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BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE  
—AND BEFORE







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# BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE—AND BEFORE

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FORESTS AND WOOD-

LANDS" ETC

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ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

FROM ITS FOUNDATION

TO THE PRESENT TIME

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## Chapter I

### BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN FURTHER INDIA AND SOUTH-WESTERN CHINA

THERE can be no doubt that one of the greatest of commercial problems in the near future concerns itself with the opening up of China to trade. And no country can possibly be more affected by this problem than Great Britain, whose commercial interests in China at the present moment bulk much larger than those of any other foreign nation. Whilst the South African troubles remain unsettled, progress must almost necessarily be retarded in pushing British interests in south-western China; but certain aspects of the problem are so intimately connected with Burma as to require careful consideration, and particularly with regard to the much-talked-of proposal to extend the north-eastern branch of the Burma railway system across the mountains and valleys of Yunnan to some objective on the Yangtse river. Apart from the purely commercial point of view, this project is so closely concerned with political and strategic motives that it is hardly possible to consider and criticise it adequately without first of all taking a purview of the affairs of Britain and France in Indo-China, and giving a summary of the chief events out of which the existing positions of these two Powers have arisen.

While Britain was gradually, through force of circumstances, acquiring the Burmese territories after the first (1826), second (1852), and third (1885) Burmese wars, France has during the last generation and a half possessed herself of a still larger territory on the eastern side of the Further Indian peninsula. The methods by which Britain and France gradually acquired these pos-

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sessions differ essentially according to the national characteristics. The three successive annexations, separated by wide intervals of time, of the British in Burma were absolutely forced on them by aggressions, insults, and deliberate violations of treaties by the Court of Ava, and were only unwillingly made when all diplomatic means of improving matters had been tried and found useless; whereas the French Empire in Indo-China has been built up by directly and frankly aggressive measures.

In 1858, Cochin China was invaded by the French, and Saigon was taken in the following year, seven years after we had permanently acquired Rangoon; and in 1867, the whole of Cochin China came under French rule. In 1863, a Protectorate was established over Cambodia, proving the prelude to annexation in 1884. Hanoi was taken in 1873, and a Protectorate asserted over Tonquin, which was in turn followed by annexation. Annam became protected in 1874, and was ceded entirely by the Franco-Chinese treaty of 1884. Hostilities breaking out again, Tonquin was annexed in 1885.

These vast acquisitions, forming an empire larger than France, were, however, merely a base upon which to found schemes for further annexations towards the west and south. Having despoiled China sufficiently for the time being, French attention was next given to encroachments on Siam as soon as military affairs in Tonquin permitted of this.

On pretence of demanding rectification of the western boundary of Annam, in accordance with conditions that had anciently obtained, French troops, in April, 1893, occupied Stung Treng and Kaung, on the lower Mekong. This was a purely aggressive act, as was also a subsequent advance made from Annam; but these were neither of them actions which Britain could properly object to. When, however, French warships approached the Menam river to threaten Paknam and Bangkok, in July, 1893, Lord Rosebery found himself compelled to protest, because there were no French interests at Bangkok, and British commerce there amounted to tenfold the combined trade of all other

## FRENCH ACTION IN SIAM

foreign nations. In defiance of orders from his Government, the French commander took his ships into Paknam harbour; and, unfortunately, the Siamese forts unwisely opened fire on them. A French ultimatum was the result; a blockade was declared, and severe penalties were exacted.

Later events, also arising from claims to ancient Annamese possessions, permitted—as will be shortly explained—the expansion of the French territories up to the river Mekong, so that now, for about 100 miles between latitude  $20^{\circ}$  and  $21\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  N. the boundaries of British India and French Indo-China march together. This extension of French territory deprived Siam of about 100,000 square miles, or one-third of its total area, including the town of Luang Prabang, while Chantabun was occupied “*temporarily*” till the differences between the two Governments were settled. Although this is somewhat anticipating the results of the gradual development of events, it may here be noted that assurances had previously been given in Paris that the integrity of Siam would be respected, that French warships would not enter the Menam, that French Indo-China should not be extended up to the borders of British India, and that Chantabun would be evacuated “*within a month.*” Every one of these assurances has been deliberately violated. Chantabun is still occupied, and the French assert it was not intended to be evacuated till all differences, including those created subsequently to 1893, and presumably also those which may still be created as occasion offers, are at an end between the two countries. Served by men of the stamp of the French Consular Agents agitating in Mandalay in 1885, and in Bangkôk in 1893, there will never be lack of “*incidents*” requiring settlement, and hence apparently justifying the retention of Chantabun indefinitely by France.

Previous to the French acts of aggression against Siam in 1893, arrangements had been in progress for the peaceful rectification, by diplomatic means, of the extreme eastern boundary of the British possessions in Burma, Britain being willing to give some small unimportant Shan States to China and Siam on the guarantee



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that they should not cede any portion of those to any other country without the previous consent of Britain. By the Burma-China treaty of 1892 the Shan States of Keng Hung and Möng Lem were ceded to China on this condition, and negotiations were in progress for similarly handing over another small State (Kengcheng) to Siam. But French action rendered such a course impossible. When France seized the great eastern bend of the Mekong in 1893, China, notwithstanding her treaty engagements with Britain, gave over to the French the trans-Mekong portion of what is known as the Sibsauing Punna, a confederation of twelve States, at the head of which was Keng Hung. On strong representations being made by Britain about China's perfidy, a set-off was made by the promise of opening up the West or Canton river to trade and of delimiting and permanently demarcating the Burma-China boundary, a work which has now recently been completed.

Uneasiness being felt at the gradual contact of French and British territory, a Commission was appointed in 1894-95 for the delimitation of a "buffer State" between the British and the French possessions—M. Pavie, French agent at Bangkok, acting for France, and Mr. Scott, Superintendent of the Northern Shan States, for Britain. The endeavour in this direction failed completely. The French flag had already been hoisted at the town of Möng Sing, which was the starting point of the work of the Commission; and the British Commissioner had to begin operations in displacing the French by the British flag, and in garrisoning the town with a few Gurkha troops under a British officer.

It soon became apparent that the French Indo-Chinese party were bent on acquiring possession of Möng Sing, the capital of the small Kengcheng State, although this, as a tributary to the British Shan State of Kengtung, was undoubtedly British territory. As M. Pavie persisted in declining to acknowledge the existence of Kengcheng as a State, the affairs of the Commission at once came to a deadlock. Diplomatic negotiations were consequently transferred to Paris and London, the outcome of which, after serious differences

## ANGLO-FRENCH CONVENTION, 1896

almost verging on war, was the Anglo-French Convention of January, 1896. Under this, British claims to territory east of the Mekong were abandoned, the river being adopted as the boundary line between the French and the British possessions in latitude  $20^{\circ}$  and  $21^{\circ}$  N. ; while the integrity of the Menam valley, which constitutes the richest, the most populous, and the most valuable portion of Siam, was mutually guaranteed against armed intrusion. The small British garrison was withdrawn from M $\ddot{o}$ ng Sing, and Kengtung, the capital of the large State of that name, now forms our extreme eastern frontier station, having a garrison of one Burma regiment.

As regards the Franco-Siamese boundary, the results of the French encroachments, in 1893, and of diplomacy thereafter were that the French frontier has been pushed forward so as to include all territory on the left bank of the lower Mekong, and that France has obtained practical control over a strip of land twenty-five kilometres wide along the right bank of the Mekong, while Siam has been prohibited from maintaining forts or troops on the Mekong or in Angkor and Battambang, and from keeping armed vessels on the Mekong or the Great Lake. French consulates were established at Khorat, Muang Nam, and elsewhere ; and Chantabun, occupied "*temporarily*," was fortified. This, too, although in the French treaty of 1867 with Siam the provinces to the north-west of Cambodia had been formally acknowledged to be Siamese.

The Anglo-French Convention of 1896 guaranteed the integrity of the Menam valley, amounting to about 85,000 square miles in extent, and agreed that no exclusive advantages should be gained by either nation in the same. But it acknowledged, and thus virtually assigned to France, as a sphere of independent action the north-eastern portion of Siam, extending to about 80,000 square miles ; while it proposed nothing with regard to the termination of the "*temporary*" occupation of Chantabun or to the twenty-five kilometre zone within which French agents have authority in Siamese territory west of the Mekong river.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

This eastern portion of Siam is of considerable value from the fact that it includes Khorat, whence a railway runs to Bangkok. Yet the French Indo-Chinese party in Tonquin were loud in denouncing the Convention, and in regretting that arrangements had been come to short of annexation of the whole of Siam.

As matters stand there is always a danger that, under one pretext or another,—and French agents are talented in creating pretexts,—the French frontier may be advanced so as to incorporate in her Indo-Chinese empire the whole of the territory now recognized as forming her sphere of influence. This much, however, is certain, that without absolute and flagrant breach of the Convention made with Britain, France can never again send her warships up the Bangkok river to threaten and coerce the capital of Siam in any of her future dealings with the Siamese Government. But the past action of French agents in Upper Burma, as well as in Siam, during the last sixteen or eighteen years has very clearly shown that if the French Indo-Chinese party can possibly embroil Siam in any sort of entanglement affording a pretext for interference and seizure of territory, written guarantees and pledges (see vol. i., page 63) will be thrown to the winds if the occasion be deemed opportune for acquiring the sole or the preponderating political and commercial influence at Bangkok, the heart of Siam.

Previous to 1900, about eighty per cent. of the shipping of Bangkok was British, but since then a great deal of it has passed under the German flag. The steamships for local trade were built to negotiate the bar blocking entrance to the river at low water; and, in 1900, the Norddeutscher Lloyd bought the two chief lines from the British firms concerned, in order to work them as feeders for their main lines between China and Europe. A Danish line of steamers also runs direct from Bangkok to Europe. Amid this foreign enterprise British interests are painfully remaining more or less stationary.

The French possessions in Indo-China aggregate about 330,000 square miles, or one-third of the whole peninsula, and contain a total population of about 23,000,000. They are thus about half as large again as



## THE FRENCH IN INDO-CHINA

the British possessions, and they contain a population amounting to more than twice that of Burma and the Shan States. But, while the British province is prosperous and with a rapidly expanding trade, the Government of French Indo-China is carried on at a heavy annual loss. In place of developing considerably the vast tracts already acquired, France's motives in Indo-China seem rather to be political rivalry at any cost than peaceful commerce and civilization. French Indo-China is merely a base from which to carry out, whenever convenient, political movements south-west towards the Menam valley, and northwards into Yunnan and Szechuan, so as, if possible, to raise up obstacles to the development of British overland commerce between the Irrawaddy and the Yangtse rivers. Wherever France can do so, she invariably closes the door by heavy imposts in order to prevent British trade competing on equal terms with French commerce. But for the heavy import duty levied against British goods, there can be no doubt that British trade with south-eastern Yunnan would rapidly expand along the Hanoi-Laokai route to Yunnan Sen. Hence, although it is admitted that the approach from the seaboard into the interior of China is incomparably the more important from a purely trading point of view, yet the complementary land route from Burma is a virtual necessity if British commercial and political influence is to be fully maintained and adequately extended, because direct communication seems far more feasible with Burma than with Assam, further to the north.

The financial condition of French Indo-China is officially stated to be showing some improvement. The total trade of 1898 was 166 million francs, an increase of twenty-three millions over the estimate; and for the first half of 1899 the receipts amounted to twenty-six million francs, or three millions more than estimated. But these returns hardly bear comparison with the trade and revenue statistics of Burma, previously detailed in chapters ix. to xiv. of Vol. I.

It is not only by means of the convention with France that Britain has evinced her friendship for and support of Siam as a neighbouring power in Further India. She

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

has also lent officers, mostly from Burma, for the improvement of some of the chief branches of the administration since the beginning of 1896. Reforms have thus been effected in the Financial, Police, Forest, and Survey Departments, and in the collection of the land tax. But, while the regeneration of Siam and the development of British commercial interests at Bangkok are thus being assisted, an element of latent danger has been introduced by the recent appointment of a Russian Minister at the Court of Bangkok, although Russia has absolutely no interests, political or commercial, in Siam, nor any subjects resident there. It is only too much to be feared that this new feature in Siamese politics may hereafter prove a disturbing factor ever ready to lend its aid to French diplomacy in thwarting British influence for maintaining the status guaranteed by the Convention of 1896.

From this point of view, the acquisition of the two local steamship lines by the Norddeutscher Lloyd in 1900 may perhaps prove little short of a God-send to Siam; because Germany, with its vast army ever ready for war, will certainly not submit to anything like the treatment from France which Britain has so often put up with complaisantly. And France and Russia will pause and consider for a very long time before adopting a course which must be opposed by the combined protests of Germany and Britain.

Apart from the machinations of their agents on the spot, ever ready to embroil their Government and to force on action almost necessarily aggressive, what is the French official view of the situation in Indo-China? Speaking in the Chamber on November 24, 1899, M. Delcassé, Minister for Foreign Affairs, said:—

Do you not think that our political action should above all be determined by the interest of France? Now, what does this interest command? When Germany took possession of Kiao Chow and England of Wei-hai-wei, it was asked, "And what about us? Are we to remain with empty hands?" But people forgot that on the Chinese frontier we were in possession of an entire empire, Indo-China, a region twice the size of France. *Who would dare say that this Empire has now its definitive boundaries?* But does not simple good sense say that its possession should keep us from any temptation to conquests which would add to our burdens, which are already so heavy?

## MINISTERIAL UTTERANCES

I know the arguments by which this madness for territorial expansion is justified. It is said, "If only the Powers would declare that they are satisfied: but, just as in Africa they put forward the theory of the *Hinterland*, they are tracing zones of influence, so that the partition of China will soon be accomplished." This is possible, and even easy—on paper.

Let us admit, for a moment, the zone theory. What then would France have to claim? Evidently it is our Indo-Chinese Empire which gives the answer to this question; and this zone is the portion of China bordering upon Tonquin, and including Yunnan, Kwangsi, and Kwangtung. Unfortunately this zone is not intact. *We are urged to conquer Yunnan without knowing whether the game is worth the candle. But it is forgotten that by Clause 4 of the Treaty of 1896 France and England have agreed not to seek in Yunnan any special advantages. And this situation becomes clear from the very position of Yunnan.*<sup>1</sup> For us, as for England, Yunnan is the most direct route towards Szechuan. It is settled, therefore, that this province should remain open to England as to us. As for Kwangsi, it is the poorest region in China. It wants resources, but abounds in pirates. Such is the region which might constitute our zone. I do not think it is of a nature to justify the feverish impatience of certain newspapers.

The important thing for the security of our possessions is that no one should be able to settle on our frontiers. China has agreed to this, and our *rôle* consists in watching that this engagement be kept and that our interests be respected. This should be our concern, devoting ourselves, at the same time, to the protection of the economic interests established on other points of the Chinese Empire. These interests are not slight, and I am happy to see our manufacturers and merchants beginning to look across the seas; for economic interests abroad will become more and more the basis of political action.

The Chamber will learn, no doubt with pleasure, that in the exploitation of Chinese territory we have not lagged behind other nations. Out of 10,000 kilometres of railway concessions we have obtained 2,000, more than half of which are under construction. We have also obtained for Frenchmen or French companies a great number of concessions of lead, petroleum, mercury, argentiferous lead, and sulphur mines.

But it is to be desired that these Frenchmen and these French companies, so eager to ask for concessions, should not let their zeal cool when they have to be utilized; for there is always somebody ready to profit by such shortcomings. The majority of these enterprises are developed in regions other than those which, if the policy of "zones of influence" prevailed, might constitute the French zone. Is not this enough to caution us against the onerous vagaries of which I spoke just now, and to induce us, on the contrary, to keep China open to the free conflict of the intelligence and capital of the whole world?

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<sup>1</sup> By the declaration of January, 1896, Szechuan is likewise one of the two provinces in which it was agreed that all privileges and advantages secured by either England or France should be rendered common to both Powers.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

The main objection to this enunciation of policy of course is that whenever France can she deliberately shuts the door against free trade and protects French interests by heavy imposts on goods of other nations.

It is quite true that Kwangsi is thinly populated in comparison with some other parts of China, though perhaps less so than Kweichow and Yunnan; while the western part of Szechuan, abutting on Thibet, is mountainous and also poorly peopled.

In April, 1898, assurance was given by China to France with regard to the three provinces (Kwangtung, Kwangsi, and Yunnan) marching with French Indo-China, similar in terms to that given to Britain in January, 1896, with reference to the Yangtse region, namely, that they will not be ceded or leased to any other Power, permission also being given for the construction of a railway from the frontier of Tonquin to Yunnan Sen.

The Yangtse drainage comprises the rich provinces of Kiangsu, Nganhui, Kiangsi, Hupeh, Hunan, Szechuan, and the northern portions of Kweichow and Yunnan, the trade to and from all of which must naturally proceed by way of the Yangtse Kiang.

So far as British commerce in the main portion of the Yangtse valley is concerned, the natural lines of transport all converge towards Shanghai, and the trade capable of development in that sphere could never profitably find its way out through Burma; while the promise extended to France with regard to the three southern provinces (Kwantung, Kwangsi, and Yunnan) marching with French Indo-China, is very far from being equivalent to granting that empire the sole right of trading there. At the same time we shall indeed be neglecting the lessons learned during the past decade and a half if we do not carefully watch the action of our French neighbours, our political and commercial rivals in south-western China; for Consul Haas, the negotiator of the secret Franco-Burmese treaty in 1885, and a typical "stormy petrel" of French diplomacy, is now Consul of France at Chungking in Szechuan. Hence, as history is so apt to repeat itself, apprehension of similar attempts in Yunnan and Szechuan seems justified. The simplest and



## BRITISH CONSULAR POSTS

cheapest method of frustrating unfriendly intentions is obviously to be beforehand in enterprise. The attainment of this end would probably be assisted by the commercial occupation of all essential points by means of increasing the number of British Consuls. Between the present Consular posts of Chunking, in Szechuan, and those of Momein and Szumao, in Yunnan, the distance is about 600 miles. The diplomacy which, early in 1898, obtained from China the indirect and informal guarantee against cession of any portion of the Yangtse valley to any foreign power and the right to construct a railway from the Burmese frontier across Yunnan, should, if necessary, be able to obtain the privilege of posting Consuls and allowing British subjects to establish themselves and to trade at important points further west, such as Suifu, Chingtufu, Tongtchuenfu, and Talifu. In addition to the Consuls at Momein and Szumao, the only other resident British officials now on that Chinese frontier are the subalterns in charge of detachments of the Burma military police force stationed at Sima and Sadôn, between Momein and Myitkyina, and at Satisu, about forty miles to the north-east of the Kunlôn ferry on the Salween river. The French are meanwhile showing greater activity than ourselves. French Consuls left Tonquin for various posts in Yunnan during February, 1901.

The natural outlet for trade in the most important part of the Yangtse valley being, as already stated, eastwards towards the coast, it would be only an insignificant portion of its commerce which could be profitably diverted towards Burma. With the Yangtse navigable for 1,750 miles as to its main branch, viz. to Suifu, for boats of 60 tons; to Pingshan, about twenty miles higher up, for boats of thirty tons; and beyond that, for a light draft stern-wheeler to Kiating, 280 miles further up, the limit of navigation, there seems little chance of any important deflection of trade from this natural outlet towards Shanghai. Below Chungking the only practical competition which can be offered to this natural line of least resistance is the railway from Canton to Hankow, which is already in process of construction by the American Brice Syndicate.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

The trade routes leading westwards from the province are mule and cattle tracks, literally footpaths of the most primitive description, ascending and descending steep hillsides. What trade there is on the Yunnan plateau, which varies from 5,000 to 8,000 feet in elevation, and whose capital is Yunnan Sen, though by far its most important trading centre is Talifu (7,000 feet in elevation), very probably already finds its way into Burma without any expensive railway. So far as concerns the bulk of the traffic that will interest Europeans, however, this must naturally proceed eastwards down the Yangtse Kiang. Mr. Bourne, of the Blackburn Commercial Mission, has shown that the first step towards tapping this trade is not a railway, but the extension of steam navigation on the Great River from Ichang to Chungking, and thence to Suifu, 1,750 miles from Shanghai. Towards this end the recent promise of China to open the rivers to trade and to establish a treaty port in Hunan is a distinct step. Sound commercial proposals are certain to be seriously entertained as soon as ever merchants obtain something in the shape of guarantees respecting the capital involved in extensive investments of this nature. To give or to obtain such guarantees is also obviously the duty of the British Government in the interests of British commerce.<sup>1</sup> The loan to China, in 1898, of £12,000,000 at three per cent. is, strengthened by the conditions attached to it, in itself almost of the nature of an informal guarantee that British commercial interests in the Yangtse valley will be adequately safeguarded by the British Government.

Previous to the Panthay or Mohammedan insurrection of 1854, in Yunnan, when the population is supposed to have been reduced from something between 10,000,000 and 15,000,000 to about 5,000,000, the commerce of this highland region is reported to have been extensive and valuable. The present population is variously estimated

<sup>1</sup> The French Government have sanctioned a guarantee of four and a half per cent. for seventy-five years on a sum of 70,000,000 francs (£2,800,000) required for the extension of the Tonquin line from Laokai to Yunnan Sen, interest being guaranteed by annual grant under the law of December, 1898 (see page 16).

## TRADE ROUTES TO YUNNAN

at from 5,000,000 to upwards of 11,000,000, and some assert that it is quite as large now as ever it was.

So far as the trade of the south-eastern portion of the province of Yunnan is concerned, consideration of the geographical and physical features of the country seems to indicate that the natural lines of trade are either by the West river (Sikiang) to and from Canton and Hongkong, or else by the Red river (Songka) and Hanoi, the capital of the French possessions in Tonquin. The French maintain that in the latter route they have solid advantages. They are certainly nearer to the tracts to be tapped; but the commercial advantages gained by China's agreement of June, 1896, to throw open the West river to foreign trade as far as Wuchowfu, and the inclusion of Nanningfu on the Yukiang, a tributary of the West river, as a treaty port in February, 1899, should tend to equalize the natural possibilities between Hongkong and Hanoi. In any case, however, the commerce throughout by far the greater portions of the provinces of Kwangsi and Kwangtung must proceed by the valley of the Sikiang to and from Canton and Hongkong. If the trade of south-eastern Yunnan find its natural outlet through Tonquin, and even if, in addition thereto, a considerable share of the western Kwangsi trade be attracted towards the French railway now being pushed on from Hanoi in the direction of Nanningfu, about 200 miles to the north-east,—the great trade centre on the Yu river, the main southern tributary of the Sikiang—there still remains an ample and promising field for commercial energy radiating from Hongkong and Canton. Just as has already happened in the case of Chungking and the upper Yangste valley, so also will trading developments or other considerations in due time lead to the extension of the agreement of June, 1897, and gradually include the upper portions of the West river.

But, with the conclusion of the Anglo-German Agreement published in the autumn of 1900, the political and the future commercial position has changed entirely throughout southern China. This Agreement between the greatest military and the greatest naval powers in

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

the world to keep the Yangtse river and the seaports of China "free and open to trade and to every other legitimate form of economic activity" on behalf of all nations, to make no use of the present complications to wrest territorial advantages from China, and to endeavour to maintain the integrity of that empire, has completely altered the political complexion of matters. If France, urged mainly by purely selfish motives, continues to try and push northwards with feverish haste in order to establish a preponderating influence in any so-called sphere or zone, it seems very probable that such action would, in consequence of this Anglo-German Agreement as to the Yangtse valley, result in a joint protest from these two powers in terms which could not be very agreeable to her *amour propre*; because, although the Yangtse valley is not specifically mentioned in the Agreement, it is obviously the maintenance of the "open door" all along the Yangtse river that is meant in the exchange of notes between the British and the German Governments.

There need be no disguising the fact that Britain might, if so inclined, have obtained paramount influence on the Yangtse as an offset for Russian aggression at Port Arthur and in Manchuria, and for Germany's action in Kiao Chow. But the opportunity was not then taken advantage of; and to-day one very good reason, though probably not the only one, for this forbearance is patent to all. For years the South African war had been looming on our colonial horizon, and the Anglo-German Agreement was simply making the best of things so far as the Yangtse valley and the rest of China is concerned. Its conclusion and its publication were no doubt expedited by the expression given by the highest Chinese authorities to their views regarding the extreme seriousness of the situation. On 1st September, 1900 (see Blue Book, *China, No. 5, 1901*) the Yangtse Viceroy, Chang Chih Tung, telegraphed as follows to Consul-General Warren, at the same time requesting him to transmit the message to the British Government:—

I am quite satisfied that England really does not desire the partition of China. But it is to be feared that, if she merely looks on and delays



## RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION

to take action, all sorts of complications will arise ; and the situation in the Yangtse valley, in spite of our measures for the preservation of order, will be ruined by the disturbances which will arise in every province unless a cessation of hostilities is made quickly."

Chungking, the commercial metropolis of Szechuan, with an estimated population of 400,000, and distant about 500 miles in a straight line north-east from Talifu, is the proper point from which Anglo-Chinese railways should be constructed so as to radiate throughout Szechuan and Kweichow, and perhaps *ultimately* become connected with the Burma railway system at the Kunlôn ferry. As yet, however, this does not seem to be a pressing necessity. Hankow, the terminus of the American Brice Syndicate railway from Canton, now being rapidly pushed on, is very much nearer Chungking than the Kunlôn ferry is. Canton is also nearer to Chungking than Kunlôn is, and still more so is the treaty port of Wuchow. And there can be no doubt whatever that a railway from Canton or Wuchow to Chungking would hold out far better promise of being remunerative than any Kunlôn-Chungking scheme, because (1) it would be easier and cheaper to construct and maintain, (2) it would pass through or close to coal tracts, and (3) it would traverse areas having a larger trade and better commercial prospects than the mountainous province of Yunnan. If a railway were made from Wuchow to Chungking (500 miles direct) viâ Kweilin, capital of Kwangsi, and Kweiyang, capital of Kweichow, goods from Hongkong could be delivered in four days in place of taking three months as at present. This route is said by Consul Hosie to present no very great difficulties, while coal and iron are reported to be obtainable near Kweiyang in tracts through which the railway would pass. From Wuchow to Kweilin it could follow the Fu or Kweikiang canal, which is not suggestive of engineering difficulties such as are inevitable in Yunnan. And even as regards Yunnan Sen, the route from Hong-kong,—by Canton, Wuchow, Nanningfu, and Poseting (Posai), the limit of navigation on the Yukiang,—is maintained by many to be the best way of reaching Yunnan Sen by railway ; for it follows a gradual slope in place of crossing the mountains and

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

valleys, as must be the case between the Kunlôn ferry and the town of Yunnan Sen.

Now, what have our French neighbours done in the way of railway construction in Tonquin, and what projects appeal most directly to them in the immediate future?

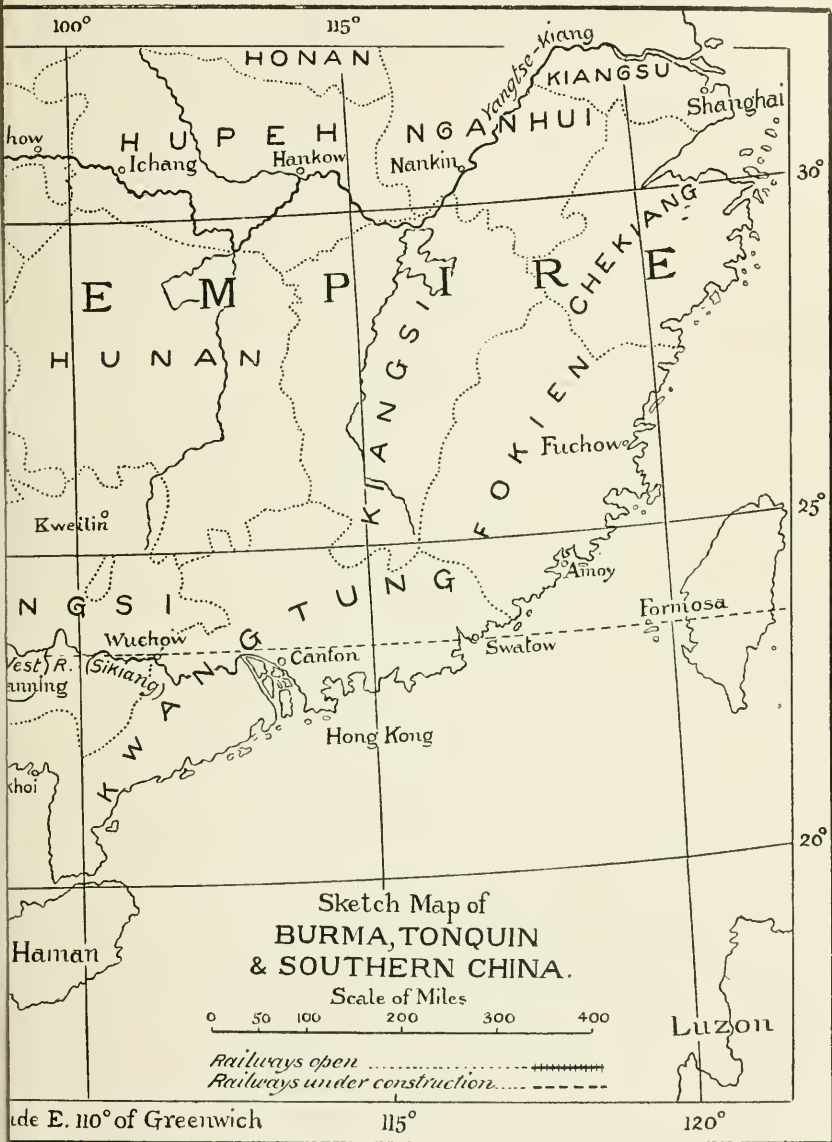
Among the railways of first importance is one, just completed, running north-westwards from Nam-Dinh viâ Hanoi to Laokai, to receive the trade of the southern part of Yunnan.

