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THE CHANGING NATURE OF CONFLICT BETWEEN BURMA AND SIAM AS SEEN FROM THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF BURMESE STATES FROM THE 16TH TO THE 19TH CENTURIES

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**THE CHANGING NATURE OF CONFLICT BETWEEN BURMA AND SIAM AS SEEN
FROM THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF BURMESE STATES FROM THE
16TH TO THE 19TH CENTURIES¹**

Pamaree Surakiat²

I. Introduction

The pre-modern states of Burma and Siam waged intense wars against each other numerous times during the first Toungoo empire in the mid-16th century and during the early Konbaung empire from the mid-18th to early 19th centuries. However, during the restored Toungoo empire in the 17th century, Burmese-Siamese wars were mainly skirmishes on peripheral battlegrounds. In the military operations of pre-modern Burmese-Siamese warfare, it was the Burmese states which played the major offensive warfare role, endeavoring to subjugate Siamese capitals: successively, Ayutthaya, Thonburi and Bangkok. The Siamese states dominated many battles; however, their main role was defensive warfare. Over half of modern Thailand was formerly battlegrounds in Burmese-Siamese warfare. Therefore, to analyze the origin of the conflict inevitably requires an in-depth study of Burmese states' motivational factors behind the wars.

¹ This paper is derived from Chapters 2 and 3 of my Ph. D. dissertation titled "Dynamism of Thai-Burmese warfare from the mid-16th century to the mid-19th century". The paper is a revision of the presentation at the SEASREP 10th Anniversary Conference: Southeast Asia, a Global Crossroads, held in Chiang Mai, Thailand in December 2005.

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There are a great number of historical studies in Thai society concerning pre-modern Burmese-Siamese warfare. The scholarship on the subject has made considerable progress in terms of historical approach, interpretation, and source materials. Notwithstanding, there remain some crucial limitations. Firstly, the subject is mainly treated within a Siamese-centric analytical framework, emphasizing only the socio-political development of Siamese states in terms of the wars. Secondly, only a few historical studies have paid attention to Burmese political, economic and/or social conditions in terms of the wars. Thirdly, the scope of analysis has mostly been confined to either specific battles or particular periods. Finally, these limitations apparently lead to the static treatment of the nature of conflict throughout the whole series of wars. Examination of the dynamic characteristic of the conflict has been neglected. To overcome the limitations as well as to create well-rounded insights into the subject, this paper proposes to study the warfare in the light of a Burmese-centric analytical framework focusing on how pre-modern relations between Burma and Siam were connected to the growth and development of Burmese states: the first Toungoo empire (1485-1599), the restored Toungoo empire (1597-1752) and the early Konbaung empire (1752-1819), respectively.

Furthermore, in terms of military history, almost all writings of Thai military historians and several by civilian historians on this warfare have chiefly stressed “battle studies” and/or narratives of the battle. In their works, tactics and strategies as well as the principles of waging war are their central units of analysis. Hence, the military operations in the battlefields are removed from the historical context and separated from the states’ overall strategic policies. In the current study, pre-modern Burmese-Siamese warfare is studied through a “war and society” or “military and society” approach (cf. Griess, 1988: 27, 31), since an understanding of state warfare necessitates a look at the nature and formation of states. The state and warfare were interconnected. Indisputably, wars wrought great changes to the state. However, the state itself definitely determined its own attitudes to war (Pamaree, 2005: 87). Thus, the direction in which Burmese states formed and developed fundamentally shaped the state strategies vis-à-vis Siam.

Most of historical sources used in the paper are basic to historians of Burma, but hardly explored by Thai historians. The main ones are Burmese chronicles, for instance, *U Kala Mahayazawingyi*, *Mahayazawinthit*, *Hmannan Mahayazawindawgyi*, *Konbaungset Mahayazawindawgyi*, *Toungoo Yazawin*, *Moattama Yazawin*, *Zatadawbon Yazawin*, *Rajadhirij*

Ayeidawbon, Hanthawaddy Hsinbyumyehsin Ayeidawbon, Nyaungyan Mintaya Ayeidawbon, Alaunghpaya Ayeidawbon etc. Burmese primary sources, such as Royal Orders and inscriptions have also been consulted. There are, in addition, contemporary traveler's accounts, for example, including those of Gaspero Balbi, Duarte Barbosa, Thomas Bowrey, Nicolò d' Conti, A. Dalrymple, Cesar Fedrici, Peter Floris, Thomas Forrest, Alexander Hamilton, Nicolas Pimenta, Fernão Mendes Pinto, Tomé Pires, Salvador Ribeyro, Father Vincenzo Sangermano, Hieronimo di Santo Stefano, Jeremias van Vliet and Ludovico di Varthema.

II. Previous studies concerning the origins of pre-modern Burmese-Siamese warfare: some limitations

Some historical researches have given consideration to Burmese motivation behind the warfare; nonetheless, there are some limitations. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab's monumental work -- *Our Wars with the Burmese* (1917) -- was the pioneer. In spite of the fact that his approach was unquestionably Siamese-centric and Siamese nationalist, he attached much importance to the Burmese historical context. The Burmese chronicle--*Hmannan Mahayazawindawgyi* [The Glass Palace Chronicle] was consulted in his work. The historical background of Burmese kings and internal situations were given as preludes to each war or battle. His treatment of the causes of the whole series of warfare suggested geopolitical conflicts. The Mon polity was a critical element as it was located between Burma and Siam. Whenever the Mon could not maintain their sovereignty, warfare would occur because Burma was able to expand her domination over Siam by using the Mon lands as a stronghold for her Siamese campaigns (1917/2001: 3-6).

Nidhi Eoseewong (1986), an eminent Thai historian, has analyzed the cause of the warfare in the first chapter entitled "Kan Salaitua Khong Ratcha-anachak Ayutthaya [The collapse of the Ayutthaya kingdom]" of his tremendous study titled *Kanmueang Thai Samai Prachao Krung Thon* [Thai politics in the reign of King of Thonburi]. He has also attached great weight to the geopolitical origin of the conflict. Unlike Prince Damrong, he has studied the

Burmese-Siamese conflicts through a structural analysis approach. His thesis is that the maintenance of the political stability and unity of states within the Irrawaddy Basin and Salween Valley was the priority concern of Burmese leaders, since the areas comprised a great diversity of ethnicities, cultures, languages and history. These diverse conditions were basically one of the factors leading to the collapse of the Burmese empire. These minor autonomous factions usually sought help from external powers to counterbalance the Burmese center. Without the support and concord of the Salween states, Burmese centers, either in the central or southern Irrawaddy Basin, would inevitably have been unable to survive. Ayutthaya was one of the most dangerous threats to Burma as being an external source of support for the rebellious Mon, and sometimes for the Lan Na Shan. Therefore, whenever a Burmese center assumed high power, it would try to expand her influence over Ayutthaya at a certain level in order to prevent Ayutthaya from being an asylum for any rebels (Nidhi 1986/1999: 10-11).

Nidhi's analysis reveals the core of the Burmese political structure. However, the explanation regarding the origin of the conflict is still limited to the geopolitical factors and is apparently static. In fact, Burmese history does not entirely support his statement that whenever a Burmese center became the most powerful, it would exert influence on Ayutthaya in order to forestall Ayutthaya's political interference. Burmese leaders during the mighty reigns of the early restored Toungoo empire in the first half of 17th century did not adopt the policy of defeating or weakening Ayutthaya for the purpose of maintaining her internal stability. The condition of the formation and development of the restored Toungoo empire was not in need of an offensive strategy towards Ayutthaya. Rather, she preferred to practice the defensive measure of gaining control only over important peripheral areas, for instance, Lan Na and some ports along the western coast of the Tenasserim range, without any campaigns to subjugate the Ayutthayan capital. (This will be explored in more detail in part V.)

Similarly, William J. Koenig (1990) also discussed the geopolitical causes of the Burmese invasion of Ayutthaya during the late 18th century in his important study entitled *The Burmese polity, 1752-1819: politics, administration and social organization in the early Konbaung period*. He attached significance to the triangular relationship between the Thais, the Mons and the Burmans only during the early Konbaung period. He did not apply this thesis to overall pre-modern Burmese-Siamese relations as did Nidhi. Maladministration by local

Burmese officials was the cause of the rebellions both in the Mon lands and Lan Na. It was argued that because people from these areas had fled to gain Siamese protection, the Burmese center needed to suppress this special Siamese relationship, especially with the Mons, in order to secure the internal stability of the state (1990: 15-16, 19-22).

Victor B. Lieberman (1984), who has done a great amount of research on pre-modern Burmese history, conducted analysis of almost all pre-modern Burmese-Siamese conflicts from 16th to 19th centuries in his monumental study— *Burmese administrative cycles: anarchy and conquest, c. 1580-1760*. However, his main focus was on the institutional and political development of the Burmese empire, rather than on the dynamics of Burmese-Siamese conflicts. He stressed the importance of economic motivation of the Burmese campaigns against Siam during the first Toungoo period. He saw the origin of the warfare as lying in the fact that both Ayutthaya and the first Toungoo empire were aiming to gain control over ports on the Tenasserim coast, particularly Tavoy, Mergui and Tenasserim, which were on the trans-peninsular trade routes connecting the Gulf of Martaban to the Gulf of Siam (1984: 28-30).

For the Burmese relations with Siam during the restored Toungoo empire, he remarked on the shift of Burmese expansionary strategy. He pointed out that Anaukpetlun (r. 1606-1628), despite numerous opportunities, had never organized a sustained attack against either Ayutthaya or Lan Chang [as had the first Toungoo empire done and as later the early Konbaung empire would do]. He did not elaborate on the crucial factors for this change, only mentioning that Anaukpetlun and heirs might have learned the serious disadvantages of overextension into the Tai world as demonstrated under Nandabayin (r. 1581-1599), and Anaukpetlun himself had experienced the hardship of the campaigns of Chiang Rung-Sipsong Panna and of the Siamese port cities—Mergui and Tenasserim (ibid., 55).

