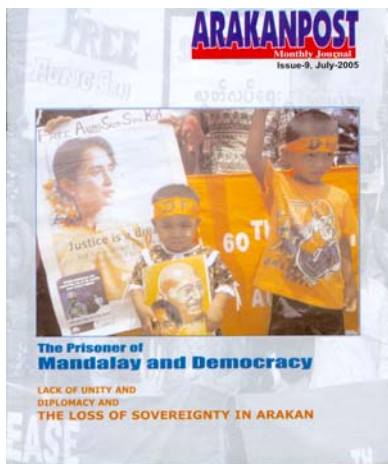
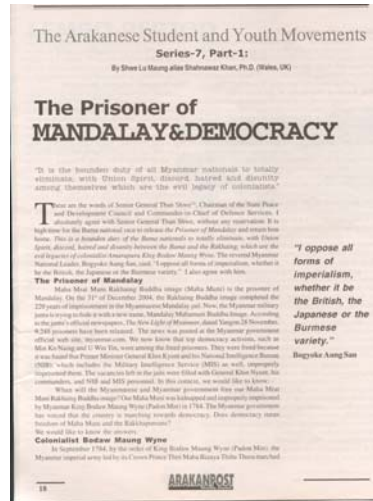
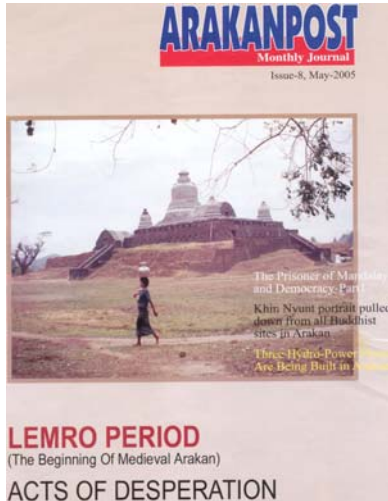


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The Arakanese Student and Youth Movements
Series-7: The Prisoner of Mandalay and Democracy-Part1
 Shwe Lu Maung *alias* Shahnawaz Khan, Ph.D. (Wales, UK)

“It is the bounden duty of all Myanmar nationals to totally eliminate, with Union Spirit, discord, hatred and disunity among themselves which are the evil legacy of colonialists”. These are the words of Senior General Than Shwe⁽¹⁾, Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council and Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services. I absolutely agree with Senior General Than Shwe, without any reservation. It is high time for the Bama national race to release *the Prisoner of Mandalay* and return him home. *This is a bounden duty of the Bama nationals to totally eliminate, with Union Spirit, discord, hatred and disunity between the Bama and the Rakhaing, which are the evil legacies of colonialist Amarapura King Bodaw Maung Wyne.* The revered Myanmar National Leader, Bogyoke Aung San, said, “I oppose all forms of imperialism, whether it be the British, the Japanese or the Burmese variety.” I also agree with him.

The Prisoner of Mandalay. Maha Mrat Muni Rakhaing Buddha image (Maha Muni) is the prisoner of Mandalay. On the 31st of December 2004, the Rakhaing Buddha image completed the 220 years of imprisonment in the Myanmarese Mandalay jail. Now, the Myanmar military junta is trying to hide it with a new name, Mandalay Mahamuni Buddha Image. According to the junta's official newspapers, *The New Light of Myanmar*, dated Yangon 28 November, 9,248 prisoners have been released. The news was posted at the Myanmar government official web site, myanmar.com. We now know that top democracy activists, such as Min Ko Naing and U Win Tin, were among the freed prisoners. They were freed because it was found that Primer Minister General Khin Kyunt and his National Intelligence Bureau (NIB), which includes the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) as well, improperly imprisoned them. The vacancies left in the jails were filled with General Khin Nyunt, his commanders, and NIB and MIS personnel. In this context, we would like to know: -

When will the Myanmarese and Myanmar government free our Maha Mrat Muni Rakhaing Buddha image? Our Maha Muni was kidnapped and improperly imprisoned by Myanmar King Bodaw Maung Wyne (Padon Min) in 1784. The Myanmar government has voiced that the country is marching towards democracy. Does democracy mean freedom of Maha Muni and the Rakkhapureans?

We would like to know the answers.