In December, 1898, the Colonial Committee of the French Chamber agreed to guarantee 70,000,000 francs (£2,800,000) for this line, and the Chamber "almost unanimously" adopted the Bill for a loan of 200,000,000 francs (£8,000,000) for the construction of other railways guaranteed by the Government of Indo-China. The chief project covered by this was the Tonquin railway, begun in 1890, running north-east from Hanoi to Langsun, and extending northwards to Langchow, within the borders of Kwangsi, as far as which it is now constructed. Endeavours will probably be made to continue it north-east to Nanningfu, and thence to the treaty port of Wuchow on the West river. From Nanningfu a branch will extend to the treaty seaport of Pakhoi. But provision was also made for a coast line in the direction of Annam, and a line terminating in Cochin China.

Taking a comprehensive and liberal view of affairs, Britain can well give her best wishes to a French line from Tonquin into south-eastern Yunnan viâ the Red river, provided Britain secures possession of all trade routes trending in any western direction through Talifu or other northern routes into Burma and Assam.

French activity must naturally attract towards Hanoi a certain proportion of the trade that now exists or that may be capable of being developed. Even if such attraction amounted actually to deflection, it would not be of much consequence were it not that British commerce is handicapped against French trade by heavy import duties in Tonquin.

In 1898 a railway reconnaissance survey was made by French officials from Kwangtung through Hunan to Hankow, and indications have already been given that French agents would like to construe the British sphere





## THE FRENCH IN YUNNAN

of influence in the Yangtse (Takiang or "great river") valley as terminating at the Tong Ting lake, above which the upper Yangtse is generally called the Chingchow river. More recently, however, particular attention has been bestowed upon projects having special reference to Yunnan and Siam. During the spring of 1899 M. Doumer, Governor-General of French Indo-China, visited Yunnan Sen and pressed upon the Chinese Viceroy considerations regarding the extension of the railway line from Laokai to the provincial capital. Fifteen French surveyors were engaged in operations near this town, while other seventeen surveyed between there and the French frontier. Among other concessions desired was the demand for the immediate building of a terminal station; but at the same time M. Doumer made it his particular care to try and interfere in the negotiations of the Burma-Chinese Boundary Commission. He prolonged, though he could not otherwise interrupt, the successful conclusion of Mr. Scott's mission. Numbers of agents of French syndicates went to Yunnan Sen seeking concessions of various sorts, French shops were opened, and the tricolour flew from the centre of the city. There was jubilation among the French that they appeared to be stealing a march on the British; but it was premature. During the summer a strong anti-French feeling manifested itself. The tricolour flags were torn down by the mob, and the Viceroy had to issue a proclamation warning the inhabitants against molesting French surveyors. But the French railway survey and the definite alignments were stopped, so that the graves of the revered ancestors of the population were no longer ruthlessly insulted without substantial and satisfactory compensation being given. Of course the murder of a few surveyors would be at once utilized to make enormous demands having for their true object little else than the obstruction of British commercial interests and their normal expansion. As Yunnan Sen is not a town of any real importance, the anxiety to connect it with Laokai by railway must clearly have some other than a commercial object.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> While these pages are being passed for press the following rather



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

The only counterpoise to this ceaseless French activity, inaugurated by the Roman Catholic missionaries and serious addition to our information on this subject appears in the *Times*, May 23, 1901 :—

“CANTON, May 3, *via* Rangoon, May 22. The political activity displayed by the French in this region has doubtless helped to bring home to the Chinese authorities the dangers with which the reckless policy of the old *régime* has been fraught. Under the energetic impulse of M. Hardouin, the French Consul, who has learnt all the approved methods of French political propagandism in Siam, the French are unquestionably making strenuous efforts to assert special claims to influence in and around Canton. No less than six French gunboats have been sent to patrol the Canton waters, a small steamer has been subsidized nominally to carry French mails from Hong-kong to Canton, and the usual inducements are being offered to Chinese junk owners to fly the tricolour. A French bank will shortly open a branch here, and various other schemes are on foot to place French enterprise *en évidence*. The commercial interests of France in Canton, which mainly consist of a small share, barely 15 per cent., of the silk trade with Lyons, cannot possibly explain this sudden outburst of activity. Still less can they explain the need which France has suddenly discovered for laying an independent cable from Saigon to Amoy, whence it can directly connect with the Russian system over the northern telegraph wires. Despite the most liberal treatment which the Eastern Telegraph Company has accorded to French possessions, this scheme has long been advocated by the French colonial party, but it was, of course, pooh-poohed in British circles with our customary optimism, until about three weeks ago news came from Amoy that a French ship had entered and landed a cable there. It was a smart piece of work carried out in a business-like fashion with the utmost secrecy, rendering telegraph communication between France and her Far Eastern possessions independent of cables under British control.

The provinces of Kwang-si and Yun-nan have hitherto been regarded as the main objectives of French colonial expansion from Tongking. M. Doumer, the Governor-General of Indo-China, has undertaken a journey to Europe with the avowed object of urging upon the French Government the completion of the railway connecting Tongking with those provinces, but there is some reason to believe that a project, whereof we are already witnessing the preliminary steps, is being matured for including within the sphere of French expansion the whole province of Kwang-tung with Canton itself. Some anxiety is certainly beginning to be felt, not only by the Chinese authorities, but also in responsible circles in Hong-kong, as the prosperity of our colony is indissolubly bound up with freedom of trade in Canton and the wealthy province of which it is the capital. French protectionism has killed the important trade with Singapore formerly carried on with the French possessions, but Singapore has ample resources in its own *Hinterland*. Hong-kong, on the contrary, is wholly dependent upon the maintenance of the open door on the mainland. French activity in Canton, therefore, deserves at least to be carefully watched.”

## RAILWAYS IN SIAM

energetically supported by the French Government, is the encouragement of British pioneers of commerce in western China. Unfortunately, however, British merchants have only too often been urged to proceed slowly, if not actually snubbed when appealing for assistance and encouragement.

M. Doumer also during the spring of 1899 visited Siam to try and impress on King Chulalongkorn the desirability of extending the existing Siamese railway line eastwards towards the French frontier. The only line in Siam is a short one from Bangkok to Khorat on the north-east. The contract for this State railway was given to an English firm, while the Director-General appointed to supervise the work was a German who had tendered for the work unsuccessfully. Hence inevitable friction arose. The contract was cancelled in 1896, and was afterwards given to a German firm for completion. The matter was brought to the notice of the House of Commons in 1899, but Government decided that the action constituted no breach of the British-Siamese treaty.

As Khorat is no commercial centre, nor likely to become one, the railway is foredoomed to commercial failure. Yet railways are a pressing want of the country. Undeterred, therefore, by their unfortunate experience in this instance, the Siamese Government have decided on an immediate survey for a railway from Bangkok to Chiangmai (Zimmè), the second city of the kingdom and an important trade centre, about 400 miles to the north-west. A large volume of trade already passes up and down the Menam river between Bangkok and Chiangmai, but the waters fall so low during the dry season that navigation becomes interrupted. Writing of "The Progress of Siam," the special correspondent of the *Times*, on April 4, 1899, remarked of this scheme that—

The prospects of such a line are superb. It would be only 400 miles in length, and would pass for its entire distance along one of the richest valleys in the world. I have travelled widely in Asia, and I consider that the country up the Menam valley from Bangkok through Chiangmai to the north-west frontier of Siam is the richest I have ever seen. Every acre will grow paddy. Rice is the staple export from Siam; it is with rice that the country purchases British goods. Now it is only the neighbourhood of the lower plains that sends rice to

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

Bangkôk. If a railway were built to Chiengmai, thousands of square miles now growing only sufficient paddy for home consumption would be thrown under cultivation.

With the contemplated extension of the Rangoon-Mandalay line from Pegu to Moulmein almost in the immediate future, Chiengmai would be certain to be linked up; and this strengthening of the position of Siam would probably mean more to Britain than the strengthening of our position on the lofty plateau of Yunnan.

Under the *Treaty of Tientsin*, negotiated with China by Lord Elgin in 1858, it was open to a British subject "to clear his goods of all transit dues by payment of a single charge." The transit dues thus arranged were defined to be "a sum in the name of transit duty which will free goods, whether of export or import, to pass between port of shipment or entry to or from any part of China without further charge of toll, octroi, or tax of any description whatsoever." This single payment was not to exceed  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. *ad valorem* (in addition to the five per cent. customs duty on imports), and "on payment thereof a certificate shall be issued which shall exempt the goods from all further inland charges whatsoever."

Notwithstanding the clear stipulations on the point, this transit-pass system has been allowed to become to a great extent inoperative owing to the treaty rights not having been *ab initio* enforced to their full extent by the British Government. There is no necessity to adduce elaborate proofs in support of this statement. They are convincingly given in Consul-General Brenan's report of 1897 on the *State of Trade at the Treaty Ports in China*, and Lord Charles Beresford's *Break-up of China* bristles with concrete examples of this habitual violation of the treaty stipulation.

Owing to this want of prevision and of firm insistence on the stipulated conditions from 1858 onwards a system of provincial exactions of the nature of transit dues, octroi, or toll has become established which is decidedly prejudicial to the interests and the expansion of British trade. These indefinite inland taxes are known as



## THE *LIKIN* EXACTIONS

“*Likin*.” The further the provincial authorities are from the central Government of China the more independent do they become, and the more openly are they able to exact these illegal transit dues which cause delay and loss to trade and hinder its expansion. This *Likin* or illicit provincial customs duty is levied in every province and sometimes in every district of a province. Whenever any new trade route is opened a *Likin* exaction is at once imposed, and unless paid delay and loss inevitably result. In fact, the provincial governments rely to a great extent upon *Likin* for their revenue.

These *Likin* exactions are notoriously heavy and vexatious in the Kwangtung and Kwangsi provinces, but they also operate greatly against trade in Yunnan. Thus, between Bhamo and Yunnan Sen goods are said to be subjected *en route* to no less than seven different duties, which must of course act as a deterrent to commercial expansion.

Great difficulty is, however, encountered in endeavouring to obtain something like a true estimate of almost anything connected with Yunnan, even from those who have visited the country. Thus Mr. Colquhoun (*China in Transformation*, 1898, p. 14) says of Yunnan that “*its mineral wealth is greater and more varied than that of any other province.*” Consul Hosie’s statements in his reports hardly corroborate this eulogy, although he mentions copper as being found in the north-east and tin mines as being worked in the south of the province; while Captain Wingate, who recently crossed from Shanghai viâ Hunan, Kweiyang, and Yunnan Sen to Rangoon, describes Yunnan and Kweichow as being sparsely populated and poor in comparison with the wealth and enormous possibilities of Hunan.

So far as is yet known coal is not found in Yunnan, although in Szechuan it forms the fuel of the people, the pine forests having long since been destroyed. Mr. Jamieson, when Consul at Szumao, reported in 1898 that—

It is difficult to understand on what grounds such sanguine hopes of Yunnan’s future prosperity are based, when it is seen what little support has been given to such illusory ideas by competent observers

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

conversant with actual facts. I am quite prepared to admit that the mineral wealth of Yunnan is great, but the difficulties in the way of working the same are so formidable that they are certain to deter all who wish for some return on their outlay from investing capital in mining enterprises, at least in the southern and western sections of the province. Apart from minerals the province possesses few other resources, and the inhabitants are unenterprising and lazy to a degree. So long as they grow enough rice to feed themselves, and procure enough cotton wherewith to make the few articles of clothing necessary in this equable climate they are content.

Mr. Litton, Consul at Chungking, likewise reported in 1899 that a line from Burma to Chungking direct would pass through an excessively difficult country, which is commercially worthless. On the other hand, Consul Bourne said in a recent report—

There are great possibilities of expansion of trade in western and south-western Yunnan, but eastern Yunnan is a poor country consisting for the most part of dry wind-swept downs, on which nothing is grown except perhaps one crop of Indian corn a year.

The agents of the Yunnan syndicate of course go much further and assert that commercial prospects are favourable for railway enterprise, and their officers, sent during the dry season 1898-99 to make a rough reconnaissance between the Kunlôn ferry and Chungking, reported that what they considered a practicable route might be found for a line about 1,000 miles long from Kunlôn viâ Yunnan Sen to Luchow, between Suifu and Chungking on the Upper Yangtse.

Again; as to the actual condition of existing trade there seems to be the same sort of contradiction in statements. Thus, in the memorandum on trade presented to Lord Charles Beresford by the China Association at Shanghai in October, 1898, the following description of affairs is given (*The Break-up of China*, 1899, pp. 89-90)—

But if the British Government has allowed the provisions of the Treaties to become a dead letter, other nations have been less complacent with China in their handling of the matter, and it is somewhat humiliating to find the following passage in the report of Mr. Consul Bourne, who accompanied the recent "Blackburn Mission to China." Writing upon the trade of Yunnan, Mr. Bourne says: "Since my visit to this place in 1885 the import trade in foreign goods has almost

## YUNNAN TRADE STATISTICS

entirely shifted from the West river route viâ Pose-Ting (i.e. the British route) to the Tongking route by way of the Red river and Mengtzu (the French route). This revolution, great indeed if the conservative habits of the Chinese are remembered, is entirely due to the energy of the French in vigorously enforcing on the Chinese Government their right to transit passes to cover goods from Mengtzu to Yunnan Fu." Again, on the same subject, Messrs. Bell and Neville, the members of the Mission, write: "There is little chance of any increase of trade (into Yunnan) by the overland route from Bhamo (i.e. the Burmese frontier route), for goods coming this way are subjected to no less than seven different duties, whereas by the Mengtzu route transit passes are recognized, and the  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. paid to the Imperial Maritime Customs exempts the goods from any further taxation. If the French have been able to enforce upon the Chinese Government this respect of Treaty rights, how is it that we, who hold some sixty-four per cent. of China's total foreign trade, have so entirely failed?"

This seems perfectly clear and intelligible. Yet it is entirely at variance with the report of the Commissioners of Customs at Mengtse, in southern Yunnan, for 1899. This says that, in 1898-99, the traffic—

reached a total value of about £525,000, being the largest amount since the place was opened to foreign trade; and the year is described as a prosperous one for merchants, in spite of frequent and even increasing wrecks of junks in the Red river. The imports amounted in value to about £350,000, of which ninety-seven per cent. came by way of Hongkong, the remaining three per cent. representing Tonquin trade. The exports represented roughly, £175,000, of which eighty-three per cent. went to Hongkong, the remainder being the share of Tonquin.

Both of these statements cannot possibly be correct; one of them must be at least partially wrong. The French do more, however, for encouraging and pushing their trade, because they have consular agents resident both at Mengtse and Yunnan Sen.

But, in any case, it is quite certain that the provincial *Likin* exactions must naturally act as a barrier to the expansion of British trade, while other two very serious obstacles need also to be removed before commerce can increase rapidly. These are, that right of residence in the interior of the country, and not merely at the Treaty ports as at present, should be secured to British subjects, and that the right to trade in the interior of the country should also be obtained.

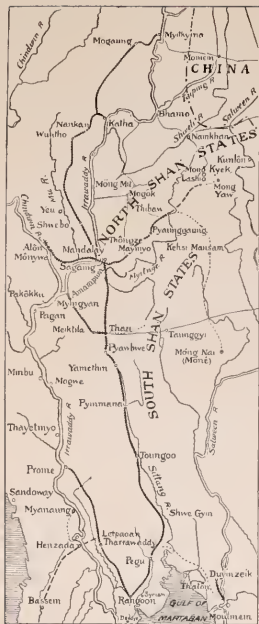
## Chapter II

### RAILWAYS IN BURMA, AND THEIR PROPOSED EXTENSION ACROSS YUNNAN

THE railways in Burma are all of metre gauge. They consist of two main trunk lines of very unequal length, both of which were originally State railways. That constructed first and opened to traffic in May, 1877, the *Irrawaddy Valley State Railway*, runs from Rangoon, the capital and the chief seaport of Burma, situated near the mouth of the Irrawaddy river, northwards for 163 miles to Prome, an important town on the left bank of the Irrawaddy. It was first projected in 1868, but the estimates were not prepared till 1873. The first sod was turned in July, 1874, large numbers of famine immigrants from Bengal being employed on the earthwork.

Throughout most of its length this railway follows the military road constructed at the close of the second Burmese war (1852-53) to connect Rangoon with the old frontier station of Thayetmyo, forty-five miles north of Prome. This line passes through rich rice-fields, and has been a very remunerative investment. Apart from the strategical objects which were of considerable influence in determining the Government of India on its construction, it has contributed in a very marked degree to the spread of rice cultivation and the increase of revenue throughout the Hanthawaddy, Tharrawaddy, and Prome districts. Where twenty-five years ago in Tharrawaddy there were vast compact areas of tree forest only broken into here and there by patches of permanent cultivation, there are now enormous stretches of rice lands; while the area still under forest on the plains has been reduced





Railways open to traffic —————  
 Railways under Construction - - - - -  
 Railways proposed & under Survey ······  
 Burma-China Boundary - - - - -



## RAILWAYS, ROADS, AND RIVERS

to far lower proportions than are desirable in the interests of agriculture. Fortunately the summer rains brought by the south-west monsoon never fail throughout the central and southern portion of the districts traversed by the railway, so that anything like a famine consequent on excessive clearance of the primeval forest need not be feared. The only tracts that still remain uncleared for rice cultivation within easy reach of the line of railway are areas reserved as State forests for fuel and fodder, or as grazing grounds set apart for the plough cattle.

After the completion of this first short line, the survey was put in hand of a similar line of about equal length (166 miles) running first north by east through the Pegu and Shwegyin districts, and then due north to Toungoo, the other old frontier military station on the Sittang river. The prospect of this *Sittang Valley State Railway*, opened in 1884, paying as well as the line on the Prome side was not very promising at first; but strategical reasons were far stronger in this than in the previous case. From Rangoon to Prome and Thayetmyo there had always been good river communication by means of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company's steamers, whereas the troops in Toungoo were much more out of touch with the central military authorities. Toungoo could, it is true, be reached either by land or water. But the land route involved marching for more than 160 miles over a very bad road crossed by several large streams, some of the largest of which were neither bridged nor served by ferries. Moreover, only the first fifty miles or so of the road were metalled, and very badly metalled too, so that this route was only practicable between the months of November and April.

The river communication was equally bad. The passage from the Pegu river to the Sittang, and consequently the ascent of the latter, could only be made during the fortnightly spring tides, at which periods the strong bore rushing up the winefiller-shaped mouth of the Sittang river was sometimes dangerous. The ascent by river from Rangoon usually took from ten to twenty days, in great discomfort, and it was all but impractic-

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

able during the flood season lasting from June to October.

At that time, prior to 1884, there were few steam launches in Rangoon, and the conveyance of troops and of other travellers took place in boats roofed in with a thin, low awning of thatch. It was uncomfortable to have to lie down all day long, and day after day, on the hard boards of a so-called Chittagong boat, and a relief to get out and walk up and down a sandbank while the evening meal was being cooked. One could, of course, come down stream much quicker. During the rains of 1880 I made the journey from Toungoo to Rangoon in four and a half days in a Burmese boat of about fifty tons. This contained, as my fellow-passengers, four servants, one pony, one dog, and five boatmen. That was, however, travelling in unusual comfort for those days, as I could not only sit upright all day, but even had a small table and a chair in the centre compartment of the boat, next to my pony. The compartment immediately beyond that my cook used as his kitchen.

All movements of trade between Rangoon and the Sittang river were likewise limited to the high tides recurring fortnightly, as at other times the Kyásu creek, leading from the Pegu river across into the Sittang, was blocked for want of water. Such was the rather unpleasant state of affairs until the opening of the Sittang Valley State Railway in 1884.

During 1887-88, the Irrawaddy and Sittang lines, extending over 333 miles, which had cost over 289 lacs of rupees (£1,926,666), made net earnings of nearly 15 lacs of rupees (£100,000) giving a return of 5·11 per cent. on the capital.

Permanent cultivation near the newer line of railway soon began to extend, though nothing like so rapidly as had been the case in the less thinly populated tracts traversed by the Prome line. The Sittang railway had, however, this great advantage, that it was capable of extension northwards to Mandalay whenever circumstances might render such a scheme feasible. That this opportunity was actually forced upon us, mainly through the action of the French in adopting their

## RAILWAY TO MANDALAY

customary plan of trying to steal in behind the tracts occupied by Britain, is now a matter of history.

The annexation of Upper Burma on January 1, 1886, and the military operations entailed thereafter in the occupation and the pacification of the new territories, necessitated the extension of the Sittang line to Mandalay. The work of survey and of construction began towards the close of 1886, taking place simultaneously from Mandalay southwards for forty miles, and from Toungoo northwards for sixty miles; but in the intervening 120 miles some delay occurred in making a commencement, as the work had to be carried on in tracts that were seriously disturbed by predatory bands of dacoits or armed robbers. It is perhaps the finest achievement of our civilization in Burma that this extension, measuring 220 miles from Toungoo to Mandalay, was opened to traffic early in 1889, within three and a quarter years of the annexation of Upper Burma. The chief credit of this great work is mainly due to Sir Charles Bernard, the Chief Commissioner of Burma; for it was really through his personal insistence that the extension scheme was somewhat reluctantly approved by the Government of India and recommended to the Secretary of State. This extension skirted the Shan hills, passing within fifteen to twenty miles of the mouths of the passes through which the caravans from the southern States reach the plains, and opening up a land-locked tract inaccessible by any navigable streams. Work on this line provided labour for large numbers of people, and materially assisted the pacification of these eastern districts which were for some time among the most turbulent in the province.

One of the results of this through railway communication between the moist tracts of Lower Burma and the central dry zone of Upper Burma—in which, owing mainly to excessive clearance of the original forest covering, the humidity of the atmosphere is very low and the storage capacity of the soil for retaining moisture has been ruined, while the surface soil is easily eroded and washed away during heavy rainfall—has been that in years of scarcity, such as have been of frequent recur-

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

rence recently, large supplies of rice and other food-stuffs can be poured into the afflicted districts. At the same time the people can easily, if they like, be transferred by rail to the vicinity of tracts not far distant in Lower Burma, where danger from drought does not exist, and where good land can still readily be obtained from Government for clearance and permanent occupation on uncommonly easy terms.

On the completion of the line to Mandalay, a survey was almost immediately put in hand for facilitating military operations and opening up the new province by extending the railway system northwards towards Shwebo, and then beyond that to Katha, to Mogaung, and to the upper portion of the Irrawaddy river, about 100 miles north of Bhamo. The Myohaung ("ancient capital") station, a few miles south of Mandalay, was chosen as the most convenient point of junction, and from this a short branch was thrown out westwards to Amárapura. Here the Irrawaddy has now to be crossed in large and powerful ferry steamers to the town of Sagaing (though it will probably soon be bridged at an estimated cost of about £200,000), whence the Mu Valley State Railway was constructed running northwards through the Sagaing, Shwebo, Katha, and Bhamo districts to Mogaung and Myitkyina. In its course through Shwebo and Katha it passes within twelve miles of the Wuntho goldfields, from which so much gold was expected and so little has up to date been obtained. This railway was opened to traffic in sections, first of all to Shwebo in 1891, then to Wuntho in 1892, to Katha on the Irrawaddy (which is connected with the main line by a short branch) in 1895, to Mogaung in 1897, and finally to Myitkyina during the autumn of 1898. This Mu Valley line only commenced to pay in 1900, but its prospects are good.

Myitkyina, the headquarters of a new district of the same name, is the terminus of the railway line up the Irrawaddy valley, at a point 724 miles distant from Rangoon by railway and about 1,000 miles by river. It is situated on the right bank of the river, about twenty-five miles below where the two branches, the



## THE UPPER IRRAWADDY

Malikha and the Maikha, unite to form the Irrawaddy. At Myitkyina, and for about twelve miles further north, the river is navigable for steam launches; but beyond that steam navigation is impracticable, and must remain so. From December to May steam launches can run between Bhamo and Myitkyina, but not during the rainy season from June till the end of November; for in the gorge known as "the first defile" the floods, rising over eighty feet high and pent up till they pour over a narrow opening, only fifty to sixty yards wide, called "the Pashaw gate," render navigation either up or down stream equally impossible. Even in the dry season there are stringent regulations as to the departure of launches upwards from Bhamo and downwards from Sinbo, in order to obviate casualties in the defile. Under no circumstances could large steamers make the journey at any time of the year; and whatever traffic there is, or there ever will be, the requirements of commerce are far better served by the railway than they possibly could be by river steamers plying between Bhamo and Myitkyina.

From Wuntho northwards the line passes through thinly populated districts which are certain to be more extensively cultivated later on. To the north and east, Myitkyina is shut in by lofty hills, thickly wooded and sparsely inhabited by wild Kachin jungle tribes. Any remunerative extension of this main line beyond Myitkyina is therefore hardly to be thought of in the meantime, though a branch from Mogaung northwards, by way of Kamaing, up the Hukong valley to connect with the Assam railway system has been considered so far as to have been the object of a reconnaissance survey during 1895-96. The results were, however, not sufficiently encouraging to hold out any hope that the project can for the present be considered remunerative. It is, nevertheless, a scheme perhaps more worthy of consideration than the construction of a railway across Yunnan.

After the opening of the Mu Valley Railway, the various lines were amalgamated and called the *Burma State Railways*; but this name was altered when the *Burma Railways Company, Limited*, took over all the



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

existing lines and projects on September 1, 1896. This Company, formed in July, 1896, contracted to take over from the Secretary of State for India the open system of railways in Burma, then aggregating 834 miles in length, also to complete and eventually work other lines in progress, amounting to 360 miles more—or about 1,200 miles in all—and to construct and work such other lines as the Secretary of State may think fit to entrust to it, Government arranging to contribute further capital or enabling the Company to raise the same. The capital is £2,000,000, of which half has been called up, and on which the Indian Government guarantee a dividend of two and a half per cent. per annum together with one-fifth of the surplus earnings beyond that interest. It was also guaranteed that this one-fifth should not be less than a quarter per cent. for the first five years ending with June, 1901. Provisions were likewise made in the contract as to the utilization of the net earnings for discharging interest on any debentures raised, and for paying to Government interest at two and a half per cent. per annum on the capital expended in constructing the railways. Further, Government reserved the right of determining the contract at six months' notice in 1921, or in any tenth year thereafter, or in the event of the undertaking not paying its expenses for three successive half-years. In the case of such determination, the share capital is to be repaid at par. That is to say, the onus of finding money for all constructions within British territory really falls on the Government of India, whose financial position does not justify their rushing into rash expenditure. Beyond that, responsibility for surveys and other charges in Yunnan can hardly be forced upon the Government of India.

The status of the Burma railways is thus clear and definite. The Company not only took over the active management of the existing open lines of railway, the lines in course of construction, and the projects under consideration, but they also voluntarily incurred the liability to construct further extensions ordered by the Government of India on the guarantee from the latter of an uncommonly low rate of interest for investments of the nature in question in a country like Burma.

## THE MANDALAY-KUNLÔN RAILWAY

The capital outlay on the Burma railways system—including open lines, lines in construction, and surveys in connexion with projects then under consideration—up to August 31, 1896, when the enterprise was handed over by Government to the Burma Railways Company, amounted to  $787\frac{1}{4}$  lacs of rupees or five and a quarter million pounds sterling. Of this total,  $771\frac{1}{2}$  lacs (£5,180,666) represented outlay on open lines; and these yielded during 1896-97 net earnings to the amount of  $34\frac{1}{4}$  lacs (£230,000), giving 4.47 per cent. on the capital invested. The last dividend declared by the Company was three and three-quarters per cent. for the half-year ending June 30, 1900.

The principal extension now in course of construction is the much talked of branch extending from Myohaung, near Mandalay, which is also the junction for the Mu valley section to Mogaung and Myitkyina, eastwards through the northern Shan States by way of Maymyo, the little "hill station" of Burma, Thibaw, Lashio, and Mong Yaw to some point at or near the Kunlôn ferry on the Salween river.

The detailed survey for this line was begun in the autumn of 1892, but the project was not sanctioned till 1895. The estimated distance from Myohaung junction to the Kunlôn ferry is 224 miles, and the sanctioned estimate was for 183 lacs of rupees (£1,220,000), though this would probably be exceeded considerably.