Finally, on the origins of the Burmese invasion of Ayutthaya during the reign of Alaunghpaya (r. 1752-1760), he commented that the root of Alaunghpaya's hostility toward that kingdom was less obvious than it was in the case of Manipura, for Ayutthaya had studiously refrained from exploiting Burma's weakness in the 1740s. He emphasized that it was Alaunghpaya himself who showed his great desire to expand his power over Ayutthaya by using the Mon rebels' flights to Ayutthaya as an excuse. In addition, he mentioned that there was

economic conflict between the Konbaung empire's ports in lower Burma and the Siamese port of Mergui as in the 16th century (ibid., 266-267).

Sunait Chutintaranond, a prominent Thai historian, has conducted numerous researches on pre-modern Siamese-Burmese warfare. The most important one is *Cakravartin: the ideology of traditional warfare in Siam and Burma, 1548-1605*. His main thesis is that the cakravartin concept functioned as an ideological motivation of Siamese and Burmese kings in traditional warfare. In reality, the kings created within their imaginary Jambudipa the realm of their own mandala or 'field of power', in which they contended to become the most powerful cakravartin king. However, their madalas never overlapped until the first half of the 16th century, after the old Mon kingdom was totally incorporated as part of the Burmese political domain and after the interior capital, Toungoo, was abandoned and replaced by Pegu. Like Lieberman, he suggested that the first Toungoo kings' main objective in attacking Ayutthaya was to win control over the trans-peninsular traffic with the Gulf of Siam.

Furthermore, Sunait has, in his analysis, suggested that the outbreak of warfare was a result of important changes politically and economically within Siam and Burma in particular, and more generally throughout the mainland. The wars took place after (1) the political conflict between the two leading families of the lower Chao Phraya Basin, the families of Lopburi and Suphanburi, had come to an end with total victory by the latter; (2) upper and lower Burma were reunited under the leadership and consummate skill of the first Toungoo kings; (3) the international trade of the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean had reached new heights as a result of the expansion of Muslim and European shipping, and (4) the arrival of modern weapons, particularly firearms, i.e., the cannon and muskets of European ships and mercenaries (cf. 1990: chapter IV & V).

Additionally, he propounded that Burmese kings always considered the Siamese kingdoms as part of their field of power. From the founding of the first Toungoo dynasty, up until the end of the monarchic period, almost all of the strong kings waged war against the Siamese kingdoms, since they expected total submission from, successively, the Ayutthaya, Thonburi, and Bangkok kings (ibid., 240). However, according to a contemporary Burmese inscription in the 17th century (SHMKM V, 1998: 148), Ayutthaya was not included in the

mandala or the realm of power of the restored Toungoo kings. In fact, the strong kings of the dynasty did not launch any grand-scale attacks on Ayutthaya, as Lieberman remarked.

Myo Myint (1999/2002), an important Burmese historian who studied “Alaungpaya’s campaign in Thailand (1759-1760)” has also applied the geopolitical analysis of Koenig and Prince Damrong and the economic one of Lieberman to elaborate the origin of the warfare during Alaungpaya reign. Helen James’ article on “The fall of Ayutthaya: a reassessment” (2000) has expanded Lieberman’s analysis by proposing that the whole series of Burmese-Siamese wars from the 16th to the 19th century all shared the same origin of economic rivalry. The economic purposes of Burmese kings were to gain control over 1) the trans-peninsular trade routes from the Gulf of Martaban to the Gulf of Siam, 2) the overland trade route to China via the north of Siam and 3) the prosperous trade center of Ayutthaya (James, 2000: 75-83). Nonetheless, the economic contest between Burma and Siam during the period was not confined to those three areas described by James. Both James and Myo Myint, who focused on the warfare in the early Konbaung period, have neglected to study the change of Burmese-Siamese battleground southwards to the Malay peninsula corresponding to the shift in international maritime trade patterns from the 18th century. This dynamic was first been pointed out by Sunait in his conference paper on “Myanmar’s southward political extension by the early Konbaung kings” (2005: 1-6). This paper agrees with Sunait’s thesis and examines it in more detail.

III. States in the Irrawaddy Basin from the post-Pagan to the pre-Toungoo period: a prelude to Burmese-Siamese warfare

Pre-modern Burmese-Siamese warfare was directly connected to the two significant domains of the Irrawaddy Basin: 1) The Burmese polities originally from inland areas which were the main rivals of Siam and 2) The Mon polities in lower Burma and on the Tenasserim coast which were the main conflictive areas in the Burmese-Siamese rivalry. Thus, it is important that we first investigate the development of states and wars in the Irrawaddy Basin prior to Burma’s wars with Siam in the mid-16th century.

During the post-Pagan period and before the rise of the first Toungoo empire, between c. 1300 and 1530, the Irrawaddy Basin remained divided into two main distinct geopolitical-ethnic

zones -- the Ava realm in upper Burma and the Pegu realm in lower Burma. Both polities were fundamentally fragmented internally. The city-states in each realm were bound together by the loose political structure of patron-vassal relations built on personal loyalties of the individual sub-kings to the high king at the center. Nonetheless, the two kingdoms had developed distinctive characteristics due to their different conditions. While Ava was rather a territorially expansionist state, Pegu was, comparatively, a defensive one.

If we look at the central and northern Burmese regions after the fall of Pagan, we see that the centers of power were moved northeastward from Pagan to the well-irrigated land of Kyaukse and adjacent areas. From the 1300s to the 1360s when Myinsaing, and then Pinya and Sagaing, were leading centers and even when the new center at Ava was founded in 1364 by King Thadominbya (r. 1364-1368), their political influence was very limited to a small number of city-states concentrated around the Sagaing-Ava area, and several city-states, including Toungoo, Toungdwingyi, Nga-nwe-gon Pyinmana and Sagu rose in rebellion against Ava (Hmannan I, 1956: 438-441; Kala I, 1959: 343-344; Pwa, 1924: 13; Yazawinthat I, 1968: 201-204, II, 1998: 5).

It was King Mingyizwasawke (r. 1367-1401) who was able to secure provisional power over those polities occupying the important well-irrigated lands of the Burmese region including Kyaukse, Minbu, the Mu Valley, Meikhtila and Yamethin (Hmannan I, 1956: 446; Kala I, 1959: 349-350; Pamaree, 2005: 71-72; cf. Aung-Thwin, 1990). These areas provided Ava not just with its essential food-supply but with a great amount of manpower. According to *Zatadawbon Yazawin* [Chronicle of Royal Horoscopes], 127 cities and towns were required to send conscript soldiers to join the Ava army. These included “Htaung-pyu-Myo” or “thousand-conscript city” such as Toungoo, Toungdwingyi and Laing-teik etc. (1960: 95-99). Following the reign of Mingyizwasawke, Ava was at the height of her supremacy over these Burmese states during the reigns of King Mingaung (r. 1401-1422), King Thihathu (r. 1422-1425) and King Narapati (r. 1442-1468), according to the lists of rulers in royal appanage ceremonies and those of conscripts in the Ava royal army as provided by the Burmese chronicles (Kala I, 1959: 365, 370-371, 378-379, 390-391, 394-396, 421, 428-429, 401, II, 1960: 1, 3, 10, 14, 44). The relative political unity and internal stability within the central and northern Burmese region allowed these strong Ava kings to expand their power by waging wars against other city-states outside Ava’s main realm.

Similar to earlier and later traditional Buddhist kings of Southeast Asia, the Ava kings proclaimed that they were “Cakravartin Kings” or “Universal Monarchs” by titling themselves as “Hsinbyushin/Hsinbyu Thahkin”, which means Lord of the “White Elephant” or the king possessing the “White Elephant” (Inscriptions I, 1897: 201; Inscriptions I, 1900: 63; SHMKM IV, 1998: 153). According to Sunait, this referred to a type of iron-wheeled cakravartin (ayacakravartin) or balacakravartin (armed cakravartin), who rules Jambudipa (cf. 1990: chapter V, 1995: 59-60). The white elephant was considered as one of the seven treasures of the cakravartin kings of pre-modern Burma and Siam (Sunait, 1990: 211-212).

Contemporary Ava inscriptions show that Ava kings created within their imaginary Jambudipa the realm of their own *Mandala* [field of power]. King Mingyizwasawke was glorified as being the great king of the lands of the Burmese, the Shan, the hill tribes, the Rahkine [Arakan] and the Talaing [Mon] and that he ruled over these foreign peoples like his own sons (Inscriptions I, 1897: 201; Inscriptions I, 1900: 63). According to an ancient Burmese historical document titled *Zambudipa Oksaung Kyan*, he also adopted the title “Lord of the Gold Mines, the Silver Mines, and the Ruby Mines and of the Ports and Umbrella-bearing Kings” (Furnivall & Pe Maung Tin, 1960: 60). Inscriptions of other Ava kings, such as King Mingaung, King Thihathu, King Narapati and even those during the turbulent reign of King Dutiya Bayin Mingaung (r. 1480-1502) often also announced their authority over the mentioned territories (Inscriptions I, 1897: 225-234; SHMKM IV, 1998: 229-230, 240, V, 1998: 34-38, 46, 54, 69). In reality, the directions in which Ava kings attempted to expand their power corresponded to their declared *Mandala*.

In brief, the powerful kings of Ava sustained a series of attacks on adjoining states in two directions: 1) southward to coastal states of Pegu and Arakan and 2) northward to surrounding Shan hinterlands. Owing to her geographical location, Ava was both a great agrarian kingdom and an inland entrepôt exchanging commodities back and forth between the hinterland, the Chinese overland trade and Indian Ocean commerce. The increase in international maritime trade in the Indian Ocean stimulated by Muslim shipping and Chinese overland trade promoted by the expansion of Ming China from the late 14th century economically motivated Ava to extend her territories over port-cities, such as Bassein-Myaungmya, Dala-Syriam and Sandoway in order to reach maritime commerce directly, and also over neighboring Shan states to try and dominate the

Chinese overland trading center at Bhamo as well as of the precious stone and jewel mines at Mohnyin.