Colonialist Bodaw Maung Wyne. In September 1784, by the order of King Bodaw Maung Wyne (Padon Min), the Myanmar imperial army led by its Crown Prince Thiri Maha Bizaya Thiha Thura marched into Rakkhapura kingdom. The Rakhaing Rakkhapura kingdom fell into the hands of the occupation army on the 31st of December 1784. During the occupation war, the Myanmar army slaughtered 250,000 Rakkhapureans, including women and children. It is almost a quarter of the Rakkhapurean population. After the massacre, the Myanmar terrorists kidnapped Maha Mrat Muni Rakhaing Buddha, the Rakhaing King Thamada, and abducted 100,000 monks, intellectuals, and artisans and drove them away in chains to Mandalay. The Rakhaing King Thamada, monks, men and women were made slaves and forced to construct Min Gwan temple and Mithila Lake. Many of them are made *Phya Kyan* or Slaves of Buddha at the temples of upper Burma and Pagan (Bagan). Our Maha Muni was imprisoned behind the iron bars in Mandalay Phyagyi Temple.

Myth or Fact? Is it a myth that the Myanmar king occupied our Rakkhapura kingdom in 1784? Is it a myth that the Myanmar occupation army killed 250,000 Rakkhapureans? Is it a myth that the Myanmar Terrorists kidnapped our Maha Muni? Is it a myth that Myanmar terrorists abducted our Rakhaing king Thamada and 100,000 Rakkhapureans and made them slaves in their land of tyranny? I shall try to distinguish fact from myth in this communication.

Myanmar Colonization of Rakkhapura. It is no myth, but a genuine fact that the Myanmarese colonized our Rakkhapura kingdom in 1784. Myanmar Hman-nan-yazawin, which is the official Myanmar Palace archives of history, mentioned it glamorously. The British Empire, that had already seized entire India, including Bengal and today Bangladesh, was the witness of the colonization. Lt. General Sir Arthur P. Phyare, who was the Commissioner of Arakan and Chief Commissioner of Burma, mentioned details of Myanmar imperial army invasion into Rakkhapura kingdom from a soldier's point of view in his book *History of Burma*, Trübner & Co., London, 1883,

pp213-215. A Myanmar patriotic historian and renowned scholar of Burma, Dr. Htin Aung, in his book *A History of Burma*, Columbia University Press, New York and London, 1967, pp195-197, gave a well-balanced account of the history. In his book *A New Look At Myanmar History (Myanmar Naingan Razawinhit*, Rangoon, 1969), Bamaw Tin Aung² analyzed it from an angle of a responsible citizen of a modern republic. Recently, in November 2004, Myanmar government put up their Myanmar Imperial terrorist point of view on their web site myanmar.com (<http://www.mahamunipagoda.org.mm/>). The historians across the world, including the Islamic historians, mentioned it from their angles of view. The Myanmar invasion and occupation of our kingdom was a serious violation of the Rakhaing-Myanmar border agreement signed by the Rakhaing King Mun Khari (Ali Khan) and the Myanmar Ava King Narapiti in 1454 CE. Please also see my article *Series-6: The Struggle of A Hidden Colony and Globalization*, in the Arakanpost Issue-7.

Therefore, it is not a myth; it is not that we, the Rakkhapureans, are making a noise out of emotional nonsense. *Nevertheless, we are emotionally disturbed because this act of invasion and injustice has been totally ignored by the Myanmar people (including Mrs Aung San Suu Kyi Aris), their successive Myanmar governments, and international communities, including the United Nations. This fact must be duly recognized and taken into consideration, and justice must be done if the Myanmar people and the world are committed to a peaceful and democratic future of Burma.*

Myanmar Genocide at Rakkhapura. It is no myth, but a genuine fact that the Myanmar people committed genocide during their invasion of our Rakkhapura kingdom in 1784 CE and their rule up to 1826 CE. The historians and researchers across the world do accept the fact that there was a mass killing and a large number captured and forced into labor or slavery, during that occupation war. Citing the examples of Alexander the Great, the Roman Empire, Genghis Khan, and the Muslims expansions to the East, they accept that such atrocities are common in the invasion and occupation wars. They also pointed out that the figures 250,000 killed and 100,000 taken as the captives and slaves is very high and unbelievable.

I have also questioned these figures and asked a number of local historians of our grandparents and parents generations⁽³⁾. They all agreed it is very difficult to ascertain the exact number, but they pointed out the following facts.

