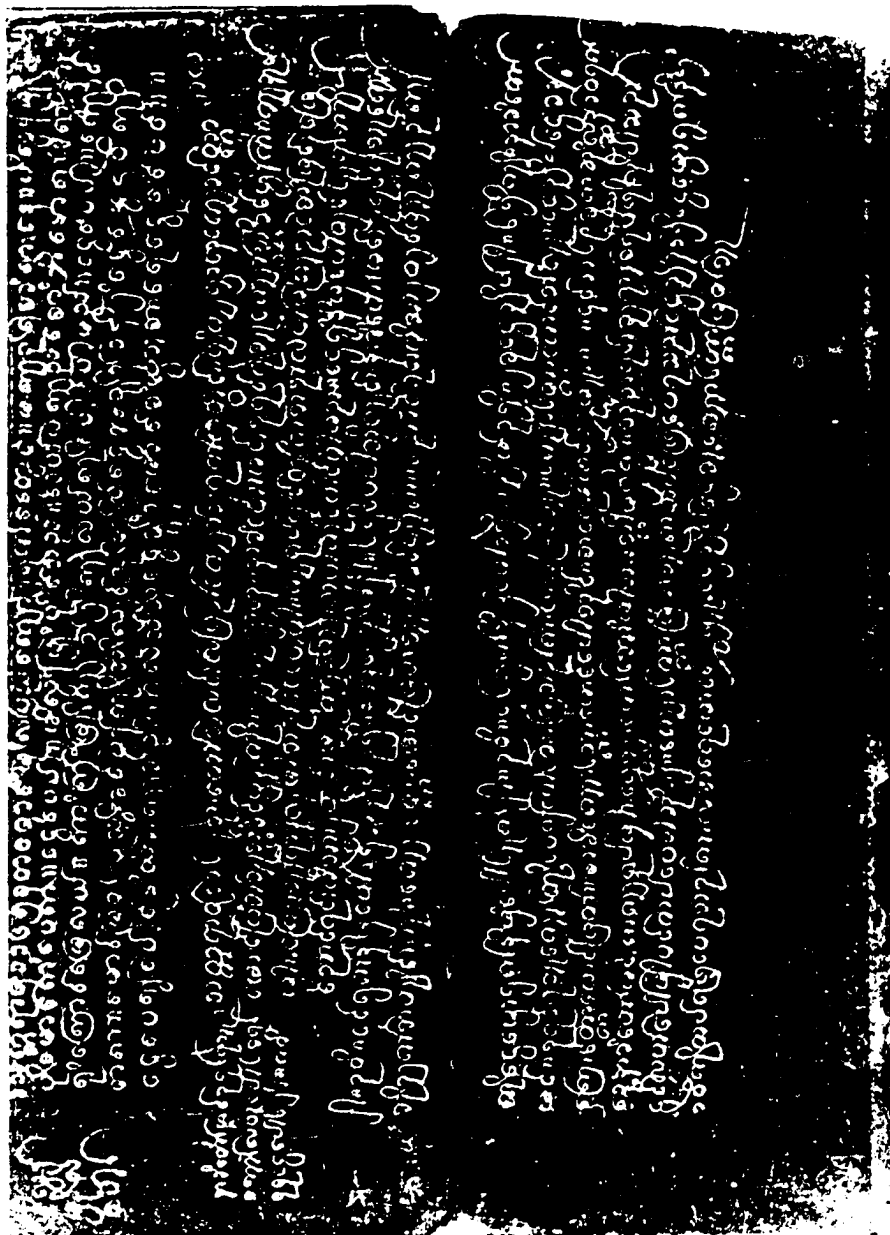
သက္ကရာဇ် ၁၀၉၁ ခုနှစ်၊ ဇန်နဝါရီလပြည့်ကျော် ၁၂ ရက်နေ့တွင် ကိုဦးဘွဲ့သား ကိုသာလေတို့က ကျယ်သာ
ဒုမ္မာပိုင်ကြီးက နေရာထွက် နယ်လယ်ပါး ယခုပင် ကြီးမင်းသား နေရာထွက် ကြီးမင်းသား လူငယ်
ဘိုသာ ကိုသာလေတို့ နေရာထွက် လယ်ခင်းဝင်၍ ကိုဦးဘွဲ့သား ကိုသာလေတို့ အတွက် နေရာထွက်
တာဝန်ပေးကြောင်းကို နေရာထွက် နယ်လယ်ပါး ယခုပင် ကြီးမင်းသား နေရာထွက် ကြီးမင်းသား လူငယ်
ကိုယ်တိုင် လက်မှတ်ရေးထိုးခဲ့ကြောင်းကို နေရာထွက် နယ်လယ်ပါး ယခုပင် ကြီးမင်းသား နေရာထွက် ကြီးမင်းသား လူငယ်
လက်မှတ်ရေးထိုးခဲ့ကြောင်းကို နေရာထွက် နယ်လယ်ပါး ယခုပင် ကြီးမင်းသား နေရာထွက် ကြီးမင်းသား လူငယ်
လက်မှတ်ရေးထိုးခဲ့ကြောင်းကို နေရာထွက် နယ်လယ်ပါး ယခုပင် ကြီးမင်းသား နေရာထွက် ကြီးမင်းသား လူငယ်

ကိုဦးဘွဲ့သား

A Land Mortgage Thet-káyit Written on a Palmyra Palm Leaf
(original size)



Land Mortgage Thet-káyits Written in a Parábaik
(English Translation is given on pp. 325 , 327, 328)



APPENDIX 3
THET-KÁYITS

(1)

7 October 1787
23 October 1787
23 August 1795

Thet-káyit 1149 Thádìn-gyut waning 10. Mí Kywet Má of Pagan-myei village said:

I need money to redeem my mortgaged land. Please lend me 30 kyats of silver, and I shall work as a sharecropper on my lands: two plots of Te-bin field that can be sown in 1.5 baskets of paddy; and another two plots of Htàn-bin field that also can be sown in 1.5 baskets of paddy.

When it was said, Maung Tha ù and wife of Byan-gyá village made a loan of 30 kyats of silver, of which 15 kyats 1 mat were the ywet-ni silver, and 14 kyats 7 mùs were the 20 kyat-kè silver. At the time Mí Kywet Má was granted a sharecropping loan of 30 kyats to work on the lands to which she referred, the weighers were Me Tok, the builder of a rest-house, and Má Nyo. The draftsman and writer was novice Myat Hmwei.

On the 12th waxing of Tázaung-mòn of the same year, Mí Kywet Má again mortgaged two baskets of paddy sowing land called Nábe-yìn-mi-thà for a sum of 21 kyats 8 mùs.

On the 9th waxing of Taw-thàlìn of the year [11]57, Mí Kywet Má mortgaged a one basket of paddy sowing land located in front of a hut for a sum of 14 kyats 2 mats of small ywet-ni silver.

RUCL, Párábaik No. 151107

(2)

16 May 1788

Thet-káyit 1150 full, Náyon waxing 11. Ngá Kaùng, the builder of a pagoda, and son Ngá Tha Lei of Bádwin village said:

We have to pay an impost to the crown. Lend us money and we shall pledge our land called Le-bok-kyì that consists of 14 divisions including a nursery, located on the west of the village; it can be sown in five baskets of paddy. The mortgage is on the basis of repay-the-loan-get-back-the-land.

When it was said, Maung Tha Ò, the builder of a monastery of Byan-gyá village gave a loan of 1 viss and 5 kyats of which 80 kyats were small ywet-ni, and 25 kyats were the 2 mat-kè silver. The witness was Ò Nei, and the weigher and writer was a royal listener.

RUCL, Parábaik No. 151113

(3)

3 September 1792

Land Mortgage by Û Nei

Thet-káyit 1154, Taw-thálin waning 2. Maung Nei, Chief of a cavalry unit and eater of Mágyi-zauk village said:

I need money to send a man to Yò-dáyà (Thai) expedition. Lend me money on the security of two plots of paddy land on the basis of repay-the-loan-get-back-the-land. These lands were granted to me for being a chief of a cavalry unit; they are located below the tank, in the north of the village. One by a bayan (Ficus Indica) and a thánat (Cordia myxa) tree is known as lower Nat-yìn that consists of 7 divisions and can be sown in 2.5 baskets of paddy; and another near a Nyaung-gyin tree (Fiscus infectoria) is a nursery and known as upper Nat-yìn.