According to the geopolitical setting, the Ava nucleus in the northern Burmese region was ringed by many important Shan states i.e. Kalei, Mohnyin, Mogaung, Bhamo, Momeit, Ohnbaung-Thibaw, Hsenwi and Mong Mao/Luchuan, while the central Burmese states, especially Toungoo and Prome, were contiguous to the Pegu kingdom. The growth of Chinese overland trade and military technology transfers from Ming China to northern mainland Southeast Asia following the Ming conquest of Yunnan in the early 1380s had encouraged the rise of these Shan states as well as Ava. Albeit being under Ming influence, these Shan states often competed against each other and invaded Ava territories to try to attain supremacy in the region. Thus, the Ava kings sought to gain control over these surrounding Shan states for the security of the Ava center. The kingdom of Pegu in the south was also a threat to the Ava kingdom. Pegu sometimes invaded the central Burmese city-states such as Toungoo and Prome and occasionally provided military support to rebellious Toungoo to stand against Ava and to attack other central Burmese city-states as well. Therefore, Ava had to suppress Pegu from posing an external threat to her internal stability.

The Ava kingdom (1364-1527) launched military expeditions mainly during the 1370s to 1470s. The battlefields spread over surrounding Shan states from the upper Chindwin, and northern Irrawaddy to the west of the Salween River and over the coastal states from the Arakanese littoral, and Irrawaddy Delta to the west of the Sittang River. However, throughout the 1480s to 1520s, Ava rapidly lost her power through internal discord and became a war-victim heavily raided by the Shan polity of Mohnyin. Eventually, Ava came to an end in the year 1527.

3

After the fall of Pagan, lower Burma was also politically fragmented like upper Burma. It was divided into three main polities i.e. 1) Bassein-Myaungmya in the western Irrawaddy Delta,

³ (cf. Barbosa, 1921: 154, 161; Breazeale, ed., 2004: 100-101, 112-117; Charney, 2000: 53-68; Chen Yi-Sein, 1966: 85; Fernquist, 2005b: 291-344; Kala I, 1959: 262-263, 364-381, 393-405, 428, II, 1960: 2-15, 21-29, 33-34, 40-48, 50-55, 58-59, 77-81, 114, 116, 122-127; Leider, 2002a: 63, 2002b: 128; Lieberman, 1980a: 205, 1984: 23; Liew, 1996: 162-203; Nai Pan Hla, 1977: 187-415; Ohn Gyi, 2000: 72, 75; Pamaree, 2005: 73-77; Phayre, 1998: 77-78; Pires, 1944: 96; Sun, 2000: Chapter 3&7, 2003: 495-517; Sandamalalinkara II, 1932: 3-10; Santo Stefano, 2004: 118; Tun Aung Chain, 2002: 39-41; Wade, 1991: 39, Appendix: 5. Ava-Burma, 79. Meng-yang, 83. Mu-bang, 1996: 7, 13.)

2) Pegu in between the eastern Irrawaddy Delta and the mouth of the Sittang River and 3) Martaban at the mouth of Salween River. These three coastal centers were important sea-ports and entrepôts exceedingly depending on maritime commerce in the Indian Ocean. According to *Rajadhirij Ayeidawbon*—the Mon chronicle -- the new dynasty firstly established by King Wareru (r. 1287-1306) was the most significant political polity and played the leading role of unification of Ramanyadesa or the Pegu kingdom (1287-1538) (cf. Nai Pan Hla, 1977).

From 1287 to 1369, the kings of this dynasty had their capitals at Martaban. The early years of the Wareru dynasty were closely connected to the Sukhothai kingdom in the east politically and economically. During the 1290s to the 1320s, the Martaban court sought protection and political support from the Sukhothai kings. Meanwhile, she also attempted to expand her influence over Bassein-Myaungmya, Pegu, a few peripheral cities of the Lan Na kingdom in the east and port-cities on the Tenasserim coast. However, Martaban was not able to maintain her supremacy even over the other two polities of lower Burma. The rulers of Pegu and Bassein-Myaungmya, though generally relatives of the Martaban court, rose in rebellion and seized control of Martaban. Hence, in the year 1369 King Bannya U (r. 1348-1384) established the new capital of the Wareru dynasty at Pegu replacing the former capital of Martaban.

The Pegu court during the reign of Bannya U was rather powerless, as Bassein-Myaungmya and Martaban retained their autonomous sovereigns. He had sent an envoy to King Mingyizwasawke presumably in order to forestall Ava invasion of Pegu and interference in lower Burma. His attempt was effective only during his reign. However, when King Rajadhirij (r. 1385-1423) succeeded to the throne, the ruler of Myaungmya invited Ava to attack Pegu. Thus, Ava launched its first military expedition against Pegu and the Irrawaddy Delta in the year 1385. After the first battle in this north-south warfare, King Rajadhirij endeavored to gain control over the whole of lower Burma by mounting attacks on Bassein-Myaungmya and Martaban. His success in the provisional unification of Ramanyadesa enabled him to also invade the kingdom of Ava as well as the Arakanese littoral.

Rajadhirij was the first and the last Mon-Pegu king to wage large-scale offensive warfare against upper and western Burma. Political factors were the obvious motivation behind the war as he needed to eliminate Ava influence from lower Burma and to impose Pegu power over

Ramanyadesa. In terms of economic motivation, undoubtedly, he aimed to set up Pegu as a trading center linking to the western port of Bassein and the eastern port of Martaban. His invasion of Arakan was probably aimed at blocking Ava's southward expansion and at controlling Arakanese ports. Moreover, he desired to dominate the hinterland as a source of rare and luxury goods. Eventually, he was only able to establish his power over lower Burma.

Despite this, after the Rajadhirij reign, the succeeding Mon-Pegu kings did not continue to pursue the territorial expansion policy or invade states outside lower Burma. Apparently, their wars with the Ava kingdom were confined to border city-states, such as Prome and Toungoo. Furthermore, Pegu kingdom's eastern peripheral cities and port-cities along the Tenasserim coast such as Yei, Tavoy, Mergui and Tenasserim were frequently invaded by Ayutthaya, according to the *Luang Prasert chronicle of Ayutthaya* (1961: 10), Jeremias Van Vliet's *History of the Kings of Siam* (2005: 214), the *Moattama Yazawin* (Pyinnya, 1927: 11-12) and the Mon legend of Moulmein (Langham-Carter, 1947: 33-34). In such situations, the Pegu kings defensively struck back by forcing the Ayutthayan armies to withdraw from Pegu territories, but did not mount any counter-attacks into the Ayutthayan domain. (cf. Guillon, 1999: 156, 160-164; Halliday, 2000: 96; Kala I, 1959: 298-307, 361-362, 368-369, II, 1960: 63-65, 108, 153-154; Nai Pan Hla, 1977: 13-24, 30-40, 45-66, 190-191, 199-219; Pwa, 1924: 44-45; Pyinnya, 1927: 5-6; Tun Aung Chain, 2002: 37-38)

Mon historical evidence shows that Mon-Pegu kings were also influenced by the cakravartin ideology, as they too were celebrated as the lords of the white elephant (Halliday, 2000: 97; cf. Nai Pan Hla, 1977: 32-35). The title of King Rajadhirij [Rajadhiraja] also means "the king of kings". However, there is so far no available inscription or historical document in which the Pegu kings proclaimed their *mandala* or territory in the same way as did the Burmese kings of Ava. This was related to the fact mentioned in both Mon and Burmese chronicles that most Mon-Pegu kings did not put great effort into expanding their territory or power beyond their centers in lower Burma, while those of Ava sought ways to subjugate adjacent states beyond their realm in northern and central Burma.

It can be seen from Mon inscriptions and chronicles that the Mon-Pegu kings' major concern was the maintenance of internal stability and unity within the Pegu realm, rather than

gaining control over other polities outside Ramanyadesa. Almost all of the inscriptions concern their declaration of Buddhist merits, while some of King Dhammacedi (r.1470-1492) -- i.e. the *Kalyani Inscriptions* -- suggested that Ramanyadesa, previously called Suvannabhumi was the ancient center of Buddhism in the region, as Buddhism had first been established there by Sonathera and Uttarathera. The inscriptions which were erected by King Dhammacedi as well as his religious missions clearly reflected the Pegu court's political endeavor to strengthen her legitimacy as supreme center of Ramanyadesa. (cf. Aung-Thwin, 2005)

King Dhammacedi had purified and reformed the sangha in the Pegu kingdom by following the practices of the Mahavihara tradition of Sri Lanka and consecrating a new sanctuary or a new *Sima/Thein* called the *Kalyani Sima*, where the monks had been reordained. The *Kalyani Sima* was situated east of Pegu. He had also consecrated a considerable number of new *Sima* around Ramanyadesa, mostly concentrated in Pegu (Guillon, 1999: 173-176; Lu Pe Win, tr. & ed., 1985: 95-98; Shorto, 2002: 189; Taw Sein Ko, 1892: 46-105; Than Tun, 1969: 42-46). Additionally, he had established "Dewatau Sotapan" or the stream-winning gods, which Shorto analyzed as a Mon prototype of the 37 Nats. Shorto also remarked that there were approximately 16-17 "Dewatau Sotapan" located in many holy places of Pegu such as Shwemawdaw Pagoda, Kyaikpon Paya, and Kalyani Sima etc (2002: 69-74). Moreover, the Pegu kings' regular Buddhist ceremonies and donations, particularly at the Shwedagon Pagoda, which are recorded in Mon chronicles and the *Shwedagon Inscriptions*, imply that they were endeavoring to establish Dagon city, in which Shwedagon Pagoda is located and which was in the vicinity of Pegu, as the center of Buddhism (Chit Thein, 1965: Part II, 79-80; Halliday, 2000: 97-105; Pearn, 1939: 16-26; Tun Aung Chain & Thein Hlaing, 1996: 2-3).