1. The figures are not merely from the occupation war of 1784, but are the cumulative figures representing the Myanmar invasion and occupation from 1784 to 1826, spanning a period of 42 years. We know very well that large number of Rakhaing fugitives landed in British Bengal in 1784, 1794, and 1798. They were escaping genocide and forced conscription. It is a well known fact that tens of thousands of the Rakhaing youths were forcefully conscripted by the Myanmar King in his invasion wars of 1785 and 1792 against Siam (Thailand). The people who are called Beikthar (Myeik-thar) are the descendents of the Rakhaing conscripts who settled at Southern Tanessarim when the invasion war ended in defeat. Even today after 220 years, a Beikthar (Myeik-thar) speaks Burmese with the same accent of a Rakhaing.
2. Chunpyan (King Bering) was not successful in his resistance against the Myanmar occupation because there was no able men left alive to fight; all able men were killed. Bo Gri Kra Hla Aung's answer to my question was rather blunt. He replied, "How do you expect to win a war with two-and-half persons?" The idiom 'two-and-half persons' is a

popular Rakhaing expression of extremely small number. He continued, “You must go and see *the mountain of bones* at Mrohaung; then you will know what I am telling you.” He did take me to *the mountain of bones*, in 1966 December, when we passed through Mrohaung and Wethali in our cross-country revolutionary campaign. *The mountain of bones* will forever remain as the evidence of Myanmar genocide committed upon us. Our historians even said that small babies were tossed into the air and, as they fell, the Bama barbarians sliced the babies with their swords.

3. I was also reminded of the fact that Mun Saw Mwun had to regain his throne with the help of 30,000 Muslim army in 1430 CE because there were no able Rakhaing left to fight against the Myanmar occupation of 1403-1430 CE. It was the first well-recorded genocide committed by the Myanmar people upon the Rakhaing people.

4. Our own experience, from 1948 CE to date, gives us living evidence on how systematic genocide is being conducted in our Land of the Great Image⁴ by the Myanmar occupation forces. About 30% or 150,000 soldiers of today Myanmar Armed Forces are made up of the Rakhaing rural youths, who are conscripted at an age as young as 14 years. When I was in Bangladesh in 1992 a Rakhaing father mourned in front of me saying, “Only women, children, and old men are left”.

If the international community has any doubt to the numbers mentioned in this article and in our chronicles, I would like to request them to conduct a properly designed scientific investigation into the matter. No matter what, even if the head counts are found lesser than what we assert, the fact that Myanmar committed genocide, in the periods of 1403 CE –1430 CE and 1784 CE –1826 CE, will ever remain valid and true. It is not a myth, but a fact.

Kidnapping of Mahamrat Muni. It is a fact, not a myth that the Myanmar kidnapped our Mahamrat Muni Phragri. Our Rakhaing Buddha is still *the prisoner of Mandalay*, inside the iron cage. The imperial Myanmar and their successive governments shamelessly hide the fact. Nevertheless, honorable Myanmar scholars like Professor Htin Aung, and novelist Bamaw Tin Aung honestly admitted the robbery and bitterly denounced the barbaric act of the ancient Myanmar feudal king. Recently, the official Myanmar government web site myanmar.com put up web pages on Mahamrat Muni. It is presented with pride and deceit of the Third Myanmar Empire. Please visit myanmar.com (<http://www.mahamunipagoda.org.mm/>). These are in Burmese; they are still constructing the English version. I am also presenting the readers with the excerpts from Lt. General Sir Arthur P. Phayre’s *A History of Burma* and Dr. Htin Aung’s *A History of Burma*. You may please compare and contrast these accounts. The bottom line is that the Myanmar’s robbery of Mahamrat Muni Buddha image of the Rakhaing nation is a fact, not a myth.

An Excerpt from Phayre’s *A History of Burma*. The excerpt is from pages 212 to 215 of Sir Arthur P. Phayre’s *History of Burma*, Trübner & Co., London, 1883. Please note it is in British English. The excerpt begins now. “Bodoahpra was now entire master of the country included in the basin of the Irawadi. The chiefs in the districts east of the Salwin as far as the Mekong acknowledged his supremacy. The sea-coast, as far south as the port of Tenasserim, was subject to his government. Fortune laid open to him a kingdom which had been subject to Burma some countries before, but after wards had recovered independence, and had not been subdued by Alaunghpra. The distracted state of Arakan at this period has already been narrated. For many years past, discontented

noble from that country had flocked to Ava, beseeching aid to restore order. Singgusa had no ambition for warlike expeditions, and paid no attention to these applications. So terrible, from the tyranny of faction and the desolation of civil strife, was the state of that country, that even foreign interference, -the last resource of despair to lovers of their country, -was accepted as promising relief from greater evil.