When it was stated so, Mí Dùn, the builder of Byan-gyá village monastery and son Ngá Myat Thu lent a mortgage loan of 1 viss 70 kyats 6 mùs of which 66 kyats were the flowered silver for the price of paddy, and 1 viss 4 kyats 6 mùs were the 2 mat-kè silver, altogether totaling 1 viss 70 kyats 6 mùs. These lands were rented to the mortgagor to work as a sharecropper, at his own expense, paying the land revenue. The assayer and weigher was Ngá Pyán Hmweì, the builder of a pagoda, and the writer novice Ngá Hpyu.

RUCL, Párábaik No. 151113

(4)

10 February 1803

Thet-káyit 1164, Tábo-dwè waning 4. ù Htut Nyo of east Lín-zín¹ village said:

The Ok-hpo paddy land that consists of 7 divisions, large and small, nearly equals a pe. It being my holding, I have previously mortgaged it to ù Htun Hmin, big broker and son Maung Yweì for a sum of 4 viss of silver. Give me 1 more viss on it of silver as I am in want of money; I shall henceforth never claim the right to redemption....Let Mí Pwíns have the sole right on it.

The grandchildren of the big broker, the above-said mortgagee, gave additional 1 viss of the 50 kyat-kè silver, weighing with an old royal weight. When an outright land alienation was made at the price of 5 viss--previous loan of 4 viss plus additional 1 viss, the weigher was Maung Àw; the witness, novice Ngá Maung; and the writer, Maung Ya.

RUCL, Párábaik No. 140618

¹Name of a village where war captives from Vieng Chang were settled.

(5)

31 October 1803

Mí Lùn Hmo Mortgaged a Paddy Land

Thet-káyit 1165, Tázaung-mòn waning 2. Maung Kan Beì said:

Lend me money for Mí Lùn Hmo, and I shall pledge a Det-hkí-na-yon monastery land that can be sown in 1.5 basket of paddy, located in the west of Mágyi-zauk village, and presently owned by Mí Lùn Hmo.

When it was said to Maung Myat Thu, the builder of a monastery, and wife, they lent 14.5 kyats of the 40 kyat-kè silver. The thet-káyit was made in the presence of Maung San Htwà who acted as a weigher. The writer was the lender himself.

RUCL, Párábaik No. 151113

(6)

10 May 1804

Thet-káyit 1166, Nayon waxing 2. Maung Pyeí, the village crier of Thet-ke-gyìn said:

I am in need of money. I shall mortgage a 2 seiks (0.5 baskets) of millet sowing land called Gaùng-gwábin, located in the Pauk-pin-gan wood in the Tè-tha tract, for a sum of 45 kyats 1 pè.

When it was said, Me Bòn Zet, the founder of the Lei-tha monastery, paid loans: 13 kyats 2 mats 1 pè of the ywet-ni, and 31 kyats 2 mats of the 10 kyat-kè silver, totaling 45 kyats 1 pè. The weight used was a front palace weight, and the paid silver contained no dross or gum lac.

The assayer and weigher was Maung Shùn, a broker. The witness was Maung Shwei Ton.

LZC, Palm Leaf MS

(7)

19 September 1805

280 kyats of Mortgage Loans Lent to
Tu-yin Yè Thu Kyaw, Liaison Officer

Thet-káyit 1167, Taw-thálin waning 12. Maung Myat Thu, the builder of a monastery and wife of Byan-gyá village were stated by Tú-yin Yè Thu Kyaw, a liaison officer, and wife of Byan-gyá village:

I need money. Lend me 265 kyats weight of silver in two kinds: 230 kyats of the 6 mu-ke silver; and 35 kyats of the 15 kyat-kè silver. I shall pledge for the loan 2 plots of Nyaung-yìn paddy lands granted to me for my being a lieutenant of a cavalry unit, that can be sown in 3 baskets of paddy.

Then, Maung Myat Thu, the builder of a monastery, and wife lent Tú-yin Yè Thu Kyaw, the Liaison Officer, 230 kyats of the 6-mù-kè silver, and 35 kyats of the 15 kyat-kè silver, totaling 265 kyats. The witness was Maung Bi Lù, the builder of a monastery; the assayer and weigher, Maung Myat, the builder of a monastery; the draftsman, Maung Pàw Hsaing, the builder of a monastery; and the writer, Maung Shwei Hmù.

RUCL, Párábaik No. 151113

(8)

15 April 1807

(Thet-káyit) 1169, Káhson waxing 10. The Liaison Officer said:

As I have no son or daughter at the golden feet,¹ I need money for my traveling expense to the capital. Give me an additional loan of 15 kyats of the 10 kyat-kè silver.

When the Liaison Officer was lent an additional loan, the writer was Maung Shwei Hmù; the assayer and weigher, Maung Myat Thu, the builder of a monastery.

RUCL, Párábaik No. 151113

¹It meant the royal city.

(9)

2 December 1808

Dry Cultivation Land Called Sein-bàn-bin

Thet-káyit 1170, Nat-taw waxing 15. ù san Hmweì, the donor of a short-legged bedstead, and son Maung Hkè of Bí-thin quarter said:

We are in need of money to pay an impost to the crown. Accept our mortgage of Sein-bàn-bin land that can be sown in 6 baskets of millet, and is located in the Àuk-lin wood in the Le-zin village tract, and lend us 30 kyats of silver.

Me Bòn Zet, the founder of the Lei-tha monastery bought Sein-bàn-bin land from ù San Hmweì, the donor of a short-legged bedstead, and son Maung Hkè, giving 30 kyats of silver of which 15 kyats were the ywet-ni and other 15 kyats, the 20 kyat-kè silver, that were weighed with an old weight. The paid silver was drossless. Broker Nga Pwè acted as an assayer and weigher of the silver, and writer, too.

LZC, Palm Leaf MS

3 June 1809

Town clerk Ngá San Hlá of Mágyì-zauk-kòn said:

No paddy in the ban to consume. And funeral expenses are also to be paid. As of now, 5 baskets of paddy have already been consumed, for which I have to pay 25 kyats of silver. The debt incurred to me for funeral expense amounts to 22 kyats 6 mùs of the 20 kyat-kè silver. All these loans total 47 kyats 6 mùs and are to be paid to Maung Thu, the builder of a monastery, and wife. I cannot afford to settle these debts now. I have 3 baskets of paddy sowing land known as Pauk-yin, located in the Káni horse land; I acquired it through mortgage from Ngá Shwin, headman of Káni horse village. Take this land and work on it until I have liquidated all debts.

Then, Maung Myat Thu and wife lent Maung San Hlá, the town clerk, 25 kyats for paddy, and 22 kyats 6 mùs of the 20 kyat-kè silver (for funeral expenses), totaling 47 kyats 6 mùs. The land mortgage was made on the 6th waning moon of the month, Káhson, in the year 1171. The witness was Maung Kaùng, the draftsman, Maung San Hlá, and the writer, Ngá Hmù.

RUCL, Párábaik No. 151107

(11)

28 September 1809

Maung Sa Enters Kyunship

Thet-káyit 1171, Thádin-gyut waning 5. Maung Sa and wife, when ordered to join the army by the Kan-shei village headman, said:

I am not courageous enough to go to war. Please send someone for me for the expense of which I shall enter kyunship.

Then, Maung Kywet, the village crier, and wife gave a loan of 15 kyats of the 3 mù-kè silver; 17 kyats for paddy rice; 3 mats of the ywet-ni; and 1 kyat 2 mats 1 pè for paddy rice, all of which amounted to 34 kyats 1 mat 1 pè.¹ It was agreed that there would be no increase on, or loss of, the loan for the kyun's being alive or dead. When the bondage thet-káyit was made, the witnesses were ù Kyaw, ù Tha Nyo of Kùn-gyan-zú, ù Kan of Kan-shei Ywa-má, and ù Naing. The writer was Maung Tha Bàn.

LPC, Párábaik MS

¹The total amount when checked gets 34 kyats.

(12)

28 November 1810

Thet-káyit 1172, Nat-taw waxing 1. Maung Nge Pú and Shin Pein of Hsin-gyan village said:

We want to mortgage our lands: 4 plots of Hkaung-yǎn-gìn in different sizes including a nursery, that are located in the Hsin-gyan Tract; and 3 plots of Ná-bè-za-gìn in different sizes, including a nursery, all of which equal 2 seiks of a pe,¹ for a sum of 1 viss of silver--50 kyats in ywet-ni and 50 kyats in 20 kyat-kè silver.