Undoubtedly, in the political realm, the Pegu kings' attempts to become the center of Buddhism helped provide the Pegu court with more legitimacy and saw it become a more sacred center than other Mon polities. Meanwhile, on the economic level, it stimulated the growth of urbanization around the Pegu and Dagon areas, which was close to Pegu's main port of Syriam. It also suggests that the Pegu kings mainly attached importance to their supremacy over the polities within their own Ramanyadesa or Pegu region, which basically consisted of three Mon polities i.e. Bassein-Myaungmya, Pegu and Martaban. Actually, this was also in accord with their defensive strategic policy.

The naval expansion of Ming China in the first half of 15th century and then the advent of the Portuguese in the early 16th century had increased trade volumes in the Indian Ocean as well as the South China Sea. Thus, Ramanyadesa during the 1430s to the 1530s gradually came to enjoy a golden age of commerce. A great number of foreign traders including Indians, Muslim Indians, Persians, Southeast Asians, Europeans, Armenians and Portuguese came to trade at the ports of the Pegu kingdom. Bassein, Pegu and Martaban all made great profits from trading, as well as merchandise and port revenues. The cash income allowed Pegu kings as well as the rulers of Bassein and Martaban equip themselves with firearms and foreign mercenaries. Thus, these three polities were rather equally strong and wealthy; though the Pegu court was the center of Ramanyadesa.⁴

This situation probably caused the Pegu kings concerns about sustaining the balance of power within Ramanyadesa, since the Pegu kingdom could not stably survive without either Bassein or Martaban. In spite of the fact that the Pegu kings possessed firearms and foreign mercenaries, they still preferred to adopt the defensive policy and did not wage war far beyond their Ramnyadesa.

IV. The first Toungoo empire: the outbreak of Burmese-Siamese warfare

There are a number of historical studies analyzing the origins of Burmese-Siamese warfare during the mid-16th century, for instance, Lieberman (1984, 28-32), Sunait (1990) and Pamaree (2005) (for which see section I). These works mostly investigated the factors motivating the expansion of the first Toungoo empire which caused the *Mandala* overlap and led to the first military confrontation between the pre-modern states of Burma and Siam. Here, the paper attempts to deeply examine some of the specific issues. Prior to the mid-16th century, although Pegu and Ayutthaya had experienced economic rivalry and their *mandalas* or territory partly overlapped each other, especially at Tavoy, Mergui and Tenasserim, Pegu had no intention of trying to subjugate Ayutthaya or invade Ayutthaya's territory. Prior to or even subsequent to

⁴ (cf. Arasaratnam, 1989: 5-6; Barbosa, 1921: 152-159, 217-221; Breazeale, tr.&ed., 2004: 110-112, 116-117; Boxer, 1977: 46-48; Chaudhuri, 1989: 60-62; Kala I, 1959: 364-369, 403, 417-421; Lieberman, 1980a: 204-208, 1984: 26, 28; Meinlink-Roelofs, 1962: 20-22, 27-35; Nai Pan Hla, 1977: 269; Nikitin, 2004: 160; Pinto, 1989: 313-317, 322; Pires, 1944: 97-103, 111; Prakash, 1998: 12-14, 18-22, 2002: 96; Pyinnya, 1927: 13-22; Ray, 1987: 116-124, 1995: 103-105, 1999: 39-46; Reid, 1993: 10-16; Santo Stefano, 2004: 118; Subrahmanyam, 1999: 60-63; Suthachai, 2000: 41; Taw Sein Ko, 1892: 50-53, 73-75, 82-83; Varthema, 2004: 119-128; Wade, 2004a: 9-11, 2004b: 10-13)

King Tabinshwehti's (r. 1531-1550) removal of the Mon center to Pegu, Ayutthaya had not any desire for territorial expansion further west than Martaban, and had not invaded Pegu. The questions then are 1) Why, when the first Toungoo kings took control of the Tenasserim littoral, did they not only attempt to control the overlapping territories but also endeavored to conquer the Ayutthayan capital?; and 2) Which factors and conditions resulted in the first Toungoo kings dealing with the *mandala* overlap with a different strategy from that of the previous Mon-Pegu kings.

The first Toungoo dynasty grew out of an inland, central Burmese city-state situated in the middle course of the Paunglaung or Sittang River, the basin of which lies between the Irrawaddy and Salween rivers (Phayre, 1998: 90). Compared to Ava or Prome, it was a minor inland entrepôt and strategically inferior. It was considered as a border city between upper Burma, lower Burma and the Kayah and the Shan plateau. Its geographical setting did not allow Toungoo to be a strategic center for expanding her power over those in the well-irrigated areas of upper Burma, ports in lower Burma or for control of the riverine communication and transportation along the Irrawaddy River. However, while not being a strategic area, during the reign of Mingyinyo (r. 1485-1531), the founder of the first Toungoo dynasty, Toungoo became a refugee center sheltering Burmese rulers and people fleeing from the Shan Mohnyin invasion of Ava and upper Burma. The continuing flights of refugees made for a rapid growth of Toungoo city during the Mingyinyo reign.

Unlike the Pegu kingdom, the first Toungoo dynasty was an expansionist one. The process of expansion began with the Mingyinyo reign. He immediately responded to the changing situation whereby the Ava capital had fallen into decline. During his early years, he consolidated his stronghold by raiding well-irrigated areas such as Pyinmana, Yamethin and probably Kyaukse, as well as peripheral villages of the Pegu kingdom. However, the Shan Mohnyin conquest of Ava in 1527 signalled to him that he needed to adjust his strategic plans and prepare strong defenses on the northern frontier. Thus he engaged in heavily sacking Mon peripheries in order to obtain more manpower and war-supplies -- i.e. war captives, elephants and horses. He passed away in 1531, being succeeded by his son, Tabinshwehti. The latter continued to pursue his father's expansionist plans by further invading the Pegu kingdom. Moreover, he shifted the center of his polity from inland Toungoo to coastal Pegu, which was

superior to the former in many ways especially in terms of its natural wealth and its direct access to international maritime trade, firearms and foreign mercenaries (cf. Pamaree, 2005: 76-77).

The transfer of the capital from Toungoo to Pegu not only changed Tabinshwehti's *mandala* or field of power, but also laid upon him the need to deal with the cultural differences between Burmese and Mon culture. Tabinshwehti was the first inland Burmese king to establish a political center in lower Burma. Undoubtedly, he was a pioneer facing new challenging conditions. Pegu had been the center of politics, the economy, culture, the arts and Buddhism for the ethnic Mon people long before the rise of the first Toungoo empire. The former Mon-Pegu king—Tushintakayutpi (r. 1526-1538), who lost Pegu to Tabinshwehti, as well as a number of other Mon rulers were descended from the ancient Wareru dynasty. As the Mon polities were highly fragmented, it was not an easy task for Tabinshwehti to win loyalty from Mon local leaders and to achieve stability in Pegu, particularly as the first Toungoo court was a minor Burmese group in the midst of a Mon majority. Loyalty and support from Mon leaders and Mon people in lower Burma, particularly in Pegu, were matters of great concern, as the first Toungoo court could not survive without their collaboration. The tragic fall of the Pegu court at the end of the Tabinshwehti and Nandabayin (r. 1581-1599) reigns were partly the result of their failure to achieve the cooperation of the Mon (Kala II, 1960: 237-233, III, 1961: 93-103; Yazawinthit II, 1998: 70-72, 217, 228-235).

In order to gain control over Ramanyadesa, Tabinshwehti was in a different situation from previous Mon-Pegu kings. He was under a heavy obligation not only to prove his supreme legitimacy but also to assimilate himself and his court into the hegemonic Mon community. He had adapted himself to Mon tradition and culture by adopting a Mon hairstyle, wearing Mon costume, marrying the daughter of a wealthy Mon noble and celebrating his coronation both in royal Mon and Burmese traditions (Kala II, 1960: 177, 208-209; Yazawinthit II, 1998: 51-52). Nonetheless, merely these cultural attempts would likely not be enough to gain widespread acceptance and respect from the Mon people. He needed to prove himself the cakravartin king, not only much greater than the former monarchs of the Mon-Pegu kingdom, but the greatest king of his new *mandala*. After his conquest of Ramanyadesa—Bassein, Pegu and Martaban -- he launched a series of attacks against Prome, which had provided military support and protection for the former Mon-Pegu king when he counter-attacked Tabinshwehti. Then, rather than further

attacking Shan rulers in Ava and upper Burma, he moved to expand his power over the polities outside the Irrawaddy Basin. As Pegu verged on the powerful kingdoms of Arakan in the west and Ayutthaya in the east, which had *mandala* overlap with the previous and existing Pegu kingdom, he mounted immense military expeditions against both kingdoms in order to proclaim his cakravartinship as well as for other economic-political interests. In the event, he could not subjugate either of them. His failure to prove his cakravartinship and supreme legitimacy was partly to blame for his tragic end (ibid., 185-237; 36-69).

Although King Bayinnaung (r. 1551-1581), who succeeded the Pegu throne, had to spend nearly one year in order to restore the Pegu court's power by suppressing rebellious Mon and central Burmese polities, he did not encounter the same conditions as Tabinshwehti had. Bayinnaung was not in an urgent situation of needing to win loyalty and respect from Mon leaders. As he was the most important general waging war together with Tabinshwehti in every battle, his great merits had already been manifest to Mon officials and soldiers before he was enthroned. Furthermore, Mon leaders were among the first who pledged allegiance to him and were his major allies in helping him vanquish those rebellious Burmese leaders, such as the Toungoo Bayin ruler who was his own brother. It appears that he was able to impose his control over and achieve stability in Pegu and lower Burma rather effectively; and he was not in any immediate need of subjugating Arakan and Ayutthaya in order to prove his cakravartinship. As compared to Tabinshwehti, he shifted his expansion strategy by invading northwards and gaining control firstly over all the well-irrigated areas of upper Burma and then over huge Tai-speaking realms. His invasions of Ayutthaya and Arakan occurred quite late, in the years 1563, 1569 and 1580 respectively (Kala II, 1960: 243-439, III, 1961: 1-65; Yazawinthat, 72-205; Hanthawaddy Hsinbyumyashin Ayeidawbon, 1967: 321-395). He was the first Burmese king who expanded his influence over the Tai states to the east of the Salween River. Even though he possessed enormous and well-equipped armies, it was not easy to impose his power over the Lan Na kingdom, which was culturally different, being an ancient center of the Tai Yon people long before the rise of the first Toungoo dynasty. Further, it was partially under the influence of the strong neighboring kingdom of Lan Chang. Additionally, Lan Chang had made an alliance with Ayutthaya to defend against the expansion of the first Toungoo empire (Simms, 1999: 72-73; Stuart-Fox, 1998: 78-81). Thus, in case of the wars with Ayutthaya, he aimed to declare his cakravartinship particularly over his new *mandala* of the Tai states east of the Salween River i.e.