After the destructive earthquakes which seemed to portend the overthrow of the kingdom, Snada Parama was dethroned by his brother-in-law, who ascended the palace, and took the title of Apaya Maha Raja. He in his turn was put to death by one of his officers, who then reigned as Sanda Thumana. Bodoahpra sent emissaries to inquire as to the state of the country, and the king not daring to recent this act of interference by his powerful neighbour, humbly represented by letter that all disturbance had subsided. But resistance to the nominal king soon broke out once more, and Sanda Thumana fled from his capital. He became a Rahan, but this did not save his life. One of the rebel chiefs seized that palace. Immediately there was a combination of faction leader against him, and he fled. A chief in Ramri, Aungzun, a man of resolute character, was called by majority to occupy the throne. He took the title of Sanda Thaditha Dhammarit Raja. Some chiefs still persisted in resistance to his authority, and as he pursued them into the mountains with untiring determination; they fled across the border into Burma. One of them, Hari, the son of Apaya Maha Raja, invited Bodoahpra to take the country. The time did not appear suitable, and nothing was done. In the meantime, Dhammarit Raja honestly endeavoured to quiet the kingdom. His efforts were in vain. Village fought against village, and robbers plundered everywhere. In the midst of this confusion the king suddenly died. The husband of his niece succeeded, and took the pompous title of Maha Thamada, the name of the first king, the Nimrod of the Buddhist world. Bodoahpra saw that the time had come. His scouts kept him well informed, and he knew that Arakan would be an easy prey.

The conquest having been determined on, Bodoahpra made ample preparations to ensure success. An army of twenty thousand men, two thousand five hundred horses, and over two hundred elephants, was assembled at and near Amarapura. It was composed of four divisions, three of which were to march to Arakan by land. The fourth, still incomplete in numbers, would, when joined by boatmen and landsmen drawn from the lower country, proceed by sea. The three divisions which formed the land columns were under the command of the king's three sons, the Ainshemeng, who was also commander-in-chief. Thado Mengzona, and Kama Meng. The army having moved in advance, the Ainshemeng left the capital and proceeded down the river. The division under Thado Mengzoa disembarked at Mengbu, with orders to cross the mountains by the Talak pass. The two other divisions continued on, passing Prome to Padaung. The plan was, so to arrange the march of the three land columns, that the flotilla should have time to come round by sea, and enable the land columns to occupy Sandoway, Ramri, and Cheduba; after which a general advance would be made on the capital in Arakan proper. The division under Kama Meng went down the river as far as Kyankheng, from whence it marched to cross the mountains, and debouch on the plain of Sandoway. The flotilla of armed vessels under Ne Myu Kyohteng and Tarabya, a Talaing officer, went on to Bassein. Joined there by more vessels and men raised in the delta, it passed Pagoda Point and Cape Nagrais, and began to work up the coast toward Sandoway and Ramri.

The Ainshemeng halted at Padaung for twelve days, and then commenced his march leisurely, by the pass which led to Taungup on the sea-coast. Thado Mengzoa reached Talak after some opposition from an Arakanese force. The flotilla made extraordinary exertions, and a few days after the Ainshemeng had arrived at Taungup, it was reported to be at the mouth of the Sandoway River, and in communication with the column of Kama Meng. The town Sandoway was occupied without opposition, and the whole force was combined under the commander-in-chief at Tanlwai. He proceeded against Ramri. The island was held by a son of Dhammarit Raja, who was defeated without difficulty. The Ainshemeng then proceeded northwards, and mustered his force at the mouth of the Talak river. Moving his army, chiefly by means of his flotilla, into the great river of Arakan, two chiefs with their followers made submission. At Laungkrek the Arakanese fleet was defeated, and there being no adequate means for the defence of the capital, the chiefs and Rahans entreated Maha Thamada to submit. He fled to the jungle, and the Ainshemeng entered the city. The fugitive king was brought in a prisoner a month afterwards.

Bodoahpra recalled his sons, and sending Meng Khaung Gya as governor of the conquered province, directed that ten thousand men should remain as garrison, and the rest of the army return home. The great national image of Arakan, called Mahamuni, was sent across the mountains by the Taungup pass; was received by the king with great honour; and was set up in a building specially erected for it to the north of the city. The king of Arakan, his queens, and his whole family; the chief officers, the Brahman astrologers and soothsayers with their families, and numerous prisoners, were sent by the same route. All the arms and muskets, with the great guns, one nearly thirty feet long, which had been found in the city, were sent by sea." The excerpt ends here.