But in Upper Burma there are two other important branch lines. One of these, about sixty miles in length, begun in 1896 as a famine work, runs from Thazi, near the headquarters of the Meiktila division and that important military station, to Myingyan on the Irrawaddy, near where this receives from the north-west its chief tributary, the Chindwin river. This line, which was opened to traffic in November, 1899, traverses the principal cotton-producing district in Burma, whose short-stapled crop is largely exported into Yunnan viâ Bhamo. From Sagaing another important branch, about seventy miles long, runs through Myinmu and Mônnywa to Alôn, on the Chindwin, which passes through fertile rice lands and tracts producing cotton, cattle, and salt. The construction of a branch from Letpadan (on the Prome line), by way of Henzada,

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

to the seaport of Bassein is now in active progress. This will pass through a well populated, highly cultivated, and rich rice-producing country. A survey is now being made for a branch railway extending from Pegu, on the main Rangoon-Mandalay line, to Moulmein. Short feeder lines are being surveyed for between Pegu and Syriam, the ancient Môn capital near the mouth of the Pegu river, and from Dalla, just opposite Rangoon, to Dedaye, on the tidal creeks. Another survey is being made from Thazi junction to Taunggyi, and the Local Government are prepared to make and work this line themselves, unless other arrangements are meanwhile entered into, in the event of the survey showing that the cost of construction and of maintenance would be reasonable. And in the near future a branch about 200 miles in length will most likely be extended southwards from Thibaw, on the Mandalay-Kunlôn line, through Kehsi-Mansam and Laikha to Mông Nai (Moné) in the heart of the Southern Shan States, the survey for which was begun in 1897. Here a certain amount of trade already exists, which is capable of being greatly increased. These States are small principalities which, prior to annexation, were utterly disorganized by internecine strife and thinly populated by reason of constant petty warfare. Under good government they are now, however, showing great improvement, with rapid development of trade. In 1892 the total trade of the Southern Shan States with Burma amounted to £30,000; in 1899-1900 it was £575,556. This capital has all been created since the annexation, when cultivation was confined to absolute requirements for actual existence. No statistics are available as to the trade of these States with Siam, China, and Tonquin; but if the railway being surveyed for from Thazi to Taunggyi can be continued across the Shan States to Moné (thus forming a loop with the Thibaw-Moné branch) and on to Kengtung, trade will probably develop very rapidly. The country is fairly fertile and possesses a good climate suitable for growing tea, coffee, fruits, vegetables, and grain, as well as for breeding cattle. Hence, given the railway, there would probably soon be a large development of trade eastwards from

## THE NORTHERN SHAN STATES

Kengtung and the country beyond : for the Shans are endowed with very keen trading instincts. Moreover, it would bring our military station at Kengtung, now 350 miles distant from the railway line at Thazi, into considerably better touch with its main bases at Mandalay and Rangoon. The extension of the railway in this direction would therefore be an important strategic movement in protecting Burma against any flank movement from Tonquin or Siam.

But even the Shan States are not everywhere capable of being opened out to an unlimited extent. In Thibaw, the most important of the Northern Shan States, which is being traversed from west to east by the railway from Mandalay to Lashio, irrigation is already extensively adopted for cultivation. The soil, a clayey loam resulting from the decomposition of limestone rock, is fertile so long as it has a sufficient supply of moisture. Already the original forest covering on the hill sides has in many places been so much denuded that further extensive clearings for cultivation may interfere prejudicially with the water-storage capacity of the soil, and consequently with its productivity and with the wellbeing of the cultivators and of their cattle. This is, however, a danger that will no doubt be guarded against in due time by those responsible for the administration of the State. The Forest Department has already been called upon to give attention to this matter.

Remunerative extensions of the railway will also ultimately be feasible beyond Mogaung ; for the country in the north of the Myitkyina district, though poorly populated and as yet only partially administered, is rich in future possibilities. The project of linking up the Burma line with the Assam railway, for which the preliminary surveys were completed in 1896, must again in due course be brought forward for favourable consideration. In 1892 a reconnaissance was made from Minhla through the An pass across the Arakan hills to Chittagong, and it was found that an alignment was feasible. But, as it ascended to 2,800 feet and required a tunnel 3,000 feet long at the top of the pass, the project was not taken into further consideration.



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

Even under the most favourable circumstances it cannot now be anticipated that the railway will reach Kunlôn on the Salween for several years. From the Kunlôn ferry, about 1,700 feet above sea level, a line can be formed on the farther side of the Salween extending north-east up the Namting valley and across a *col* about 5,600 feet in elevation to Yunchow (Yincho),<sup>1</sup> and thence northwards for about twenty-five miles to Shunningfu, both of which places are about that same elevation. This extension would be about 160 to 170 miles long, and over thirty miles of it would have to be of a gradient of one in forty. But it is only after reaching Yunchow or Shunningfu that the really great obstruction becomes unavoidable. The Mekong, flowing from twenty to thirty miles to the east of these towns, presents a formidable obstacle as a gorge 2,000 feet deep and between two and three miles in breadth. Beyond that, the possible route and its obstacles are as yet mainly conjecture. There is no longer any talk of its going to Talifu (7,000 feet), the emporium of northern Yunnan. The reconnaissance made by the Yunnan Company's surveyors in 1898-99 suggests a possible alignment viâ Yunchow, through south-western Yunnan to Yunnan Sen, and thence by way of Luchow to Chungking. A survey party was during 1899-1900 engaged in ascertaining details of this route. But perhaps sufficient has been said to show that railway construction into the heart of Yunnan will be abnormally dear, and that the cost of working over high gradients will be unusually heavy without natural supplies of good steam-producing fuel near its eastern end.

If for purely commercial purposes it be desired to extend the Mandalay-Kunlôn line into Yunnan, it should not in the near future proceed beyond Yunchow or Shunningfu, either of which would serve as an additional

<sup>1</sup> Lieut. Roux, of the French navy, who accompanied Prince Henri d'Orleans (*From Tonquin to India*, 1898, pp. 372, 373), puts Mein-ningfu (Namting drainage) at 5,207 feet, the pass between the Salween and the Mekong at 7,776 feet, Yunchow at 7,531 feet, Shunningfu at 5,584 feet, and the Mekong river at 3,604 feet. Unless it can be proved that these observations are vastly overestimated, then the construction of a line will require to overcome natural obstacles of unusual difficulty.



## EFFECT OF RAILWAYS

focus and distributing centre for any commerce capable of development. Later on, further knowledge would be acquired which should make additional extensions, amounting to vast investments, less of a leap in the dark than must be the case if large works are hurried on prematurely. Political reasons may perhaps, however, make it desirable to proceed ultimately as far as Yunnan Sen, to which a young engineer officer is said to have found what may prove a practicable route viâ Yunchow (Yincho) in 1898-99, with a railway distance of about 350 miles from the Kùnlôn. It is purely a question of a British Government guarantee to the extent of about £90,000 a year on the required capital outlay of probably over £3,000,000.

The open railway lines in Burma convey a large and a steadily increasing traffic. The extension of the main line to Mogaung and Myitkyina, though not immediately remunerative, will become so in course of time. Between these two small towns the railway passes through dense malarious jungle, which will have to await the arrival of settlers before the forests can be cleared for permanent cultivation. The tapping of Yunnan by a railway would not likely bring down cultivators from there; while mountaineers from lofty regions soon sicken and die on the low, hot, moist plains. Mogaung receives the produce of the jade mines at Nanyaseik, above Kamaing, and the amber coming from Maingkhwan; while indiarubber from the wild forest tracts to the north, formerly taken by boat to Bhamo before it could be sent south, is now brought to Mogaung and Myitkyina for direct transport to Rangoon.

Since railway construction was commenced at Myitkyina a considerable portion of the Yunnan trade, formerly borne on pack mules and bullocks westwards through Momein to Bhamo, has now been deflected from the Taiping valley towards Myitkyina. It is quite likely that this deflection of the petty inland trade may continue, and that Myitkyina, a brand new town, will, to a certain extent, grow at the expense of Bhamo. But, *cæteris paribus*, the valley route by the Taiping river is the easier track, and there seems no fear of the trade at

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

Bhamo becoming extinguished. It is most probable that trade may increase considerably, both at Myitkyina and Bhamo, though the limits of its possible expansion seem somewhat narrow. Bhamo, in addition to trade viâ the Taiping valley, must continue to be the emporium of the Chinese muleteers coming down through Namkhan, our frontier town on the Shweli river, which was in 1897 connected with Bhamo by means of a well cleared track fifty-six miles in length.

Even in ascending and crossing the Shan plateau considerable difficulties have to be overcome on the Mandalay-Kunlôn line. From Myohaung junction the ascent of the Shan hills, from a level of about 500 feet on the plain to 3,000 feet on the edge of the plateau within a distance of less than ten miles, involves, with two reversing stations, a gradient of the unusual steepness of one in twenty-five, which may ultimately, for public safety, have to be reduced at great expense to one in forty. The alignment follows a zigzag course across the face of a precipitous hill, rounding sharp curves, passing under heavy cuttings, and going through rocky galleries. When once this short section was opened so that rails could reach the plateau, the laying of the permanent track followed rapidly up to the Gokteik gorge, about the eightieth mile. This Gokteik gorge formed, however, a very formidable natural obstruction to further progress. A fissure in the hills, incomplete in one short portion, resembling rather a geological fault, apparently resulted in once damming up the bed of the Gokteik stream now lying hundreds of feet below. A lake must have been formed until in course of time the waters forced an outlet for themselves, by percolation and pressure, in the form of a subterraneous passage extending for about half a mile through the dam of limestone rock. The stream now disappears for this considerable distance into a huge cavern, while the fault above it forms a *Ngôk* or natural bridge across which the old trade route from China to Mandalay passes.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> When I visited the Gôkteik gorge, in May and June, 1898, there stood on the *Ngôk*, just below where the bridge now crosses, a quaint little monument about seven or eight feet high. It was Chinese in

## THE GÔKTEIK GORGE

This trade route has within comparatively recent times been completely dominated by the Chinese. That such has been the case is, apart from direct historical records, clearly apparent from the entrenchments, the remains of which are easily traceable at different points along the route. The road bungalow at Séin (Théin), about half-way between Thibaw and Lashio, is built within one of the best preserved of these; but they are to be found even so far west as Maymyo, near the western edge of the Shan plateau and within about forty miles of Amárapura and Ava, for five centuries the capitals of the Burmese kingdom.

Natural bridges of this sort are common throughout the Shan States, where the prevailing rock is limestone. The Gôkteik gorge is crossed by a lofty iron bridge elevated about 850 feet above the stream and 2,500 feet in length. The contract for this viaduct was given to an American firm, and the work was completed in December, 1900. This obstacle being surmounted, there was nothing of unusual difficulty to hinder the rails being rapidly laid up to Thibaw, 123 miles, as far as which the line is now open for traffic.

Owing partly to the difficulties connected with the descent to the Salween and the far greater difficulties beyond that, and also partly to the disturbances and political unrest throughout China, it has been very wisely decided that Lashio is to form the terminus of this railway for the present.

Many who have had exceptionally good opportunities of forming a sound judgment on the matter have all along been strongly of opinion that either Lashio or else one or other of the small towns of Mong Yaw or Mong Kyek, respectively about twenty-five and forty miles east of

form and appearance, and bore inscriptions in Chinese and Burmese. The latter ran as follows:—"On the second day of the waxing moon of Tabaung, 1233 (i.e. about March, 1871), during the reign of the Thibaw Sawbwa, Mahawun-tha-thiha-dama Raja, this Yattaung pass, which was in bad condition, was repaired by the two *Hein* (headmen) of Yattein and Taungdeik, so as to make it passable for men and laden oxen. Hence they have earned the good wishes of the *Nat* (guardian spirits) and of men." It is to be hoped that this quaint record has not been destroyed by the bridge work.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

Lashio—and preferably the former—should definitely form the terminus of the railway line. Beyond that, the country descending to the Salween again becomes difficult, and the expense of construction and working will be considerable. The extension from Mong Kyek to the Salween river would be about fifty miles in length and very costly.

When travelling along the roads leading up from the plains of Burma into the northern and the southern Shan States, one continually meets caravans of bullocks carrying small loads of about a hundredweight per head, packed in bamboo baskets slung over the withers of each animal, while the Chinese caravans consist both of bullocks and of mules carrying loads of 120 lbs. But it must be recollected that, even with the limited number of trucks necessitated by the high gradients on parts of this line, one train could convey about 3,000 bullock loads; and when several hundreds of thousands of possible bullock or mule loads are converted into tons of traffic, the amount of commerce thereby represented is comparatively so unimportant that it fails to promise anything like adequate returns to a high-grade railway abnormally expensive to construct, to maintain, and to work.

Long caravan routes can, of course, never compete successfully with direct transport by river or rail when once this is provided. Hence, when the railway line is open to Lashio, this will absorb all the caravan traffic now proceeding to Mandalay, and caravan trade will be attracted towards the line both from our own Shan States and from the territories beyond. The bulk of whatever trade exists or is capable of development in the western portion of Yunnan must naturally, following the lines of least resistance, find its way into the Irrawaddy valley, either through Sadôn to Myitkyina, or down the Taiping valley (Manwaing) or the Shweli valley (Namkhan) to Bhamo, or by the Kunlôn ferry to the railway line from Mandalay. The caravan traffic from the south of that which now crosses the Salween by the Takaw or other ferries and passes through Taunggyi, the headquarters of the southern Shan



## TRANSFRONTIER TRADE

States, and thence proceeds down a fairly good road for 106 miles to the railway line at Thazi (or to the Pyawbwè station south of that, which offers better natural advantages for the cattle), may perhaps not be affected to any appreciable extent until the proposed branch line is, in course of time, made from Thibaw southwards through Kehsi Mansam to Mōng Nai (Moné), the capital of the Shan State bearing the same name.

Inland transfrontier trade with Siam, Karenni, the Shan States, and Yunnan reached £2,047,314 in value during 1899-1900. Owing to improved communications and greater safety of the frontier trade routes, and particularly of those leading into Yunnan, this class of trade is increasing rapidly, and is distributing itself over a large number of products.

The main imports from Yunnan are now gold leaf—largely used for the decoration of pagodas and religious shrines,—horns, orpiment, and raw silk; while the chief exports to it are raw cotton, silk and woollen goods, twist, yarn, and cotton piece goods. At present the total trade amounts to about £250,000 a year.

The trade with the Shan States is more important. With the southern Shan States alone it amounted to £575,556 in 1899-1900—which, however, includes exports of teak timber by river—and it aggregated £616,667 for the northern Shan States. To the Shan States the chief exports are cotton, piece goods, silk and woollen goods, salt, and salted fish; while dry and pickled tea, timber, ginger, chillies, onions, and hides form the chief imports therefrom.

With Siam trade amounted altogether to over £355,000 in 1899, but this includes teak timber imported by the Salween. As the teak timber imports from Siam, Karenni and the Shan States range in value from £250,000 to £300,000 a year, however, these data yield a fair basis for contrasting the relative merits of Yunnan with those of the southern Shan States and western Siam as a field for railway extension in the immediate future.

Much can, of course, be done to facilitate the attraction of trade to the existing railway and steamer lines. It would be of enormous advantage if British commercial



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

syndicates could, in the first instance, in anticipation of subsequent railway concessions, secure the control and management of inland trade routes between the Yangtse and the Irrawaddy and Brahmaputra on guaranteeing to the Chinese Customs Department a sum in excess of the provincial exactions made, in contravention of treaty rights, in the shape of *Likin* dues annually derived on the average during the last five years. This ought not to be impossible: nor should it be impossible to organize a semi-military transport system along improved trade routes in the western Chinese provinces marching with our Indian Empire.

Apart from purely political and strategical considerations, the improvement of existing communications converging on important points on river or railway and the formation of branch lines of railway within Burma seem to afford much more promising commercial opportunities than the early construction of a costly railway into and across Yunnan. The Government of Burma is certain to do its duty in this respect, so far as lies within its power; but it has for many years been the main grievance of this rich province that an undue share of its surplus revenue is usurped by the Government of India for Imperial purposes instead of being more liberally allotted for the improvement of communications in Burma. In 1897 a road was made from Bhamo to Namkhan (fifty-six miles), and another leading east to Sinlungaba (thirty miles), while in 1898 one was constructed from Myitkyina to the frontier on the route to Momein. A good mule track has been opened from Momeik, on the Shweli river, through Mogôk, the headquarters of the Ruby Mines district, to Mainglôn in the Thibaw State, whence it can easily be extended southwest and south-east to meet the new railway line at Thôngzè and at Pyaunggaung.

As to new railways, Moulmein is soon likely to be connected with Pegu on the Rangoon-Mandalay line; while the most important of the works actually in hand is the construction of a line from the seaport of Bassein northeast to Henzada on the Irrawaddy. This will traverse rich rice tracts at present lying unserved by any direct

## ANGLO-CHINESE AGREEMENT, 1897

communication with the main river. Again, numerous small branches could be very profitably thrown out from the Prome and the Mandalay lines to act as feeders in facilitating the transport of rice and timber, the two main staple products of Burma, to Rangoon.

To form a correct idea about it, the question of extending the Rangoon-Kunlôn line into south-western Yunnan and onwards, so as ultimately to reach some objective point on the Yangtse river, requires to be viewed both in its political and its commercial aspects.

The Anglo-Chinese agreement of June, 1897 (Article XII.) provided for the construction of railways in Yunnan being considered, in the event of trade conditions justifying this, and for such railways being connected with the Burmese lines. This concession, coupled with the right of posting Consuls at Momein and Szumao, had long been desired by commercial men. Several commercial syndicates have already taken active steps by sending out small survey parties to make special investigations and to collect information of all sorts required before the Chinese and the British Governments can reasonably be approached with definite requests for concessions or guarantees. But it is perhaps to be regretted that these various syndicates do not co-operate instead of remaining as separate mercantile interests. Union is strength : and no nation appreciates the advantages of co-operation more intelligently than the Chinese, or knows better how to trifle with divided interests of this sort.

If matters advance beyond these preliminary steps undertaken by merchant adventurers of the City of London, then all further negotiations regarding concessions and guarantees must in equity be guaranteed by the British Government ; otherwise, to involve the Government of India in such a matter will be adding another to the many financial wrongs already done to India in the name of Imperial requirements. The Secretary of State may indeed bring pressure to bear on the Government of India to have the railway constructed up to the extreme limits of Burma ; but, beyond that, arrangements for the extension into Yunnan, if ultimately decided on, must rest entirely with the British Government on its own financial

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

responsibility. This is more essentially the case if political and strategical reasons with regard to British interests and influence in China are to be allowed greater weight than purely commercial interests connected with the trade of Burma. If imperial political considerations are to rule the British policy, then no doubt the City of London can very easily furnish millions of capital for railway construction at the low guarantee, as in the case of the Burma Railways Company, of two and three-quarters per cent. with prospect of a share of further surplus earnings when (or if) realized.<sup>1</sup>

The commercial prospects of enterprise in Yunnan, however, unfortunately appear anything but promising. British Chambers of Commerce told to look upon Yunnan as an Eldorado should, to avoid the probability of disenchantment and disappointment, carefully study the opinions expressed by the most reliable of the British Consuls personally acquainted with the country through which the proposed line of railway would pass. Consequently there are solid reasons for believing that British commercial interests in the immediate future would be better served by devoting the money which railway extension beyond the Salween would cost to linking together the Burma and Assam railways, to the proposed line from Burma to Bangkok, the capital of Siam, to the construction of branch lines as feeders of the existing trunk lines, and to the formation of short new lines falling entirely within our own territories. There exist very favourable openings in Burma for profitable investment of capital, and it seems much more desirable that money available in Britain should be well invested in our own fertile but only partially developed province than that it should be sunk in as yet questionable enterprises in the mountainous tracts of Yunnan.

These views on the commercial openings in Burma are my individual opinions based on a knowledge acquired by service there extending over nearly a quarter of a century, on personal acquaintance with almost every district in the province, and on recent tours made in the northern and the southern Shan States. But they coincide with the

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* p. 12 for the French guarantee of the Laokai-Yunnan line.

## PROSPECTS IN YUNNAN

opinions held generally in official and commercial circles, and with those reflected by the local Press. Any abnormally expensive endeavour to tap the trade of south-western Yunnan by means of a railway will not be remunerative for the very simple reason that this lofty plateau produces nothing in the nature of a trade capable of great expansion. It is not asserted that it is in any way impossible, as beyond engineering skill, to construct such a line to Yunnan and thence to the banks of the Yangtse; but it is maintained that it will be enormously expensive to build and to work, that it will not give adequate returns, and that in any case extensions and ramifications of the railway net throughout Burma are preferable so far as the purely commercial aspect of affairs is concerned. To be profitable, or even possible, trade must be reciprocal; and there seem to be no products in Yunnan which can be utilized in exchange for goods of British manufacture to a sufficient extent to make the railway in question remunerative.

The present population of Yunnan, numbering probably between 5,000,000 and 6,000,000, or only about fifty to the square mile, is dependent mainly on agriculture; while one of the presumptive objects of the proposed railway is to exploit the reputed mineral wealth of the province. But no coal has yet been found in Yunnan, while even pinewood for fuel is comparatively scanty in many parts; and this want of abundant supplies of cheap fuel will much increase the cost of working a railway.

As for gold, why go to Yunnan when the Wuntho goldfields are within twelve to twenty miles of the Mu Valley Railway, and while the Paunglaung range of hills, east of the Sittang river but within easy reach of the Rangoon-Mandalay line, is known to be rich in precious metals?

Coal is being worked at Kabwet, between the Irrawaddy and the railway in the Katha district, and more important fields are believed to exist throughout the northern Shan States within fairly easy reach of the Mandalay-Lashio line.

And, *a fortiori*, if development of agriculture is another object in view, why not concentrate efforts on the vast



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

stretches of rich lands lying uncleared and uncultivated throughout the plains and valleys of Burma itself? Again, all the agricultural produce Yunnan can yield (chillies, onions, ginger, etc.) can be equally well raised in Burma and in the Shan States; while the cotton, betel-nuts, cutch, piece goods, etc., required for Yunnan, necessary in fact, *must* be taken inland, either from the Irrawaddy at Bhamo or else from emporia situated on our Burma railways. Opium, almost the staple of Yunnan, is *not* wanted as an import into Burma.

Under any circumstances we already command the bulk of the trade that is possible, without embarking on questionable railway extensions of considerable financial magnitude in Yunnan. It must also be considered that in actual distance, in a straight line, the Kunlôn ferry is about 550 miles from Suifu, the limit of the navigability of the Yangtse to boats of about sixty tons, and about 660 miles from Chungking, the limit of navigation for junks up to eighty tons, which latter may be taken as the limit of possibility for cargo steamers of large size. On the other hand, Hongkong (Kawlôn) is only about 680 miles, Canton 600 miles, and Wuchow 500 miles from Chungking. That is to say, the Kunlôn ferry and Hongkong are practically about equidistant from Chungking, the most important objective on the upper Yangtse river; and there is good reason to believe that the construction of a railway from Hongkong to Chungking would have fewer natural difficulties to contend with than a line taken across the mountains of Yunnan. And there are the other two very great advantages that a line from Hongkong,—viâ Canton, Wuchow, Kweilin, and Kweiyang—would pass through tracts more populous than Yunnan and more likely to be productive of local supplies of the coal so essential for the working of a railway at anything like a moderate cost.

Considering the natural difficulties of the country, Hongkong is practically nearer to Yunnan than Rangoon; and the natural route to the Yunnan plateau is by the gradual ascent from the east viâ Wuchow, Nanningfu, and Poseiting (Posai), where river communication ends.

As this Burma-Yunnan railway scheme has been so

## DEVELOPMENT OF BURMA

much talked of, I venture to repeat that unless it can be shown that railway construction extending far beyond the Salween will be less unduly expensive than has hitherto been surmised and can offer the prospect of better returns than have generally been anticipated by those most competent to form an opinion on the subject, the solid reasons for advocating the immediate further development of the railway net throughout Burma in the first place, and then for uniting it with Zimmè and Bangkok in the second place, seem much stronger than those for extending the line eastwards into China. No pressure has been brought to bear on Government from the Rangoon Chamber of Commerce, the Press of Burma, or the Burma Railways Company. If the project were really very promising, these would probably have been the first to urge the necessity for action on the part of the Government; for they have most to gain by whatever will increase the bulk of the trade passing through Rangoon. They, however, would prefer that the inland communications of Burma by road and rail should be improved, and that private capital should be encouraged to flow normally into Burma for the more rapid development of the province rather than that Government should commit themselves in the immediate future to guarantees for extensive railway works extending across the mountainous tracts of Yunnan.

Apart from the special projects now engaging the attention of the Burma Railways Company much may easily be done by other British capitalists in the way of opening out feeder railways; and suitable companies would probably be able to obtain concessions of this sort on liberal terms. In the last Administration Report on Burma (1899-1900) it is expressly stated with reference to transport of the rice crop that "communications are not yet so perfect as to make free export follow demand, and the inadequacy of the rolling stock of the Burma Railways Company in Upper as in Lower Burma makes it impossible to put much of the grain on the market. The markets are therefore in most districts local, and prices vary considerably from district to district."

Among feeder lines which may thus be indicated as



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

likely to prove profitable and worthy of the attention of capitalists are railways from Pegu to Shwegyin in Lower Burma, and from Salin to Sinbyugyun in Upper Burma.

But there are many others besides these two. As above mentioned, a survey for a line is now being made from Thazi (on the Rangoon-Mandalay line) to Taunggyi, the capital of the southern Shan States, with a view to its construction out of provincial funds. No doubt, if a wealthy syndicate made suitable overtures, this project for opening up the southern Shan States might be handed over to it by the Local Government of Burma, as the desirability of attracting British capital for the development of this rich province is fully recognized by the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Frederic Fryer; and this would only be in accordance with the liberal and progressive policy pursued by the Governor-General, Lord Curzon of Kedleston.

## Chapter III

### BURMA'S FOREST WEALTH AND THE MAINTENANCE OF THE TEAK TIMBER SUPPLY

THE statement may certainly appear remarkable that the diminution in the supplies of oak timber in England required for maintaining the King's navy towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries had a by no means remote connexion with the first and the subsequent annexations of portions of Burma by the British. And yet such statement is quite in accordance with fact.

During the great period of naval warfare about a century ago the supplies of timber for ship-building became practically exhausted throughout Britain. To satisfy the requirements of the chief naval yards, a substitute for oak was found in teak (*Tectona grandis*) from India. It was first of all exported from the Bombay dockyard, which drew its supplies from the Konkan and Malabar forests lying between the western Gháts and the sea-coast. Here the easily obtainable supplies of large-sized timber soon gave out, and the bulk of the demands had to be drawn from Martaban in Burma. During the course of this century the evolution of ship-building has made teak almost a necessity, for this largest species of the *Verbenaceæ* contains an essential oil which preserves iron and steel coming in contact with it, or embedded in it, in place of rusting and corroding them like the tannic acid contained in oak.

At the termination of the first Burmese war, in 1826, it was obvious that Assam and the seaboard province of Arakan should for political reasons become integral portions of Bengal, to put a stop to the Burmese interfer-

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

ence and annoyance within the frontiers of that province; but the annexation of the far distant and poorly populated tract of Tenasserim was mainly occasioned by the fact that, though much of the timber came from the Siamese and Shan States lying further to the north and east, this tract was believed to contain rich supplies of teak, which were much needed for the demands of the naval docks in England. It was soon found out that the forests in Tenasserim were nothing like so rich in teak as those in Pegu; and when the line of frontier was arbitrarily drawn at latitude  $19\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  N. to conclude the second Burmese war in 1852, it was supposed that now, at any rate, all the finest teak forests had been secured against wasteful destruction. Many rich forest tracts were thus included; but those perhaps richest of all in teak, and situated between  $19\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  and  $20\frac{1}{4}^{\circ}$  N. in the drainage of the Sittang river, were just missed. It was in these Ningyan forests that the commercial trouble occurred with a British foresting corporation, which ultimately became the cause of the third Burmese war of 1885. As the whole of Burma was annexed on January 1, 1886, all the vast forest wealth it contains was taken over by the British, and the province of Burma forms the great natural storehouse of teak from which the whole world's requirements of this invaluable timber is mainly supplied at present. With the conservative treatment which the best of these vast forest tracts are now receiving, and with the works of improvement now being carried out in selected portions of the reserved areas, the supply of teak timber that they will yield in the future is far more likely to increase greatly than to diminish at all.

Immediately after the annexation of Tenasserim, in 1826, Dr. Wallich, the Government botanist, was sent down from Calcutta to inspect the teak forests that had thus been acquired. On receipt of his report, Government resolved to reserve them as State property, and to work the forests on the Attaran river by direct agency. The first attempts at this proved discouraging. Moulmein having just been founded as provincial capital and the chief garrison nearly opposite to the site

## PROTECTION OF FORESTS

of the Burmese town of Martaban, there was no market for timber, as commerce had not yet had time to develop. The timber had therefore to be sent to Calcutta for sale, where the prices realized were so bad as to cause Government to abandon the scheme of direct extraction, and throw the forests open to private enterprise in 1829. Teak had, however, always been one of the royal monopolies in Burmese times, and the Government of India had no intention of abandoning the rights inherited from the King of Burma. So the new system adopted was to issue licences restricting to four feet the minimum girth of trees to be felled, and requiring payment of a royalty of 15 per cent *ad valorem*. Four years later it was found necessary to entertain a small native establishment in connexion with protection, but it was not till 1841 that any officer was formally placed in charge of the forests. New forest rules were then issued providing for the resumption of the old licences, the issue of leases for twenty years, and the control of forest work by the Executive Engineer of Moulmein, as *ex-officio* Superintendent of Forests. Among the conditions contained in the leases, no tree was to be killed for felling if less than six feet in girth, and five young trees were to be planted for each tree killed. These were the first of the forest rules, which have ever since been continuously undergoing changes and amplifications in order to meet the necessities of the new conditions evolving themselves.

On the annexation of Pegu, in 1852, immediate steps were taken for the protection of the forests. By proclamation, they were declared to be the property of the State in accordance with established custom, all teak trees having been the property of the King and teak timber being a royal monopoly. To deal with forest business the appointment of Superintendent of the Pegu Forests was created, and was filled by Dr. MacClelland of the medical service. Various notifications were issued and rules promulgated of a more or less tentative nature, for it was difficult to find the proper course to pursue so long as next to nothing was known about the forest resources and the growth of teak. Light was



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

only beginning to shine in the midst of this darkness when Dr. MacClelland resigned, in 1855. In his successor, Dr. (now Sir Dietrich) Brandis, appointed in January, 1856, the man was found who substantially laid the foundations of the Forest Department in Burma. Working on the lines of policy recommended to Government by his predecessor, and bringing to the task in hand sound judgment and great determination in facing the opposition with which his proposals were met by the European merchants engaged in the timber business, Dr. Brandis succeeded in gradually establishing a sound and profitable system of Forest Conservancy during his six years' labour in this field, before he was transferred to India on special duty in 1862, and then appointed Inspector-General of Forests in India in 1863, a post he held with conspicuous ability and success till his retirement in 1883.