According to the words of Maung Nge Pú and sister Shin Pein, Shin ù and daughter Mí Hpè bought these lands, paying 1 viss of silver--50 kyats of the 2 mat-kè silver and 50 kyats of the 10 kyat-kè silver. The draftsman and writer were Ko Hmaing and Ko Myat Hpaw.

RUCL, Parábaik No. 140618

¹A pe has four seiks and, therefore, two seiks of a pe means one-half of a pe; see J. G. Scott and J. P. Hardiman, GUBSS, pt. I, vol. 2: 168.

(13)

26 May 1811

Thet-káyit 11703 [1173], Nayon waxing 5. Shin Bòn and husband Maung Ò Ka, a lianson officer, said to Me Lon:

We have to repay a loan of 1 viss 20 kyats in feathery ywet-ni, taken from you, hypothecating our Kaùng-mon-gyaw land. We cannot settle this debt now. Take our lands located in the Aung-tha tract: Mágyi-gwá field of 300 wisps on the southern fringe of Thágyà-gádaw, that consists of a nursery; and Kok-ko-yìn field of 300 wisps, watered from the Myaùng-wá canal, and located on the west of Mágyi-gwá and on the eastern fringe of Kok-ko-zú village.

Me Lon took the lands after having investigated and assessed by the brokers of Ywa-pále village for a loan of 1 viss 20 kyats. The draftsman was broker Maung Pwè; the witnesses were Maung Pàw, a mason, and Maung Pei, headman of Ywa-haung-gan. The writer was Maung Hlauk.

LZC, Palm Leaf MS

(14)

10 May 1813

A Strip of Paddy Land Called Thámàn-baing

Thet-káyit 1173, Kahson waxing 11. Maung Myat Tha, Maung Shwei Yan, and Shin Yìn said to Maung Nò and wife:

While our parents were alive, we mortgaged a strip of paddy land called thámàn-baing, which consists of 7 divisions including a nursery, located on the north of Than-gon village, to Má Naw and daughter Shin Wet of the royal city, for a sum of 70 kyats of the 2 mat-kè silver. We also took an additional loan of 10 kyats of the same kind. Now we have to repay that loan of 80 kyats. Please settle our debt and take our land.

Maung Nò and wife bought the land, paying 80 kyats of the 2 mat-kè silver to Má Naw and daughter Shin Wet. The paid silver contained no dross or gum lac, and it was weighed with a royal front palace weight. When the transaction was made, the witnesses were Maung Myat Tha and Maung Kan Beì, the thweì-thauk-gyi. The assayer was ù Shàn Hpyu; the draftsman, the judge; and the writer, Maung Kywe Wá. Another witness was Maung San Htwà. The brokerage fee of 2 mats was paid by the money-lender.

KLC, Palm Leaf MS

(15)

17 March 1814

Thet-káyit 1175, Tabaung waning 12. Me Tàw, the builder of a pagoda, and daughter Shin Hkwèi said to Maung Shwei Bon, the builder of a monastery, and wife:

Please buy our ancestral land of 30 transplinters work at the price of 250 kyats. It is watered from the Shwei-myaung canal overseen by Maung Myat Tha, the Chief of Tálába land tracts.

According to their request, Maung Shwei Bon, the builder of a monastery, and wife bought the Pauk-pin land of 30 transplinters work, watered from the Shwei-myaung canal, giving them 250 kyats of silver--100 kyats of the ywet-ni and 150 kyats of the 3 mù-kè silver. The witnesses were: Maung Myat Thwin, the bearer of umbrella; and Ko Hpyu, the architect. Maung Yè acted as a weigher, draftsman, and writer. The weight used was the front palace weight.

MNC, Párábaik MS

(16)

15 April 1815

Ngà-dwìn-zi Land Mortgaged by
Maung Pú and Ma' Ein Thu

Thet-káyit 1177, Káhson waxing 8. Maung Pú and Ma' Ein Thu said to Maung Nò, the builder of a pagoda, and wife:

We want to mortgage a five-plot paddy land called Ngà-dwìn-zi of 500 wisps for a sum of 150 kyats; it yields 100 baskets of paddy, and is located on the east bank of the Táma-bin creek. We shall redeem it only after three full years lapse.

According to their request, Maung Nò and wife paid them 150 kyats of the following kinds: 53 kyats of the 10 kyat-kè silver; 42 kyats of the 25 kyat-kè silver; 28 kyats of the 19 kyat-kè silver; and 26 kyats 2 mats of the 27 kyat-kè silver. All these bits of silver were free from dross and gum lac, and weighed with an old royal front palace weight. When the mortgage was made, the witnesses were Maung Shin, Maung Htùn, and Maung Myat Aung. The weigher and assayer was Maung Htà; the draftsman and writer was the lender himself. The brokerage fee of 2 mats was paid by the lender.

KLC, Palm Leaf MS

(17)

21 January 1817

Thet-káyit 1178, Tábo-dwè waxing 5. When Maung Kan who was solicited by ù Tha Kyu to settle a debt of 40 kyats of the 2 mat-kè silver to Maung Hmù and brother Maung Shwei Yei, was demanded to pay, he said:

As I am to settle a loan of 40 kyats, I have handed over my musket that was worth 10 kyats of good-quality silver. I cannot afford to pay the rest of 30 kyats, and, therefore, I pledge my 2 baskets of paddy sowing land called In-gyìn-yin, located in the Mágyì-zauk tract. Accept my mortgage of land until I can clear my debt.

The land mortgage was made for a sum of 25 kyats of the 2 mat-kè silver, in the presence of Maung ù as a witness, Maung Kan as a draftsman, and Maung Shwei Yei as a writer.

Maung Kan again paid 15 kyats of the 15 kyat-kè silver to Maung Hmù and Maung Shwei Yei.

RUCL, Párábaik No. 151113

(18)

25 June 1819

Land Mortgage of Ywa-pálè Maung Yit

Thet-káyit 1181, Wa-zo waxing 4. Maung Yit said:

I want to mortgage a 5-plot paddy land of 10 transplanters work, called Ngáchin-ò, located in the middle island of Ywa-pálè in Tálok township. It is the land that my father Thein-hká Ya-záthu, the royal clerk, was bequeathed.

When it was said, Náya Wei Thaw, brother-in-law [of the mortgagor] gave a mortgage loan of 33 kyats--10 kyats of good-quality silver, 8 kyats of ywet-ni, one silk loin cloth of 15 kyats worth--to Maung Yit for the 5-plot Ngáchin-ò land. The mortgage was made on the basis of repay-the-loan-get-back-the-land. The assayer, weigher, and draftsman was the lender himself; the writer, Maung Gá Lèi; and the witness, Maung Shwei Wet.

KLC, Palm Leaf MS

(19)

20 February 1820

A 3-Plot Thit-hseín-bin Paddy Land

Thet-káyit 1181, Tabaung waxing 8. Me Myin-zu of Ywa-pálè, builder of a pagoda said to Maung Wìn, the thweì-thauk-gyì, and wife:

I am in need of money; I mortgage my 3-plot Thit-hseín-bin paddy land, located in the south of Le-zin village. Please accept it.

Maung Wìn and wife gave a mortgage loan of 54 kyats--3 kyats of the 35 kyat-kè silver, and 18 kyats of ywet-ni. The assayer and weigher was hsáya¹ Maung Nyo Èi; the draftsman, Maung Chan Kaung; and the writer, Maung Kyaw Gaung. The weight used was his majesty's Hìn-tha weight of the year 6.²

LZC, Palm Leaf MS

¹The word hsáya referred to indigenous doctor or medicineman.

²It implies the year 1116 B.E. that corresponds to A.D. 1754.

(20)

29 March 1820

Mí Hpyu's Blind Watercourse

Thet-káyit 1181, Tagu waning 8. Maung Shwei Yan, Maung Paik, Shin Yín, Shin Chìn, and Shin Hlèi said:

We want to mortgage a 2-plot máyìn paddy land of 600 wisps, called Mí Hpyu's blind watercourse, located in the west of Laung-tha village, for a sum of 60 kyats of the 10 kyat-kè silver.