Sir Arthur Purves Phayre (1812-1885). Captain Arthur Purves Phayre was made the Commissioner of Arakan and Tanessarim in 1826. The British became the master of these territories under the Rantapo Treaty, which ended the First Anglo-Burman War (1824-1826). The sovereign Kingdom of Arakan was earlier annexed by the Burmese king in 1784. When the Second Anglo-Burma War (1852) ended, lower Burma also became under Phayre's administration. He, then a colonel, was appointed as the British Envoy to the Burmese court in 1855, when the diplomatic relationship was established between the crowns of Great Britain and Burma. With his office at Pegu, Colonel Arthur P. Phayre was the first British Ambassador to Burma. In 1862, Arakan, Tanessarim, and Lower Burma were brought under a single administrative unit, known as the Burma Province of British India. In the same year, Arthur P. Phayre was knighted and appointed as the Chief Commissioner of Burma to rule the new province of British Empire. His tenure ended in 1867. He also served as the Governor of Mauritius from 1874-1879. In 1883, he published his book *History of Burma* in the name of Lieut.-General Sir Arthur P. Phayre, G.C.M.G., K.C.S.I., AND C.B. In 1885, the year of the Third Anglo-Burma War, he died in Great Britain.

The Prince Regent, later King George III (b.1738, r.1760-1820), established Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George (G.C.M.G.) in 1818. Awardees are British subjects who have accomplished important services with extraordinary and excellent achievements. Founded in 1917 by King George V (b.1865, r. 1910-1936), a Knight Commander in The Most Exalted Order of the Star of India (K.C.S.I.) is an order of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. The Companion

of the Order of Bath (CB) is an order of chivalry and was introduced by King George I (b.1660, r. 1714-1727) in 1725. The order has a civil and military division and is awarded in three ranks, namely Knight Grand Cross (GCB), Knight Commander (KCB) and Companion (CB). The name of the Order has its origin in the symbolic bathing of a candidate as a part of the preparation to receive the knighthood in ancient days⁽⁵⁾.

As the administrator of Arakan and Burma, he utilized his offices as very well learning much about the country. His book *History of Burma*, Trübner & Co., London, 1883, is the first history book of Burma in English. It is a 311-page hard cover book, 5 1/2 x 8 inch in size. He also gave a 12x15 inch map of the Burmese Empire. In his preface he mentioned that he used the Burmese Mahâ Râjâweng, a history of Arakan authored by a learned Arakanese Hsayâ Maung Ni, and a history of Pegu in Mon Language by Hsayâ dau Athwâ. Arakan is described in the chapters V, IX, XVIII, and XX, making 54 pages. He described the Burmese conquest of Arakan in very detail, part of which is reproduced above. Sir Arthur P. Phayre's *History of Burma* will forever remain classic.

An Excerpt from Dr. Htin Aung's *A History of Burma*. The excerpt is from Dr. Htin Aung's *A history of Burma*, Columbia University Press, New York and London, 1967, pp195-199. The excerpt begins here. "**Bodawpaya** in 1784 decided to invade Arakan, not because he was aggressive but because he believed that continued lawlessness in that region would encourage intervention by either the British or the French. He doubtless remembered how Portuguese intrusion in Arakanese affairs had resulted in the Arakanese conquest of Nandabayin's Pegu and the establishment of de Brito's kingdom of Syriam. Conditions in Arakan in 1784 were indeed chaotic. The kingdom of Arakan had become powerful through the services of Portuguese mercenaries and pirates. About the time of de Brito's fall Arakan was also helped by the Dutch, who had opened a factory in the capital. It also went on using Portuguese pirates, and with their help Arakan still maintained a powerful navy. In 1660 the king of Arakan became involved in the power struggle for the throne of India, which resulted in Aurangzeb's becoming emperor. Aurangzeb's brother, the viceroy of Bengal, lost the struggle and escaped together with his family and some few hundred followers to Arakan, where he was well received by the king. After some time, however, the king became tempted to seize the enormous treasure brought by the fugitive prince. The prince, sensing danger, tried to return to India, but he and his followers were murdered by an angry mob. Aurangzeb, hearing of his brother's murder, sent an envoy to Arakan, protesting the massacre and demanding the surrender of the three children of the dead prince. The king refused to comply, and when the new viceroy of Bengal sent a rescue mission the king executed the three children together with a number of Indian Muslim residents at his capital. He then ordered his fleet to raid Bengal. In 1666 the viceroy defeated the Arakanese fleet, after the Portuguese mercenaries had changed sides, and he annexed the port of Chittagong. Arakan never recovered from the blow and rapidly declined. The Muslim palace guards now became king-makers and, raiding the treasury regularly, they placed one king after another on the throne. In 1710 the Arakanese people rose against the palace guards and overcame them but their leader, who became the new king, proved himself to be but another pirate. He was assassinated in 1731, but Arakan remained in chaos.