Lan Na and Lang Chang as well as to gain control over the Chinese overland trade in upper Burma and the international maritime trade in the eastern Bay of Bengal region.

Bayinnaung was one of the greatest conquerors and the first Burmese king who embarked on trans-regional warfare on a grand scale, and it was unprecedented in mainland Southeast Asia. He expanded power over the huge hinterlands of the Tai realms from the western end in Manipura, along both sides of the Salween River, to the east as far as Sipsong Panna and Laos in the upper Mekong region, and to the south to the great kingdom of Ayutthaya in the lower Chao Phraya Basin. He engraved his unparalleled triumph on his bell inscription at Shwezigon in Pagan in 1557, declaring that he was the great king of Ketumati, Hanthawaddy, Thayeikhattaya, Pagan, Ava, Mong Mit, Hsipaw, the Ruby Lands, Mogaung, Mohnyin and Kalei (Than Tun, 1994: 13-15). He also announced his greatest *mandala* by naming the twenty gates of his new palace: Zimme [Chiang Mai], Ohnbaung [Hsipaw], Mohnyin, Mogaung, Tavoy, Kalei, Mone, Nyaungshwe, Thayawaddy, Theinni, Tanintharyi [Tenasserim], Ayutthaya, Martaban, Pagan, Bassein, Thayekhattaya, Ava, Toungoo, Linzin [Lan Chang] and Dala (Kala II, 1960: 379-380; *Nawadei Yadu-baung-gyok*, 1964: 105-106; Rajataman, 1967: 82-83). Bayinnaung's *Mandala* eventually became the ideal model for the Burmese empire and successive kings of Burma, especially those of the early Konbaung dynasty in the late 18th century.

V. The restored Toungoo empire: Mandala without Ayutthaya

Although Bayinnaung was the paragon of the greatest Burmese king, the immediate successors of the restored Toungoo dynasty (r. 1597-1752), who directly descended from Bayinnaung, did not completely follow his expansion strategy. The strong kings of the restored Toungoo empire -- i.e. King Anaukpetlun and King Thalun (r. 1629-1648) -- though they had power and opportunities, did not mount any grand-scale military expeditions to subjugate Ayutthaya or Lan Chang. During the 17th century, Ayutthaya attempted to expand its influence over important Burmese peripheries and tributary states i.e. Martaban, the Tenasserim littoral, and Lan Na; however, the restored Toungoo kings decided to adopt a defensive strategy in respect of Ayutthaya by forcing the Ayutthayan armies to retreat. Their changing scope of territorial expansion corresponded with their proclaimed *mandala*, detailed in a contemporary inscription. This is the *Kaunghmudaw Pagoda/ Rajamanichula Pagoda* inscription of King

Thalun, incised later in the next reign of King Pindale (r. 1648-1661) around 1649-1650. As to the inscription, the *mandala* of Thalun and presumably all other of the restored Toungoo kings consisted of 10 main territories:

- 1) Sunaparanta territory, comprising Sagu, Salin, Le-gaing, Hpaung-lin, Kalei and Thaug-thwet etc.
- 2) Tambadipa territory, comprising Pagan, Ava, Pinya and Myingsaing etc.
- 3) Kambawza territory, comprising Hsipaw, Nyaungshwei and Mone etc.
- 4) Sein territory, comprising Bhamo, Hkei-lon and Sanda etc.
- 5) Thirikhettayama territory, comprising Thirikhettaya, Ok-dei-tayit and Pan-daung etc.
- 6) Jeyavaddhana/Zeyawathana territory, comprising Ketumati and Zeyawaddy etc.
- 7) Ramanya territory, comprising Hanthawaddy, Dagon, Dala, Bassein, Yaungmya [Myaungmya] and Moattama [Martaban] etc.
- 8) Khemavara territory, comprising Kyaing-ton [Chiang Tung/Keng Tung] etc.
- 9) Haribhunja territory, comprising Zinme [Chiang Mai] and Kyaing-thin [Chiang Saen] etc.
- 10) Mahanagara territory, comprising Kyaing-yon and Maing-zin etc. (SHMKM V, 1998: 148; Tin (Pagan), 2001: 166; Than Tun, 1968: 175)

The revision of the *mandala*, and particularly the exclusion of Ayutthaya, was closely connected to the specific conditions of the growth and development of the restored Toungoo empire, which differed from those of the first Toungoo empire (cf. Lieberman, 1984). The varying features were 1) the changed balance of power between upper and lower Burma, and 2) the change of political structure from the loose pattern of patron-vassal relations to a partially centralized administration.

Firstly, at the time of the rise of the restored Toungoo empire, the balance of power had swung back to a Burmese polity in a northern region— the restored Toungoo dynasty originally from Nyaungyan, while the Mon polities in the littoral areas were dreadfully impotent. Those Mon leaders were far too weak to be an obstacle or urgent cause for concern for the early restored Toungoo kings i.e. Anaukpetlun and Thalun, who initially seized control of lower Burma. During Nandabayin's reign in the late 16th century, the Pegu court and lower Burma

experienced a period of severe political and demographic turbulence. The unparalleled conquest of the over-extended empire, ranging from Manipura to Laos, an area far more extensive than was needed for the stability of the Irrawaddy Valley and lowland regions, as well as the method of loose control which depended on a personal “network of loyalty” were the main causes of the collapse of the first Toungoo dynasty. The side effects of ineffective governance had been demonstrated in a few symptoms during the Bayinnaung reign, but harshly affected the hapless Nandabayin. Throughout his reign, the old vassal states within and outside the core area rebelled and attacked the court of Pegu (cf. Lieberman, 1984: chapter 1; Pamaree, 2005: 96-97; Sunait, 1990, 137-150).

Among the many tributary states’ revolts, the case of Ayutthaya was the most serious. In order to regain control of Ayutthaya, a large number of Mon conscripts and ethnic Tai war-captives in lower Burma were repeatedly forced to join the first Toungoo empire’s military expeditions against Ayutthaya. Owing to the insufferable conditions, these Mon people and Tai war-captives repeatedly rose in rebellion and fled away from lower Burma into adjacent areas such as upper Burma, Arakan, Lan Na and Ayutthaya. The Pegu court’s severe suppression of those rebellions extremely provoked the flight of further Mon people from lower Burma. Eventually, Pegu ended up becoming the heart of a war zone which was invaded and sacked by the armies of Toungoo, Arakan and later Ayutthaya (Balbi, 2003: 31-33; Floris, 2002: 52-55; Furnivall, 1915: 4, 8; *Jahangir and the Jesuits*, 1930: 185-189; Kala III, 1961: 69-103; Pimenta, et al., 2004: 184-187; Ribeyro, 1926: 108-115; Sandamalalinkara II, 1932: 144-151; Simms, 1999: 92; cf. Fernquist, 2005a: 41-68; Marini, 1998: 26-27). According to a contemporary European account, at the turn of the century, Pegu was left to ruin, overtaken by the jungle and nearly uninhabited (*Jahangir and the Jesuits*, 1930: 191-193).

Furthermore, Mon people in Martaban and Moulmein also suffered from the Ayutthayan invasion of Pegu and Toungoo, as they were forced to join the armies, build defense mechanisms, war boats and weapons and prepare food supplies for the Ayutthayan armies. They also rebelled and were suppressed harshly. Father Francis Fernandes, who visited this area around 1599, described it thus: “...This writes concerning Martavan, that it is a large Kingdome, but now desolate by the Siamites warre no lesse then Pegu. But two hundred thousands of the Inhabitants lurke in Woods and Mountains. The King [Banyà-dalá] hath only two or three fortified Cities,

not able to withstand the Siamite...” (Pimenta, et al., 2004: 187). In sum, during the early years of the 17th century, lower Burma was left under the leadership of Portuguese mercenaries, led by Filip de Brito at the fort-city of Syriam. Desperate Mon commoners together with Bannya Dalla, the ruler of Martaban, had sought protection under de Brito (*Jahangir and the Jesuits*, 1930: 198-199, 207-215, 262; Kala III, 1961: 109; Ribeyro, 1926: 113-138; Tun Aung Chain, 2004b: 38).

Compared to lower Burma, upper Burma was less affected by the series of wars and conscriptions. In terms of its geographical setting, the northern Burmese region was superior to central Burmese regions such as Toungoo. Therefore, the northern Burmese region was in a better state and ready for expansion, as it was fully equipped with manpower and food supplies from the main well-irrigated areas. King Nyaungyan (r. 1597-1606), the founder of the restored Toungoo dynasty or the Nyaungyan dynasty, immediately seized this opportunity. He had established his center at Ava, and throughout his reign, he would gain control over upper Burma and surrounding Shan states such as Mohnyin, Mogaung, Bhamo, Hsipaw, Mong Mit, Nyaungshwei and Theinni. He planned to utilize the immense manpower of these states to expand his control over the remaining polities in the central and coastal Burmese regions, but he suddenly passed away in 1606 (Kala III, 1961: 113-136; Lieberman, 1984: 46-48; Nyaungyan Ayeidawbon, 1967: 339-417). His plan was thus further pursued by Anaukpetlun. Although Toungoo and Portuguese Syriam might possess more firearms, considerable manpower and mercenaries, the restored Toungoo armies presumably outnumbered them. From 1606 to 1610 Anaukpetlun put pressure on Prome and Toungoo. Then from 1612 to 1614, he successfully subdued de Brito and captured a large number of Portuguese mercenaries as well as weapons. From 1614 to 1615 he and his brother— King Thalun mounted attacks against Lan Na. After that, he sent military expeditions probably under the command of Thalun to regain control over the Tai states east of the Salween i.e. Lan Na, Chiang Tung and Chiang Rung-Sipsong Panna. On occasions, Anaukpetlun personally commanded these armies (Kala III, 1961: 143-179, 184-187; Nyaungyan Ayeidawbon, 1967: 419-443; Saimong Mangrai, 1981: 250-251).