In the autumn of 1856 new rules were published for bringing the Pegu forests under regular conservancy and preventing their destruction by removal of all the mature, marketable, seed-bearing trees, while a rough working plan was framed for regulating the killing and felling of teak trees for extraction. When Rangoon was thrown open to trade in 1826 the chief business which sprang up there before its annexation in 1852 was in teak timber. The rice export trade, now the great staple, was only in its early stage of development, and the merchants raised great opposition to the conservancy measures urged by Dr. Brandis. It was clear to him that the only effective method of retaining full control over forest operations was to form a body of departmental contractors among the Burmese, to extract the timber on Government account, and to sell it by public auction at a central timber depôt established at Rangoon.

The first point, however, was to form some estimate as to the existing stock of marketable teak timber and its rate of growth, and to determine what number of trees might annually be killed and marked for extraction. One great practical difficulty was that the teak tree is not of gregarious habit, forming pure forests, but usually only occurs individually, or in small family groups,



## WORKING PLAN OF 1856

sprinkled throughout a matrix consisting of about a hundred and fifty different genera and species of trees, which form an overwood to dense masses of bamboos of different kinds, usually from thirty to sixty feet in height, but often shooting up to 100 feet or more when able to obtain free enjoyment of light in blank spaces. As a rule the proportion of teak in what are called the teak forests seldom amounts to over ten per cent. of the total crop on the area, and in most cases it is considerably less than this. Under any circumstances, therefore, the felling of mature seed-producing teak trees had to be arranged for with caution, in order that the competition and the struggle for existence among so many other kinds of trees, and among the dense bamboo undergrowth, might not result in the gradual extinction of teak.

The results of the investigations made by linear valuation surveys made in 1856 seemed to show that a teak tree could not be considered mature and marketable till it girthed four cubits (six feet) near its base, and this was adopted as the minimum size of a first-class tree; while those between three and four cubits (four and a half to six feet) were denominated second-class trees. It was also found that the forests acquired in 1852 in Pegu contained about 585,000 first-class trees; and it was estimated, on too sanguine a calculation as subsequent experience showed, that it would take about twenty-four years for a second-class tree of four and a half feet girth to develop into a first-class tree of six feet girth. The rough working plan of 1856 was therefore framed on the assumption that 585,000 first-class trees were available for extraction during the next twenty-four years, and it was arranged that during the next six years (1856-62) one-fourth of these should be "girdled" or killed by ringing. The forests were grouped into six main divisions, to be operated upon successively during the next six years. For the selection of the trees to be girdled, instructions were given to the girdling officers that not more than one in four of the first-class trees should be killed, that isolated trees should be spared for seed-production, and that over-mature trees and such as

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

overshadowed groups of young teak should be girdled in preference to others.

Girdling consists in cutting through the bark and sapwood till the darker-coloured heartwood is entered about an inch below the surface. The effect of this operation is, by removing a complete ring of the cambium, to check the possibility of sap rising from the root-system. Deprived of food supplies the leaves wither within a few days of the operation, and the tree dies. A process of natural seasoning on the stock then follows, the bark and the twigs and smaller branches gradually falling off during the next year or two years, and the seasoned stem being ready for felling and extraction in two years or more, according to the depth of the girdle and the girth of the trees. If the tiniest bit of sapwood be left in any of the fluted portions of the stem, the tree will gradually recover in place of dying, so great is its vitality and recuperative power. Trees thus operated on during the rainy season lose their bark much earlier than those girdled during the dry season, but as a rule girdling work—always performed under the selection and the immediate supervision of gazetted officers—can only, for climatic reasons, be carried out during the dry season.

When selected for girdling, a stem is measured, numbered, blazed, and marked with a hammer at the base. After girdling it is again marked above and below the girdle with a hammer, showing the date of the operation. Girdling has thus several advantages. It seasons the trees evenly and as thoroughly as is possible in two or three years; it makes dragging to the floating stream much easier than would otherwise be the case; it greatly facilitates floating operations; and it forms the best check against illegal girdling and extraction. The only drawback to it is the loss of increase in volume between the time of girdling and that of extraction; but this is insignificant in comparison with the very solid advantages gained. It was an old Burmese custom the purpose of which was mainly to ensure successful floating of teak, apt to sink if put green into floating streams, and only seasoning unevenly at best, while liable to be damaged or consumed by jungle fires if felled and left to season on the ground.

## WORKING PLAN OF 1860

Yet the retention of this most excellent custom met with a storm of opposition from the European merchants, who no doubt wished to have a less efficient check placed upon their foresting operations.

The Pegu forest rules, published in October, 1856, permitted traders to purchase dead and girdled timber within specific tracts assigned to them under leases not exceeding three years. But private girdling operations were not permitted, and the timber remained the property of the State till revenue was paid on it at a fixed rate.

A working plan like that for Pegu was formed in 1860 for the teak forests of the Martaban and Tenasserim provinces, which were added to the Pegu charge in 1858, and the whole of the forests were worked on similar girdling principles till the end of 1867, the number of trees killed averaging 24,300 a year. Until the girdlings of 1857 and subsequent years became thoroughly seasoned and available for extraction only trees "killed by the spirits" (*Natthat*), those dying from natural causes, were felled and floated out for the Rangoon market. This work was given to Burmese and Karens living in the forests, and advances were made to them for the purchase of elephants for dragging. There were heavy deficits for the first two years, but after that a substantial surplus was earned by these direct departmental operations.

Meanwhile the opposition offered by Rangoon merchants to the conservancy measures never relaxed. Naturally desiring to be able to increase their business rapidly they tried every argument and inducement to be allowed to enter the forests and to fell and extract all teak trees of marketable size. They pressed home the argument that restriction of felling was interfering considerably with the more rapid development of trade in Rangoon. Their arguments being backed by the influence of important firms in Calcutta, the Government of India, then in financial straits after the quelling of the Indian Mutiny, resolved to throw open the Pegu forests to private enterprise, and sent orders to Rangoon to this effect early in 1861. In accordance with these orders all the forests west of the Irrawaddy river, and most of those in Martaban drained by the Sittang river, were let to



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

merchants on twelve-year leases with permission to girdle. For some of the other tracts permits to work were issued for three and six years on payment of fixed rates for timber extracted, while felling operations were confined to trees girdled by forest officers. Fortunately, however, the orders of the Government of India did not necessitate the whole of the forests been thrown open at once, and the best of all the teak forests in the Tharrawaddy and Prome divisions continued to be worked by direct departmental agency.

In these latter areas many of the most valuable teak-producing tracts were closed to extraction by natural obstructions in the floating streams; and from 1858 onwards, for more than thirty years blasting parties were employed during each dry season for the removal of these rocky obstructions in the streams flowing from the Pegu Yoma hills westwards into the Irrawaddy and eastwards to the Sittang river—a work that is still being vigorously prosecuted in the more recently acquired territory.

On the three Commissionerships in Burma being formed into the Chief Commissionership of British Burma in January, 1862, all the forests of Arakan, Pegu, and Martaban were placed in charge of Dr. Brandis, as Conservator of Forests; and in the following year the Tenasserim forests, hitherto under the civil authorities, were also transferred to the charge of the Forest Department. In November, 1862, Dr. Brandis was transferred to India, where he was soon after appointed Inspector-General of Forests to the Government of India. In this position of greater influence, and in direct touch with the supreme Government, he could do even more for the conservancy and improvement of the Burma forests than when he had them under his direct charge as provincial head of the Forest Department.

In 1865 it was found necessary to pass a Forest Act, and to promulgate new and more definite rules dealing with the boundaries of the Government forests, the use of marking hammers by lessees of forests and purchasers of timber, the methods of disposal of State timber, and various other matters. Unauthorized killing of teak trees

## FOREST ACT AND RULES, 1865

was absolutely forbidden, and clearances for shifting hill cultivation were only to be made with special permission in places where teak trees were to be found growing. Under these rules, which (with modifications) remained in force till the issue of the rules of 1882 under the Burma Forest Act, all girdling work was prohibited except such as was carried out by the forest officers; for the risks and disadvantages consequent on the orders of 1861 had already become apparent to Government, without their being able to cancel existing arrangements except in the few cases where it could be absolutely proved that the agents of the permit-holders or lessees had been guilty of illicit girdling on a large scale. The timber girdled by Government might either be sold as it stood in the forest to private parties for extraction, or it might be brought out by direct departmental agency and disposed of by public auction or by sales on indent.

With the Forest Act and Rules of 1865 the second period of progress commenced in the history of forest administration in Burma. It was soon found that, as the Act did not relate to foreign timber imported from Upper Burma, Siam, and the Shan States, all the rules dealing therewith were illegal, hence special amendments had to be made. As the working plans of 1856 for Pegu and of 1860 for Martaban and Tenasserim lapsed in 1867, new proposals for girdling operations had to be prepared before the autumn of 1868. As in 1856, linear valuation surveys (over about 140,000 acres) and investigations regarding the rate of growth formed the basis of the new working plan. It was estimated that the stock of mature teak timber amounted to 934,000 first-class trees, and that it took seventy-two years for a young second-class tree of four and a half feet girth to develop into a first-class tree of six feet—that is to say, thrice as long as was in 1856 calculated to be requisite. Subsequent experience, however, again showed that this estimate was too unfavourable, as that of 1856 had been too sanguine. As a precaution against overworking the forests the number of trees to be annually girdled was reduced from 24,300 to 11,600, and this yield was fixed for the next five years, 1868 to 1873.



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

By the time this new working plan lapsed in 1873 extensive illicit girdlings by lessees had been discovered in the forests on both sides of the Sittang river, and the Government of India had ordered that henceforth no fresh leases were to be granted. The last lease expired in 1877. After 1873 no specific working plan was adopted for the regulation of girdling operations. For several years these were almost suspended, being confined merely to localities which showed, after examination by a forest officer, that regeneration of teak was good enough to permit of some of the mature trees being removed without endangering the reproduction of this species in the forest.

The following seven or eight years, till the passing of the Burma Forest Act, 1881, formed a period of great activity in the then still small Forest Department. Until 1873 protection extended only to teak, and not to any other trees. But in that year thitka (*Pentace Burmanica*) and thitkado (*Cedrela Toona*), woods like mahogany in appearance and texture, were declared to be reserved trees. As both of these were found suitable for furniture and tea boxes, large quantities of them were extracted for home use as furniture, and for export to Calcutta for making tea boxes. By reservation and levying royalty on these two trees the Government not only obtained revenue to which they were legitimately entitled, but also caused timber consumers to turn their attention to the many other useful kinds of timber as yet unreserved, and therefore able to be extracted for home consumption or for export free from all payment of revenue.

With the increase of population under good government and the rapid development then taking place in the trade and general prosperity throughout British Burma, the extraction of unreserved woods soon assumed such proportions as to justify Government in reserving other twelve species of trees on 1st January, 1876. At the same time the boundaries were extended within which the forest rules applied, a new procedure was provided for making Reserves or State Forests, and regulations were issued for the granting of permits to extract reserved kinds of timber.

## RESERVED TREES

As regards the reserved trees the principle adopted was that Government was entitled to payment of a low rate of royalty on all such timber extracted for purposes of trade. Two classes of licenses were therefore introduced, "trade permits" and "free permits," which could be issued by gazetted civil officers as well as by the officers of the Forest Department. Each permit specified where the timber was to be extracted from, and where it was to be marked with either the *sale* or the *free* hammer before being disposed of or consumed.

Theoretically the reservation of these twelve kinds of trees was quite sound, but in practice it did not work very successfully, although it produced a fair amount of revenue. In a thickly forested country containing at least fifteen hundred different species of trees there were of course many which in the log were practically indistinguishable from one or other of the actually reserved species. For example, it is almost impossible to distinguish between logs of pyinma (*Lagerstroemia Reginæ*) and lèza (*L. tomentosa*); hence on arrival at a revenue station the latter were declared to be unreserved and exempt from duty, while after conversion they were for selling purposes practically pyinma wood. However, one of the objects of Government was gained in causing attention to be given to the many other good woods in the Burma forests that had hitherto remained unutilized. Rather than be at the trouble and inconvenience of obtaining free permits for reserved wood required for domestic or agricultural purposes the people in general took to utilizing other kinds of timber, whose useful qualities gradually introduced these to the market.

The system which has now in course of time sprung up from these beginnings is that certain kinds of trees having specific commercial value are classed as reserved trees, and can only be cut and extracted under licenses upon payment of revenue varying according to the value of the particular kind of timber, while unreserved trees growing on land outside areas reserved, or preliminarily notified for reservation, as State forests can be cut unrestrictedly for *bonâ fide* home consumption.

In 1870 the Government of India had already become

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

convinced that the maintenance of a future supply of teak timber could only be secured by the formation of plantations (in Lower Burma), and that simple cultural operations could not be relied on to effect satisfactory regeneration. They therefore at this time laid down that the principal work of the Forest Department should consist in the selection of the best areas to be formed into State reserved forests and in the formation of teak plantations. From 1842 onwards experimental plantations had been made, mostly with unsatisfactory results, in the Tenasserim forests, and from 1857 onwards at various places in the Irrawaddy and the Sittang valleys. The areas were cleared, prepared, and sown by direct departmental agency ; but these so-called "regular plantations" proved so expensive that it soon became apparent that some less costly method was essential. The idea had long been entertained of trying to induce the Karen hill tribes to plant teak along with the rice raised in their hill clearings, thus utilizing as a means of propagating teak the wasteful *Taungya* system of cultivation shifting annually. In 1868 Major (now Major-General) Seaton, the Conservator of Forests, succeeded in getting work of this sort done in several forest districts, the cultivators being paid so much per hundred plants alive when the rice crop was harvested in autumn. Gradually the Karens took to the business, finally becoming so eager in earning this additional income that now the difficulty is rather to find within the fire-protected portions of the State reserved forest areas suitable for planting—that is to say, without already containing teak trees to a greater or less extent—than to persuade the Karens to form such plantations. The result has been that, up to 1898, 3,667 acres of regular and 52,231 acres of *Taungya* plantations have been formed, mostly of teak, but also including some cutch among the latter class. The method now usually adopted is to mark out the cleared area with pegs at nine feet by four feet (1,210 plants per acre),—this having been found preferable, for subsequent weeding operations, to six feet by six feet or any other distance. In good plantations canopy is formed during the second or third years, and thenceforth the rate of growth is very rapid, a height of



## STATE RESERVED FORESTS

seventy feet or more being often obtained within about sixteen to twenty years.

The work of selecting State forests as reserves was also prosecuted vigorously, more especially during the Conservatorship of Mr. Ribbentrop (1875-82), who later became Inspector-General of Forests to the Government of India (1885-1900). Under the rules of 1865 any divisional forest officer could reserve areas up to 100 acres in extent. This was merely intended, and was sufficient, for enabling experimental plantations to be formed in suitable localities; but the existing legislation was hardly sufficient to deal with reservation on a large scale, such as was necessary in the best interests of the province, when the advantages of forest conservancy became better understood and appreciated. The task faced by the small Department was to select for reservation the best teak-producing tracts throughout the whole of Pegu and Tenasserim, for teak is not indigenous to any portion of Arakan, and to demarcate them permanently after once they had been notified as State reserves. But great practical difficulties were experienced in carrying out this work, and an immense amount of prejudice and opposition on the part of the district civil authorities had often to be overcome, sometimes at the cost of the loss of very valuable portions of forest land. Hence it not infrequently happened that the reserves had to be formed not of the very best tracts of woodland, but only of such portions as could be obtained with the consent of the civil authorities.

The State, as the inheritor of the rights of the King of Burma, could not but be regarded as having the ownership of all waste land and forest not alienated by grant or under the customary tenure for agricultural occupation. On the other hand, however, the people generally had been, from immemorial time, in the habit of making unrestricted use of the forests for felling wood and bamboos, extracting wood-oil for torches, cutting grass for thatching, grazing their cattle, and clearing forest land for temporary or permanent cultivation. Thus, although they had no actual *proprietary rights*, the people living within the forests and in their vicinity had been

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accustomed to *privileges* amounting practically to *rights of user*, which required careful consideration in connexion with the selection of reserved forests. The policy adopted was to regard this customary user as a right or privilege, but only as one which the State, as guardian of the general interests of the province, had the power to define and regulate, to commute by compensation in land or money, or to extinguish. This procedure was in accordance with the views of Government adopted and embodied in the forest laws successively passed for different provinces of the Indian Empire. But in giving effect to these provisions the special habits and customs of the people had of course to be duly considered. At first there was a good deal of discontent among the hill tribes, and of friction with them; but when once they found out the advantages to be derived from forming teak plantations for Government within the Reserved forests and from other remunerative work given to them by the Forest Department, the opposition to reservation soon subsided. The cordial relations which now exist between the officers of the Department and most of the villages in the vicinity of the forests, and particularly of the Karen hamlets embodied within the reserves, are a proof of the wise and prudent manner in which the great beneficial work of reservation was undertaken and carried out.

All along the fringe of the hill ranges little villages and hamlets were scattered here and there, while within the hills themselves the Karen tribesmen practised, almost entirely unrestrained, their immemorial system of *Taungya* or "hill garden," shifting annually, as approved by the tribal oracle. This wasteful system of cultivation did (and still does) enormous damage annually to the forests. Besides the actual waste it caused in timber, the fires lighted to reduce the trees and bamboos to ashes were allowed to spread unhindered through the forests, destroying seedlings and greatly injuring both young and old trees. When the work of selecting reserves was at length taken in hand vigorously in 1875-6 it was found essential to demarcate an outer line which should exclude Burmese or other hamlets fringing the plains, and also to fix inner lines practically marking off *Taungya*



## KAREN TAUNGYA TRACTS

lands within which the Karen tribesmen might continue to exercise their peculiar method of hill cultivation.

The work was at first done by a Forest Demarcation Party consisting of a Forest Officer, who selected the tracts for reservation, proposed lines of demarcation, and blazed and hammer-marked them if approved by the Civil Officer deputed to accompany him and see that the rights of the Burmese and the Karens to land for cultivation, shifting or permanent, and to forest produce of all the usual kinds required for domestic and agricultural purposes were not infringed. The recorded proceedings and reports of this Demarcation Party were scrutinized by the Deputy Commissioner of the District and by the Commissioner of the Division before being submitted for the final orders of the Chief Commissioner, and it was not until the notification of reservation had appeared in the official gazette that the areas became State reserves and could be permanently demarcated. Some of the Deputy Commissioners and the Commissioners were extremely antagonistic to this work of the Department, with the result that the "Karen areas," enclosed here and there within large blocks of reserves, were really often more than amply sufficient for all the existing requirements of the hill men, and that the interests of Burmese villagers living in the vicinity of the reserved tracts were provided for on far too generous a scale. The proposals of the Forest Demarcation Party were usually accepted, subject perhaps to certain modifications. This was, however, not always the case, for, in 1879, the Chief Commissioner, Sir Charles Aitchison, disapproved of nearly all the season's work done in the Kabaung valley (Toungoo district) during 1878-79 as not showing sufficient consideration for the Karen interests, and ordered the whole of the proposals to be revised and re-submitted during the following camping season. Since then, a very elaborate and technically legal system of forest settlement has been introduced by more recent legislation, which will be specially referred to later on.

Up to 1898 there were over 19,000 square miles of forests (849 of which are burdened with *Taungya*

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

privileges) either reserved or in process of settlement as State forests to be permanently maintained for the benefit of future generations when the increase of population by natural augmentation and immigration, and the consequent clearance of tree forest and jungle shall have caused the unreserved forests and waste lands to be occupied for cultivation. But there are still vast tracts of forest land throughout Upper Burma which await examination, and it will be many years before the important work of reservation can possibly be completed. By the time this has been accomplished there will probably be about 25,000 square miles of reserves, or about twelve per cent. of the total area. These permanent State forests will include not only reserves for teak and catch, but also large fuel reserves near the chief towns, and forests reserved for climatic and agricultural purposes in the central dry zone. The rate of clearance of tree forest in some of the more populous districts has now made even the district officers anxious to push on the work of forest demarcation. But in many places it is too late to do this effectively, for the forest has often completely disappeared by clearance.

It was, of course, only within reserved areas that teak plantations were formed, and so far as possible these were confined to tracts in which there was not already a fair sprinkling of teak throughout the forest crops. But the advantages of carrying out special measures for the improvement of teak and for freeing it from excessive competition of other trees and of bamboos soon became apparent; and these "cultural operations" for the purpose of increasing the proportion of teak scattered singly or in family groups throughout the forests were carried on simultaneously with the formation of plantations. They chiefly consisted in girdling trees overshadowing or otherwise interfering with the growth of teak, and in sowing or dibbling seed in places where bamboos had flowered and died. But, for the success of each of these measures of improvement, it was necessary to arrange for the protection against jungle fires of the areas operated on.

The question, as to whether the ground fires—which,

## FOREST FIRES

unchecked, annually traversed thousands of square miles of the drier forests throughout Burma—were beneficial or not with regard to the propagation of teak and to assisting it in its life struggle with other species, was one which was hotly discussed. Early in March, at the beginning of each hot season, the wisps of straw left standing in the rice fields are burned, partly to remove them easily and thus help speed the plough later on, the grazing tracts are fired to promote the early growth of coarse, succulent grasses for the cattle at the hottest time of the year, and the hill men fire the trees and bamboos felled on their *Taungya* clearances. From time immemorial fires of this sort and camp fires lit by travellers in the jungles were allowed to spread as they pleased, eating their way along the ground, consuming entirely the carpet of dead leaves shed by the trees, and reducing completely to ashes logs left lying on the ground, windfall stems, and the like. All over the country, except in the naturally protected damp evergreen forests, these ground fires passed. Though, fortunately, they never, as sometimes occurs in coniferous forests, took the form of vast conflagrations spreading among the trees from crown to crown, yet they did a great amount of damage. They removed the natural covering of the soil, rendering it easily eroded at the commencement of the subsequent rainy season. Catching hold of logs and stems which had lain for some time on the ground they would consume them so completely that only a long line of white and grey ashes would mark their places. Growing trees were apt to be badly damaged and even killed outright, so that they either rotted and fell or were burned standing in subsequent years. It would be impossible to estimate and difficult even to exaggerate the destruction thus caused by jungle fires passing year after year over the drier forest tracts. Hundreds of thousands of timber trees were, and still are, annually destroyed from this cause, though the damage thus done cannot be expressed in any monetary equivalent owing to the fact that no remunerative market yet exists except for teak, pyingado, catch, padauk, and a comparatively few of the many other good woods constituting Burma's forest



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

wealth. Over vast tracts of country formerly covered by pine in the Shan States and on the Chin hills next to nothing in the shape of woodlands is now to be found ; while in other great tracts of less elevated hills, such as the hill tracts of Northern Arakan, the original tree forest has had to give place to a poor class of jungle consisting almost entirely of bamboos, among which trees are merely to be seen dotted here and there. Even in the moist region of Lower Burma, the annual forest fires caused the drying up of water springs, as is shown by the fact that after a few years of successful fire protection in some of the reserves in the Tharrawaddy district perennial springs are now to be found where formerly the water supply gave out early in the hot season.

When such ground fires obtained a footing in young teak plantations they not infrequently killed the young plants outright, and almost invariably inflicted considerable damage. The leading shoot was often destroyed ; and though stool shoots might be produced to replace it, the injuries thus caused to the plantations were permanent in their nature. Again, where cultural operations were carried out, the girdling and felling of trees and bamboos interfering with the growth and development of teak unavoidably increased the amount of inflammable matter, dry as tinder, littering the ground : hence operations of some effective sort were necessary for the protection of all plantations and cultural areas against fire.

The endeavours made by the Forest Department to introduce fire protection roused a vast amount of opposition among the people living in the forests, and among the district officers, who saw nothing but harshness and oppression in any attempt to interfere with the individual liberty, the unrestrained license, of kindling fires at will and allowing them to spread unchecked wherever the wind listed to waft them. Even among the officers of the Forest Department itself there were, and still are, some who think that fire protection is, apart from areas including plantations and cultural operations, of less assistance to teak than to other kinds of trees competing with it for possession of the soil and for the enjoyment of the light and air necessary for normal development. It

## PROTECTION FROM FIRE

has often been maintained in support of these assertions that teak seedlings are more numerous in the forests annually overrun by fire than in those portions of the reserves which are specially protected ; but in the vast majority of cases these seedling-like plants are merely young shoots springing up year after year from the root only to be killed by the fires in March and April. Thus the struggle goes on for years until a general seeding of the bamboo takes place, when the new growth of bamboos springing up keeps the soil damp for a few years and limits the progress of the ground fires. It is only during such periods of natural protection that the young teak have a fair chance of establishing themselves and of rapidly shooting up into poles capable of subsequently resisting the effects of the fires. If the roots of such plants, apparently of recent seedling growth, be dug up and examined, they will often show fifteen or twenty or more close, narrow, concentric rings of annual growth.

The necessity for extending fire protection over as large a proportion of the reserved forests as is possible with the funds available for this purpose has been fully recognized by Government, and the Government of India never now lose an opportunity of impressing this on all of their provincial Governments. But the first steps taken in Burma towards protection of plantations, cultural operations, and selected portions of reserved forests were rough, and even humorous in their simplicity, though they were not by any means cheap. This original system of "fire protection" consisted in being first in the field, and in burning all round the areas to be protected before the villagers began to fire their fields and grazing lands or the Karens to burn their hill clearances. As for stopping the fires from spreading into the unprotected portions of the forest, and thence into neighbouring and then on to distant tracts, little or no attempt was made. All that was done was to clear a trace of about ten to twenty feet in breadth round the tract to be protected, to fire the débris as soon as dry enough, and let the fire burn outwards so as to destroy, early in the dry season, material which could feed the ground fires coming from the fields and the *Taungya*. Cross lines within the



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

plantations were cleared and the débris carefully burned in the centre, but all along the outer edge of the protected area the fire was allowed to spread so that later fires coming from beyond that should die out through want of material to feed their progress.

Some advance has been made on this very primitive system of fire protection by forming a second trace or cleared belt about 150 feet beyond the fire-trace encircling the area to be protected, by endeavouring to keep the fire within these limits when burning the débris, and by repeating the firing at intervals as the dead leaves continue falling down from the trees. But no method has yet been devised which can be applied to large blocks of forest land so as to ensure efficient protection at a comparatively small outlay. During 1898, 1756 square miles were successfully protected out of a total of 2,064 fire-traced and attempted to be protected, at a total cost of £4,157. This of course gives very little idea of the comparatively high cost of protecting plantations and cultural areas where numerous traces have to be cleared and kept in proper order, large numbers of fire watchers being employed for the purpose from the end of January till the advent of the heavy rains about the end of April or the middle of May. And the success of the whole operation depends essentially and mainly on the goodwill of the people living in the vicinity of the forests, who can easily, with little risk of discovery, revenge themselves by incendiarism for wrongs or fancied wrongs done to them by forest subordinates, by the Forest Department, or by the State generally.

By 1880 the work of the Forest Department had expanded so much and had become so important, that the legislation provided by the Forest Act of 1865 was found inadequate for the business that had now to be controlled and administered. A new Act was therefore passed in 1881, and rules under it were issued in 1882. With modifications found necessary from time to time, these still constitute the forest laws; and they were applied to Upper Burma shortly after the annexation in the form of a Regulation, and of rules made thereunder, with suitable alterations meeting the special local require-

## RESERVATION OF STATE FORESTS

ments. With the passing of the Burma Forest Act, 1881, and the issue of the Forest Rules of 1882, the third and most progressive period of forest history in Burma was entered on.

It would be quite out of place to give here anything like a complete survey of the Act and Rules, but mention may at any rate be suitably made of the provisions under which the reservation of State Forests, the fire protection of reserves, and the general working of the forests take place.

Whenever it is proposed to reserve any particular tract of forest, the forest officer who has examined it submits his proposals, stating the objects of reservation and giving the results of his inspection, a description of the tract, and a statement of the boundaries proposed. This report, accompanied by a map, is forwarded to the Deputy Commissioner, the chief civil authority in each district. After considering the proposals and recording his concurrence or objections, the project is transmitted to the Commissioner of the division, is forwarded by him to the Conservator of Forests of the Circle, and submitted by the latter through the Revenue Secretariat for the orders of the Local Government. Thus, before any of the necessary legal steps are taken towards reservation, the civil authorities have an opportunity of recording any *primâ facie* objections they feel towards the proposals, and the Conservator of Forests has the opportunity of explaining away their objections or adducing additional arguments for reservation.

On such proposals being preliminarily approved by the Local Government a notification is published in the official gazette specifying the situation and the limits of the land, intimating that it is proposed to constitute the same a reserved forest, and appointing a Civil Officer as Forest Settlement Officer to inquire into and determine the existence, nature, and extent of any rights or claims to exercise privileges of various kinds within the specified tract. This notification is also published in Burmese at the headquarters of the township concerned, and copies of it, together with an explanation of the consequences that will ensue on reservation, are distributed to all the

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

villages and hamlets situated in the vicinity of the tract in question ; while a period of not less than three months is allowed during which the villagers may make written or verbal objection to reservation. When this given period has elapsed, the Forest Settlement Officer, who is usually assisted in his inquiry by the Forest Officer, visits the localities in question and makes formal inquiry into the objections raised. Duly empowered with special legal qualifications, he may alter the boundaries of the proposed reserve so as to exclude land for the exercise of *Taungya* or shifting cultivation, or may include *Taungya* areas as separately demarcated tracts within the reserve, or may refuse to permit this class of cultivation if amply sufficient land exists for its exercise outside the proposed boundaries. Rights of way, of watercourses, of water-user, of pasture, and of forest produce are also adjudicated on. If such claims are found reasonable, they are provided for by excluding sufficient land for their exercise, by recording an order granting the privilege of pasturing so many head of cattle or of extracting certain quantities of forest produce annually, or by commuting the rights into a payment of money or a grant of land.