To escape from the continuing chaos, Sandoway made itself part of Alaungpaya's kingdom and invited Alaungpaya to take northern Arakan also. By that time the Mogul power in India had waned, and as there was no danger of foreign intervention Alaungpaya did not march into Arakan. Since Alaungpaya's time the position had become worse, and Bodawpaya clearly felt that unless he acted Arakan would fall to the English East India Company. Moreover, delegation after delegation of Arakanese arrived at Amarapura, pleading that Bodawpaya take over the kingdom and restore law and order. Bodawpaya sent three armies by land together with a flotilla by sea. There was no organized resistance on the part of the Arakanese king, for his authority had broken down years before. There is no doubt that the Burmese conquest of Arakan at the beginning was popular with the Arakanese people. Many Arakanese villages received the invading Burmese troops not with bullets but with drums and pipes and gongs, and the villagers danced with joy as they thought that the years of lawlessness were over. The crown prince, Bodawpaya's son, who commanded the armies, became immensely popular and was greeted as a hero and a savior. It was the arrogance of the Burmese troops that changed the Arakanese attitude. The captured king of Arakan was treated discourteously, and as a result the almost unknown king came to be looked upon as a martyr.

Thousands of Arakanese were forced to widen a mountain pass to enable the Burmese troops to take away the great Mahamuni image of the Buddha. The statue was cast in bronze and was covered with gold. Apart from its intrinsic value, it had deep historical associations and was the pride of the Arakanese people. They could forgive the hours of forced labor, they could forgive the humiliating treatment of their king and of themselves, but they could not forgive this act of piracy. All over Arakan the people wept and men said that the great image itself shed tears. In robbing Arakan of its great image the Burmese army commanders were trying to emulate the exploit of Pra Taksin in taking the Emerald Buddha from Laos to Siam. But they did not foresee the effect their action would have on the Arakanese people. The Emerald Buddha from the beginning of its history was a bone of contention. According to legend it was carved in Ceylon and was gifted to Anawrahta, but because of a storm it reached a portage kingdom and Anawrahta nearly went to war over it. Then it passed from kingdom to kingdom in the Menam valley until it reached Laos. In contrast, the Mahamuni image was a creation of Arakanese craftsmanship, and from the day it was cast it had remained in Arakan as a national treasure. It was a great feat for the Burmese army engineers to have taken this great image all the way to the Irrawaddy River through the mountain passes and then by raft to Amarapura, but Bodawpaya lost a great chance of uniting the Arakanese and the Burmese people. When the Arakanese protested the Burmese army became even more arrogant and started to deport them to Burma for re-settlement there.

In 1785 Bodawpaya invaded Siam. Some would say that the conquest of Arakan had whetted his appetite, but in fairness to him it must be pointed out that Siam, with the help of the Mon refugees, was again raiding the Burmese frontier with a view to winning back the port of Mergui so as to obtain access to the Bay of Bengal again. Bodawpaya himself took command of the invading army, but because of poor commissariat arrangements on the part of a negligent commander, and because of his own lack of military experience, his forward forces suffered a defeat; although those troops regrouped and marched on, Bodawpaya felt discouraged and ordered a general withdrawal. In the following year he sent another army, which was also defeated; again in 1787 he sent

another expedition that saw only defeat. Unlike Burma, Siam was able to buy arms and ammunition from foreign ships including even American ones. Realizing Siam's superiority in arms, Bodawpaya gave up all ideas of re-conquering Siam. In 1791, however, he was again constrained to turn his attention to Siam.

Siam's aim was to re-assert control over as much of the Malay peninsula as possible and thus restore its thirteenth-century domain. In fact, the English East India Company received the island of Penang from the sultan of a Malay peninsula kingdom because the sultan wanted British help against Siam. The sultan also wrote to the Burmese king asking for his intervention. Checked in their expansion southward, the Siamese concentrated on the re-acquisition of the Tenasserim coast. Bodawpaya sent an army to the region, which was able to defeat a Siamese army led by the king of Siam himself. To the end of his reign Bodawpaya kept a Burmese army there. In spite of the successful holding of the Tenasserim coast against Siamese aggression, Bodawpaya's campaigns in Siam not only lowered his prestige but caused more resentment against him in Arakan, because Arakanese levies were impressed for service in those expeditions.