According to their request, Maung Nò and wife gave a mortgage loan of 60 kyats of the 10 kyat-kè silver to Maung Shwei Yan, Maung Paik and Maung Shwei Tu, for 2-plot máyìn paddy land of 600 wisps, called Mí Hpyu's blind watercourse. The paid silver was weighed with a swastika weight that bore a handle. The assayer and weigher was Maung Hkwei, the boatman; the witnesses were Maung Tin, Maung Kaùng Myín, and Maung San Htwà. The draftsman was the money-lender and judge; the writer, Maung Shwei Yan.

KLC, Palm Leaf MS

(21)

12 September 1824

Maung Yè`

Thet-káyit 1186, Taw-thálin waning 12. Maung Yè` and wife said:

We cannot afford to pay 12 kyats 2 mats exacted for the recruits, the garrison, and the lower riverine column. Please pay for us 12 kyats 2 mats of the 20 kyat-kè silver, and we shall work as sharecroppers with our water buffaloes and seeds, and pay one-half of the produce from both dry and wet cultivations, at your hay stack.

According to their words, Maung Shwei Yei and wife gave a loan of 12 kyats 2 mats of the 20 kyat-kè silver to Maung Yè` and wife. When the sharecropping contract was made, the witnesses were Ámei [mother of the lender?], Û Nú, and Shin Hkan.

LPC, Párábaik MS

(22)

25 November 1824
16 November 1824

Aung-tha-le Bin-gwè Land

Thet-káyit 1186, Nat-taw waxing 5. Shin Kùn said:

The loan taken from Maung Ywè and Shin Lon for the funeral expense of Maung Hpei amounted to 91 kyats 4 mùs 4 yweìs; and an impost to the crown paid for me by Shin Lon amounted to 61 kyats 2 mats in ywet-ni. Both totaled 156 kyats 9 mùs 4 yweìs in ywet-ni. To reach 288 kyats, give me another loan and I will mortgage eastern portion of the 2 baskets of millet-sowing land called Aung-tha-le Bin-gwè.

According to their request, Maung Ywè and Shin Lon gave a mortgage loan in addition to previous ones--one for funeral expense and another for an impost to the crown--all of which amounted to 288 kyats in ywet-ni. The witnesses were Maung Mò, the digger of a tank; Maung Hlèi, the clerk; and Maung Èi, brother of the above.

On the 5th waxing of Nat-taw in the year 1186 B.E., Maung Shwei Gè asked cash contribution for the recruits, and it was paid [for Shin Kun?] by Shin Lon in the presence of Maung Mò. The amount was 15 kyats.

LZC, Palm Leaf MS

(23)

12 June 1826
19 November 1826

Thet-káyit 1188, First wa-zo waxing 8. Mí Mìn Ya's husband Ngá Shwei Tok said to Maung Ywè and wife:

I am in want of money to pay an impost to the crown. Please buy me to be a kyun, charging no interest on the bondage loan.

During kyunship, Maung Shwei Tok could be employed on the other side of the river or creek, overnight away from home, on occasions of childbirths and funerals, in trees short or tall.

Maung Ywè and wife gave a bondage loan of 40 kyats 3 kyats [43 kyats] 3 mats--23 kyats 2 mats in feathery ywet-ni, 16 kyats 1 mù of the 15 kyat-kè silver, and 4 kyats 1 mù of the 20 kyat-kè silver. All bits of silver were weighed with a royal Hìn-tha weight. The witnesses were father Maung Kaung, Maung Pú Gyì, and Maung Pyeí. The weigher, assayer and writer was Mìn Dáyin Naw-yahta Kyaw.

An additional loan of 3 kyats of the 70 kyat-kè silver was given on the 5th waning moon of Tázaung-mòn of the same year.

LZC, Palm Leaf MS

(24)

11 July 1827

Kyit Dry Cultivation land Sold by ù O

Thet-káyit 1189, Wa-zo waning 3. ù O and son Ko Tha Pei of Kòn village asked Thi-ha Zei-ya Kyaw, headman of a village circle, to buy a 2.5 seiks [0.62 baskets] of sessamum sowing land that they wanted to sell. According to their words, the land was assessed to be 35 kyats worth by ù San Tok, an assistant to the kòn village headman, and ù Kwe, the builder of a pagoda. Thi-há Zei-yá Kyaw, the headman of the village circle, bought the land outright, giving 35 kyats to ù O and son Ko Tha Pei. The witness was Ko Pwín of Ywa-má Hsaing-dàn. The weigher and assayer of the silver was Ko Yò, assistant to the headman of Kòn village. And draftsman and writer was Maung Tò.

LZC, Palm Leaf MS

(25)

4 April 1828

Thet-káyit of Sit-yin Paddy Field

Thet-káyit 1189, Tágù waning 5. Novice Myat ù and Maung Pa Nauk, father and son, being in want of money to settle a debt to Ngá Chìn O, mortgaged Sit-yin paddy field of 12 transplinters work to Maung Swa and wife.

Maung Swa and wife paid them 120 kyats: 60 kyats of the 35 kyat-kè silver; 30 kyats of the 8 kyat-kè silver; and 30 kyats of the 12.5 kyat-kè silver. The paid silver was without dross or gum lac, and all bits were weighed with a Hìn-tha weight. The redemption of land was to be made only after three years lapse. The witness was Ko Myat Kyaw; the assayer, Ko Myat ù; the weigher, Maung Ta Hkweì; and the draftsman and writer, Ko Kyaw, father of novice. The copyist was Maung Tok.

MNC, Párábaik MS

(26)

1 January 1829

Thet-káyt 1190, Pya-tho waning 12. The Taung-dwìn-gyaung Prince who needed 2 viss of ywet-ni silver said to uncle Maung Pwa and wife:

I want to mortgage for a small sum just about the nursery expense my mayin paddy fields of 4000 wisps: Kyei-bìn-daik of 1400 wisps; Ále-yò of 1000 wisps; Wet-kyein of 1000 wisps; and Tàw-na of 600 wisps, located on the western fringe of the above one. They are located in the Tet-thèi-ìn, and watered from the Hsù-bàn tank.

Uncle Maung Pwà and wife gave the Taung-dwìn-gyaung Prince a mortgage loan of 2 viss of the ywet-ni silver. The loan was made on the basis of repay-the-loan-get-back-the-land. The draftsman was uncle Maung Pwà; and the writer was Maung Yan Kìn, the steward.

NLC, Párábaik No. 1046

(27)

27 April 1832

Ù Baw, Ma Yauk, and Son Maung Shwei Èi

Thet-káyit 1194, Tágu waning 12. Ù Baw, the builder of a pagoda, Má Yauk, and son Maung Shwei Èi of Hsat-pàn-gòn village said to Maung Myat Pwín and wife who live near the outer San-ya gate of the royal golden city:

We want to mortgage our paddy lands--a 5-plot Sho-yò of 600 wisps, which is located in the Ìn-pet-let wood and belongs to Ù Baw, and a 3-plot Let-hkok-pin of 300 wisps, which is located on the east of the Lei-tin Monastery, and belongs to Maung Shwei Èi and mother Me Yauk. And we shall pay 100 baskets of paddy a year as land rents.

Maung Shwei Htùn of Wùn-byeí guaranteed that he would pay the mortgage loan together with the land rent of 100 baskets of paddy if they failed. According to their words, Maung Myat Pwín and wife bought the lands at 1 viss 5 kyats of the 27 kyat-kè silver. When the loan was made, the weigher was Maung Shwei Htùn; the draftsman, Mìn Si-thu Zei-yá of Wùn-byeí village; the writer, Maung Cho, headman of Wùn-byeí village.

WBC, Parábaik MS

(28)

16 June 1833

Thet-káyit 1195, Náyon waning 14. ù Baw, the builder of a pagoda, and Me Yauk of Hsat-pàn-gòn village took in the year [11]94 a loan of 1 viss 5 kyats of the 26 kyat-kè silver from Maung Pwín of outer San-ya gate of the royal golden city, pledging paddy lands of 900 wisps, and promising to pay 100 baskets of paddy a year. When demanded to pay land rent of 100 baskets of paddy, they said:

We cannot pay the rent--100 baskets of paddy. Please add up 33 kyats 3 mùs in ywet-ni--the current price of paddy per 100 baskets--to previous loan.