On the termination of the inquiry the proceedings of the Forest Settlement Officer are sent to the Deputy Commissioner of the district, and a period of three months is allowed for the receipt of objections to the Settlement Officer's decisions. If such are received, the Deputy Commissioner acts as appellate officer, and approves, modifies, or upsets the judgments made by the Settlement Court of first instance. The Settlement proceedings are then forwarded to the Commissioner for review and remark, who sends them to the Conservator for submission to the Local Government. It is not until all these prescribed legal steps have been taken and the whole of the proceedings have been subjected to careful scrutiny by various responsible officers and by the Revenue Department of Government that final orders are notified declaring the area in question to be a reserved forest from a certain date.

Carefully as the existing rights of village communities

## DISAFFORESTATION

and of individual villagers or hill tribesmen are thus inquired into and safeguarded, legal provision is made for the revision by the Local Government of any such notification during the following five years. Further than this, provision is also made under the Act for enabling the Local Government, with the previous sanction of the Government of India, to direct that any reserve or any portion of a reserve shall cease to be reserved. Thus, if land suitable for permanent self-sustaining cultivation should happen to have been included within a forest reserve, and the increase of population should subsequently show that it is desirable to throw it out of reservation and utilize it agriculturally, the necessary power for effecting such changes is provided in proper legal form. In a thickly forested but thinly populated country like Burma it seems especially desirable that forest reservation should, in the interests of water storage and of agriculture generally, be carried out as rapidly and extensively as is practicable, so that fresh cultivation (except among the true hill men) should break ground chiefly on the plains, leaving the cultivable portions of the true forest tracts to be settled only when rendered necessary by the increase of population.

It is not, and it never has been, the desire of the Forest Department in Burma to drive the hill tribes out of the forest-clad hills. On the contrary, it has ever been its object to conciliate and win the goodwill of the Karen and other hill tribes, whose assistance is essentially necessary for the formation of plantations, for furnishing labour for cultural operations, for fire protection, and for working the forests. Without having gained their cordial goodwill and assistance, based on mutual advantages, the history of forest conservancy could not possibly have been the continuous record of material and financial progress which it is.

For the last twenty-five years the work of reservation has been pushed on as energetically as circumstances have permitted. But many years must elapse before it can be completed in the great forest tracts of the northern portion of the province. When once the demarcation of such permanent forest estates has been



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

effected, they will be found scattered more or less irregularly over the face of the province, being of course mainly confined to the hills in which the feeders of the great rivers have their sources. Gradually, in course of time, as population increases, all the land now under tree forest will be cleared for cultivation, and only the areas specially reserved as State forests or demarcated as grazing tracts will be left under tree growth. Already in some of the more populous southern districts clearance of forest has during the last quarter of a century proceeded so rapidly as to have had a serious effect on the health and mortality of the cattle, while the agriculture would also have suffered grievously but for the fact that the districts in question, not far removed from the seaboard, receive copious rainfall from the south-west monsoon. The nearer the heart of the central dry zone in Upper Burma, the more important it is that forests should be reserved, or formed in some parts if necessary, for the benefit of agriculture apart from any of the other advantages to be derived.

Clearing land, trespass, injuring trees, and setting fire to a reserved forest are of course acts prohibited and penalized. But the Act and Rules often make provisions which it is practically impossible to carry out. For example, with regard to fire protection the rule is as follows :—

4. Between the 15th day of January and the 15th day of June no person shall, within two miles of the boundary of a reserve, leave any fire burning, unless he shall have taken the following precautions, namely :—

(a) He shall at least one week before kindling such fire have given notice of his intention so to do to the nearest Forest Officer ;

(b) He shall have cleared of inflammable matter a belt of ground of not less than twenty feet in breadth around the place whereon he proposes to kindle such fire ;

(c) He shall have kindled such fire at a time when no high wind is blowing in the direction of the reserve.

Any person who in contravention of this rule leaves any fire burning in such manner as to endanger a reserved forest is punishable under section 26 of the Act with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months or with fine which may extend to Rs. 500 (£33 $\frac{1}{3}$ ), or with both, in addition to such compensation for damage done to the forest as the convicting Court might direct to be paid.

## PROTECTION FROM FIRE

Fire protection is essential to the good management of the forests, and it can only be successfully effected, as already mentioned, through the goodwill of the people together with considerable outlay. But the above restrictions are totally at variance with immemorial custom; and any attempt to apply these powers, except in glaring cases of actual incendiarism, would produce an enormous amount of easily understood discontent. In many matters the rules necessary for efficient forest conservancy are quite at variance with the past customs of the people, but there can be no doubt that the restrictions imposed upon an individual liberty which had degenerated into license are requisite for the general benefit of the province at large. And it is but fair to say that the Forest Rules are applied only in a well considered and lenient manner, which fully recognizes the fact that in many respects they must appear harsh and oppressive to those living in the vicinity of the forests.

Within the reserved forests everything is the property of Government, except in so far as absolute ownership has been modified with regard to orders passed at the time of reservation. On all other land covered by forest teak and other reserved trees are the property of Government, the trees actually reserved varying in the different parts of the province. None of the reserved trees can be cut or extracted without special licenses. The felling and extraction of unreserved trees growing on unreserved areas can take place unrestrictedly by residents in the vicinity of the forests provided the timber is to be used for *bonâ fide* agricultural, fishery, or domestic purposes, or for religious works of public utility, such as building rest-houses and bridges; but felling and extraction of timber, fuel, and other forest produce for trade purposes can only take place under license and upon payment of revenue.

The policy adopted is to confine the work of extraction so far as possible to the unreserved forests, so as thus to utilize the existing supplies of timber of all sorts before these areas are ultimately cleared for permanent cultivation. Nothing is there done for regeneration and

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

reproduction. The forests are left to nature, and the only protection given is to restrict the felling to trees of mature limits. Trade licenses are thus given under suitable restrictions for all kinds of unreserved and reserved trees, except teak, the girdling and entire control of which remains now, as formerly, in the hands of the Forest Department.

In the State reserves, however, it is different. The moment a forest has been declared a reserve it is, save under exceptional circumstances, absolutely closed to the girdling of teak or the extraction of reserved or unreserved trees, or other utilization of produce not specially authorized under the Forest Settlement. It is thus practically closed even against departmental operations until a working plan has been specially prepared for its future treatment.

The first regular working plan of this sort was made in 1884, and since then steady though slow progress has been made in the endeavour to provide sound schemes of working for the reserved forests. As the work of selecting reserves is still only in progress, as the forest survey entails much time, and as the working plan parties can only carry out their operations when detailed maps are available, it will probably take more than twenty years before all the reserved forests of Burma can be brought under the provisions of specific working plans.

The basis of such plans is a map on a scale of four inches to the mile, showing all the topographical details of streams, hill-ranges, ravines, dells, swamps, and the like. The preparation of these maps is entrusted partly to the Topographical Survey branch of the Survey of India, and partly to the Forest Survey branch; and for some years past three survey parties have thus been continually employed in Burma for the preparation of the maps necessary before the forest working-plan parties can operate.

On the receipt of the maps each working circle—as the area is called (usually a drainage area) to which the provisions of one working plan are intended to apply—is marked out in suitable blocks and subdivided into

## RATE OF GROWTH OF TEAK

compartments formed with due regard to the configuration of the soil and its natural boundaries of ridges and streams. The compartments often vary considerably in size according to the nature of the forest and the quantity of teak contained in it, but they usually average about one square mile or more in extent. All over the forest sample plots are marked off so as to be fairly evenly distributed throughout the area, and these, amounting to between one-fifth and one-quarter of the whole working circle, are carefully examined to ascertain the existing stock of teak trees of different girth-classes, from seedlings and poles below three feet in girth up to mature trees above seven feet in girth, and of other reserved trees girdling over three feet. At the same time investigations regarding the rate of growth of teak are made by means of Pressler's increment gauge or borer, a well known German instrument, and by examining the annual rings on the tree stumps to be found in every forest that has been worked within the last twenty or thirty years. The data acquired by counting out the sample plots and by estimating the rate of growth of teak form the basis for the proposals made in the working plan.

When the field work has thus been completed a working plan report is prepared. It first of all gives a description of the situation, soil, and climate of the tract dealt with, of the composition and condition of the forest, of the past system of management, and of the extent to which the forest produce has been utilized. The bases of the proposals are then detailed, giving the existing stock as estimated by the countings on the sample areas, and the ascertained rate of growth of teak from girth-class to girth-class. Generalizing broadly from data collected in various parts of the country it takes a second class tree (four and a half feet in girth) about thirty-three to thirty-eight years, or say thirty-five on the average, to develop into a first-class tree (six feet girth); and it takes from 150 in moist forest to 180 years in dry forest for the production of a fully mature teak tree of seven feet or above in girth. With efficient fire protection, however, as we know from the evidence of our plantations, the time required should not exceed



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about 100 to 120 years respectively in the moist and the dry forests, while the timber itself will be of better quality if its life history records no damage by fire.

The working plan usually confines itself only to proposals with regard to the girdling of teak, because the supplies of other reserved kinds of trees are not (unless in exceptional cases like pyingado or ironwood if required locally for railway sleepers) intended to be utilized in the meantime so long as supplies are still available for utilization in the unreserved forests. Except in the very dry forests, where teak of course does not attain such large dimensions as in moister tracts with conditions more favourable for vegetation, the girdling proposals are limited to mature trees of seven feet in girth. The whole term of rotation (about 150 to 180 years) is divided into five or six periods of about thirty years each, and the proposals of the working plan extend to the utilization of the trees which have attained or will probably attain fully mature dimensions during the first period of about thirty years. It sometimes happens in virgin tracts, or such as have been but little worked, that the trees over seven feet in girth are largely in excess of those girdling from six to seven feet, *e.g.*, in one working circle the former aggregated almost exactly twice as many as the latter (28,671 and 14,391, over 94,694 acres). In such a case the question arises whether the girdlings should use up all the fully mature timber within the first period or should store some to equalize the outturn during the second period, the *modus operandi* usually depending on the soundness or the overmaturity of the old trees. Along with these specific girdling proposals for teak, recommendations (sometimes general, sometimes special) are also made with regard to works of improvement, such as sowing and planting, fire protection, cutting of woody climbers and epiphytic *Fici*, and blasting operations for facilitating the work of floating.

No working plan for any reserved forest can come into operation before it has been approved by the Local Government, and this approval is not lightly given. While the field operations are in progress the working plans officer, who has previously discussed the matter with his Con-

## FOREST WORKING PLANS

servator and who is always in direct communication with him, submits a preliminary report setting forth the nature and condition of the forest and sketching the proposals he will probably make. This is forwarded with remarks to the Inspector-General of Forests in India, and returned to the Conservator along with any criticisms or suggestions which seem desirable. On the working plan and forest maps being completed they are submitted by the Conservator to the Local Government, and forwarded by them to the Inspector-General for favour of his opinion and advice ; and it is not until the Local Government have assured themselves that their technical advisers, the Conservator and the Inspector-General, concur in recommending the proposals submitted, that these are approved and applied to the working circle for the next thirty years or so.

And apart from these precautions, there is an additional safeguard. The girdling thus sanctioned is a maximum estimate, which must not in any given case be exceeded ; but the work of girdling is carried out only under strict application of silvicultural principles. Hence it often happens that in order to leave seed-bearing trees in parts poor in teak some of the mature trees require to be left standing in place of being girdled for extraction. From this it must be clear that none of the reserved forests can possibly be exposed to the danger of being over-worked and becoming exhausted. The present average annual outturn in teak is exceedingly low, but this must gradually improve with fire protection and the cultural improvements of various sorts now regularly taking place for increasing the proportion of teak among the many other kinds of trees forming the great majority in the so-called teak forests.

It is impossible to give any description of the forests of Burma in a few words. In Lower Burma alone the enumeration of the trees made by the late Sulpiz Kurz, in his *Forest Flora of British Burma*, 1877, includes some 1,500 species ; and the unknown species of Upper Burma and the Shan States would probably increase this total very considerably.

In speaking of the dry zone of central Burma, which was

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

previously described (vol. i. page 243), it was mentioned that the rainfall increases considerably as one diverges in different directions from this central area. And the character of the forest covering throughout different parts of the province varies to a considerable extent according to the amount of rainfall, the humidity of the atmosphere, and the prevailing temperature. One result of the great general humidity of the climate and of the comparatively low temperature of the greater part of the province as contrasted with the interior of the continent of India is that a large number of trees belonging to the forest flora at the foot of the Himalayan range is to be found at comparatively low elevations in Burma, growing along with the more characteristically tropical vegetation.

Forests of an evergreen or pseudo-evergreen description are to be found in the littoral tracts and mangrove swamps fringing the sea coast and occupying the mud banks of the tidal creeks ; in the swamp forests covering the depressions in the alluvial plains and the low lands subject to inundation during the rainy season ; in the tropical forests growing luxuriantly in the shady valleys and on the cooler hill slopes in the regions of plenteous rainfall ; in the damp hill forests, with their oaks, chestnuts, and magnolias, often to be found at elevations of from 3,000 or 3,500 feet upwards ; and in the pine tracts which occupy the higher regions of the Shan plateau and the Chin hills.

None of these possess as yet any very great financial value, but the tropical forests are marvellous in their luxuriance of vegetation. Abundant rainfall on the one hand, and complete protection of the surface soil and the soil moisture on the other, are the essential requisites for this type of forest. Hence they are not to be found within the dry zone, but occur in all the other parts of the country. Here the forest consists practically of three tiers of trees, exclusive of the underwood of shrubs, bamboos, palms, screw pines, rattans, woody climbers, ferns, and herbs (with few grasses, however), which cover the soil. The lowest tier consists of trees like *Garcinia*, *Diospyros*, *Cinnamomum*, *Tetranthera*, *Ardisia*, *Millettia*, *Ficus*, *Eugenia*, *Myristica*, and a host of others. Above



## TYPES OF BURMESE FORESTS

these are loftier species of *Ficus*, *Bursera*, *Semecarpus*, *Cedrela*, *Lagerstroemia*, *Mangifera*, and other genera; while over these again tower the still loftier crowns of forest giants belonging to the genera *Sterculia*, *Tetrameles*, *Artocarpus*, *Parkia*, *Dipterocarpus*, *Parashorea*, *Hopea*, *Anisoptera*, *Antiaris*, and many others. Some of these attain a height of 250 feet, and it is not unusual to see Kanyin stems (*Dipterocarpus turbinatus*) of enormous girth running up, straight as an arrow, to a height of about 120 or 130 feet before showing the first of their few branches. The luxuriance of vegetation in such forests is marvellous. There is often a dense and almost unbroken mass of foliage from the ground up to a height of 200 feet, the crowns being festooned with gigantic woody climbers garlanded with beautiful flowers.

It is in forests of the evergreen class in the colder regions of Upper Burma, from about the latitude of Mogaung northwards into Assam, that the caoutchouc or India-rubber tree (*Ficus elastica*) is indigenous. Heavy annual rainfall, humidity of atmosphere, and a considerable degree of cold for a subtropical region, seem requisite for its thriving.

The more typically deciduous forests consist of trees which shed their foliage during January or in February on the approach of the hot season, and break out into leaf again in March or April after the advent of the "mango-showers," or as soon as they have imbibed a sufficiency of subsoil moisture. These deciduous forests consist of various well marked types differing essentially from each other, and are distinguishable as the scrub forests of the dry central zone, the Indaing or Laterite forests, and the mixed forests on the lower hill ranges.

The scrub forests of the dry zone are of some financial value on account of the cutch (*Acacia Catechu*), which, along with dahát (*Tectona Hamiltonii*), is one of the most characteristic of the trees. But their chief claim to deserve careful attention is on account of the benefits that reservation will probably bring with it in regard to water storage in the soil and amelioration of the precarious conditions under which agriculture now labours owing to reckless clearance of dry forests that once



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existed on the plains. The number of trees and shrubs to be found here is comparatively small, and they are of course for the most part leguminous, as might (for now well known reasons) be expected; while on the hill sides they are scantier still, with species of *Euphorbia* as their most striking characteristic.

The Indaing or Laterite forests are to be found wherever this peculiar geological formation crops out or forms the subsoil close below the surface. The characteristic tree is In (*Dipterocarpus tuberculatus*), which forms the principal kind along with other genera such as *Shorea*, *Pentacme*, *Dillenia*, *Zizyphus*, *Strychnos*, *Melanorrhoea*, *Emblica*, *Terminalia*, *Careya*, and palms of various sorts. These forests are fiercely hot during the month of March until they break out into their fresh foliage. They cover an enormous extent of country, and there are probably considerably larger supplies of In than of any other timber tree in the province.

The mixed forests covering the greater part of all the lower hill ranges are those of the most importance to the Burma Forest Department, and to British commerce at present, because they constitute the great sources of supply of revenue drawn from teak (*Tectona grandis*), pyingado or ironwood (*Xylia dolabriformis*), sha or cutch (*Acacia Catechu*), the few other reserved woods, and the many unreserved woods yielding valuable kinds of timber for local requirements. They are to be found covering probably about two-thirds of the hill ranges lying back from the seaboard, in the interior of the country beyond the limits of torrential rainfall (of 200 inches and more) characteristic of the coast with their evergreen tropical forests.

These mixed forests, occupying the uplands and the central hill ranges, vary somewhat in character according as they grow on alluvium, on soft siliceous sandstone, or on metamorphic rocks. They form the matrix throughout which the (as yet) financially most valuable kinds of timber trees occur singly or in knots and patches as family groups among about a hundred and fifty other kinds of trees, such as species of *Eugenia*, *Bombax*, *Sterculia*, *Garuga*, *Pterospermum*, *Spondias*, *Termina-*

## EFFECTS OF THIRD BURMESE WAR

*lia*, *Anogeissus*, *Homalium*, *Briedelia*, *Cordia*, *Gmelina*, *Nauclea*, and many others, interspersed among which are bamboos of various kinds, now forming only an underwood, and again growing more luxuriantly where not overshadowed by a crown of foliage.

These constitute the four main types of forest in Burma, although there are also great tracts of bamboo jungles on many of the hills (showing the track of the wasteful shifting *Taungya*), and of savannahs growing coarse, gigantic *kaing* or elephant grass (*Saccharum spontaneum*), and *Thekkè* or thatch grass (*Imperata cylindrica*), etc., on the great plains marking sites probably once cleared for cultivation but now reverted into a low type of jungle and awaiting re-conversion into rice fields.

It will be recollected that a *casus belli* in 1885 was forced upon the British by the refusal of the Court of Ava to submit to the investigation and decision of a mixed court, as accorded by treaty rights, the question of alleged malpractices on the part of the Bombay Burma Trading Corporation, engaged in very extensive foresting operations in different parts of Upper Burma. On the assumption of sovereignty the arrangements made between the Corporation and the King were terminated, but the British Government virtually renewed them in the shape of leases at the very low rates of royalty of ten rupees (13s. 4d.) per ton for large-sized and six rupees (9s.) for small-sized logs.

With vast sources of supply at their command at this nominal rate of royalty the Corporation practically commanded the market for teak in Europe, and the timber trade in Rangoon was exposed to the grave danger of becoming almost the absolute monopoly of this rich and influential firm. Their profits were enormous, and their shares increased to considerably over four hundred per cent. in market value. The few other firms of Rangoon dealing exclusively in timber, which were forced to procure their supplies from the Government auction sales at the timber depôt, could not hope to compete successfully against so rich a firm drawing their main supplies from Upper Burma on payment only of a ridiculously low rate of royalty in addition to actual cost of extraction.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

Hence assistance of some sort was needed to enable even the principal one among these minor firms to maintain itself against the supremely advantageous position acquired by the Corporation.

This was arranged for by granting a purchase contract (*leases* having been forbidden by the Government of India in 1873) to the firm of Messrs. Macgregor & Co. for the extraction of all the girdled timber in the north-western portion of the Toungoo district. Although these forests adjoined the Ningyan (Pinyinana) forests held by the Corporation and were more difficult to work, and although the rate of royalty fixed was twenty-one rupees (£1 8s.) per ton, or more than twice what the Corporation were paying, yet this foresting business proved very remunerative besides having the advantage of ensuring at known fixed rates a certain proportion of the timber required to keep the sawmills at work. Had dependence on the Government auction sales been the sole source of supply, the Corporation, without materially enhancing the average cost of their own raw material, might have soon forced up prices till conversion must needs have meant heavy loss, might have maintained them there till the other firms had been driven into the bankruptcy court, and might then subsequently have offered merely nominal rates for the timber extracted by Government. To prevent the teak export trade of Rangoon from becoming an absolute monopoly Government were forced to consider the contingencies of either giving substantial support to enable a solvent and energetic firm to compete with the Corporation or of finding themselves drifting onwards to the prospect of being ultimately forced to run sawmills of their own; and for very obvious reasons they wisely chose the former alternative.

The policy thus initiated in 1889 has been consistently followed and expanded. Several Rangoon firms have now contracts for the extraction of teak from different well defined forest areas in the Sittang valley and throughout Upper Burma, while all the remaining tracts are worked departmentally by means of native contractors. The determination of the number of trees to

## TRADE IN TEAK TIMBER

be girdled rests with the Forest Department, and the work is carried out by its officers only ; but the working out of the timber takes place partly by European firms, upon payment of a royalty varying from about £1 5s. to £2 per ton of fifty cubic feet, for the supply of their sawyards in Rangoon, and partly by the Forest Department for its auction sales at the depôts in Mandalay and Rangoon. The pick of all the finest timber brought annually to the Government dépôt at Rangoon goes, as it ought to go, to supply the indents received from the naval dockyard at Bombay.

The year 1899 was the last in which the Bombay Burma Corporation could procure supplies of timber at the low rate covered by their leases of 1887, and their dividend for 1899-1900 was 30 per cent. But they are still in an abnormal position of great advantage in having accumulated in their Rangoon yards vast stocks of timber purchased at a low rate of royalty. Thus, in 1897-98, the Corporation extracted from Upper Burma no less than 220,540 tons of teak on payment of £133,839, while Messrs. Macgregor & Co. had to pay the much higher revenue of £42,178 on 25,928 tons extracted from the Toungoo forests.

The object of Government in continuing the purchase-contract system to Rangoon firms now that the Upper Burma *leases* have terminated is twofold. In the first place, consideration had to be given to the fact that on the one hand serious loss might be caused to the firms in question if their foresting operations were discontinued, for the elephants, buffaloes, and personnel for working on a large scale represent investments that can neither be acquired nor disposed of all at once ; while on the other hand the present strength of the Forest Department, hardly able to cope with the business already undertaken, is perhaps inadequate for embarking on larger foresting operations than are at present being carried out by direct departmental agency. And in the second place it seemed clear that the wisest course to adopt in placing the teak timber export trade in Rangoon on a permanently sound basis was to permit the various substantial European firms to work out for themselves, at reasonable rates of



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royalty, sufficient supplies of timber to provide a fair proportion of their annual requirements, say one-third to one-half, leaving them to obtain at the Government auction sales the remainder necessary for the maintenance and the expansion of their business. Government is thus also entitled to anticipate obtaining the true market value for the timber extracted departmentally, unless all the various firms should form a "ring" and combine to keep prices low. Such a danger may ultimately have to be considered, though hardly for some years to come, and the remedy against it will easily be found.

The teak trade of Rangoon is now on a much sounder footing than it has ever been previously, but it will not be on a thoroughly sound basis till the large and cheaply acquired stock of logs held by the Corporation is exhausted, when all firms will be able to compete on nearly equal terms as regards the price paid for timber in the rough. After that, even should the source of supply be confined solely to the Government auction sales, which is not now likely to be the case, the milling alone should always yield a fair return on the capital invested, apart from the other trade profits. It is a branch of trade still capable of very considerable expansion in the future.

Much is now being systematically done to increase the supply of teak. During the thirty years that have elapsed since the Government of India (in 1870) defined the main duties of the Forest Department to consist in the extension of teak plantations on a large scale in a few well selected blocks, the demarcation of the most valuable forest tracts as State forests, and careful husbanding of the resources of the existing forests meanwhile, vast changes have taken place both as to the extent and as to the constitution of the teak-producing areas entrusted to the management and control of the Forest Department. It then seemed not improbable that Pegu and Tenasserim would have to be considered the main sources from which the world's future supply of teak timber would have to be drawn, and adequate measures had to be adopted for ensuring the maintenance of a sustained yield of marketable teak timber. Now, however, there is not

## THE TEAK FORESTS

only a well organized system of management throughout the principal teak forests in Lower Burma, but we have also the control and a fairly good knowledge of the vast teak-producing tracts spreading over enormous areas in Upper Burma and the Shan States, which certainly equal and probably far excel the forests of Lower Burma in the quantity of first-class marketable teak which they are capable of supplying *in perpetuo*.

With such resources at command it is no longer necessary to look to plantations as the main source for supplying our timber requirements in future. So much so is this the case that the time has now come for considering whether it may not be advisable to curtail teak plantation work and to concentrate energy on improvement fellings for the benefit of immature teak, to be found in greater or less abundance throughout all the teak-producing areas.

Where teak is not now found as a constituent among the trees of any forest, or is only sparsely represented, it stands to reason that it can only be introduced artificially by means of sowing or planting. Apart from exceptional cases, such as relate to agreements or questions of policy with regard to the Karen or Kachin and other tribes, where the Forest Department is (or may be) committed to forming plantations in order to secure the good will of such hill tribes or to carry out agreements made at the time of forest settlement of reserves, the views have been spreading that plantation operations should be curtailed and that more attention should be devoted to improvement fellings. In teak-producing areas it is seldom that *Taungya* tracts can be selected so as to include no teak, and in some instances the damage done to the existing stock of teak and of catch is sufficient to stamp the formation of plantations in such localities as unnecessary.

When teak plantations were originally started it was hoped that after about two years' weeding and cleaning they might be trusted to outgrow danger from lofty grasses, creepers, softwoods, etc. Experience has shown that such is not the case. It is only in very exceptional cases that plantations can be left unweeded in their third year, and sometimes the operation has to be repeated during the fourth year. Even then weeding and clean-

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

ing have to take place at intervals for several years more; and such weeding and cleaning operations are hardly (or perhaps not yet) completed when one finds one's self face to face with the necessity for thinning.

Areas suitable for improvement fellings abound throughout the majority of the teak-producing tracts forming the reserved forests, but cultural operations of this class can only be successfully carried out within fire-protected areas.

Unless artificially assisted in its struggle for existence with the various other kinds of forest trees, etc., many of which are of more rapid growth than teak, it must naturally follow that a larger outturn of this and a higher financial return from the reserved forests can only be expected in proportion to the expenditure incurred under competent supervision in assisting the teak in its struggle for existence, in shortening the duration of such struggle, and in obtaining for teak special advantages for growth and development by the felling or girdling of epiphytic *Ficus* trees or woody climbers which strangle it, or dominate or otherwise interfere with its crown of foliage and its free exposure to light and air.

The total area of reserved forests in Burma will probably, before the selection of State reserves is completed, amount to over 25,000 square miles. Of this it may be estimated that not less than 10,000 square miles will be teak-producing tracts which should be gone over by *improvement fellings* at intervals not exceeding ten years, if we are to accord to the teak forests the treatment essential towards providing anything like the outturn in timber and money which the State may easily derive from their very valuable forest properties.

But there is at present no staff of trained subordinates such as is necessary to operate properly over even a tithe of so extensive an area as 1,000 square miles annually, because technical operations of this sort cannot be entrusted to untrained officers.

These can only be trusted to fell all trees (whether teak or not) being damaged by epiphytic *Ficus*, and to cut woody climbers. When this preliminary step has once been taken there still remains for consideration how,

## THE TEAK FORESTS

and to what extent, trees interfering with the growth of teak should be removed. Leaving bamboos and other lofty grasses out of consideration, the trees that it may be desirable to deal with for the benefit of the teak trees, poles, or seedlings may be classified as—

- (1) *True heartwood trees*, which die on being girdled;
- (2) *Sapwood trees*, whose vegetative processes do not appear to be interfered with by girdling; and
- (3) *False heartwood trees*, which sicken or are distinctly interfered with temporarily in growth by girdling, but are not killed by the operation.

This last or intermediate class consists of kinds of trees which might perhaps in many instances be killed off by a second girdling, if it were practicable to go over the area again and re-girdle in the following year.

The *true heartwood trees* comprise the more valuable kinds of timber trees like teak itself, cutch (*Acacia Catechu*), padauk (*Pterocarpus Indicus*), pyingado (*Xylia dolabriformis*), ingyin (*Pentacme Siamensis*) and more than a score of other trees.

The *sapwood trees* include at least from thirty to fifty other kinds, and the *false heartwood trees* also number more than a score of others.

Experimental improvement fellings carried out in 1897 showed not only that forty-two per cent. of the trees girdled survived the operation, although the girdle was deep and broad, but also that, five months later, in many cases no material reduction was noticeable in the density of their foliage and in that of the shadow cast by them on the underwood.

As regards the trees which die when girdled, the girdling operations can be performed under the supervision of any subordinate. But what cannot be safely entrusted to untrained officers is the selection of trees to be removed. In such cases it has only too often happened that large trees have been girdled for the sake of very small seedlings. Hence the result has often been to benefit other species of trees or bamboos far more than the young teak. Besides this, inspection has shown that



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untrained officers lose all sense of proportion between the cost of girdling a large tree on the one hand and the prospective benefit to be gained on the other hand in affording special protection to a very small seedling or a badly grown pole.