Unlike the first Toungoo dynasty, the restored Toungoo dynasty established its capital at Ava, so their strongholds were in, and supporting manpower was from, upper Burma and the surrounding Shan states. The survival of the Ava court did not heavily depending on the support of Pegu and lower Burma as was the case with the first Toungoo empire. Yet it was

Anaukpetlun who firstly attempted to revive Pegu and the coastal areas economically and demographically. A huge number of Shan-Yon war captives from Lan Na were forced to relocate from Lan Na to the Pegu region, in order to resolve the problem of sparse population in the Mon littoral (Kala III, 1961: 176-179; cf. Singhakha Wannasai, 1979). Anaukpetlun also did a lot of meritorious deeds by donating and arranging reconstructions of Mon sacred places such as the Shwemawdaw Pagoda of Pegu and the Shwedagon Pagoda of Dagon (ibid., 179-180, 183). Diplomatic relations and international maritime trade with important states, kingdoms and European East India companies in the Indian Ocean region were also resumed (ibid., 180-183; Dijk, 2001: 1-101; Hall, 1945: 25-31, 1968: 28, 32-46, 100-101; Hamilton, 1997: 9-38; Moreland, ed., 1931: 44-48). The early restored Toungoo kings were not in urgent need of proving their cakravartinship over Ayutthaya in order to win loyalty and support from local Mon leaders, because at that time those Mon leaders were too weak politically, economically and socially. In any case, the early restored Toungoo monarchs had already shown their supreme legitimacy by eradicating the Portuguese –the threat to Buddhism -- and revivifying Pegu and lower Burma.

Furthermore, while they were waging wars to reunite the empire, the early restored Toungoo kings had also been reforming the administrative system and manpower control systems. The reformation process had been begun in Nyaungyan's reign, been carried on by Anaukpetlun, and been brought to its apex by Thalun (cf. Lieberman, 1984: chapter 2). They imposed a partially centralized administration both in the core and in the peripheral tributary states, especially Lan Na. Instead of waging wars against Lan Chang and Ayutthaya in order to declare their cakravartinship, they regained and strengthened their control over Lan Na by embedding a fairly tight system of centralized governance. Chiang Saen was established as a Burmese center directly in charge of Lan Na (cf. Laddawan, 2002: 97; Saraswadee, 1996: 243-244).

Remarkably, the restored Toungoo kings had initially opened diplomatic relations with Ayutthaya by sending friendship envoys with precious tribute products to the Ayutthaya court. According to the Burmese chronicles, the two kingdoms had exchanged envoys during the Thalun reign and later during the reign of the last ruler King Mahadhammaraja Dipati (r. 1733-1752). There are diverse records regarding their relations during this period. Burmese chronicle

portrayed them as warm and harmonious (Kala III, 1961: 217-218, 240; cf. Dijk, 2001: 81); the chronicles of Ayutthaya, which were compiled and edited in the early Bangkok period, conversely painted them in a more discordant and disgusting hue (cf. *Praratchaphongsawadan Krung Sri Ayutthaya chabap Somdet Phra Phonnarat* [The Somdet Phra Phonnarat Chronicle of Ayutthaya], 1971: 358-360); while, to a contemporary European observer– Van Vliet -- their diplomatic relations seemed to be smooth on the surface, despite being underpinned by deep distrust and suspicion (2005: 125-126).

VI. The early Konbaung empire: regaining control of Ayutthaya

Notwithstanding the collapse of the restored Toungoo empire in 1752, the centralized administration did not vanish, but was restored and continued by the early Kongbaung kings (r. 1752-1819). The early Kongbaung kings made no significant changes in the political and governance structure, following almost completely the previous system (cf. Lieberman, 1984: 230). Nonetheless, they did make a great shift in terms of the scope of their *mandala*. Compared to the restored Toungoo kings, they were excessively expansionist, waging wars on Manipura, Ayutthaya, Lan Chang and later Arakan.

The great trans-regional expansion process started with Alaunghpaya (r. 1752-1760). He clearly announced his determination, as recorded in a Royal Order dated 9 April 1756, that “...Alaungmintaya...This king of upper Burma is a very unusual man of great past merits. He is destined to become the supreme lord of Chinese, Indians, Shans, Talaings, Thais, etc. That is the Buddha’s prophecy...” (ROB III, 1985: 21) After he established his supreme power over the Irrawaddy Basin and surrounding Shan states, in early 1759 he conquered Manipura, which was a former threat to the northwestern and northern Burmese region, including his homeland of Shwebo. From that time on, Manipura became a tributary state of the Burmese empire, with an obligation to offer a Manipurese princess once in every three years. They were also obliged to annually offer tribute of a great amount of gold, as well as horses, bows, arrows with poisoned iron tips and tree gum to the Konbaung court including a force of 2,000 men to join the imperial army whenever war broke out (*Alaungmintaya Amindawmya*, 1964: 106-107; ROB III, 1985: 54). After this expansion, Alaunghpaya planned to launch attacks on the Tai states east of the Salween River i.e. Ayutthaya, Lan Na and Lan Chang. He decided to attack Ayutthaya first

(Konbaungset I, 2004: 176; ROB III, 1985: 56-57), but this invasion was a failure and the cause of his death in 1760 (*ibid.*, 235-246).

This expansion strategy was then successfully pursued by the great warrior, King Hsinbyushin (r. 1763-1776). He mounted a series of attacks to regain former tributary states as well as to subjugate Lan Na, Ayutthaya, Lan Chang, and Manipura. Additionally, he organised enormous forces to launch counter-attacks against Chinese armies which invaded Bhamo, Chiang Tung and Chiang Rung-Sipsong Panna. His most magnificent *mandala*, consisting of 16 main territories, was documented in the contemporary inscription entitled *Bo-san-tu-lut-kyauung Kyauksa* in the year 1766, placed at Shwebo. The list includes:

1. Ramanya territory: three Mon divisions comprising Hanthawaddy, Bassein and Martaban with their 33 tributary cities.
2. Ayutthaya or Davaravati territory: the country of Gyun and Yodaya people, comprising 79 cities such as Tenasserim, Phitsanulok, Kamphaengphet, Sukhothai and etc.
3. Haribunja or Zinme territory [Chiang Mai]: the country of Yun people, comprising 57 cities such as Prae, Nan, Phayao, Chiang Saen, Lamphun and etc.
4. Khemavara or Kyaing-ton [Chiang Tung] territory: The country of the Gon people, comprising 37 cities such as Maing Mi, Maing That/Maing Sat, Maing Chaing, Maing Baing and etc.
5. Mahanagara or Kyaing-yon [Chiang Rung] territory: The country of the Lu people, comprising 12 cities such as Maing Se, Kyaing Hon, Maing Hat and etc.
6. Lavaratha or Candapura territory: The country of Linzin [Lan Chang/Laos] people, comprising 100 cities such as Maing Lon, Maing Kun, Law-thut/Law-sut, Taik-san, Saw-san, Saw-thein/Saw-sein, Maing Hsan-gyi, Maing Hsan-nge and etc.
7. Kambawza territory: The homeland of the Sawbwas, comprising chief cities such as Mone, Nyaungshwe, Yauksauk, Moby, Theinni, Kaingma, Thibaw, Momeit, Mainglon and Thonze.
8. Alavi territory: The homeland of the thirty Shan Sawbwas, comprising chief cities such as Mota, Mosit, Mohnyin, Mogaung, Hkanti, Tethkaung, and Mainglon.

9. Mawriya territory or the nine Maw lands: The country of Shan-Tayok or Sino-Tai people, comprising nine chief cities, such as Maingmaw, Sihkwin, Hotha, Latha, Mona, Santa, Mowun.
10. Sein territory: The homeland of Shan Sawbwas of Bhamo, comprising chief cities such as Kago, Songan, Hseithit, Kaungzin, Ngayin, Ngayon and Yinkat.
11. Mahimsaka territory: The country of So rulers, comprising small towns and villages such as Mogok, Kyatpyin and Yeihlyan.
12. Manipura territory: The country of Hon Sawbwas (Tai Ahom) and Kathi people of India comprising towns such as Mweiyei, Meikei, and Ngazinkyei.
13. Thunaparanta or Sunaparanta territory comprising 37 cities such as Kalei, Thaungthwat, Htilin, Yaw, Hsaw, Sagu, Salin, Mabe and Mindon.
14. Thayekhittayama or Srikhettarama territory comprising Thayawuti, Kyunhson, Puangde, Talizi, and Pandaung.
15. Zeyawaddana or Jeyawaddana territory comprising Baranathi, Keilin, Toungoo, Kanbani, Toungoo-nge, and Ketumati.
16. Tambadipa territory, which was the golden land, where the capital city of Ava known as Ratanapura was situated (Inscriptions I, 1900: 522-523; Tin (Pagan), 2001: 166-167).