To re-gain his popularity he expanded the irrigation system around the town of Meiktila and the great reservoir there. He also built a number of temples and began the construction of a large temple at Mingun on the opposite bank of the river above Ava. He ordered Burmese, Siamese, and Arakanese craftsmen to work together and cast a great bell for the temple, which still hangs at Mingun. It is the second largest bell in the world, smaller only than the one in the Kremlin; the Russian bell, however, is cracked and could never be sounded even from the beginning. In spite of its great beauty, the Mingun bell was cast without enthusiasm or pride of achievement, for the workers were underpaid. Wages had risen sky-high at Rangoon and at other ports in Lower Burma, but the king insisted on paying the low wages prevailing in Upper Burma. Mingun at the time was also malarial and working conditions were not satisfactory. Learning of the shortage of labor for the king's project, the army in Arakan deported more Arakanese to Mingun. To pay for his project the king raised many taxes. Unlike the great temples of Pagan, the Mingun temple was not a labor of love and its workmen, drawn from all racial groups in the country, started to whisper, "When the pagoda is completed, the great king shall die." It was not a mere protest but a bitter curse. Although in Upper Burma the peace remained unbroken, Bodawpaya had many anxious moments because the Chinese emperor still remained petulant over the failure of his invasions, and on his instructions the governor of Yunnan occasionally sent threatening and insulting letters to the Burmese king." The excerpt ends here.

This excerpt is presented so that the reader will have a Burman point of view of the Myanmar invasion of Arakan. This will also serve as a window to view Rakhaing-Myanmar relationship. I hope this will help the reader to brew over the complexity of Rakhaing-Myanmar relationship. Please also that Dr. Htin Aung distinctly mentioned here the Arakanese and the Burmese as two separate national groups. Since the Myanmarese is a synonym of the Burmese we can confidently conclude that the Arakanese (i.e. the Rakhaings) are not the Myanmarese either. This conflict of the national identity must be politically resolved if we want a peaceful and united Burma (Myanmar).

Dr. Htin Aung. Dr. Htin Aung, Ph.D., D.Litt., was a brilliant son of Burma and a great-great-grandson of Maha Minhla Mindin Raza, a famous Myanmar imperial

bureaucrat and noble of the Konbaung dynasty. He was a historian as much as a litterateur. He wrote a number of books on Burmese history and literature. I came to know him through his book *Thirty Burmese Tales*, which I read as my English textbook for matriculation. It was a government-prescribed book in Burma's high schools of my time. I love his book. His English was truly a beauty. Saragri U Aung Hla Zan, the Principal of People's Private School, was the teacher who taught us *Thirty Burmese Tales*. Vice Principal of the school was U Tha Kyaw, who died as the Chairman of National League for Democracy NLD (Arakan), in 2004. Saragri U Aung Hla Zan won the 1990 election with Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) ticket from Mrohaung (Mrauk-U) Constituency. He defeated my cousin, Colonel Kaung Hla Pru of the National United Party (NUP), who was a former cabinet minister of General Ne Win government. U Aung Hla Zan died as the MP-elect with throat cancer in 1997(?). He was a chain-smoker. All the three persons I mentioned here played a significant role in the advancement of my early education. Dr. Htin Aung inspired me to write books in English. Saragri U Aung Hla Zan inspired me to learn English as good as him. He made my English foundation very good. Sara U Tha Kyaw inspired me with his political life in Rangoon University. For his political activities Dr. Htin Aung expelled him from Rangoon University in 1956. Dr. Htin Aung was the Rector of Rangoon University in the days of U Aung Hla Zan and U Tha Kyaw. I met U Tha Kyaw's younger brother Ako Tha Doe, a graduate student studying law, when I reached Rangoon University in 1960. In 1964, Ako Tha Doe was elected as the General Secretary of the powerful Rangoon University students' Union. With him we rebuilt the Students' Union. In the same year, he went underground and joined Burma Communist Party (BCP), along with Ba Swe Lay (President of Rangoon University Students' Union) and many other student leaders. In 1970, I learned that he was in Beijing. It was the last news I heard about him.