With regard to the other trees, it appears very questionable whether it would be safe to entrust such operations to any but trained supervision to direct and control the killing of the trees so as to ensure that their removal will not be in reality more beneficial to useless trees, bamboos, etc., than to the teak it is intended to benefit.

Another very important matter requiring consideration in connection with a scheme for improvement fellings is the flowering, seedling, and dying off of the *Kyathaung* bamboo, which must occur soon over enormous tracts of teak forest on both sides of the Pegu Yoma. This will be a sylvicultural opportunity such as has never previously occurred in Burma. Simultaneously with the use of fire, under due control as a destructive agent for destroying the germinative power of the bamboo seed, improvement fellings, sowings, dibblings, etc., will have to take place on the largest possible scale capable of being adequately controlled and carried out.

Proposals regarding the above important matters have already been submitted for the consideration of Government. Whatever the line of action may be that is decided on, the above rough sketch of the position of affairs will show that the measures being taken are such as will adequately maintain supplies of teak in the future. It is almost certain that the work now being done will in course of time enable larger supplies of teak timber to be extracted than have been obtained in the past, while, even if the future market price of teak should fall to a considerably lower level than at present, the extraction of this fine timber will always remain a most profitable source of income to the State, to the export commerce of the province, and to a very large proportion of the population resident in or near the forests.

The bare statement that, in 1899, the net surplus revenue derived by Government from the forests amounted to £399,255 can convey no idea of the vast

## OTHER FOREST PRODUCTS

extent and resources of Burma's forest wealth. In addition to teak, which provides the bulk of this surplus, there are valuable sources of revenue in catch, India-rubber, *pyingado* for railway sleepers, and *padauk*, superior in quality to that exported largely from the Andaman Islands. All these present sources of revenue are being duly conserved, while the trade in them is being developed in tracts hitherto unworked, so that in future larger supplies should be produced than are now obtained. And besides these already well known products there are enormous quantities of fine timber of various kinds for which no remunerative market yet exists, though this may develop in time. Many of these are too heavy for floating unless lashed to bamboos, but with the expansion of the railway net this difficulty will soon disappear. One of the commonest trees in Burma, *Dipterocarpus tuberculatus*, resembles Jarrah closely in appearance, and seems suitable for wood-paving if it could only get a first footing on the European market. Further, there are vast quantities of gums, resins, dye stuffs and tanning materials, which will no doubt in course of time emerge from their present state of being mere waste products of the woodlands. The suitability of the climate for the production of caoutchouc is being demonstrated by the formation by Government of a Hevea rubber plantation at a cost of £14,000 in South Tenasserim, which it is calculated will yield a large profit in twelve years' time or less. There is plenty of scope for such rubber plantations by private commercial companies.

There is a fashion in woods, as in other commodities, and markets cannot be forced to buy unknown products. Hence the work of the Forest Department has hitherto mainly been in connection with woods already having a market value, and in the formation of State reserves that will grow in every kind of economic value as the unreserved areas gradually become cleared for agricultural occupation.

The present forest revenue probably represents only about one per cent. of the capital value of the forests ; and the work which is being done by the Forest Depart-

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ment will not only increase this percentage considerably in the future, but should also very much enhance the capital value of these, the greatest and the most remunerative of all the forest estates owned by the Indian Government.

## Chapter IV

### BURMESE BUDDHISM

**B**UDDHISM is second only to Brahminism in antiquity. Although it now forms the religious belief, or at any rate the professed religion, of about four hundred and twenty-five millions of human beings, yet comparatively little is generally known in Britain about its true nature and foundations.

When Bishop Titcomb, the first Anglican Bishop of Rangoon, went out to Burma in 1877 he was anxious to obtain knowledge at first hand as to the fundamental tenets of Buddhism. Seeing a yellow-robed "religious" performing his devotions at the great golden pagoda he asked him, through an interpreter, to whom he was praying, and what he was praying for. The reply promptly given was, "I am praying to nobody, and for nothing." That this was the only possible correct answer must be clear to any one who understands the principles of the Buddhist philosophic creed.

Burmese Buddhism is an offshoot from the old Aryan religious system which had its birthplace in or near that cradle of religion, the Hindu Kush. From this nucleus sprang all the systems of religion which have supplanted the fetishism and spirit worship of the primitive tribes that they came in contact with, and which have radiated in all directions, impelled by the evolutionary centrifugal force begotten of the movement of the Aryan tribes from the localities they originally occupied. Just as in wavelets produced on the surface of smooth water when a stone is thrown into it their individual features become less and less marked and distinct as the ripples extend far from the central point, so also in all the various



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religious systems that have sprung from the old Aryan centre, close resemblances gradually disappear, while essential differences of every sort become wider, more prominent, and more marked, the further they are removed in time from the period of primitive belief. The Brahminism that gave birth to offshoots forming the three great religions of the present day—Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity, which evolved themselves as the primitive teachings spread eastwards, southwards, and westwards—has undergone such vast changes during the process of evolution as to be almost unrecognizable. To attempt to trace this evolution, even in a comparatively brief and sketchy form, would here be out of place.

In looking back, however, along the vista of centuries in the direction of the time when the *Rig Veda* practically embodied the original Aryan religion, one cannot but notice that the religious differences have not been of gradual growth, as in the processes of evolution in the animal and the vegetable kingdoms. Nor can one fail to be struck with the fact that these three great offshoots from Brahminism have all been produced by violent convulsions or revolutions causing them to undergo changes so great as to make each a new religion not only different from, but also violently antagonistic to, the religion or religious philosophy from which it is an offshoot and against which it forms a protest.

In each of these three great branches into which the main stem of the tree of primitive Aryan religion has ramified, similar causes have supervened to make the evolution of these different religions what they now are. In each of them human nature has asserted itself, and has been the main cause in moulding the religious tenets to the shape in which they are to-day to be found. In each of them the religious power, and therewith also the secular power to a very great extent, was usurped and held tenaciously and jealously by a priestly sect or caste, which gradually evolved itself into a tyrannical and domineering scourge, practically controlling the affairs of the community, enforcing the observances of religion, and ultimately also prescribing the rules for the guidance of social and domestic life.

## ORIGIN OF BUDDHISM

In that branch of the primitive religion which came down to us through the Jewish race, the evidence of the Old Testament clearly goes to prove that the priestly tribe or caste of Levi was strongly leavened with the tyrannical powers and desires similarly usurped by the Brahmins in India. As time rolled on abuses naturally crept in and became so marked as to call forth the opposition of a reformer. In our own religion this was Jesus Christ, the greatest of all religious reformers, whose teaching was an enunciation of the highest physical, moral, and spiritual purity, and who in his own person exemplified his doctrines by a life of unparalleled simplicity and beauty. In addition to correcting many other abuses and deviations from the primitive religion, one very marked feature of Christ's doctrine was the revival of the belief in the immortality of the soul, which, judging from most parts of the Old Testament, seemed to have been either discarded or else lost sight of.

Similarly, the great reformer Mohammed cleansed another branch of religion from many of the abuses that had crept in, and gave it fresh impetus in a new direction.

And again, similar causes produced similar effects with regard to what was destined to become Buddhism, the great south-eastern branch of religion, when Gaudama, the "Buddha," dedicated his life to the overthrow of Brahminism in Nipál and to the enunciation of a new philosophy concerning the religious duties of the people.

The influence which developed into Buddhism was originally an uprising of a young Hindu of the Kshatriya or fighting caste, a son of the ruler of Magada, a small principality in the Nipál terai or marshy jungles to the south of the Himalaya. It was at first a strong protest against the tyranny of the Brahmins or priestly caste; and it then developed into an offshoot from Brahminism, just as Christianity was a later offshoot from Judaism.

But Buddhism was a political and social revolution, as well as a movement towards religious reform. In the early Vedic period the Kshatriya or fighting man was the most important caste, but gradually the Brahmins had succeeded in usurping the premier place and in arrogating

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to themselves the sole right of celebrating religious rites and observances. Finally, this tyranny of the Brahmins, who claimed to have sprung from the mouth of Brahma, became unendurable; and the result was the foundation of a new religion, or what may perhaps more correctly be termed a new philosophy, called Buddhism.

Buddhism takes its name from the Pali word "*Buddh*," which means a being having the form of a man but endowed with wisdom and virtue unequalled throughout the *Sekya* universe or world, who is the supreme object of adoration both during the time of his existence and after his attainment of emancipation or perfect rest (*Neikban*). The Burmese say that twenty-seven known Buddhs have preceded Gaudama during the present grand period of time (*Mahagat*); whereas the Cinghalese maintain that only four Buddhs (Kaukasan, Gawnagun, Kathaba, and Gaudama) have yet appeared, and that all traces of the three first named have entirely vanished from human knowledge. A fifth Buddh, Arimateya, is yet to come. Buddhs, however, only appear after intervals regularly recurring in a series that has neither beginning nor end.

Metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls after the death of the body during the present state of existence, one of the fundamental doctrines in Buddhism, was merely incorporated into it by borrowing from the Hindu religion or philosophy, in which it formed the agency for purifying the soul from its imperfections and worldly dross. But the Buddhism of Burma is very different from the original Buddhistic religion or philosophy as laid down in the Buddhistic scriptures (*Bidagat*), which are contained in three great sections for the guidance of the laity, of the priests, and of the *Nat* and *Brahma* of the celestial worlds. The original Hindu idea was altered by the reformers so far as to assert that when a man died his whole being was dissolved so that nothing remained but the influence arising from the works of merit or demerit, his good and bad actions, throughout this life, and that such good or evil influence was the determining cause as to a person entering into the future state of happiness or unhappiness. Thus the

## GAUDAMA, THE "BUDDHA"

Buddhistic philosophy teaches that the new being is quite independent of the former, and that it is an entirely new entity owing its existence to the fundamental principle of rewards for good and punishment for evil; but the Burmese laity undoubtedly hold that after death the soul migrates and becomes embodied in another being, whose nature is determined entirely by the influence of the *Kan*, the merit or the demerit, accumulated by the person during his or her present state of existence. Hence the Buddhism of Burma—or, to speak more correctly, of the Burmese laity—is practically the maintenance of a debit and credit account throughout life's course. So long as one has, on the termination of the present state of existence, a credit balance in one's favour, that means promotion to a higher order of beings (*Nat*) after death. If the balance be on the debit side, a descent will have to be made; hence one may be plunged into the depths of hell or become such a creature as a snake, a toad, or any of the lower animals. From such a position, as punishments are not endless, opportunity is again given for improving one's position by reappearing as a man or woman; and further descent or re-ascent must be made till, after countless ages, deliverance or complete emancipation (*Neikban*) is attained.

Gaudama, the "Buddha," was a man like ourselves. In nature he was exactly as we are; but he attained the perfect knowledge, which we lack. He never taught the idea of any supreme being, and certainly never arrogated to himself any divine origin or power. On the contrary, he invariably exhibited himself to his disciples as a man, like themselves, doomed to die. His doctrines are atheism pure and simple. Despite efforts made at a comparatively recent date to raise up the notion of a supreme being (*Adi Buddha*), Buddhism is emphatically an atheistic religious philosophy. And it is the philosophy of extreme pessimism, for one of its fundamental principles is that life is not worth living, but rather to be despised—though wilfully taking the life of another, or deliberately terminating one's own existence, is the most unpardonable of sins. Some such extreme penal threat



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

is only natural in a religious philosophy of so pessimistic and cynical a character. It merely forms an essentially necessary safeguard. Suicide is consequently of extremely rare occurrence among the Burmese.

Buddhism acknowledges no God or supreme ruler, and no Providence shaping the destinies of each individual; for it holds that man's destiny lies in his own hands. Moreover, it is a purely selfish religion. While it cannot be denied that many of the duties imposed by the Buddhist law upon human beings for their guidance in this life are beautiful teachings, yet they are cold and cynical. They absolutely lack sympathy. They do not inculcate charity or anything like doing to one's neighbour as we would that he should do unto us. The bestowal of alms, offerings of rice to priests, the founding of a monastery, the building of a bridge or of a rest-house for the convenience of travellers, are all works of religious merit (*Kútho*) prompted not by love of one's fellow-creatures, but simply and solely in order to place so much credit to one's own current life account. Selfishness is the sole motive for which good works are undertaken. That they may be of benefit or convenience to other people does not enter at all into consideration, except in so far as that determines the fact of such particular performance being ranked as a work of merit. It is to save himself from punishment or degradation in a future state of existence that works of merit or benevolence are carried out by a Burman.

Buddhism is thus simply the religious philosophy of pure selfishness. In this respect it forms the very antithesis of the altruism which is the living spirit of Christianity. "*For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,*" is a statement quite incomprehensible to the Buddhist. An absolutely impassable barrier, a fathomless abyss that cannot possibly be bridged over, exists between the eternal law as enunciated by Gaudama and St. Paul's noble interpretation of the Christian law that "*love is the fulfilling of the law,*" or that "*he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.*" The Buddhist mind is ignorant of altruistic feeling or of anything like what is implied in

## MERIT AND DEMERIT

“*charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*” Whatever he may perchance do in the way of alleviating suffering by means of bestowing alms is not done in order to relieve the wants of others, but solely to gain religious merit for himself.

The fear of becoming an ox or an ass in the next state of existence leads him to be devout and attentive to religious ceremonies, and to make merit for himself even though he may thereby leave his family absolutely penniless. That it should also lead him to be patient with and kind to such animals, as well as to vipers, mosquitoes, and all other noxious creatures, necessarily follows as a corollary. Otherwise, might he not perhaps be beating or abusing the incarnation of his father or his mother, if their merit (*Kútho*) had not been in excess of their demerit (*Akúthala*)? From this teaching it therefore follows that all the lower orders of animals differ from man only in condition and not in nature, for they are the temporary abodes of the souls of human beings who are undergoing punishment on account of having had a debit balance to their life account, and who were consequently compelled to descend in the scale of beings in place of ascending to become *Nat* and *Brahma* in the twenty-six celestial regions.

Even Gaudama himself recounted how he had passed through many existences in the embodiment of the lower animals, owing to demerit during a past state of existence as a man. Hence, as a rule, the taking of life is most repugnant to the Burman, for one may perhaps be killing the incarnation of a lost friend or relative. Buddhist monks (*Pôngyi, Rahan*) are even forbidden to cut down trees or to pull up weeds, in order to avoid killing insects. Averse as the average Burman may be to taking life, however, he has no scruples whatever about partaking of the food products thereby obtained in the way of fish, flesh, or fowl. Any demerit connected with their death is not his, and is not chargeable to the debit side of his life account.

Gaudama, the founder of Buddhism, was born in the year 623, and died in 543 B.C. He was the son of Suddawdana (Suddhodana), the Rajah of Kappilawut

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

(Kapilavastu), situated amid the sub-Himalayan forests of Nipál, by Maya, his wife ; and he was known as Seiddatta (Siddhartha) before he renounced the world and became Gaudama, the "Buddh" (literally, the "wise" or "learned"). Having more than once appeared in the form of a man, and having passed through various stages of existence as a lower animal on account of his want of religious merit when a human being, he was finally in 623 B.C. born in the Lumbini forest of Sál trees (*Shorea robusta*), while his pure and pious mother was on a journey to the place of her birth. Delivery took place while his mother stood in an upright position, and she felt no pain ; but she died seven days afterwards, when she became the daughter of a spirit (*Nat*).

Various marvellous signs prevailed at the time of Gaudama's birth. The earth rocked and swayed, the sky was lighted up with flashing meteors, and trees burst into full blossom to herald the auspicious event. From the moment of his conception within his mother's womb the spirits inhabiting the six lower celestial regions (*Nat* and *Dewa*) came forth to pay him honour and to offer homage at the time of his birth, as also did the superior beings (*Brahma*) abiding in the twenty divisions of the higher celestial regions. These *Brahma* of Buddhism and their archangel *Maha Brahma* are not to be confounded with the Brahma of the Hindu triad. Being superior to spirits (*Nat*), they are in every way greater and more richly endowed with regard to longevity and other matters. They feel neither heat, nor cold, nor sexual passion. When the age allotted to them has been attained they may become born again as men or as animals, or may even pass away into some other world.

No sooner was Seiddatta born than he at once gave evidence of his future greatness, for he stood erect and announced to his mother the glory of his future and the omniscience he was destined to attain. On sixty-four astrologers being consulted, they predicted that he would either be a *Sakya Wade*, a great and mighty ruler of the universe, or else a *Buddha*, without, however, being able to discern to which alternative consummation the infant prince had been born. Ambitious as a ruler, and filled with

## EARLY LIFE OF GAUDAMA

hatred of the Brahmin or priestly caste, Suddawdana, his royal father, a prince of the Kshatriya or fighting caste, trained him to arms as the champion of the latter against the former. At the age of sixteen he was married to the Princess Yasawdara, who, having been his consort in past stages of existence, was born again into this world on the same day as Suddawdana in order to assist him in the fulfilment of the duties necessary for the attainment of his high destiny.

For thirteen years he lived surrounded by the luxuries of a court, enjoying the companionship of his wife, Yasawdara, and of their son, Rahulo. But the time was then approaching when he was to receive the call to the religious life to which he had been predestined, and which the training of his father and the comforts of his princely home could neither prevent nor obviate. It was then that he received the "four great signs" (*Nemeik-le-ba*)—an old man, a leper, a corpse, and a recluse—the sight of which, and the lessons thereby inculcated, induced him to renounce the world previous to becoming Gaudama the Buddha; for these four great signs impressed him with the nothingness and the burden of this life, and indicated that the only possible mode of obtaining relief therefrom was in religious contemplation.

Whilst surrounded by luxuries and living in the enjoyment of them, he one day drove forth in his chariot drawn by four gorgeously caparisoned lily-white horses for the purpose of promenading in his garden, situated, as is usual in Upper India, at some distance from the palace. On his way he met a toothless, infirm, and decrepit old man, with grey hair and bent form, who was slowly and painfully making his way along the road with the aid of a stick. Astonished at such a sight, he asked if there were many people of that sort, and was surprised to learn that the old man was once young and strong like himself, and that he himself too, in course of time, would become old, infirm, and stricken in years. Thus were the impermanence and the transitoriness of things impressed upon his mind. Four months later he was again driving along this road to the pleasure garden,



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

when he met a miserable leper sitting on the roadside, whose foul, sloughing sores and filthy, squalid appearance agitated him so much that he returned at once to the palace, being filled with the thought of the misery to which man is born in being liable to foul diseases as well as to the decrepitude of old age and senile decay.

After another period of four months, the third sign came to him in the form of a funeral procession, bearing onwards to the sacred river a loathsome corpse in an advanced stage of putrefaction and decomposition. Again he learned that such too would one day be his state ; and this caused him to ponder over the fact that death and its consequences are added to the infirmity of age and the misery of disease.

Four months later, on the day of the full moon in the month Aesola, he beheld the last of the four great signs. Driving along as before, he beheld a recluse seated on the ground, oblivious of all around, engrossed in deep and peaceful meditation, and filled with the philosophic calm begotten thereof ; and thus he learned how the pains and penalties of life and of death might best be obviated by pursuing a course which would bring rest and peace.

Thus the four great signs were given, and all was completed in order that the astrologers' prophecy should enter upon its fulfilment. The luxury of his high estate lost its desirability in the eyes of Seiddatta, who at once determined to abandon his life of ease and comfort, to dedicate himself solely to the attainment of *Neikban* (Nirvana), and to preach to his fellow-creatures the only way of securing happiness in this life, and final emancipation hereafter. Returning to the palace, he took one last fond look at his beloved wife and child ; and then, donning the garb of an ascetic and subsisting on alms received by the wayside, he set forth at the age of twenty-nine upon the six years' pilgrimage which was to intervene before the time should arrive when the Buddhahood would be attained by him.

During this time Seiddatta was a *Bawdisat*, or being destined to become a Buddha. There are many such beings, for the term includes all who avow themselves as

## THE TEN CARDINAL VIRTUES

candidates. When ages elapse without the appearance of a Buddha, some compassionate *Brahma* dwelling in one of the higher celestial worlds seeks out a *Bawdisat* and inspires him with the resolution enabling him to form the wish to become the teacher of the three worlds (of men, *Nat*, and *Brahma*), in order that he may release all sentient beings from the evils of existence.

During the time of his *Bawdisat*, Seiddatta practised the ten cardinal virtues (*Párami-se-ba*), in which he had to become mature before attaining the Buddhahood. These were (1) giving away as alms everything he possessed; (2) observing all the precepts in the three degrees; (3) abandoning all kinds of possession or wealth; (4) the virtue proceeding from wisdom, through the revelation to others of what his purified eyes beheld; (5) the virtue proceeding from determined courage; (6) enduring with composure the opposition of unjust men, regarding it as if it were merely the prattle of a child; (7) speaking the words of truth, and thus exercising the virtue proceeding therefrom; (8) the resolute performance of what is good, without giving way to evil; (9) the virtue of kindness and affection, by giving away what he possessed to aid the necessities of others, and by taking their sorrows upon him; (10) the virtue of equanimity, by regarding with an equal mind both those who exercised the most severe cruelties upon him and those who assisted and were kind to him.

The attainment of the Buddhahood took place under the sacred Bawdi tree ("the tree of knowledge," *Ficus religiosa*) at Gaya in 588 B.C. For seven times seven days he was plunged in the profoundest meditation. For seven days he remained under the shade of a Bawdi tree, seated upon a golden throne which had ascended miraculously from the interior of the earth. For seven days he stood close to this spot beholding the throne that he had left, then walked backwards and forwards in the air for an equal space of time. Other seven days he spent in a bejewelled golden house built for him by spirits (*Nat*), and seven more under the shade of a Pipul tree (*Ficus religiosa*); whilst during another period of seven days he was seated on a dragon whose body and

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

wings protected him from storms raging round about him. It was during one of these periods that he was attacked by the chief of the spirits (*Mán Nat*) inhabiting the lower celestial regions, whose assault was powerless against the *Bawdisat* shielded by the panoply of purity and of good deeds, who would have looked upon death as but an entering upon the path leading onwards to *Neikban*. During the last of the periods he underwent the temptation of the daughters of the *Mán Nat*, but successfully withstood their alluring blandishments. Having duly passed through the necessary stages of meditation, good works, trials and temptations, the *Bawdisat* finally attained the Buddhahood, as Gaudama, the perfection of wisdom.

From Gaya he set forth as an itinerant religious reformer, preaching the greatest of crusades that was to attack Brahminism and caste, and laying the firm foundations of the new religious philosophy which is now more or less strictly adhered to by over one quarter of the human race. A little to the north of Benares, in a deer park known as the Migadawan forest, he enunciated the famous "Law of the Wheel" or manifestation of the four sublime and transcendent truths, and drew together the small body of disciples, forming the original "excellent assembly" (*Paramat Thinga*), who were afterwards to be the teachers spreading his doctrines far and wide. It is impossible not to notice that Gaudama's method of procedure closely resembles that subsequently adopted by Christ, the great Jewish reformer, who founded the latest and noblest of religions. But one essential point of difference is equally clear: for, while Christ is stated to have bestowed upon his apostles the supernatural gifts of prophecy and of the power to forgive sins, Gaudama first subjected his disciples to severe discipline and then simply conferred on them the power of admitting to the assembly (*Thinga*) such converts as they might think worthy of this distinction.

In this new religious philosophy the social divisions of caste were broken down and ignored. This was one of its main features, and indeed that which must have appealed with intense strength to the lower castes like

## THE NEW PHILOSOPHY

the Sudra, who were not even deemed worthy of being allowed to read the sacred books. From Benares sixty high-born men of the Kshatriya or fighting caste joined him as converts, while hundreds of Brahmins flocked to him from the metaphysical schools, eager to enrol themselves as members of the new religion and the latest advance in philosophy. But another social revolution was at the same time accomplished by the Sakya-Muni, as Gaudama was now generally called; for he aimed at the abolition of the severe restrictions placed upon the personal liberty of women, and founded a female religious order into which his aunt and foster-mother, Patzapati, was enrolled along with 500 maidens of noble birth.

It will thus be seen that Gaudama was much more than a reformer, for he became the founder of an entirely new religious philosophy. He shook himself free from Brahminism by proclaiming universal equality in opposition to caste differences. He acknowledged no supreme being or beings as the rulers of the universe, but declared man to be ultimately the master of his own destiny, and prayers, sacrifices, and gifts to priests to be of themselves of no avail. In founding a new religious philosophy on these lines, he at the same time sowed the seeds of a social revolution whose fruits have been reaped by hundreds of millions of human beings during the last twenty-five centuries. It is thus that the women of Burma enjoy, like those of Japan, entire immunity from the prison-like restrictions of women in India, and that they occupy a position as free and untrammelled as in any of the western nations which have advanced furthest in the direction of civilization and humanity.

For five and forty years the Sakya-Muni wandered as a mendicant with his disciples, all clad in yellow robes, teaching his new doctrines and making converts throughout northern India. The only change that gradually crept into his doctrine was that he realized how vows of absolute poverty became impracticable. Therefore he modified his teaching so as to permit of gifts of monasteries, sacred buildings, and land being accepted from pious laymen for the use of the religious body.

Finally, at the age of ninety years, the Sakya-Muni,



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Gaudama the Buddha, having spent more than half of his long life in endeavouring to point out to human beings the way of happiness and the path leading to emancipation from all evils, prepared to depart from this state of existence. Calling to him his favourite disciple, Ananda, he said, "I am weary and wish to lie down. Place a couch quickly between two Sál trees, and turn its head towards the north." Reclining thus, his soul passed away from his body and attained the perfect deliverance and the complete emancipation of *Neikban*. Hence Buddhists regard the north as the most excellent quarter of the heavens. Gaudama's body was cremated, and its ashes were distributed among the rulers of the places where his teaching had been most cordially received. Ten stupas or monumental topes were erected over these remains, at different places throughout Behar and Tirhut. About twenty years later the relics were all collected and enshrined near the capital of Behar, whence, about the year 250 B.C., they were distributed throughout India. Of these Burma appears to have obtained more than the lion's share; for there are now in Burma alone, according to the legends connected with the various much venerated pagodas, far more relics than originally existed.

Some idea of the original scope and object of Buddhism may perhaps best be gained by two quotations from Bigandet's *Life or Legend of Gaudama* (1880, vol. i. page 111). At the time of his having attained the perfect knowledge of a Buddha, Gaudama meditated on the best use to which this should be put. In this meditation his thoughts pursued the following train:—

The knowledge of the law and of the four great truths which I alone possess is very hard to be had. The law is deep: it is difficult to know and understand it: it is very sublime, and can be comprehended only by the means of earnest meditation. It is sweet, filling the soul with joy, and accessible only to the wise. Now all beings are sunk very low by the influence of the five great passions; they cannot free themselves from their baneful operation, which is the source of all mutability. But the law of mutability is the opposite of the law of *Neikban* or rest. This law is hard to be understood. If I ever preach that law, beings will not be able to understand me, and from my preaching there will result but a useless fatigue and unprofitable weariness.

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Buddha thus remained almost disinclined to undertake the great duty of preaching the law. The great Brahma, observing what was taking place in Buddha's soul, cried out, "Alas ! all mankind are doomed to be lost. He who deserves to be worshipped by all beings now feels no disposition to announce the law to them." He instantly left his seat, and having repaired to the presence of Payá (i.e. Gaudama), his cloak over his shoulders with the extremity hanging backward, he bent his knee, lifted up his joined hands to the forehead before the sage, and said to him : "Most illustrious Buddha, who art adorned with the six glories, do condescend to preach the most excellent law ; the number of those buried under the weight of filth and passions is comparatively small ; if they do not listen to the law there will be no great loss. But there is an immense number of beings who will understand the law. In this world there are beings who are moderately given up to the gratification of sensual appetites ; and there are also a great many who are following heretical opinions to whom the knowledge of truth is necessary, and who will easily come to it. Lay now open the way that will lead to the perfection of Areyas :<sup>1</sup> those perfections are the gates of Neikban." Thus he entreated Buddha. The Brahma had been, in the time of Buddha Kathaba, a Rahan (i.e. one of the sacred order of priests), under the name of Thabaka, and was transferred to the first seat of Brahma for the duration of the world.