Hsinbyushin had engraved details of his glorious conquest of Ayutthaya in the *Pagan Shwezigon* inscription in 1768 (Inscriptions, 1892: 42; Soe Soe Maw, 1993: 23). Similar to Bayinnaung, he named his 14 city-gates with vassal and tributary state names: the east gates 1) Chiang Mai, 2) Martaban, 3) Mogaung, 4) Cittakut; the south gates 5) Kaingma, 6) Hanthawaddy, 7) Myei-the, 8) Ohnbaung; the west gates 9) Gandhalarit, 10) Chiang Rai, 11) Candapuri, 12) Chiang Rung; and the north gates 13) Tenasserim and 14) Ayutthaya (Konbaungset I, 2004: 279; Tun Aung Chain, 2000: 141, 149). During the succeeding reign of King Singu (r. 1776-1782) many tributary states revolted and became independent, including the Siamese kingdom of Thonburi. However, even though Singu did not launch any attacks to suppress the rebels, he still proclaimed his utmost authority over the above-noted 16 territories in the *Ava Myo Moe-hti Kyaung* inscription, engraved in 1777, and placed at Ava (Inscriptions, 1892: 373-375, 377; Soe Soe Maw, 1993: 62-63; Tin (Pagan), 2001: 167-168).

The military power of the early Konbaung empire had been restored by the reign of King Bodawhpaya (r. 1782-1819). In 1785 he was able to subjugate the kingdom of Arakan. This was the first time, at least in the post-Pagan period, that a Burmese king had successfully taken control of the mighty maritime kingdom of Arakan. Details of his great conquest of Arakan were engraved in many contemporary inscriptions such as the *Gu-gyi-paya* inscription, the *Ein-pin-shwe-paya* inscription, the *Mahamyni-paya* inscription (cf. Soe Soe Maw, 1993: 42-44), the *Pagan Shwezigon* inscription (Inscriptions, 1892: 49) and the *Mingun-pa-hto-dawgyi-pathama* inscription etc. (Inscriptions I, 1897: 289). Moreover, from 1785 to 1809, he sent military expeditions to attack Siam on many occasions. The greatest and most threatening one was the “Songkram Kaaw Tap (in Thai)” or “Nine-army war” in 1785, when Konbaung armies stormed Siam with nine major armies from five directions. The king himself led the immense armies aimed at taking Bangkok, the new Siamese center of the Chakri dynasty (1782-present). Though he could not regain control over Siam or even the former tributary state of Lan Na, King Bodawhpaya still claimed that Davaravati-Ayutthaya, Lan Na and Lan Chang were parts of his *mandala* (cf. Soe Soe Maw, 1993: 47-49).

There are many historical studies which engage in analysis of the origins of Burmese-Siamese warfare during the early Konbaung empire (James, 2000, 75-108; Koenig, 1990: 15; Myo Myint, 2002: 45-64; Lieberman, 1984: 266-267; see part II). This part of the present study aims to investigate only the factors and conditions that caused Alaunghpaya, the founder of the Konbaung dynasty, to urgently need to prove his cakravartinship by invading Ayutthaya. This is a phenomenon which remains unexplained in detail. On the one hand, Alaunghpaya decided to revive the administrative system imposed by the restored Toungoo kings, but on the other hand, he did not follow the restored Toungoo’s expansionist strategy. Obviously, he greatly shifted the scope of his *mandala* by invading Manipura and Ayutthaya. The changing nature of conflict was closely connected to the specific conditions of the growth and development of the early Konbaung empire. The new aspects were 1) the changing balance of power between upper and lower Burma and 2) the inferior status of Alaunghpaya to other important political opponents.

In order to understand Alaunghpaya’s mentality, we need to study the historical context at the very beginning of the Konbaung dynasty. During the first half of the 18th century, the Ava court and upper Burma were plunging into turmoil, while a new dynasty of Pegu began rising to

power in lower Burma from the mid-1740s. The decline of the restored Toungoo dynasty was caused by both internal and external factors. The centralized administrative system that had been imposed since the early reigns of the dynasty had created new problems. The extension of centralized governance automatically provoked the rapid expansion of a ministerial class. These ministers competed against each other to gain control of the court's central bureaucracy. The king's power was directly affected by the growth of ministerial power, as the kings thereby lost control of manpower. In addition, the political conflicts, which were mostly concentrated in the capital, had led to the court's ineffectiveness and inability to control outer provinces and tributary states (cf. Lieberman, Chapters 3 & 4).

The main external factor accelerating the decline was a series of Manipura raids on upper Burma in the 1720s-1730s. Prior to the 18th century, Manipura was not a serious threat to the security of upper Burma. However, owing to the downfall of Ava and particularly to the growth of Manipura during the reign of Gharib Newaz (r. 1714-1750), Manipura became a danger to upper Burma. Burmese and Tai cities in between the upper Chindwin and northern Irrawaddy rivers, including Sagaing opposite to Ava, were sacked and a great number of people were taken war captives by Manipuri armies (Hnitleize Yazawin: 13-15; Lieberman, 1984: 207-211; Yazawintheit III, 1997: 147-152; Yi Yi, 1973: 33-48). With the Ava court's failure to suppress the Manipuri raids and rebellious Shan states, Ava power and legitimacy rapidly decreased and the loyalty and respect of ministers and officials saw serious decline. In 1740 a Burmese officer in Pegu rebelled against the Ava court and tried to take control of Pegu. Following this, Mon, Gwei and Shan people in Pegu rose in revolt due to the maladministration of Burmese local officers, especially the problem of overcharging of levies. This problem also caused uprisings in Toungoo, Martaban and Chiang Mai. A local leader of Pegu, Smin Htaw Buddha Kesa (r. 1740-1747) took this opportunity to declare himself king of Pegu (Halliday, 2000: 112; Hnitleize Yazawin: 16; Yazawintheit III, 1997: 152; Yi Yi, 1973: 69).

The last dynasty of Pegu (1740-1757) was not just a local rebellion but a most serious threat which in fact brought the Ava court -- the restored Toungoo dynasty -- to an end in 1752. The Pegu kings launched attacks against Syriam and Burmese cities in upper Burma and then seized Ava. Toungoo, Toungdwingyi, Yamethin, Meikhtila and many cities in Kyaukse area were burned. Firearms and military support especially from the French East India Company

provided Pegu with strong armies to sack those cities in upper Burma. (Guillon, 1999: 200-201; Hall, 1968: 237, 240; Hnitleize Yazawin: 16-25; Yazawinthat III, 1997: 153-157; Yi Yi, 1973: 72-73) In the few years prior to the fall of Ava, the northern Burmese region fell apart, various war captives and laborers rose in a “Holy Men’s Rebellion” against Ava and remained as autonomous groups, including the Lamat-In group at Mattaya and the Gwe group at Okhpo, and probably including Burmese natives such as U Aung Zeya’s group at Muksobo (Yazawinthat III, 1997: 157-161). When Pegu seized control of Ava, the whole Ava court, consisting of Mahadhammaraja Dipati, the last Ava king, the royal family and the Ava ministers were taken to Pegu (Hnitleize Yazawin: 37-38; Yazawinthat III, 1997: 167-168; Yi Yi, 1973: 98-126).

After 1752, the Irrawaddy region was fragmented into several autonomous polities. The strongest one was centered on the Pegu court, well equipped with firearms, foreign mercenaries and manpower. Additionally, Pegu’s conquest of Ava and seizure of the last Ava king and his family helped strengthen her supreme legitimacy as the next leader of the empire. According to the Burmese chronicles, the Gwe-Gunna-Ein group at Okhpo had a considerable number of people. Moreover, this group also obtained legitimacy because Prince Shwedaung or Anawyahta Minsaw, a son of the last Ava king had joined it (Konbaungset I, 2004: 51; Dalrymple, 1926: 164; Lieberman, 1984: 239). The others such as the Hkin-U, Rajadhirit and U Aung Zeya groups were weaker than the first two polities as they lacked participation by Ava royalty (Alaunghpaya Ayeidawbon, 1961: 162-167, 176-177; Konbaungset I, 2004: 67-75, 92).

Alaunghpaya (r. 1752-1760), who was originally named U Aung Zeya, was a son of a village headman of Muksobo, later named Shwebo. In his early years, his power was very limited and was far inferior to that of the Pegu court and probably to the Gwe-Gunna-Ein group. He was conditioned by his limited status, manpower, military power and firearms. These major obstacles forced him to pursue concurrently three main avenues for seeking power: 1) territorial and demographic expansion, 2) restoration of centralized administration and 3) building formal recognition of his supreme legitimacy (cf. Lieberman, 1984: 229-264). He was in urgent need of proving himself a cakravartin king, who had to be much greater than those of the restored Toungoo dynasty and of the contemporary Pegu dynasty, in order to gain widespread acceptance from Burmese, Shan and particularly Mon. When we compare him to Tabinshwehti and Nyaungyan Min, we observe that Alaunghpaya was the first Burmese dynasty-founder who was,

within his own reign, able to expand his power over a vast Burmese empire consisting of upper and lower Burma, the surrounding Shan states, the Shan states to the west of the Salween River and Manipura. His invasion of Ayutthaya in the end of his reign was part of the same process of manifesting his supreme legitimacy.

Alaunghpaya took the opportunity to consolidate and extend his stronghold in Shwebo while Pegu was paying more attention to guarding its eastern border, as its major fear was the great kingdom of Ayutthaya. Thus, upper Burma basically experienced a power vacuum. From 1752 to 1754 Alaunghpaya gained control over the northern Burmese region and surrounded Shan states such as Katha, Mohnyin, Mogaung, Momit and Bhamo. From 1755 to 1756, he seized Prome and Mon cities in the Irrawaddy Delta such as Dagon and Syriam. Then he conquered Pegu in 1757. Thus, by 1757 he had already become hugely powerful with enormous manpower from the hinterland, firearms from the British and foreign mercenaries taken from Syriam and finally had defeated the Pegu court. However, his military power alone could not guarantee long-term stability in the Mon domains. This was because the last Pegu court had established and held power over the Mon littoral for 17 years prior to the advent of Alaunghpaya. These years were long enough for the Pegu court and Mon local leaders to increase their influence in their strongholds. In order to forestall the future resurrection of the Pegu court, Alaunghpaya considered that the Pegu center had to be completely eliminated. Therefore, the city of Pegu and the royal palace were completely razed. A great number of those Mon who resisted were slain. Those Mon who survived fled into the jungle or to neighboring states such as Chiang Mai and Ayutthaya.