Then for a debt of 138 kyats 3 mùs--1 viss 5 kyats of the 26 kyat-kè silver plus 33 kyats 3 mùs for the price of paddy, ù Baw, the landholder and builder of a pagoda, Má Yauk, and son Maung Shwei Èi together with the guarantor Maung Shwei Htùn, remortgaged their paddy lands--a 5-plot Ìn-pet-let-taw of 600 wisps and a 3-plot Let-hkok-kòn of 300 wisps, that are located on the east bank of the creek in the Hsat-pàn-gòn tract--to Maung Myat Pwín and his elder brother Ko Myat Kywe on the basis of repay-the-loan-get-back-the-land.

The witnesses were ù Ya, ù Hnaung, and Maung Shwei Thà; the draftsman was Maung Sein and the writer, Maung Sò.

WBC, Párábaik MS

(29)

13 January 1839

Thet-káyit 1198, Tábo-dwè waxing 8. When Maung Shwei Lín of Kòn-dàn quarter, the royal golden city, demanded Maung Shwei Yauk of Hsat-pàn-gòn village to repay a loan of 40 kyats and 75 baskets of paddy, he said:

I cannot afford to repay the loan of 40 kyats in ywet-ni and 75 baskets of paddy; I mortgage a 5-plot Let-pan-bin paddy land that equals 6 pes, for a sum of 40 kyats ywet-ni and 75 baskets of paddy, on the basis of repay-the-loan-get-back-the-land.

It is agreed that Maung Shwei Yauk will be responsible if the land is taken by a former holder or by a ruler; and for payment of land tax or water-rate, the money-lender shall be responsible. When the thet-káyit was made, the witnesses were Thwèi-thauk-gyi Ko Tha Wá, Ko Shwei Eik, and Ko Ta Tei. The draftsman was Maung Tò, and the writer, Ko Hnìn.

RUCL, Párábaik No. 140599

(30)

27 December 1840

The Headman and Daughter Me Kyan Yit
Mortgage a Land

Thet-káyit 1202, Pya-tho waxing 5. Maung Cho said:

I need money to pay Me Í for a contest of inheritance in the court. And, therefore, I want to mortgage a paddy land of 150 wisps, called Ásheí-bet-hkwè, located in the southeastern wood of Wùn-byeí village, on the basis of repay-the-loan-get-back-the-land. Please lend me 20 kyats in addition to a previous loan of 10 kyats of the 3 mat-kè silver.

According to his request, Maung Pwín, the builder of a pagoda and wife gave a loan of 20 kyats of the 8 mù-kè silver in addition to previous loan of 10 kyats of the 3 mat-kè silver, totaling 30 kyats. The witness was Maung Shwei Nyo; the draftsman, writer and assayer was Shwei Taung Let Ya Kyaw, a forester.

WBC, Párábaik MS

(31)

6 May 1841

A Mortgage Loan to Maung Shwei Eik
62 kyats 1 mù of the 3 mù-kè Silver

Thet-káyit 1203, Káhson waning 2. When Maung Shwei Eik of Wùn-byéí was demanded to repay a loan of 62 kyats 1 mù--41 kyats 4 mùs of the 3 mù-kè silver and 20 kyats 7 mùs of interest, he said:

I will pledge a strip of paddy land of 500 wisps, known as 'In-gyi-let, located in the Yábè-nge wood on the west of Wùn-byéí village. And I will redeem my land at any time you want.

When the mortgage of 'In-gyi-let of 500 wisps was made for a sum of 62 kyats 1 mù--the principal 41 kyats 4 mùs of the 3 mù-kè silver and the interest 20 kyats 7 mùs, the witnesses were Mìn Shwei Hlá Kyaw Swa, Maung Shwei Thà, donor of a chest, and Maung Shwei Bei. The draftsman and writer was Maung Nyo Yaung.

WBC Parábaik MS

(32)

30 May 1842

Ù Yan Pyei

On the 7th waning moon of Náyon of the year 124 [1204], Maung Yan Pyei and son-in-law Maung Ni said:

We are in need of money. Please give us a loan of 10 kyats 3 mats ywet-ni silver on the security of our 3 nursery plots--2 Myìn-gyan-theis and 1 Bon-zan-zà--in addition to previous mortgages of the Bon-zan-zà, an inherited land, and the Tháhkò-má--the land we acquired through money-lending from the Maung Hmons. All these 5 plots will form a single unit in your hand.

According to them, Mìn Kyaw Htin Thi-yí Naw-yáhta and wife gave an additional loan of 10 kyats 3 mats ywet-ni silver for the nursery plots. When the loan was made, the witness was Maung Myat Hnìn. The writer was the money-lender and groom of the royal apartment.

BGC, Párábaik MS

(33)

26 June 1842

Dok Thè-gàw

Thet-káyit 124 [1204], First Wa-zo waning 4. Mí Dok and son Ngá Thein said:

We are in need of money. We want to mortgage 2 baskets of paddy-sowing glebe land of Pagan¹ Shin-má-hti pagoda, known as Thè-gàw, located on the west of Kok-ko-zú village. We acquired it through mortgage from Maung Myat Kyaing and wife of Hsin-hna-màung-gòn village. We bought it at 1 viss 3 kyats 1 mù--60 kyats 3 kyats [63 kyats] 1 mu of the 10 kyat-ke silver, and 40 kyats of the 15 kyat-ke silver--on the basis of repay-the-loan-get-back-the-land. Please give us current value of this land. However, if the original owner comes to redeem his land, take 1 viss 3 kyats 1 mu only as is said in the original thet-kayit.

According to their request, Min Kyaw Htin Si-thu Naw-yahta and wife of Byan-gya village bought the land at 1 viss 3 kyats 1 mu on the basis of repay-the-loan-get-back-the-land. The witness was Maung Waing of Pagan village; the weigher and assayer was Maung Yan Pyei of Byan-gya village; the draftsman and writer was Maung Hkwei. Copied.

BGC, Parábaik MS

¹This "Pagan" is a small village in Yei-u township.

(34)

2 July 1842

Ngá Nyún

On the 10th waning moon of wa-zo of the year 124 [1204], Maung Nyún of Kòn-tha-ya village said:

I want to remortgage a 3-plot Pauk-yín land that can be sown in 2.75 baskets of paddy, located on the west of Kok-ko-zú village. I bought it from ù Thi of Kok-ko-zú village at 50 kyats 7 kyats [57 kyats] of the 20 kyat-kè silver. Please buy this land with paddy rice at the current village price.

According to his request, Mìn Kyaw Htin Si-thu Naw-yáhta, the groom of royal apartment, and wife bought the land with 30 baskets of paddy and 2.75 kyats of the 20 kyat-kè silver from Maung Nyún in the presence of ù Shwei Yá, the Abbot of the Northern Monastery. The writer was Maung Paw Htin.

BGC, Párábaik MS

(35)

29 December 1844

Htein-gan Mí Yin Mìn, Wife of Ngá Shwei Bei

Thet-káyit 1206, Pya-tho waning 6. Mí Yin Mìn, wife of Ngá Shwei Bei said:

My husband Ngá Shwei Bei and son Nga Shwei Tháw took a loan of 120 kyats ywet-ni on the security of a young lad Ngá Shwei Èi, at the interest rate of 2 mats [per 10 kyats a month] plus 1 kyat of áhmyaw [per 10 kyats]. I am now hard up for money to settle it. Therefore, I shall enter kyunship for the entire amount of the capital plus the interest.

When Mí Yin Mìn entered into bondage, the witnesses were: Nei Myò Zei-yá, the herald of the Byè-daik; Maung Pyeí, the clerk to the left Wing Commander; Ngá Shwei Hko of the Royal Shield Regiment; and Ngá Thaìng, a hanger-on of an official. The writer was Nei Myò Thein-hká Thu, the herald of the Byè-daik.

Nei Myò Zei-yá	1 witness Ko Bò Mein
Maung Pyeí	1 clerk to the Left Wing Commander
Ngá Shwei Hko	1 Royal Shield Regiment
Ngá Thaìng	1 a hanger-on of an official
Nei Myò Thein-hká Thu	1 writer, herald of the <u>Byè-daik</u>
	Maung Hmaw

TGC, Párábaik MS

(36)

8 January 1846

Htein-gan Mí Yin Mìn and Son Ngá Shwei Tháw

Thet-káyit 1207, Pya-tho waxing 11. Ngá Cho, Ngá Kàw and Mí Yin Mìn said:

Apart from Mí Yin Mìn's bondage for a loan of 120 kyats once taken by Ngá Shwei Bei, the headman of Htein-gan village, please lend us 30 kyats more.