In my matriculation I learned about Dr. Htin Aung's wisdom and literacy expertise as well as his knowledge of Burmese folk culture. He loved Burmese folktales. He wrote, "Burmese culture is a folk culture", in one of his books. It was my brother, Major Shwe Kyaw, M.Sc., F.G.S. (Burma Navy, Retired), who told me much about Dr. Htin Aung. When he became a geology student at Rangoon University in 1956, Dr. Htin Aung was the Rector, a position equivalent to the Vice-Chancellor in a British University or President of a US University. Dr. Htin Aung became the Rector of Rangoon University in 1946 and retired in 1958, thus spanning a period from the British Burma into the independent Burma. As per description of my brother, Dr. Htin Aung was a super intellectual, an excellent teacher, and enlightened human being. My brother frequently used to say, "The Rakhaings should have super intellectuals like Dr. Htin Aung." Nevertheless, in his writings of Burmese history, i.e. in this book as well as in *the Stricken Peacock; Anglo-Burmese Relations, 1752-1948* (M. Nijoff, Hague, 1965), I found his patriotic bias. He admitted this in the preface of his book *A history of Burma*. He wrote, "...a historian, however much he attempts to be objective and detached, often finds that he cannot completely overcome his human frailties of prejudice and preference. The reader therefore may find that this history of Burma gives too flattering a picture of the Burmese people." He was an honest professional. He was also quite critical of George Orwell for his book *Burmese Days* (1934). George Orwell (1903-1950) was a famous British novelist, especially well known for his books, *Animal Farm*(1946) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*(1949).

In the above-mentioned excerpt of his book, please note the following phrases.

- (1). “They could forgive the hours of forced labor, they could forgive the humiliating treatment of their king and of themselves, but they could not forgive this act of piracy.”
- (2). “...but Bodawpaya lost a great chance of uniting the Arakanese and the Burmese people.”
- (3). Please also note how many times the Arakanese were conscripted for forced labor and soldiery. Our Rakhaing revolutionary leader Prince Rhwee Ban’s father was among the forced laborers in the construction of Meiktila Great Lake.
- (4). Please compare his description and present Myanmar government description at <http://www.mahamunipagoda.org.mm/> of the Myanmar invasion into our Rakhaing kingdom and robbing of Maha Mrat Muni Rakhaing Phragri.

Time For Democracy. Nobody wants to be a prisoner of the past. Our founding parents decided to found a republic in which sovereignty will emanate from the citizens. In the days of Burma’s independence struggle, our founding parents did not bother to bargain for the statehood of Arakan. We do not need a separate **ethnic** state in a republic where the citizens rule, without any discrimination of race, origin or faith. If we form a separate state for Arakan, it must be in a form of decentralization of the administration, not in the racial or ethnic line. Please continue to see the contemporary history of our struggle for democracy in the next article, Series-8, in the Arakanpost issue-9.

Notes.

- (1). Quotation from the address of Senior General Than Shwe, which he delivered at the conclusion of Primary Teachership Course No 35, University of Development of national Races in Ywathigyi, Sagaing Division, in February 13, 2003. The quotation is posted at myanmar.com as of December 28, 2004.
- (2). Bamaw Tin Aung was a renowned revolutionary novelist of our time. The word Bamaw is his home town.
- (3). Especially, I remembered Sara U Nga Aung mentioning this point in a regular gathering of my parents and their friends. I call these gatherings *the micro-parliaments*. In general, such gathering took place during the months of Waso in the monasteries or pagoda premises as they came for weekly Sabbath. Often, Venerable Buddhist Abbots were also involved. In general, their talk covered our ancient history, British rule, independence struggle, Japanese occupation, the civil war, definition of Nibban, and future perspectives of our Rakhaing people. Sara Nga Aung was my teacher in the middle school. He taught us history, mathematics, and Burmese. He was also the person who asked us, his students, to explain him the meaning of ‘colonial education’. In 1957, he asked this question to us when we came back from a student procession in which we shouted and demanded “to abolish the colonial education system.” We could not answer his question. I must admit it was his question that motivated me to study the meaning of colonialism throughout my life. It may not be wrong to say that my program “Decolonization of Burma’ that is the official policy of Arakan Democratic Forces (ADF), has its root in his question.
- (4). *The Land of the Great Image* is an account of our medieval Rakkhapura kingdom by Maurice Collis, New York, A.A. Knopf, 1943.
- (5). Refer to <http://www.royal.gov.uk/output/page495.asp> for more information on the British Honors and Decorations.