Although the Pegu court had been vanquished, local Mon leaders repeatedly sought opportunities to revolt against the Konbaung court during Alaunghpaya's reign and those of his successors. These Mon rebellions provoked a series of extreme suppressions. Consequently, large number of Mon keep fleeing to Siamese protection during the late Ayutthaya period, as well as during the Thonburi regime and the first few reigns of the Bangkok dynasty (Supaporn, 1998: 64-74). Following Bannya Sein's rebellion in 1774, it appears that almost all the local Mon leaders and villagers in Martaban had fled to the Siamese kingdom. This is suggested by the Burmese Sittang or census, which recorded in 1784 that almost all of the existing *Myo-thu-gyi* or village headmen of Martaban had been appointed after 1774 (Trager & Koenig, 1979: 105-

131; Tun Aung Chain, 2004d: 74-76). Considering the stability and security of early Konbaung power in lower Burma, Alaunghpaya's invasion of Ayutthaya was to prove his cakravartinship over Ayutthaya especially to the Mon people, while Hsinbyushin's conquest of Ayutthaya in 1767 was aimed at both eliminating an external stronghold for the Mon as well as manifesting his cakravartinship. From the Burmese viewpoint, Hsinbyushin's and Bodawhpaya's military expeditions against the new Siamese capitals of Thonburi and later Bangkok were aimed at suppressing Siamese rebellions and resuming their cakravartinship over Siam.

VII. The early Konbaung empire: Southward expansion to the Malay Peninsula

During the Burmese-Siamese warfare under the first Toungoo and the restored Toungoo empires, the economic conflicts and contests were confined to the ports of the Tenasserim coast and the overland trade center of Lan Na. However, there was an obvious change under the early Konbaung empire. As mentioned in part II of this study, the change in the Burmese-Siamese battlefields southwards to the Malay peninsula corresponded with the shift in international maritime trade patterns in the 18th century.

The southward expansion process had been ongoing since the reign of Alaunghpaya. Besides establishing Rangoon or former Dagon as a Burmese bureaucratic and trading center in lower Burma, he gained control of all the western Tenasserim littoral and he advanced his armies against Ayutthaya via the Tavoy route. When his troops entered Ayutthaya territory, they attacked northwards against Kui, Phetchaburi, Ratchaburi, Suphanburi and then besieged Ayutthaya (Konbaungset I, 235-238). During the invasion of Ayutthaya in 1767, Burmese armies under the command of General Mahanawrahta also trooped into Ayutthaya via the Tavoy route. The armies successively attacked Kra, Chumphon, Patiew, Kui and Pran (*Phraratchaphongsawadan chabap Phraratchahatlehka* [The Royal Autograph Chronicle], 1999: 139). The southward extension became more evident during the Bodawhpaya reign. During his grand invasion of Bangkok in 1785 (also known as the "Nine-army war") Bodawhpaya attacked Siam from five directions i.e. 1) From Mergui to Chumphon and Chaiya southward to Thalang, 2) From Tavoy to Ratburi, Phetburi to meet up with the force at Chumphon, 3) the main force under the command of King Bodawhpaya, crossed the Three Pagodas Pass to Kanchanaburi, and then directly against Bangkok, 4) From Martaban to Tak and Kamphaengphet, attacking Bangkok

from the North, 5) From Chiang Saen to Lampang and southeastward to Phitsanulok. While the Burmese armies of the other four routes shared the same objective of attacking Bangkok, Burmese armies of the first route obviously had specific military missions firstly to prepare a food supply for all the armies at Martaban and then to attack cities on the eastern and western coasts of the Malay peninsula i.e. Chumphon, Chaiya, Nakhonsrithammaraja, Takaupa, Phang-gna and Thalang (Kongaungset II, 2004: 34-45). After the failure to recapture the Siamese capital in 1786, Bodawhpaya mounted attacks against peripheral cities such as Lan Na and particularly Thalang in 1809 (*ibid.*, 52-55, 66-73, 98-101).

The early Konbaung southward extension was directly connected with their maritime trade interests. According to the interrogation of Zeya Suriya Kyaw, a Burmese military officer who was arrested by the Siamese, Bodawhpaya ordered one of his palace chamberlains, Atwinwun, to assemble an army of 30,000 men to wage war against the Siamese southern provinces in the years 1809-1810. It is evident that the Burmese general, on this occasion, sought to establish an alliance with the East India Company at Penang and urged the Sultan of Kedah to resume sending the gold and silver “flowers”, which are symbol of submission, to Ava, in return for permission to collect the revenue derived from the bird nests on the lands between Junk Ceylon or Thalang island and Kedah (cited in Sunait, 2005: 4).

There was a great shift in international maritime trade from the 1720s with the expansion of the Chinese tea trade. The Chinese tea trade brought trade to new heights in the ports of the Malay peninsula. European East India Companies such as the VOC and EIC as well as European private traders tried to seek commodities that were in demand in the Chinese market and could make a great profit for them in trading for tea with Chinese merchants. The most profitable commodities were pepper, tin and opium, the first two of which were the most important exports of the Malay peninsula. Thus, from the 18th century, the tin and pepper trade of the Malay region grew rapidly (Arasaratnam, 1979: 161-162). Opium originating in the Bengal area was also one of the most profitable imports of the Malay peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago. The growth of the Chinese tea trade and Malay commodity trade roused local leaders and European merchants to expand their power over the Malay peninsula. While the VOC tried to consolidate their control over Perak, Johor and Melacca; Bugis leaders, rivals of the VOC, attempted to set up their own trading center in the Riau Archipelago; Kedah, which was located outside the VOC’s influence, became the smuggling trade center of European and Asian merchants (*ibid.*,

163-176; Curitn, 1984: 164-166; Kathirithamby-Wells, 1998: 60-63, 70-71; Prakash, 1999: 249-251; cf. Bassett, 1990b, 1990c).

British traders, especially those based in Madras and Calcutta, also sought to set up their own trading bases somewhere in the eastern Bay of Bengal on the maritime trade route to China. Junk Ceylon, Kedah, Trengganu, Aceh and Riau were successively considered for their potential as British ports and settlements. Finally, in 1786, Captain Francis Light opened the British port at Penang Island or the “Prince of Wales” Island, which he leased from the Sultan of Kedah (Arasaratnam, 1979: 175; cf. Webster, 1998: chapter 2). The VOC’s interests at Malacca were directly affected by the rapid growth of Penang, as traders from Aceh, Rangoon, Mergui and other Burmese ports, switched their trade to Penang, instead of Malacca (Arasaratnam, 1979: 180). The opening of Penang presumably brought about a great shift in shipping networks in the Indian Ocean, because ships from Madras could reach Penang in around 8 days (Arasaratnam, 1986: 36; cf. McPherson, 1997: 109-126). Therefore, the number of ships trading to Burmese ports decreased (Arasaratnam, 1995: 262).

In fact, since the mid-16th century, the Burmese empires had been important in several strategic trade networks i.e. 1) Connecting the Indian Ocean trade with Chinese Overland trade, from ports in lower Burma to Bhamo; 2) Connecting Indian Ocean trade with the hinterland trading center of Lan Na via Martaban; and 3) Connecting Indian Ocean trade with the South China Sea trade via trans-peninsular trade routes across the Tenasserim littoral. However, as international maritime trade concentrated in the lower Malay peninsula, it was less likely that these three main trading zones would continue to be able to greatly profit the early Konbaung kings. According to the contemporary European accounts, the Konbaung port of Rangoon played an important role only in the trade in teak for shipbuilding (Hall, 1945: 62-64, 74-83, 1968: 225; Pearn, 1939: 67-76; Sangermano, 1995: 219-220; Symes, 1800: 217-220; 1955: 124). Thus, it appears that these trade limitation motivated the early Konbaung kings to expand their territories southward to the Malay peninsula and particularly to Thalang or Junk Ceylon, which were prosperous areas in terms of their abundance of tin, pepper and other important commodities (Bowrey, 1903: 235-258; Hamilton, 1997: 46; Forrest, 1792: 1-36; Gervaise, 1998: 16, 25-26; Simmonds, 1963: 592-596; Van Vliet, 2005: 151-152; cf. Dhiravat, 2002: Gerini, 1986: 37-55).

Although the early Konbaung kings could not gain control over any of the Malay peninsula, they did not retreat from the growing Chinese trade. The Tenasserim littoral -- i.e. Tavoy, Mergui and Tenasserim -- still provided them with the other important commodity in demand by the Chinese trade, esculent bird's nest (cf. Andaya, B.W. & Andaya, L.Y., 2001: 94). According to the contemporary records constituted by the Royal Orders, during the early 1820s, before the outbreak of the first Anglo-Burmese war, the Burmese and Vietnamese courts exchanged envoys for friendship and for trading esculent bird's nest. They also indicated that Chinese merchants played a significant role and had monopolies in the collecting of and trade in esculent bird's nest along the Tenasserim coast (Charney, 2002c: 48-60, 2004a: 245-250; Pearn, 1964: 149-172; ROB VIII, 1988: 61-77; cf. ROB V, 1986: xviii-xxii).

The Siamese Chakri court also expanded power far southward in order to regain control over the old tributary states in the Malay peninsula. Besides counter-attacking against Burmese invasions of the Siamese southern provinces, the early Bangkok kings sent military expeditions to Pattani, Kedah and Trengganu which were key in the Siamese court's confrontation with the British later in the 19th century (Damrong, 2002: 371, 556-561; cf. Andaya, B.W. & Andaya, L.Y., 2001: 119-125; Kobkua, 1988; Syukri, 2005: 51-81).

In conclusion, Burmese-Siamese warfare from the mid-16th to the early 19th centuries was dynamic, especially in terms of the changing nature of the conflicts. Each Burmese empire was conditioned by different factors and contexts which gave rise to specific state strategies. Waging war with Siam was one of the Burmese states' activities. State interests shaped the scope, degree and the purpose of the wars. Therefore, the investigation of pre-modern Burmese-Siamese warfare needs to be carried out in the light of a military approach which examines both "warfare/military and society". This paper is one example of an approach which studies this warfare in the historical framework of Burmese state formation.

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