The first great public occasion on which Gaudama is recorded to have enunciated his doctrines is the celebrated "Sermon on the Mount" near the village of Gayathitha, where, accompanied by a thousand followers, he ascended to the top of a hill and addressed his disciples as follows (*ibid.* page 147): —

"Beloved Beikkus (i.e. mendicants), all that is to be met with in the three abodes of men, Nat, and Brahma is like a burning flame. But why is it so? Because the eyes are a burning flame ; the objects perceived by the eyes, the view of those objects, the feeling created by that view, are all like a burning flame. The sensations produced by the eyes cause a succession of pleasant and painful feelings, but these are likewise a burning flame. What are the causes productive of such a burning? It is the fire of concupiscence, of anger, of ignorance, of birth, of death, of old age, and of anxiety. Again, the ear is a burning flame : the sounds, the perception of the sounds, the sensations produced by the sounds, are all a burning flame, which is fed by the fire of concupiscence, anger, ignorance, birth, old age, death, anxiety, tears, affliction, and trouble. Again, the sense of smelling is a burning flame : the odours, the perception of odours, the sensation produced by odours, are all a burning flame : the pleasure and pain resulting therefrom are

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<sup>1</sup> An *Areya* is one who has become independent of the common laws of transmigratory existence and will attain *Neikban* or annihilation at the end of the present life.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

but a burning flame, fed by concupiscence, anger, ignorance, birth, old age, death, disquietude, tears, affliction, and sorrows. Again, the taste is a burning flame: the objects tasted, the perception of those objects, the sensations produced by them, are all a burning flame, kept up by the fire of concupiscence, anger, ignorance, birth, old age, death, anxiety, tears, affliction, and sorrow. Again, the sense of feeling, the objects felt, the perception of those objects, the sensations produced by them, are a burning flame; the pleasure and pain resulting therefrom are but a burning flame, fostered by concupiscence, anger, ignorance, birth, old age, death, anxiety, tears, affliction, and sorrow. Again, the heart is a burning flame, as well as all the objects perceived by it and the sensations produced in it; the pleasure and pain caused by the heart are also a burning flame, kept up by the fire of concupiscence, anger, ignorance, birth, old age, death, disquietude, tears, affliction and sorrow. Beloved Beikkus, they who understand the doctrine I have preached, and see through it, are full of wisdom and deserve to be called my disciples. They are displeased with the senses, the objects of the senses, matter, pleasure and pain, as well as with all the affections of the heart. They become free from concupiscence, and therefore exempt from passions. They have acquired the true wisdom that leads to perfection; they are delivered at once from the miseries of another birth. Having practised the most excellent works, nothing more remains to be performed by them. They want no more the guidance of the sixteen laws, for they have reached far beyond them." Having thus spoken, Buddha remained silent. His hearers felt themselves wholly disentangled from the trammels of passions, and disengaged from all affections to material objects; and they who had been but *Rahan* became *Rahanda*.<sup>1</sup>

In this discourse to the voluntary mendicants (*Beikku*) who were his disciples, the leading principle in the Buddhistic religious philosophy, the unsubstantiality and unreality of everything in this world, was tersely laid down. From the three evil principles—evil desire, anger, and ignorance—flow all the other passions or demerits; and of these three ignorance is the worst, as it is the fountain head from which the other two

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, the *Rahan* or simple priest or ascetic, *lit.* "perfect," was advanced to become a *Rahanda* or *Areya* of the highest order, who has attained the fourth of the paths leading to *Neikban*. The *Rahanda* or *Rahat* possessed the five great powers of working miracles, of hearing all sounds, of knowing the thoughts of other beings, of knowing what births were received in other ages, and of knowing what births will be received by any being in future ages. But all *Rahanda* do not possess these gifts in equal degree, though all attain *Neikban* on their death. The *Rahanda* may feel bodily pain, but knows no mental anguish or sorrow. All those who have not attained the state of a *Rahat* are subject to the influence of the three evil principles—evil desire, anger, and ignorance.

## GAUDAMA'S RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY

spring. Hence ignorance is the root of all moral disorders. Truth being hidden from the eyes of ordinary mortals by the thick mists of the three evil principles, man fails to discern right from wrong, attaches an undue importance to material objects, and fans the flame of passion by like or dislike of mere illusions. The power of these main demeritorious influences is increased by such secondary or incidental circumstances as birth, sorrow, anxiety, old age, and death. But these arise solely from the influence of demerits, and the law of merits and demerits is propounded as the solution of the question relating to the attainment of freedom from the fires of evil influences. Any one born into the state of existence of a man must consequently gravitate towards perfection by means of acquiring merit. Otherwise he must, owing to his imperfections and demerits, be born again to succeeding existences, so as to allow him opportunities of acquiring merit by the practice of virtue. Those who have obtained virtue lose all pleasure in passion, and material objects become indifferent to them. Hence, when old age and death come, the causes of existence are removed, and the next step places the individual beyond the influence of the power of attraction fettering all human beings in the vortex of existences. It carries him towards the centre of perfection, and brings him on one of the four paths leading to complete rest, emancipation, and deliverance from influences of any sort (*Neikban*).

Such is a brief outline of the religious philosophy taught by Gaudama. It was the exposition of the eternal law (*Tarā*), which, existing like truth from all time to all time, had nevertheless become obliterated from the minds of men, through abuses and neglect, since the days of a former Buddha. By means of his perfect knowledge and omniscience, however, Gaudama was enabled to reformulate it, and to preach it to men for their guidance in escaping from the effects of the evil influences operating to prevent them from the attainment of *Neikban*. The enunciation of this law would be a code of the very highest morality but for the damning fact that the good works inculcated are to be done from



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

purely selfish motives and do not spring from charitable impulses or from sympathy with suffering humanity.

It was enunciated in a more popular and less philosophical form than that adopted in addressing the *Beikku* or disciples when one of the spirits (*Nat*) came at nightfall and entreated Gaudama to issue instructions that would assist men to understand many points of the law hitherto obscured to them. Gaudama's words were as follows (Bigandet, *op. cit.* p. 123) :—

Young Nat, here are the most excellent things men and Nats ought to attend to, in order to capacitate themselves for the state of Neikban: to shun the company of the foolish; to be always with the wise; to proffer homage to those who are deserving of it; to remain in a place becoming one's condition; to have always with one's self the influence of former good works; steadily to maintain a perfect behaviour; to be delighted to hear and see much, in order to increase knowledge; to study all that is not sinful; to apply one's self to acquire the knowledge of *Wini* (rules for conduct, of priests especially). Let every one's conversation be regulated by righteous principles; let every one minister to the wants of his father and mother; provide all the necessaries for his wife and children; perform no action under the evil influence of temptation; bestow alms; observe the precepts of the law; assist one's relatives and friends; perform no actions but such as are exempt from sin; be ever diligent in such avoiding, and abstain from intoxicating drink. Let no one be remiss in the practice of the law of merits. Let every one bear respect to all men; be ever humble; be easily satisfied and content; gratefully acknowledge favours; listen to the preaching of the law in its proper time; be patient; delight in good conversation; visit the religious from time to time; converse on religious subjects; cultivate the virtue of mortification (i.e. self denial); practise works of virtue; pay attention always to the four great truths; keep the eyes fixed on Neikban. Finally, let one in the middle of the eight afflictions of this world be, like the Rahanda, firm, without disquietude, fearless, with a perfect composure. O young Nat, whoever observes these perfect laws shall never be overcome by the enemies of the good: he shall enjoy the peace of Areyas.

Here, within these thirty-three terse precepts, is an epitome of almost all the moral virtues, in the form of an address which is several centuries older than anything relating to Christianity.

Burmese Buddhism has retained to a considerable extent the primitive simplicity of Gaudama's precepts first taught on the banks of the Ganges more than five and a half centuries before the dawn of the Christian era. The teachings of Gaudama were meant not only

## RELICS OF GENIOLATRY

for men, but also for the spirits (*Nat*) inhabiting the inferior celestial regions, and for the mightier spirits (*Brahma*) abiding in the higher celestial regions, all three of which classes are included in the category of human beings. It is easy to understand that a religion or religious philosophy of this sort, distinctly recognizing spirits (*Nat*), and angels (*Brahma*), would appeal strongly to and find ready acceptance with the half-civilized Mongolian tribes dwelling to the north of the birthplace of Buddhism, whose sole religious beliefs consisted in a kind of geniolatry or spirit worship such as still forms the religion of many different tribes occupying the mountainous tracts of eastern and north-eastern India.

When Buddhism was introduced into Burma about the year 240 B.C. it was but little subjected to deteriorating and corrupting influences. It was mainly, no doubt, due to the geographical position of Burma, though perhaps partly also favoured by political causes, that it remained uncorrupted and unaltered by influences which tinged the original doctrines with Hindu myths in Nipál, and with ancestral worship in China: but it is equally certain that its recognition of *Nat* and *Brahma* enabled the new religion to supplant or overlie the primitive belief in spirits.

The very ease, however, wherewith the new religion adapted itself to procure the conversion of the races with which it came in contact, and at the same time the great tolerance of Buddhism itself, served to keep alive, as something far more than the smouldering ashes of a half-dead fire, the belief in spirits and in the efficacy of offering and sacrifice with a view to the propitiation of the unseen inhabitants of the earth, the air, and the waters surrounding the earth. Hence even now, in the Burma of to-day, the Burmese Buddhist is distinctly imbued with a more or less definite belief in the power of spirits, which pure relic of geniolatry has for centuries been co-existent with the belief in the *Nat* and the *Brahma* of pure Buddhism. It is impossible to draw any hard and fast line separating these two beliefs in the minds of the Burmese, and more particularly among the vast

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majority forming the rural and agricultural population. But, just as, if you scratch a Russian, it is said you will find a Tartar, so also, if you could look into the innermost recesses of the ordinary Burman mind, you would find a vast number of Burmese Buddhists to be in reality practically little else than spirit worshippers. This does not mean to imply that Buddhism is, in Burma, a mere veneer superlying a foundation of geniolatry ; but the fact seems indisputable that the foundations of belief are much more frequently primitive spirit worship than the true Buddhism or religious philosophy founded by Gaudama. Hence, when the *Census Report* of 1891 tells us that there are nearly 7,000,000 Buddhists in Burma, or over nine-tenths of the total population, the figures must be understood as simply including all those who choose to call themselves Buddhists. A Burman, who may be at heart a spirit worshipper, would be ashamed to admit himself to be this ; it is much more convenient and respectable to call himself a Buddhist. Can we blame him for being pharisaically conventional ? Spirit worship is in Burma a despised religion still professed only by less than 170,000 persons, or little over one-fiftieth of the total population, who are almost entirely wild jungle tribes. But while it has gradually given way to Buddhism nominally, as a matter of fact the primitive *Nat* worship or geniolatry usually remains the true cult of the rural population.

*Nat* worship is, curiously enough, still one of the prevailing forms of belief at Thatôn, in Tenasserim, originally and for centuries the stronghold of Buddhism. Enshrined in a temple there is the image of the *Nat* Popo or "grandfather," who is said to have been asked to become the guardian spirit of Thatôn by the two missionaries who introduced Buddhism here in the third century. Along with him in the temple, but enshrined in other chambers, are the images of two other spirits subordinate to Popo. An annual festival is held in honour of these *Nat*. So too at Taungbyun, near Mandalay, a *Nat-pwè* is held in July or August of each year in honour of two spirits whose images are enshrined there.

## FIRST BUDDHIST SYNOD

Among a people possessing the characteristics of the Burmese, it might not have been matter of surprise if, after having for over two thousand years erected countless brazen and marble images to Gaudama, they had changed the primitive form of Buddhism by elevating Gaudama to the rank of a god. Such is, however, emphatically not the case. Gaudama still remains what he declared himself to be, a man and not a god. Honour of every sort is shown to his memory ; millions of images of him have been wrought in wood, in brass, and in marble ; he is the central figure in all the old religious plays, and throughout the ancient writings ; but he never has been raised to the status of godhead. If you ask a Burman to what religion he belongs, he will invariably reply in words which mean, "*I venerate the doctrine of the Buddha*" (*Buddabáthá kógwe the*). No Burman would ever think of saying, "*I worship the Buddha.*"

The success which attended Gaudama's efforts to establish throughout Tirhut and Behar a new and pure religion caused imitators to strike out independent paths for themselves. Moreover, the austerity with which he enforced the life of poverty and self-denial was occasionally found irksome and unnecessarily severe by some of the disciples. Hence, even during Gaudama's lifetime, heretical priests (*Parabáik*) appeared as false teachers endeavouring to spread a new doctrine that there is no future world, and that all human beings at death become resolved into the four primary elements—earth, air, fire, and water. On the death of Gaudama schisms and dissensions even crept into the Assembly (*Thinga*) into which the disciples (*Beikku*) had been formed during his lifetime ; and it was found desirable to call together a council to settle all points of controversy. This first Buddhist council or synod (*Thinga Yana*) was held in 543 B.C., sixty-one days after the death of Gaudama. It was attended by 500 "religious" of the Assembly. It deliberated for seven months, and gave rulings publicly and authoritatively. It was at this council that the Buddhist era was fixed to begin on the first day of the waxing moon of Tabaung (March) of the



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year in which Gaudama died. This era is to last five thousand years, which is the period assigned by Gaudama himself to the duration of the religion taught by him. The second Buddhist council was held exactly one hundred years later (443 B.C.), in order to counteract the deterioration and correct the laxity which had gradually found its way into the Assembly. It was attended by seven hundred of the "religious" most celebrated for their learning and knowledge. Some of the ten relaxations which were claimed by a considerable portion of the Assembly seem quaint to Western ideas, as, for example, the wish to be allowed to add condiments to the food received as alms and to preserve salt for more than the sanctioned seven days, to perform religious ceremonies in private instead of in public, to drink whey after noon (though the drinking of whey was forbidden), to sit on seats covered with cloth instead of on bare wood, and to accept proffered alms of gold and silver (the use of which was prohibited). But those who wished to relax the severity of the religious life were thwarted, and the council, after sitting for eight months, decided against the schismatics and punished them with degradation.

The third or greatest of all the religious councils was held at Palipatra, near the modern Patna, about 241 or 243 B.C., during the seventeenth year of the reign of King Asoka, and lasted into the following year.<sup>1</sup> It was attended by 1,000 selected "religious" of the Assembly, who made a careful and exhaustive revision of the Buddhist scriptures (*Bidagat*) and restored their original purity. These sacred books, written in Pali, are subdivided into three sections, viz., the instructions (*Thut*) for the laity, the instructions (*Win*) addressed to the religious, and the metaphysical portion (*Abid-amma*) relating to the *Nat* and the *Brahma* of the lower and the higher celestial regions.

This third council was the great apostolic synod at which it was resolved to spread abroad the doctrines of

<sup>1</sup> The Burmese legend asserts that this council was held in 306 to 307 B.C. But, as it is known that Asoka's celebrated "edict pillar" near Ferozabad was erected about the middle of the third century B.C., this statement is obviously incorrect.

## INTRODUCTION OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism over a much larger area than that to which it had hitherto been extended. Until then it had been confined to the limits of Magada in Nipál. But at the conclusion of the third great council it was determined to send forth apostles or missionaries in all directions to disseminate the most excellent teaching of the eternal law enunciated by the all-wise Buddha. Under the patronage of King Asoka, whose arms were then everywhere triumphant and who was at that time the most powerful ruler throughout India, the propagation of Buddhism was rapid and extensive.

Two of these apostles, Thawna and Uttara, were sent south-eastwards to the Siwana-Bami (Suvana-Bhûmi), or "Golden Land," by which name Burma appears then to have been known in Upper India. They landed at Thatôn, the capital of the Môn kingdom of Ramanya (Pegu and Martaban), now the headquarters of a civil district in Lower Burma and situated about ten miles distant from the Gulf of Martaban, though at that time on the sea coast on a tongue of land between the Salween and the Sittang rivers. From this central point it spread northwards into Upper Burma and eastwards into the Shan States and Siam. Some of the Burmese legends assert that Gaudama visited Burma and introduced his new religion in person, while others state that it was brought direct by Thawna and Uttara across the hills of Assam and Manipur to Tagaung, the oldest known city in Upper Burma, now a small jungle town on the left bank of the Irrawaddy between Mandalay and Bhamo. The former of these statements is known to be incorrect, and well founded doubt exists about the latter, as these hills were, and still are, inhabited by fierce and uncivilized tribes of spirit worshippers. Other legends of Burma, collated with those of Ceylon, seem to establish the more probable statement that the two missionaries, Thawna and Uttara, reached Thatôn by sea from Ceylon about the year 241 B.C. This is all the more probable as Burmese Buddhism distinctly belongs to the southern or Cinghalese school, whose scriptures were first of all transmitted orally for over two centuries and then written down in the Pali language. Otherwise it would

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

have belonged to the Thibetan or northern school, whose sacred writings are in Sanskrit.

It was not until the beginning of the fifth century A.D. that any copy of the Buddhist scriptures (*Bidagat*) was brought to Burma. From the time of the introduction of Buddhism into Ramanya by Thawna and Uttara down to that date the Pali teachings had been transmitted orally from generation to generation. But in 400 A.D., according to the legend, a priest named Buddha-Ghosa, or "the voice of Buddha," went across to Ceylon, where he occupied himself for the next thirteen years in transcribing the Pali text of the *Bidagat* and the other sacred books. His task completed, he returned to Thatôn, bringing with him the fruits of his diligence. Here these scriptures remained for over six and a half centuries, till Anawratazaw, King of Pagán (now a subdivision of the Myingyan civil district), having made war upon the Môn country and overthrown the Talaings in 1058 A.D., sacked the capital, Thatôn, and carried off the whole collection of scriptures brought by Buddha-Ghosa from Ceylon, together with the most learned of the *Rahan* or "religious." With thirty-two elephant loads of scriptures and 1,000 monks thus said to have been transferred to Pagán, this city became the head-centre of Burmese Buddhism until 1365 A.D., when the capital of the King of Burma was established at Ava. During these 300 years a great revival of Buddhism took place, and from this era most of the great monuments date whose remains still rouse the admiration of visitors to the ruined city of Pagán.

According to the Buddhist idea a state of existence (*Bawa*) consists of three worlds or divisions—a past, a present, and a future. Each universe or world comprises three sections, namely, one region (*Kama*) in which there is form, desire, and sensuous gratification; another (*Rupa*) in which there is form, without desire or sensuous gratification; and a third (*Aruṇa*), a state of unconsciousness without either form, desire, or sensuous gratification. In each such universe the ladder of existence consists of thirty-one rungs (*Bôn*).<sup>1</sup> Of these thirty-one divisions

<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, however, these thirty-one *Bôn* or "abodes" consist

## FUTURE PUNISHMENT

it may be said that eleven belong to desire (*Kama*), sixteen to matter (*Rupa*), and four to immateriality (*Arupa*).

In order to account for the presence of man in this world, the Burman presumes the existence of *Brahma* in a previous world. This world having been destroyed through the action of the laws regulating changes in matter, some of the *Brahma* descended in all the glory of their bright resplendence from the sixteen higher celestial regions. For some unknown reason these almost ethereal beings ate of a coarse kind of rice (*Thalé*), through the evil influence of which desire and passion germinated in their hitherto passionless souls. So great was this deterioration that these *Brahma* descended in the scale and became men, beings tyrannized by passionate desires and blinded by the mists of ignorance, who are tossed hither and thither in the whirlpool of existence according to their individual merits or demerits during this probationary stage of manhood.

Whether a man, according to the debit balance of his demerits in this life, may be relegated to one or other of the eight stories of hell, there to suffer unspeakable tortures, or may have to expiate his offences in a scarcely less terrible manner as a monster of hideous form, suffering far more than Damoclean tortures in any of the sixteen inferior hells surrounding each of these main regions, or may become incarnated in the form of one or other of the lower animals or brute creation, yet he will always, after punishment and expiation commensurate with the nature of his demerits, be given another opportunity<sup>1</sup> of acquiring sufficient merit (*Kútho*) to entitle

of (1) *Apè* or four states of punishment (*Ngayè* or "hell," *Athurake* or "gruesome monsters," *Pyeitta* or "fabulous animals," and *Tareiksan* or "brute animals"); (2) *Kama* or seven stages in which desire and passion are felt (including man, and the *Nat* inhabiting the six lower celestial regions); (3) *Rupa* or sixteen stages of visibility and materiality, including the *Brahma* or beings superior to men and to the *Nat*, insensible to heat or cold and entirely free from passion or desire, inhabiting the sixteen higher celestial regions; and (4) *Arupa* or four stages of invisibility and immateriality, in which the beings have no bodily form but rejoice in the contemplation of abstract truth.

<sup>1</sup> To re-obtain this opportunity is not always, however, an easy thing,



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

him to a seat in the celestial abodes of *Nat* and *Brahma*, and to reach the *Mag*, the four paths leading to *Neikban*. Sorrow is like a disease ; the cleaving to existence is like the cause of that disease ; *Neikban* is like the curing of the disease ; and the four paths, each of which is divided into the two grades of perception of the course of duty and fruition or enjoyment of the same, are like the medicine which causes the cure. Even the *Brahma* of the higher celestial regions—though the aggregate elements forming their bodies be different from our common clay, and though they have only attained their exalted position by the exercise of soul-purifying rites—may, when the age allotted to them as *Brahma* has passed away, be born again into this world as men or as animals, or may be born into any other world.

The greatest demerits are those incurred by the non-observance of the five great religious duties (*Pyinsa Thila*) incumbent upon the laity, and binding on all creatures, namely, (1) not to take life ; (2) not to steal ; (3) not to commit adultery ; (4) not to lie ; and (5) not to touch any intoxicating drink. In the case of the *Rahan* or “religious” the ten obligatory duties (*Datha Thila*) forbid (1) the taking of life ; (2) the taking of what is not offered to them ; (3) sexual intercourse ; (4) the saying of that which is not true ; (5) the use of intoxicating drinks ; (6) the partaking of solid food after midday ; (7) attendance upon dancing, singing, musical festivities, or dramatic performances ; (8) the adorning of the body with flowers, and the use of perfumes or unguents ; (9) the use of seats over the prescribed height of one and a half cubits ; and (10) the receiving of gold or silver. These vows must be taken by every candidate before he can be admitted to the priesthood. All ten precepts should be observed even by the laity on the four ceremonial days (*Ubôksaung*) occurring in each lunar month, and also throughout the whole of the three months of Lent (*Wa*) in each year—from the full moon

for the *Dunlaba-nga-ba* or five things difficult of attainment are (1) being a Buddha, (2) hearing the law, (3) becoming a priest, (4) becoming a righteous man, and (5) becoming a human being.

## THE THREE "APPEARANCES"

in June or July to the full moon in September or October.

The mere observance of all the five precepts by the layman cannot immediately raise him, on the cessation of his existence as a man, beyond the sphere of the six lower celestial regions occupied by the spirits (*Nat*) and full of sensual pleasures and enjoyments. More illustrious merit is obtainable by the further influence of the five great acts of renunciation (*Sungyingyi-nga-ba*) through surrendering one's children, property, life, wife, and whole individuality for the purpose of searching more eagerly after truth and perfect rest. Promotion from spirit-land to the blissful sixteen seats of the *Brahma* and the four states of immateriality is obtainable only through intellectual efforts such as the thorough comprehension of the three principles or "appearances"—(*Aneissa*, *Dôkka*, *Anatta*; *Letkaná-thôn-ba* or impermanence, misery, and unreality)—and the exercise of profound meditation regarding truth. The studies of the five parts of meditation and contemplation (*Zan*) include the careful examination of no less than six hundred objects connected with the regions of materiality (*Rupa*) and of immateriality (*Arupa*). Demerit by non-observance of these duties, however, plunges the Buddhist into one or other of the depths of hell, there to undergo punishment commensurate with the amount of the minus balance of his personal account, until he may be born again in the condition of man after due expiation of his misdeeds. Whenever the evil influence created by the demerit becomes exhausted the punishment ceases, and the miserable tortured sinner ascends again from the depths of the earth to the abode of man in order to acquire the merit that will translate him to the country of the *Nat*. The same laws apply to women as to men. From the religious point of view there is no difference between the sexes, except that a Buddha must be born a man. A woman invariably prays that she may become a man in her next relegation to this world.

The five great precepts (*Pyinsa Thila*) are always repeated when Burmans proceed to the pagoda for religious exercise, and reference is also made to the

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

“three precious gems” of Buddhism—(*Payá, Tará, Thingá; Yadaná-thón-ba*)—the Buddha, the Law, and the Assembly of the Religious. It is to these that the Burmese Buddhist looks for an escape from the horrible potentialities to which he is exposed in this whirlpool of existence. As previously remarked, the Burman does not pray to Gaudama, the Buddha, who has by the attainment of *Neikban* absolutely ceased to exert any direct or indirect personal influence on human life save through the enunciation he left behind him of the law of existence and the path of truth. Nor does he pray to either of the two remaining gems. He merely venerates the Law and the Assembly of the Religious; but he neither prays to them nor worships them.

There is indeed no such thing as prayer at all in Buddhism. When Burmese men and women—most of them old, it may be remarked, and evidently anxious to secure a balance on the proper side of life’s account—are seen kneeling reverently before a pagoda or other holy shrine and making respectful obeisance, with perhaps a sacred flower or a votive offering clasped between the palms of their hands, and more especially when one hears them repeating what sounds extremely like invocations to the deity, it might naturally be supposed that they are engaged in prayer. Of course, not all of those seen will be equally devout and absorbed in meditation. While some are earnest, others will be looking around and performing their religious duties as mechanically as the ordinary British church-going Pharisee. But prayer in the form of an invocation to a Supreme Being, has no meaning to the Buddhist. What might be mistaken for prayer on his part is what he considers meditation, aided by the repetition of stereotyped precepts and formulae used for the purpose of fixing his thoughts on the contemplation of the aforesaid “three precious gems.”

The Assembly (*Thingá*), as the Buddhist priesthood is called, is no more homogeneous than the Church of England. Previous to each of the three great councils of 543 B.C., 443 B.C., and 244 B.C., even although the first of these was only held sixty-one days after

## HIGH CHURCH AND LOW CHURCH

Gaudama's death, dissensions had already occurred in the Assembly, for the removal of the causes of which the latter was in each case called.

Again, later on, when Burmese Buddhism had for centuries firmly established itself as an independent branch of that religion, similar dissensions begun in Pagán were continued in Ava, where the rival schools of *Tôngaing* and *Yôngaing*, roughly corresponding to High Church and Low Church, each asserted the orthodoxy of their respective manner of celebrating the religious observances. Hence Bodaw Payá, the son of Alaung Payá, who reigned from 1781 to 1819 and transferred the capital from Ava to Amárapura, considered it advisable, as head of the Church—for the headship of both Church and State was combined in the royal person of the King—to convoke a meeting of the Assembly in order to discuss the religious variances in public. The end of this fourth council was that the King sided with the *Yôngaing* or Low Church party, and caused the leader of those holding opinions differing from his own to be stripped of the yellow priestly robe (*Thingan*) and thrust out from the Assembly.

During the last seventy years, however, dissensions of a similar nature have again made their appearance, causing the Assembly to be divided into a High Church party and a Low Church party. These two parties have various names in different parts of the country, but they are best known respectively as the *Sulagandi*, or *Dwaya* (*lit.* "a hole or aperture"), and the *Mahagandi*, or *Kan* (*lit.* "a deed, an action"). Each sect differs slightly from the other both in doctrine and in dress. The *Sulagandi* or High Church party are more careful and strict in their religious observances and in their adherence to all that is laid down in the ritual, while they also maintain that man is endowed with free will in accepting the knowledge of the external world conveyed to him through the conscious operation of the organs of sense, i.e. through the holes or apertures forming the organs of sense. The *Mahagandi* or Low Church party, on the other hand, are less rigid and exact in the performance of the priestly rites, while they deny that there exists such a thing as



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free will, but hold that everything is brought about by *Kan*, the secret influence of an action on one's future destiny. The former maintain that the merit of a good deed (*Kñtho*) depends on the intention of the doer, whereas the latter argue that the influence (*Kan*) of any good deed *per se* becomes potent for good irrespective of the intention of the doer.

To smooth away these dissensions the late King Mindôn (1853-78) convoked another Assembly at Mandalay, and added to his many grandiloquent titles that of "Convener of the fifth Buddhist Synod." This Council practically came to nothing. Though the King sided with the *Kan* or Low Church party, yet his Chief Queen was in favour of the *Dwaya*; and like a prudent husband, knowing the value of domestic peace, the head of Burmese Buddhism just allowed matters to go on as they were.

The differences between *Sulagandi* and *Mahagandi* are in reality comparatively slight and trivial, so far as the religious philosophy itself and its influence on the daily life of the people are concerned. When a layman of the High Church party has built and endowed a monastery (*Kyaung*), and the priest living there has died, the founder (*Kyaungtagá*) very naturally objects if a monk (*Pôngyi*) of the Low Church party enters and takes possession of it. Sometimes such things cause heartburnings and bickerings in the villages, but on the whole the differences are far more nominal than real. In proof of this the statement may be made that it is not easy to find any one in a jungle village who can explain what differences really exist between the doctrines of the two parties. The village monks always belong to one or the other rival schools, and the villagers accordingly consider themselves adherents of the same sect. Beyond the fact that the *Sulagandi* are stricter in the performance of religious duties and in the observance of ritual and rubric than the *Mahagandi*, the people in general really know little and care less.

Owing to the fact that Burmese Buddhism is in reality but a superimposed layer upon a hidden, though more or less perceptible, foundation of belief in the efficacy of

## ANIMISTIC TRACES

spirit worship, it is difficult to estimate correctly the influence that the purely Buddhistic religious philosophy exerts on the national character and on the daily life of the people.

If one examines any of the thousands of bell-shaped pagodas or stupas with which the whole of Burma is studded, it will be found that such monuments have at their core a central relic chamber and that they maintain their solidity not only from the bricks of which they are built, but also from the mortar used in cementing these together, the result being a structure capable, with due care and attention, of lasting for centuries.

And it is very much the same with the religious belief of the Burman. He professes himself to be a Buddhist; and he would indignantly repel any insinuation that he is perhaps not really a Buddhist, but more or less of a spirit worshipper. But without this intermingling of animistic worship it is highly improbable that Buddhism would have maintained itself so long as the avowed national religion of Burma. In youth and manhood the Burman goes frequently to the pagoda on the sacred seventh day (*Uböksaung Ne*) indicated by each phase of the moon, and as old age approaches he becomes quite regular in attendance. He then even goes every evening about twilight to worship at some sacred place. Here he lights up tiny candles or decorates a favourite shrine with flowers or little flaglets in honour of the revered memory of the omniscient Gaudama; and here he makes small offerings of fruits or of boiled rice for the benefit of the poor, and for the satisfaction of the carnal appetites of those who are now expiating their demerits in the form of crows, or dogs and like animals. Here, too, in an attitude of lowly obeisance, he devoutly repeats the religious precepts and formulæ learned as a small boy at the monastery, and declaims the veneration and profound respect with which he adores the "three precious gems" of the Buddhist philosophy.