According to their request, the wife of the herald lent them 30 kyats of the 20 kyat-kè silver, reminding them that all these loans were to be paid back when they returned from their village. This note was made in the presence of Ngá Kya Bwín who acted as a weigher and writer.

Maung Kya Bwín

1 weigher and writer

TGC, Párábaik MS

(37)

9 September 1846

Maung Pei and Wife Mí Ok

Thet-káyit 1208, Taw-thálin waning 4. Maung Pei, wife Mí Ok, and daughter Shin Sò said:

We want to sell our daughter Mí Hko who is in bondage to another person. Please lend us a bondage loan of 40 kyats ywet-ni for her. And we shall move in your compound if you lend us another loan of 42 kyats of the 2 mat-kè silver.

According to their request, the herald Máha Mìn Tin Mìn Kyaw bought Mí Hko at 40 kyats ywet-ni, and also lent them 36 kyats 3 mats of the 2 mat-kè silver, when they agreed to the following terms:

If Mí Hko is taken away by a master or a ruler, or is unwanted anymore, or if we--Maung Pei, wife Mí Ok, and daughter Shin Sò, move out, we shall pay back 42 kyats of Mí Hko's bondage loan and 36 kyats 1 mù, totaling 75 kyats ywet-ni¹ plus the interest at the rate of 3 mats [per 10 kyats a month?].

When the bondage loan was made, the writer was Maung Paw, the witness, Maung Kya Bwin; and the assayer, the same.

Maung Pàw
Maung Kya Bwín

1 writer
1 witness and assayer

TGC, Párábaik MS

¹The amount 75 kyat ywet-ni is not correct, because 42 kyats of the 2 mat-kè silver equals 50 kyats ywet-ni ($MS \times 100/100 + AP = Y$, $42 \times 100/100 + 5 = 40$ kyats ywet-ni) and 36 kyats 3 mats equals 35 kyat ywet-ni ($36.75 \times 100/100 + 5 = 35$ kyat ywet-ni), totaling 70 kyat ywet-ni, not 75 kyat ywet-ni. Moreover, the figure 36 kyats 1 mu is also incorrect. It should be 36 kyats 3 mats.

(38)

9 March 1848

Ngá Shwei Bei

Thet-káyit 1209, Tágù waning 5. Mí Èi of Myó-shei Han-lìn quarter said to Si-thu Shwei Taung Naw-yahta, the steward and royal clerk:

I want to sell my son Ngá Shwei Bei to be a kyun at 60 kyats of silver. He will obey all your instructions.

Má Thet Shei and Má Û held themselves responsible for Mí Èi, pledging:

If Mí Èi's son Ngá Shwei Bei absconds or is taken away by a chief of a certain social group to which he belongs, or by a master or by a ruler, we shall pay not only the bondage loan but the value of his labor lost.

The steward and royal clerk and wife gave a bondage loan of 60 kyats of the 3 mat-kè silver to mother Mí Èi and the guarantors--Mí Thet Shei and Má Û. The witness was Ngá Thet Shei; the weigher, Ngá Ba and writer, Maung Shwei Yok.

WBC, Párábaik MS

(39)

1 May 1851

Mí Yit

Thet-káyit 1213, Káhson waxing 2. Pon-nà¹ Ngá Shwei Maung of Mìn-dè Mágyì-bin-hlá village and wife Mí Shwei ù said to Si-thu Shwei Taung Naw-yáhta, the steward and royal clerk:

We shall put our daughter Mí Shwei Yit in bondage to be a kyun if you lend us 30 kyats of silver. You will have the right to take her to inferior wife and the right to assign her to any task. If Mí Yit is taken away by another creditor or by a master or by a chief of a certain social group to which she belongs or by a ruler, we--Ngá Shwei Maung, wife Mí Shwei ù, son Ngá Shwei Lan, and brother Ngá Shwei Ni--shall pay all court costs incurred to you concerning Mí Yit.

The steward and royal clerk then lent them a bondage loan of 30 kyats of the 17.5 kyat-kè silver. The witnesses were Maung Shwei Eì of Mìn-ywa village and Maung Pei. The assayer and weigher was Maung Shwei Ya; the draftsman and writer was Maung Kywet.

WBC, Parábaik MS

¹Brahman. There were many Brahmans in the royal city who served under Burmese kings.

(40)

21 August 1854

Thet-káyit 1216, Wa-gaung waning 13. Nei Myò Mìn Hlá Tháman-tá Ya-za, overseer of the crown lands and groom of the royal apartment together with Ngá Shwei Myaing, a farm worker of Mágyì-bin-zauk village said to Máha Mìn Tin Ya-za, the Commandant of the Shwei Nàn Yò Lámaing Regiment and herald and wife:

If we are provided with 40 baskets of paddy seeds, we shall work as sharecroppers on our 12 pes of kauk-kyi growing land, located on the west of Mágyì-bin-zauk and watered from the Shwei-táchaung canal, with our own draft cattle. We shall also pay half of the produce carted to, and measured at, your barn.

According to their words, they were paid 26 kyats 7 mùs 1 pè of the 3 mat-kè silver for the cost of paddy seeds. They were also reminded to pay the rent at the barn in the month of Tábo-dwè. When the contract was made, the draftsman was Mìn Thein-hká, the judge; the witness was ù Bo, clerk to the Commandant of the Lámaing Regiment; and the writer Maung ù Ka.

NLC, Parábaik No. 1046

(41)

3 May 1858

Money Loan Thet-káyit Made by the
Dázeik-sà Tháhkin to Mìn Tin Thi-há Ya-za

Thet-káyit 1220, Káhson waning 7. Mìn Tin Thi-há Ya-za, a colonel of the king's bodyguards said to the Dázeik-sà Tháhkin:

I want to pawn a cháyà-thì-shape¹ ornament studded with 24 diamonds in different sizes, 103 pearls and 23 emeralds, of which the gold chain weighs 6 m`s 1 pè,² for a sum of 306 [3006] kyats 5 mùs at the interest rate of 5 mùs per 10 kyats a month. If I cannot pay back the loan in a fixed time, you can own it.

Then, the Dázeik-sà Tháhkin lent 2758 kyats 2 mùs 1 pè of the 6 mù-tet-daing³ silver plus 248 kyats 2 mùs 1 pè weight of alloy both of which make 306 [3006] kyats 5 mùs ywet-ni silver. The witnesses were Mìn Kyaw Zei-yá Mìn Tin, the clerk to Queen mother; Mìn Kyaw Thi-há Mìn Tin, the granary officer and steward; and Mìn Hla Mìn Kyaw, a chief royal gardener. The draftsman was Mìn Tin Thi-há Mìn Kyaw, head of the royal 50-thwèi-thauk; and the writer, Nei Myò Thi-rí Kyaw Tin. Brokerage fee 27 kyats.

WBC, Párábaik MS

¹A plantain bud-like fruit or that shape.

²It is equal to 0.38 oz.

³This was 6 percent better than the ywet-ni; i.e., 1 unit weight of ywet-ni was worth 0.84 units of the 6 mù-tet-daing silver.

(42)

2 February 1864

Ngá Ò

Thet-káyit 1225, Tábo-dwè waning 11. Ngá Ò, husband of Mí Shwei Ò, who dwells in Mìn-ywa village said to Min Kyaw Min Tin, the royal clerk:

I took from Min Kyaw Min Tin, the royal clerk, a loan of 44 [viss of] cooking oil for sale. The value was fixed 28 kyats 5 mùs 1 pè 4 yweìs and the interest rate of 5 mùs per 10 kyats a month. To reach 1 viss of ywet-ni silver, please lend me another 71 kyats 4 mùs 4 yweìs of the 25 kyat-kè silver. I shall pay back the loan within 8 months of the capital plus the interest. If I cannot pay back, our whole family--myself, my wife and children--will enter kyunship and render any form of service. If we fail to comply with the thet-káyit, Maung Ìn will hold himself responsible for us.

Then, Mìn Kyaw Mìn Tin lent Ngá Ò, husband of Mí Shwei Ò, and Maung Ìn, the guarantor, 62 kyats 7 mùs 1 pè of the 10 kyat-kè silver, the equivalents of 71 kyats 4 mùs 4 yweìs of the 20 kyat-kè silver, in addition to 28 kyats 5 mùs 4 yweìs of the 25 kyat-kè for the price of cooking oil, all of which amounted to 1 viss of the 25 kyat-kè silver. The writer was Maung Ò, the borrower himself.

WBC, Parábaik MS

(43)

24 November 1870

Mí Ku's Daughter Mí Hsaing's
Bondage Thet-káyit

Thet-káyit 1232, Nat-taw waxing 2. Mí Ku said:

I am in dire want of money. Please buy my daughter at 35 kyat coins to be a kyun. I hold myself responsible for her. I will pay not only the bondage loan but the value of her labor if she absconds or is taken away by a master or a ruler.

According to Mí Ku's request, the wife of the royal steward bought Mí Hsaing at 35 kyat coins, reminding Mí Ku to comply with the thet-káyit.

The witness was Mí Hse; the draftsman and writer Maung Pú, the bearer of royal betel box and water jug.

WBC, Párábaik MS

(44)

25 March 1882

Ko Le Yauk

Thet-káyit 1243, Tágu waxing 7. Ko Le Yauk and wife of Lìn-lè village said to Maung Nyún and wife of Kya-ín village:

[We] want to pawn a brown bullock that is able to run well, for a sum of 20 kyat coins. We shall pay back the loan in the month of Taw-thálin [August-September]. If we fail to redeem the bullock, we shall pay the interest at the rate of 5 mùs per 10 kyats a month for a period starting from the contracting day--the 7th waxing of Tágu.

When the contract was made, the witness was Ko Kyaw of Kya-ín.

RUCL, Párábaik No. 5258

(45)

25 March 1892

Hká-rit thet-káyit 1892, Mat-lá 25 [Burmese year] 1253, Tábaùng waning 13. Maung Po and son Maung San Tò of Hmet-htí village in Yádána Thein-gá township said to Maung Pàw, Tax Collector, wife Má Gyí, and son Maung Bei:

We want to remortgage 2-plot of 5 baskets of paddy sowing land called In-po-dàw, together with grass and trees grown on it, located on the south of Hsádaung-gyí village, bordering in the east with Maung Làw Hu's land, in the west with Maung Htùn Ei's land, in the south with Ngá Pyín's woodland, and in the north with Ko Kyu's land, for a sum of 105 kyat coins. We got it from Maung Kyàung O and wife Má Shwei Thi of Han-lìn town through mortgage; and we shall also hand over the original coiled thet-káyit. We shall redeem it before sowing beans on it. If any court cost is incurred to you by anyone of my coheirs or by other former holders, we shall pay two times a larger amount.

Tax Collector Maung Pàw, wife Mí Gyí, and son Maung Bei paid a mortgage loan of 105--one hundred and five--kyat coins...signed below. The writer was Ù Pàw, the money lender himself.

Witnesses:

Ko Thit, clerk, town dweller
Ko La, town dweller
Ù Pwín of Hsadaung village

Maung Po
son Maung San
Maung Pàw

MUHC, Párábaik thit-hseín 3

APPENDIX 4
MILITARY FORCES ORGANIZED IN THE
LATER KÒN-BAUNG PERIOD

Military Forces Organized in the Later Kòn-Baung Period

List of Thwei-thauk-gyi (Company Commanders), the Ákyat (Section Commanders) and the Ahmú-dàn (Privates), organized at various towns and villages in 1189 B.E. (1927), and 1212 B.E. (1850), which are kept in the Shwei-daik (Archive).

Town/Village	Thwei thauk	Ákyat	Áhmú dàn	Total	
Pìn-táì	10	50	500	560	organized in 1828
Kyauk-pádaung	3	15	150	168	organized in 1829
Taung-tha	1	5	50	56	organized in 1828
Nat-mauk	1	5	57	63	-do-
Nyaung-ok	1	5	50	56	-do-
Meik-hti-la	6	26	268	300	-do-
Tálok	17	85	850	952	organized in 1827
Myó-tha	1	5	49	55	organized in 1829
Yei-nan-gyaung	1	5	50	56	organized in 1831
Málun	1	5	64	70	-do-
Mágwèi	2	10	100	112	-do-
Myin-gùn	1	5	50	56	-do-
Sálei	2	10	100	112	-do-
Pagan	10	50	500	560	organized in 1830
Bágyi-taik	5	24	239	268	organized in 1827
5 Pyin-sa-lá towns	6	30	299	335	organized in 1828
Ngayáñè	1	5	50	56	organized in 1829
5 In-dauk-tha towns	7	35	350	392	organized in 1829
Laung-shei	1	5	50	56	-do-
Kàw-lìn	3	15	150	168	-do-
Htàn-dábin	2	10	100	112	organized in 1830
Kyan-nyat	1	50	50	56	organized in 1829
Káleì and Tein-nyìn	20	100	910	1030	organized in 1830
10 villages of					
Chaung-ù	2	10	100	112	organized in 1829
Páhkàn-gyi	40	200	2016	2256	organized in 1827
Di-pè-yìn	61	305	3050	3416	organized in 1828
Myei-dè	6	30	300336	-do-	
Kyei-myin and					
In-gyìn-hlá	1	5	50	56	organized in 1827
Ságaing	10	51	503	563	organized in 1845
Sín-gù	10	50	445	505	-do-
Myei-dù	9	45	446	500	organized in 1854
Ava	9	42	529	580	organized in 1845
Taung dwìn-gyi	36	180	1800	2016	-do-

(Continued on following page)

(Continued)

Town/Village	Thwèi thauk	Ákyat	Áhmú dàn	Total	
Ámyín	2	10	101	113	-do-
Htáyan-ga			20	20	-do-
Yámè-thín	10	50	500	560	-do-
Ságu	4	20	201	225	organized in 1845
Kyábin	2	10	100	112	-do-
Le-gaing	4	20	180	204	organized in 1838
Yáw	4	20	200	224	-do-
Hsaw	1	5	50	56	organized in 1845
Yín-daw	2	10	100	112	organized in 1840
Kyauk-myaung	1	5	44	50	-do-
A-la-kat-pa	1	5	50	56	organized in 1847
Nyaung-yàn	2	10	101	113	organized in 1855
Kani	6	30	270	306	-do-
10 Taik-kyan villages	7	35	346	388	organized in 1855
Nábet		3	33	36	organized in 1846
Pauk-myaing	1	5	50	56	organized in 1849
Sálin	10	50	440	500	organized in 1845
Pín	3	15	150	168	organized in 1829
Myó-tha, Bon-gyìn, Gyò, and Mìn-gyì village	1	10	99	110	
Tháyet				25	organized in 1854
Taung-gwin				68	organized in 1864
Páhtánágo				20	organized in 1827
Total	344	1716	17068	19120 ¹	

¹None of these figures are correct.

APPENDIX 5
PADDY PRICES IN THE KÒN-BAUNG PERIOD

Paddy Prices in the Kòn-baung Period (1785-1885)
(per hundred baskets)

Year	Price (in <u>kyat</u>)	Reference
1785	50	<u>YTC</u> , 24 September 1785
1792	50	<u>Ibid.</u> , 2 November 1792
1801	75	<u>WBC</u> , 7 June 1801
1804	200	<u>Ibid.</u> , 24 May 1804
1805	10.3	<u>RUCL</u> , No. 140604, 8 October 1804
1808	250	<u>KLC</u> , 13 June 1808
1809	75	<u>RUCL</u> , No. 140604, 31 March 1809
1811	150	<u>YTC</u> , No. 10, 27 January 1811
1812	400	<u>YTC</u> , 30 April 1812
1815	200	<u>Ibid.</u> , 23 May 1815
1817	100	<u>MNC</u> , day and month not mentioned
1818	40	<u>KLC</u> , 14 July 1818
1819	90.2	<u>TTTC</u> , 25 February 1819
1820	62	<u>Ibid.</u> , 18 October 1820
1821	120	<u>MNC</u> , 22 September 1821
1822	70	<u>Ibid.</u> , 3 June 1822
1823	33.3	<u>Ibid.</u> , 28 April 1823
1824	100	<u>YTC</u> , 31 October 1824
1825	100	<u>Ibid.</u> , 30 October 1825
1826	100	<u>KLC</u> , 12 February 1826
1827	100	<u>BGC</u> , 16 February 1827
1829	60	<u>Ibid.</u> , 13 February 1829
1831	110	<u>NTC</u> , 13 May 1831
1833	33.3	<u>WBC</u> , 26 June 1833
1834	40	<u>YTC</u> , 5 March 1834
1837	22	<u>LZC</u> , 30 January 1837
1844	100	<u>BGC</u> , 18 August 1844
1845	62.5	<u>Ibid.</u> , 11 September 1845
1846	37	<u>WBC</u> , 24 April 1847
1847	50	<u>MNC</u> , 24 October 1847
1849	60	<u>BGC</u> , 23 April 1849
1850	70	<u>STC</u> , No. 108, day and month not mentioned
1851	50	<u>BGC</u> , 10 June 1851
1852	63.3	<u>Ibid.</u> , 13 September 1851, P.S. in 1852
1854	100	<u>YTC</u> , 19 August 1854

(Continued on following page)

(Continued)

Year	Price (in <u>kyat</u>)	Reference
1855	75	<u>TGC</u> , 17 April 1855
1856	30	<u>YTC</u> , 20 June 1856
1859	150	<u>Ibid.</u> , 25 June 1859
1860	125	<u>WBC</u> , 28 March 1860
1861	125	<u>WBC</u> , 1 February 1861
1862	50	<u>YTC</u> , 9 July 1862
1863	60	<u>WBC</u> , 27 November 1863
1864	50	<u>KLC</u> , 27 July 1864
1865	75	<u>WBC</u> , 29 January 1865
1866	70	<u>STC</u> , No. 114, 30 October 1866
1867	33.3	<u>BGC</u> , 13 June 1867
1868	125	<u>STC</u> , No. 134, 17 March 1868
1869	60	<u>NLC</u> , No. 1411, 1 August 1869
1872	70	<u>YTC</u> , No. 1, 4 April 1872
1875	130	<u>MNC</u> , 30 June 1875
1876	50	<u>STC</u> , No. 112, 7 May 1876
1877	80	<u>YTC</u> , No. 10, 9 June 1877
1878	50	<u>YTC</u> , No. 11, 1 May 1878
1879	100	<u>LPC</u> , 10 May 1879
1882	35	<u>YTC</u> , No. 1, 25 January 1882
1883	50	Taw Sein Ko, <u>Records of the Hlutdaw</u> , p. 84
1884	60	<u>YTC</u> , No. 6, day and month not mentioned
1885	90	<u>STC</u> , No. 107, 10 March 1885

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- Myei-lat-dei-thá sit-tàn of 1783 and 1802, that consists of nine villages, namely Baw-zon, Ìn-lei, Kábe, Lwe-e, Lwe-an Mákwei, Nàn-hkon, Pin-hmi, and Tha-maing-hkàn, ù Thein Thàn Tùn, Writer, Hè-yà-ywa-ma, Ìn-lei, Southern Shan State.
- Pìn-ya sit-tàn of 1784, Parábaik MS, ù Maung Maung Tin, Advisor, Burma Historical Research Department, Rangoon University, Rangoon.
- Sága sit-tàn of 1784, Parábaik MS, ù Maung Maung Tin, Advisor, Burma Historical Research Department, Rangoon University, Rangoon.
- Sàa-dàw sit-tàn of 1783 and 1803, Parábaik MS, ù Toe Hla, History Department, Rangoon University, Rangoon.
- Shwei-daik-áwin Taung-dwìn-gyi Ne-myei sit-tàn (1783), that includes five towns and 142 villages, Corypha Palm Leaf MS, no. 368, Taung-dwìn-gyi Museum, Taung-dwìn-gyi, Mágwèi Division.
- Si-pok-táya sit-tàn of 1765, Corypha Palm Leaf MS no. 2271, National Library and Museum of Burma, Rangoon.

Son-hse sit-tàn of 1774, Párábaik MS no. AC 4286, Burma
Archaeological Survey Department, Rangoon.

Tábò sit-tàn of 1783 and 1803, Typed copy, file no. 94, Burma
Historical Research Department, Rangoon University, Rangoon.

Taung-gyà sit-tàn of 1783, Párábaik MS, Û Tei Zàw Bha Tha Bhí Wun
Tha' (Mìn Hlá Gon Yaung), Hpya-bon Kyaung, Mò-gaung Taik,
Mandalay.

Taung-nga-kut sit-tàn of 1870, Párábaik MS no. 76362, Rangoon
Universities Central Library, Rangoon.

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Research Department, Rangoon University, Rangoon.

Royal Edicts, Instructions, Court Decisions
and Other Administrative Records

Amarapura Ein-chei-sa-yìn [Population of Amarapura During King
Bádon's Reign], n.d., Párábaik MS, Kyaw Aung San Hla Taik,
Amarapura.

Ámeín-daw-baung, Ú-pádei-daw-baung [Royal Edicts and
Regulations], Corypha Palm Leaf MS, from ka obverse to gaw
reverse, 33 leaves, Mon-daing-bin monastery Collection,
Mon-daing-bin village, Yei-ù township, Ságaing Division.

Bò-daw-hpáyà Ámeín-daw-myà [Royal Edicts of King Bádon], file
no. 4287, Mandalay Archaeological Survey Department Collection,
Mandalay.

Contest of Inheritance [Myìn-hmù Prince vs Hkaung-ton Prince in
1863], Párábaik MS no. 2, Wùn-byeí Collection, Wùn-byeí,
Myìn-mu Township.

Contest of Inheritance [Maung Maung Sú vs Maung Maung Pú and
Mí Hkin in 1875 and 1879], Párábaik MS nos. 5 and 16, Wùn-byeí
Collection, Wùn-byeí, Myìn-mu township.

Correspondence Between the Hsáya-daws of Myei-dù and the Officials
During 1869-1881, Párábaik MS no. 24 hka, Yei-u Û Thaung
Collection, Yei-u.

Correspondence between the Hlut-taw Officials and the Hereditary
Chiefs of the Yàw Province During 1883-1884, Párábaik MS, Û
Kyaw Collection, Û Kyaw, Assistant lecturer, History
Department, Rangoon University, Rangoon.

A Court Decision on Inheritance in 1866 [Maung Bei Pú vs. Maung Lu Bei and Me Săw], Parábaik MS no. 5, Wùn-byeí Collection, Wùn-byeí, Myìn-mu Township.

Court Decisions 1747-1860, Parábaik MS no. tha-wut-hti 2, Yei-ù Ò Thaung Collection, Yei-ù.

Court Decisions 1842-1858, Parábaik MS no. 5, Mìn Hlá Gon Yaung Collection, Ò Tei Zàw Bha Tha Bhí Wun Thá, Hpya-bon Kyaung, Mò-gaung Taik, Mandalay.

Court Decisions in 1884, Parábaik MS no. 10, Mìn Hlá Gon Yaung Collection, Ò Tei Zàw Bha Tha Bhí Wun Thá, Hpya-bon Kyaung, Mò-gaung Taik, Mandalay.

Gaìng-ok Gaìng-dauk-tó-hsín-za [Instructions to the Gaìng-oks and the Gaìng-dauks During 1858-1870], Corypha Palm Leaf MS, ka obverse-hke reverse, 19 leaves, Mon-daing-bin monastery Collection, Mon-daing-bin, Yei-ù Township.

1231 hkú Pya-tho-lá Áyat-yat Myó-kyèi-ywa-mya-thó Pèi-thi-sa Let-hkan Hpáya [Copies of the letters Sent to Various Towns and Villages in the month Pya-tho of the year 1231 (January 1870)], Parábaik MS no. 12, Mìn Hlá Gon Yaung Collection, Ò Tei Zàw Bha Tha Bhí Wun Thá, Hpya-bon Kyaung, Mò-gaung Taik, Mandalay.

1240 hkú-hnit-ka 1242 hkú-hnit-taing Taung-ngu Yámè-thìn Myó-mya-thó Thu-gaung-pyú-daw-mu-ywei Ahmú-daw-go-hàn-ywet-nei-htaingzin-átwìn Thà-thámì-dó-go-áyat-yat Pèi-kàn-thi Sa-yìn [Financial Supports and Gifts Given to my Children While on Duty at Taung-ngu and Yámè-thìn During the Years 1878-1880], Parábaik MS no. 2, Mìn Hlá Gon Yaung Collection, Ò Tei Zàw Bha Tha Bhí Wun Thá, Hpya-bon Kyaung, Mò-gaung Taik, Mandalay.

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The Instructions of the Thu-dhamma Hsáya-daws, n.d., Parábaik MS no. 9, Hsin-dé Taik, Mandalay.

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