These are the bricks with which his spiritual pagoda is built up within the recesses of his heart, but they are cemented together and strengthened by the mortar consisting of a more or less definitely *conscious* belief in the

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

power of good and evil spirits to influence his daily life, his health, his happiness, and his future state. And deeper still, forming the very core of this religious edifice, there rests the original animistic belief serving as the actual basis upon which the whole philosophic structure ultimately rests.

This intermingling of superstition with Buddhism is of course more distinctly noticeable among the rural population than in the towns. In these latter, indeed, and more particularly in Rangoon, contact with Christians, Jews, Hindus, Mohammedans, Parsis, and Taoists unfortunately seems to be gradually weakening the hold of any religion upon the Burmese. The vast majority of those who come to venerate the three precious gems at the foot of the world-famed Shwe Dagôn Pagoda are country people, and not residents in Rangoon. Throughout the country at large, however, the Burman still endeavours to propitiate the spirits of the earth and the air, the dryads of the forests, etc., by offerings and various little attentions. He venerates the Buddha, he performs the Law, and he respects the Assembly; but along with this there are simultaneous veneration and propitiation of the spirits (*Nat*), which almost amount to worship. Even in Pagán, for centuries the centre of Burmese Buddhism, an ancient *Nat* temple still exists as a survival of the older cult.

Three main causes have led to this. These are, firstly, the primitive spirit worship which formed a good soil for the sowing of Buddhism, with its six lower celestial regions forming the abode of the *Nat*; secondly, the tolerance of the Buddhistic religion; and thirdly, the temperament and the natural characteristics of the Burmese themselves. Bearing this in mind, it will readily be understood that true Buddhism really has now but little effect on the daily life of the Burmese. As the work of education progresses throughout the province, it seems probable that the hold which this cold and cynical religious philosophy has over the heads and the hearts of the more intelligent classes will gradually become weaker and weaker.

Even the slight hold that true Buddhism now has on

## BUDDHIST NUNS

the daily life of the people is mainly due to the fact of education throughout all the rural tracts resting solely with the monks (*Pôngyi*) dwelling in the monastery to be seen at the outskirts of each little village. Every boy must attend a monastery. Here he learns by heart the various religious precepts binding upon the laity, and wears the yellow robe; and here he is also taught to read, to write, and to work out simple problems in arithmetic. Hence, respect for his teachers and veneration for the Assembly in general are infused into the young male Burman during his early and most impressionable years. As the monastic rules forbid a *Pôngyi* to look upon the face of any female, the girls have little or no education, for the nuns (*Méthilayin*) are themselves illiterate, and therefore incapable of imparting elementary instruction to girls. Though Buddhism acknowledges that women have souls, yet it regards them as distinctly inferior to men; and no provision is made by it for the education of girls. This in itself now contains a danger which Buddhism will have to encounter, for in Burma the girls and women are, as a rule, gifted with greater ability and quicker wits than the boys and the men; and the religious philosophy which forbids the recognized teachers of religion to look upon the face of a woman, or to impart instruction to girls, must now, in these days of progress in Burma, either voluntarily submit itself to radical changes of a most sweeping sort or else undergo a process of gradual deterioration and decay through the influence of lay schools and the educational emancipation of women.

In all the large towns of Burma Government schools are maintained, in which education is imparted according to Western methods and ideas, and there are but few of the smaller towns without lay schools as well as monasteries. Even in many of the larger villages a lay school may here and there be found. These are all nuclei of a progress that is bound in time to affect the religious, the political, and the social influence which the yellow-robed monks of Buddhism still have over the people. This monastic influence is considerably greater than the religious power exerted by Buddhism over the Burmese,



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

but the gradual advance of civilization in Burma must in course of time sap the political and social power of the monks, and must thereby inevitably tend to lessen the influence which Buddhism still retains over the daily life of the Burman.

## Chapter V

### THE BUDDHIST PRIESTHOOD AND RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES <sup>1</sup>

THE yellow-robed monks (*Rahan*) or priests (*Pôngyi*) of Buddhism in Burma stand out in bold relief from the rest of the population. Like the lilies of the field, they toil not neither do they spin; and if they are not also arrayed like one of these, at any rate they can claim an advantage over the lilies in that they do not require to produce their own raiment. Like the food upon which they subsist, the robes worn by the monks are the gift of pious almsgivers. Clad in picturesque yellow robe the Buddhist monk is a daily object lesson in humility and in withdrawal from the pomp and vanities of this life; for yellow is to the Burman a symbol of mourning, affliction, sorrow, and humility.

These monks or priests were originally made known to Europe by the Portuguese under the name of "*Talapains*," probably a corruption of "*Talapat*" (or *Tarapat* in Burmese), the name of the large fan made of the leaf of the Talipat palm (*Borassus flabelliformis*), with which

<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, there are neither *priests*, nor *monks*, nor *monasteries* in Burma. Though Burmese Buddhism is an organized religion in having an archbishop, bishops, and heads of religious houses, yet there are no *priests* having the care of souls, nor are there *monks* belonging to any priestly fraternity. The correct term for any member of the Assembly would be simply the "religious"; and in so far as he voluntarily withdraws himself from worldly affairs and the society of men other than those also "religious," he may be called a "recluse." Wherever the word *priest* is here used it is intended to mean the *Pôngyi* or "great glory," the chief "religious" in any religious abode, while the term *monk* means any other *Rahan* or "perfect one" residing in a religious building. In the same way the word *monastery* is just as laxly applied to any edifice where any of these "religious" reside.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

every priest shades his eyes in order to prevent pious meditations being interfered with by beholding the face of a woman when he walks abroad to collect alms or for any other purpose. In Burma, however, they are termed *Pôngyi*, "the great glory," or *Rahan*, "the perfect one."

Until the annexation of Upper Burma on January 1, 1886, the King of Ava was the head of the Buddhist Church in Burma. As the archbishop (*Tháthanábaing*, or "possessor of discipline, instruction") likewise resided in or near the capital, it naturally followed that for centuries Upper Burma, and the metropolis in particular, has been the great stronghold of Burmese Buddhism and the acknowledged fountain head of sanctity and learning. On the accession of any king to the throne of Ava it was customary for him to bestow the title of archbishop on the priest in whose monastery he had received his instruction as a boy. In this case the nominee of the late King simply reverted again to his previous status as a *Pôngyi* or *Rahan*.

The archbishop formerly exerted much greater power than he was allowed to possess after the accession of King Mindôn to the throne of Ava in 1853. Under this monarch, who was not inclined to brook any interference with his political power,—and the priesthood or "Assembly" had undoubtedly considerable influence among the people,—the authority of the *Tháthanábaing* was much more nominal than real. Formerly his jurisdiction extended to all the territories under the sway of the King of Burma, and he sent emissaries to examine and report on the state of discipline, to enforce rigid obedience regarding the instructions to priests, and to expel from the Assembly those who were found to be unduly lax in the performance of their vows. During the latter days of the court of Ava, however, the archbishop was shorn of much of his former power, though otherwise treated with the most illustrious and respectful attention. The monastery in which he lived along with two or three monks was more richly decorated than any of the other monasteries, being covered both outside and inside with gold leaf, as well as having its teak woodwork richly carved. When, borne on a gilded litter and

## THE BUDDHIST ARCHBISHOP

accompanied by a large escort of priests and laymen, he visited the palace on certain fixed occasions for such special purposes as to remind the King of the Ten Laws (*Yazadán*), the practice of which is incumbent on a king,<sup>1</sup> the latter quitted his elevated seat or dais and seated himself almost but not quite on a level with his officers of state and courtiers, while the archbishop took the superior place vacated by his royal disciple. Behind these outward signs of reverential deference, however, there remained but little power. The *Tháthanábaing* was no longer backed by the temporal power, or even officially permitted to despatch his emissaries to supervise the manner in which the priests performed the duties they had vowed to observe when ordained, or how they attended to the religious education of the young boys sent to their monasteries to receive instruction. As there was thus no sort of central and supreme administration, laxity has crept into the religious order; and the Assembly can no longer be considered the same austere, ascetic body of voluntary mendicants as it was at the time when Gaudama collected his *Beikku* or disciples around him, or as it continued down even to very recent times. But all questions involving points of difference among priests were usually referred to Mandalay for the decision of the archbishop. Thus, even during the last days of the Court of Ava, the religious body still possessed considerable political and social influence throughout Upper Burma. Accordingly, as head of the Assembly, the *Tháthanábaing* was in 1886 treated with great consideration by the Government of India. On the strength of assurances given by the latter not to interfere with the religion of the country the archbishop rendered good political service during the troublous years immediately following the annexation, by exhorting the Assembly to maintain a passive attitude and by endeavouring to restrain the monks from what would

<sup>1</sup> These Ten Laws are—(1) not to let anger overcome him; (2) to be upright and honest; (3) not to be oppressive; (4) to be patient; (5) to bestow alms freely; (6) to feed the poor; (7) to be gentle; (8) to practise self-denial; (9) not to mix with the people; and (10) to be pious and observant of religious ceremonies.



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

have been a very natural desire to use their religious influence in order to stir up the feelings of the population against the British, who had dethroned their monarch and annexed their country. His services in this respect have often been depreciated by the remark that after all they were not of much use: but if he had been openly hostile, or had played false, the pacification of Upper Burma might have cost Britain far more of her best fighting blood, as well as of treasure and time, than actually was the case between 1885 and 1890. And there can be no doubt that he had more than once strong temptations to adopt the latter course.

The *Tháthanábaing* died at Mandalay in January, 1895; but up to date no successor to the archiepiscopal office has been recognized by Government. An election was made by an assembly of local priests, but as it was not unanimous Government declined to acknowledge it. The choice fell on the Pakhan Sadaw, or bishop of Pakhan, who is accordingly venerated as the archbishop by the priesthood and the people.

The provincial head among the priests, corresponding to a bishop in the Anglican Church, is the "district ruler" (*Gaing Ôk*) or "great teacher" (*Sayádarw, Sadárw*), who has jurisdiction over all the monasteries throughout the towns, villages, and hamlets in his district. He settles the little squabbles that occur from time to time in his diocese, and passes judgement on probationers, monks, or priests accused of breach of duty. With the present lack of archiepiscopal supervision, sometimes even a bishop is less unconcerned about mundane affairs than he should be. A *Sadárw* whom I was in the habit of visiting in Mandalay in 1891 used frequently to show me with great pride a very highly prized letter received by him from Sir Frederick Roberts, whom he always prophetically called "Lād Rabbat." And (alas for the decadence in the observance of priestly instructions!), he even showed it to and shook hands with my wife, whom, with his permission, I had taken to see him and his monastery.

The *Pôngyi* or "great glory" is the head of each monastery (*Kyaung*), and therefore corresponds with an

## THE "RELIGIOUS" COMMUNITY

abbot or superior. There are upwards of twenty-five thousand *Pôngyi* and monks throughout Burma, while the total number of males connected with the religious body is over a hundred and twelve thousand. He may live here along with other monks (*Rahan* or "perfect ones") like himself, or else he may share the monastery only with probationers and acolytes. The sole difference between the *Pôngyi* and the *Rahan* is that the former happens to be the head of the monastery: but both are *Rahan*. When an elder *Pôngyi* speaks to a younger one he uses the term *Awathaw*, while the latter respectfully addresses his senior as *Bande*.

Next below the *Rahan* in the religious order ranks the *Upazin*, or probationer, who cannot be ordained or admitted into the Assembly till he has reached his twentieth year. Previous to attaining the probationary position of an *Upazin* the young ascetic must have lived for some time as an acolyte.

The acolytes bear names (*Shin*, "lord" or "master"; *Maunggyi* or *Koyin*, "elder brother") indicative of the respect entertained by lay adults for even a small boy who temporarily dons a yellow robe while an inmate of the monastery. It is incumbent on every male Burman to spend not less than seven days in a monastery; but in order to perform this duty properly, and to get something like the Burmese equivalent of the hall mark of a pass degree at a University, the *Koyin* ought to spend at least the whole of the three months constituting one lent (*Wa*, from June or July to September or October) in practising the austerities of the religious order, even although he may have no intention of aspiring to become a probationer and later on a monk. If he desire to become a candidate for the priesthood he wears a cord round his neck previous to assuming the robe proper to the novitiate.

Formerly it was the almost universal custom throughout Burma, as also in Siam, to make boys enter the monastery about the age of puberty, and to keep them there for a year or two in order to give them a fuller knowledge of the law and place them in the best of positions for acquiring the merit requisite for

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

future existences. This event, called *Shinpyu*, is still one of the great epochs in the life of a Burman (see page 147).

According to the census of 1891, there were no fewer than 15,371 monasteries throughout Burma, more than two-thirds of which were in Upper Burma. This was at the rate of one for every ninety-three houses, and averaged more than two for each village and town. Within these monasteries there were 25,507 monks constituting the Assembly (*Thinga*) in Burma, 20,771 probationers, and 45,369 acolytes. Of the last named, rather more than one-half were then under fifteen years of age. Considerably more than one half of the priests are to be found in Lower Burma, while the majority of the probationers and acolytes are to be met with in Upper Burma. This is, however, easily explainable, partly on account of the much larger population of Lower Burma, and partly from the fact of Mandalay being the centre of Buddhistic learning throughout Burma. But whereas it is comparatively rare to find more than one probationer in a monastery in Lower Burma, it is no uncommon thing to find several in the larger monasteries of Upper Burma.

These ninety-thousand yellow-robed men, lads, and boys constitute two and a half per cent. of the whole of the Buddhist male population in Burma. Besides these, there is the army of small boys (*Kyaung Thagale*, "small sons of a monastery"; or *Tabyi*, "scholars, disciples") sent at about eight to ten years of age to be taught reading, writing, elementary arithmetic, and some of the easier formulae for repetition during religious meditation. Fortunately for these youngsters, the multiplication table (*Kogyauing*) only goes up the length of the sacred numbers nine times nine. In addressing any ordinary layman the priest uses the term "great disciple" (*Tabyidaw*); but if the latter has founded a monastery (*Kyaung*), or built a pagoda (*Payá*), or performed some other work of great religious merit, then he is addressed as *Kyaungtagá*, *Payátágá*, etc. Similarly, when a layman communicates with any priest, either in writing or in conversation, he addresses him as "Lord" (*Payá*),

## LAY BRETHERN AND NUNS

and speaks of himself as "your lordship's disciple" (*Payá Tabyidaw*).

In addition to the recognized members of the Assembly (*Thingá*), lay brethren (*Pothudaw*) are also to be found, who lead a life of poverty and celibacy without aspiring to religious eminence. Vestiges of the female order of *Rahan* instituted by Gaudama, through the admission into the Assembly of his aunt and foster mother, together with 500 maidens of high birth, are also still to be found in the nuns (*Méthilayin*). They might, however, be more correctly called lay sisters. They wear robes of coarse white cotton or pale buff, and are usually middle-aged or old women, who walk quietly along, often with the aid of a stick, holding in their hands a rosary of black wooden beads upon which they count their daily tale of religious formulæ. Among these nuns one seldom sees any female who could be called a girl or a young woman, or could be thought good-looking. They enjoy little or none of the esteem and veneration paid to monks. There can be no doubt, however, that if they had been charged by the Law with the duty of giving to little girls elementary instruction similar to that inculcated into small boys at all the monasteries, they would have been entitled to, and would probably have enjoyed, a considerably higher position in the public estimation.

The religious community which may be found in a typical monastery consists of the head monk (*Pôngyi*), one or more other monks (*Rahan*), one or more probationers (*Upazin*), and perhaps several lads serving temporarily as acolytes (*Shin* or *Koyin*)—leaving out of consideration, of course, the "disciples" (*Tabyi*) or small boys undergoing instruction and discipline, who are often the most charmingly mischievous and roguish little urchins imaginable.

The *Pôngyi* or superior may either be appointed to the monastery by the founder (*Kyaungtagá*) or else he may be elected by the monks. When a *Pôngyi* dies in any small monastery near a jungle village, any other *Rahan* may take possession without being invited to do so by the founder. It corresponds to a deodand. Once dedicated to the Assembly, it can be taken possession of by



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

any member of that religious body. Should the villagers object to this procedure on the part of a monk, then they need not embrace the opportunity he gives them of performing a work of religious merit, but may allow the mendicant friar to starve in place of living, as most *Pôngyi* and *Rahan* do, on the Burmese equivalent to the fat of the land.

Within his monastery the *Pôngyi* or *Sayá* ("teacher") has uncontrolled sway. He supervises the performances of all ceremonies, enforces obedience to the rules of the order, sees that the ten precepts or religious duties of a monk (*Theidin*, *Thila*) are not transgressed or circumvented, and maintains order and good feeling among all the inmates of the monastery.

For the instruction of probationers and of all members of the Assembly the multifarious duties and religious observances prescribed are contained in a manual of Buddhist priests (*Patimauk*), the "supreme beatitude" or "complete enfranchisement." The "basket" (*Bidagat*) of the Buddhist scriptures is divided into three great divisions—instructions (*Thut*) for the laity, instructions (*Wini*) for the Assembly, and instructions (*Abidamma*) for the *Nat* and *Brama* respectively abiding in the six lower and the twenty higher celestial regions. The priestly instructions are again subdivided into five sections, of which the first two (*Paraziga* and *Pazeik*) form a code of ordinances relating to priestly crimes and misdemeanours, and the third and fourth (*Mahawa* and *Sulawa*) contain rules and regulations for ordination and miscellaneous ceremonies, while the fifth (*Pariwa*) is a recapitulation of the four previous sections.

These instructions are all collected and codified in the manual for monks (*Patimauk*), and it is prescribed that the reading of this, or at any rate of parts of it, shall take place by a certain number of the Assembly on all holy days and festivals in a chapel (*Thein*) specially set apart for the performance of religious rites, such as ordination, excommunication, etc. The *Patimauk* is to the *Rahan* very much what his breviary is to the Roman Catholic priest; and many of the monks can repeat by heart the whole of the contents of their manual.

## THE FOUR CARDINAL SINS

The sins of commission or omission which are detailed in it number no less than 227, many of which are of the most childish, trivial, and ludicrous nature. For these, however, the punishments incurred are also childishly light. They include such acts of penance as walking up and down in front of the monastery for a certain time during the heat of the day, and carrying pots of water or basketsful of earth a certain distance. Indeed, penance of any severe nature corporeally is entirely opposed to the whole essence and ideas of Burmese Buddhism. There is, however, a "duty chapel" (*Wutkyauung*), or a chapel of penance, of a temporary or permanent nature attached to the monastery for the use of monks in which the major works of penance are usually performed during a month (*Tabodwe*) corresponding more or less with February.

The 227 sins of the priesthood detailed in the *Pati-mauk* are divided into seven main sections, of which only the first two (*Paraziga* and *Pazeik* or *Thingadizeik*) are of any real importance. The *Paraziga* enumerates the four unpardonable sins, which, if committed by any monk, must be punished by permanent expulsion from the Assembly. These include killing or directly causing death, theft, fornication, and a vainglorious false profession of having attained the status of a *Rahat*. On the day of admission into the Assembly the probationer is duly warned of these sins during the recital of the ordination service (*Kammawá*). No remission is possible if any one of these four cardinal sins be committed. At once the culprit is "deposed from religious duties," and ceases to have any longer a place in the Assembly. All other sins may be expiated by confession and penance, but not any one of those four. Any backsliding with regard to continence is visited by the laity, themselves not exactly rigid moralists, with extreme severity. The fallen and disgraced priest is ejected from his monastery, stripped of his yellow robe and driven forth from the village precincts, while his paramour becomes an equally vile object and an outcast. In Upper Burma, until the annexation, priests thus guilty of incontinence were sometimes publicly punished, even the death penalty being occasionally exacted.

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The second section (*Thingadizeik*) of the *Patimauk* comprises the other thirteen major sins, which, like all the remaining 210 minor sins, may be atoned for by confession and penance. Of these thirteen major sins the first five deal with personal cleanliness and uncleanness, great modesty in public, confession of failings, avoiding of sin, and the shunning of temptations; while the remaining eight consist of such offences as intending to erect a monastery without the aid of a lay founder (*Kyaungtagá*), placing the foundations of a monastery in any spot where they are likely to destroy many insects, bringing false charges of incontinence, persisting or assisting in sowing discord among the monks, continuing despite admonitions to transgress the rules in minor matters, and scandalous behaviour such as giving laymen false accounts of what goes on in the monastery.

The regulations binding upon monks with regard to coming in contact with the fair sex are strict and circumstantial. They may neither look upon the face of a woman, nor accept anything from her hands, nor travel in the same boat or cart, nor remain even temporarily under the same roof save when surrounded by some of the younger inmates of their monastery. When men and women meet at the monastery or the rest-house (*Zayát*) to hear portions of the law read on each holy seventh day, the monks protect their eyes with their large fans in the same way as they do when walking abroad, lest their gaze rest on the face of a woman. Even should a priest's mother fall into a ditch he is forbidden to stretch forth his hand to pull her out; the most he can do is to offer her the end of his robe or a stick, and even in doing this he is ordered to imagine that he is only pulling out a log of wood.

Confession (*Pawáyaná*) among priests and probationers exists, it is true, though it is but little indulged in save by monks of the strictest school, and by probationers in the perfervid zeal displayed previous to the ordination ceremonial. Among the latter it is sometimes even resorted to twice a day. But it is no longer the conscientious and austere practice which it was intended to be when the third great Council of the Assembly drew up the *Bidagat*

## CONFESSION AND PENANCE

in the time of King Asoka (243 B.C.). The prescriptions of the second section of these Buddhistic scriptures (*Wini*) originally ordained that when any *Rahan* had been guilty of violating, either by commission or omission, any of the 227 rules contained in the *Patimauk*, he was to go to his *Pôngyi* and, kneeling before him, confess the fault. On occasions when the monks were assembled in the chapel (*Thein*) set apart for certain religious ceremonies, the confession was to be made there; and all sins, great or small, were to be unreservedly confessed without concealment or extenuation. The *Pôngyi* was thereupon to impose a penance, prescribing the number of times during the ensuing night that portions of the sacred writings and pious formulæ were to be repeated, and the penitent was to promise to refrain from transgressing the rules in future.<sup>1</sup>

No man can simultaneously belong both to the laity (*Lawka*) and to the Assembly (*Thinga*). He who is not of the latter must be of the former. The monk has, however, this advantage over the layman that, whereas admission to the Assembly always entails a certain amount of delay and ceremonial, the *Pôngyi* or *Rahan* may at once re-enter the world by simply doffing his yellow robe and quitting the monastery. The rule of the Romish Church, once a priest always a priest, does

<sup>1</sup> The manner in which confession is now made has thus been described by the late Bishop Bigandet (*Life of Gaudama*, 1880, vol. ii. p. 284):—

“This extraordinary practice is observed now, one would say, *pro formâ*. The penitent approaches his superior, kneels down before him, and, having his hands raised to his forehead, says: ‘Venerable superior, I do confess here all the sins that I may be guilty of, and beg pardon for the same.’ He enters upon no detailed enumeration of his trespasses, nor does he specify anything respecting their nature and the circumstances attending them. The superior remains satisfied by telling him: ‘Well, take care lest you break the regulations of your profession; thenceforward endeavour to observe them with fidelity.’ He dismisses him without inflicting any penance on him. Thus an institution, so well calculated to put a restraint and a check upon human passions, so well fitted to prevent man from occasionally breaking commands given to him, or at least from slipping into the dangerous habit of doing it, is now, by the want of fervour and energy in the hands of that body, reduced to be no more than an useless and ridiculous ceremony, a mere shadow of what is actually prescribed by the *Wini*.”



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

not obtain in the Buddhist *Thinga*. Abbot, monk, probationer, and acolyte can each of them cast aside his beggar's robe and "depart as a man" (*Lutwet*) by merely leaving the monastery and returning to mix with the world. A monk can even do this and afterwards enter again into the Assembly by undergoing the ordination ceremony. Most monks rejoin the world for a time; those who do not are held in special reverence and respect. Hence, when the impulse towards any of the four unpardonable sins of the priesthood begins to make itself felt as uncontrollable, the monk can obviate the shame, disgrace, and penalties that would otherwise unfailingly await him by quitting the irksome restraints of the monastery and returning to the world of men. So long, however, as he remains one of the Assembly he is vowed to poverty; he can possess no property;<sup>1</sup> he subsists on unsolicited alms collected during each morning's progress from door to door; he may not accept or even touch gifts of gold, silver, or precious stones; he dresses in a robe theoretically or nominally consisting of rags and dyed in the yellow colour indicative of sorrow and humility; and he dedicates himself to a life of chastity, self-denial, and self-effacement. Poverty, humility, continence, and self-denial are, indeed, the four cardinal virtues embodied in the ten religious duties of the priesthood (*Datha Thila*) already enumerated. His deportment should always be, though in practice it is not, such as to indicate humility and utter indifference to all worldly things; for it is only thus that he can exhibit the unconcern he should feel towards the showy and shadowy unrealities of this life of transitoriness and unsubstantiality. Hence downcast eyes and lowly gait habitually mark the progress of a procession of priests and monks.

<sup>1</sup> One does occasionally come across cases in which priests own property, but they are very rare indeed. They are a distinct infringement of the religious law and a violation of the vow of poverty. I have now, however, before me a petition in which a priest in the Prome district asked me in 1896 for a free grant of thirty teak trees growing upon land owned by him, and for which he regularly paid the Government land-revenue demand.

## THE WAYFARING MONK

For the sake of humility it is prescribed that the monk shall shave off all the hair with which nature has adorned or protected his body; hence complete tonsure is applied to every member of the Assembly, as also to all the probationers and acolytes who wear the yellow robe of poverty. When making their morning rounds from door to door in order to collect alms of food from their lay supporters, or when walking abroad for other purposes, it is prescribed—a prescription now so little heeded as to be almost habitually disregarded—that they must go barefooted save in the case of sickness or infirmity, when plain light sandals of a certain size, shape, and colour may be worn. At all times when he goes abroad from his monastery the *Pôngyi* is allowed to bear in his hand, with the long handle resting on his forearm, a large palm-leaf fan (*Awana, Tarapat*) with which he can shade himself from the heat of the sun or screen from his vision the sight of improper or undesirable objects, such as the face of a woman. Nowadays, however, it is usual to meet the wayfaring priest shod in stout sandals and carrying, in place of the fan, one of the ordinary paper umbrellas of the country. But the *Pôngyi's* umbrella is never coloured with any sort of paint. The oil and varnish, with which the paper is manipulated to render it waterproof, make it diaphanous and yellow, the colour suitable for those wearing the robe of the Assembly. Disregarded though these and various similar prescriptions habitually are, yet it is only fair to say that many of the more conscientious of the *Pôngyi* do adhere with scrupulous attention to the performance of the religious injunctions. Such priests are usually to be found living a life of comparative seclusion near small villages situated in forest tracts, where cultivation is sparse and the cultivators themselves are not over well endowed with this world's goods.

In order to weaken and uproot the cleaving to existence and the hankering after worldly possessions, the practice of the following thirteen classes of austerities (*Dútin-se-thôn-ba*) is enjoined on all members of the Assembly: (1) To reject all garments save those of the meanest description; (2) to possess a robe consisting of only three

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

garments or pieces of cloth ; (3) to eat no food save that which has been given as alms and under certain restrictions ; (4) to halt before all houses alike when carrying round the almsbowl each morning for alms of food ; (5) to remain in one seat while eating until the repast be finished ; (6) to eat only from one vessel ; (7) to cease eating when certain prescribed things occur ; (8) to reside without the town or village ; (9) to reside at the foot of a tree ; (10) to reside in an open space ; (11) to reside in a cemetery ; (12) to take any seat that may be offered ; and (13) to refrain from lying down under any circumstances. Only two of the above thirteen austerities that may be practised by monks are prescribed for lay devotees indulging in temporary meditation in the precincts of a monastery ; eight may be observed by nuns, and twelve by probationers. Needless to say, all thirteen are never now carried out by even the most devout of *Pôngyi*.

The extremest austerities (*Mawneya*, "the remaining tired, fatigued") are so severe that during the time of a Buddh only one person can be found capable of practising them, as their performance involves the total eschewment of sleep. They are admittedly so trying that even the most enthusiastically religious monk cannot practise them for longer than twelve years. He who practises them for seven years is only entitled to be considered moderately zealous. The least enthusiastic member of the Assembly should, however, be able to perform them in their entirety for seven days, but the number who test their powers even in this least enthusiastic manner is probably limited in the narrowest degree. It is only by means of such austerities, and by the profoundest meditation and religious contemplation, that the monk can become replete with the six kinds of extraordinary wisdom<sup>1</sup> (*Abinyan*) and the eight kinds of extraordinary attainments (*Thammabat*), without which he can never attain the Buddhahood.

As the possession of property of any sort is essentially opposed to a life of self-denial and self-effacement, abso-

<sup>1</sup> These are (1) seeing like a *Nat*, (2) hearing like a *Nat*, (3) creative power, (4) knowledge of the thoughts of others, (5) freedom from passion, and (6) knowledge of our past states of existence.

## REQUISITES OF A MONK

lute poverty was one of the conditions imposed by the founder of Buddhism upon all his disciples who desired to enter the Assembly. Hence, immediately previous to the probationer being ordained and permitted to attain the status of a *Rahan*, some pious relative or friend supplies him with the eight articles required in the life of poverty upon which he is about to embark. These requisites include the three garments forming the priestly robe (*Thingan*, *Siwaran*), the girdle worn round the loins (*Kában*), the round mendicant's bowl (*Thabeik*, *Pattwa*) in which alms of food are received during each morning's round, a small hatchet or adze (*Pègók*), a needle (*At*), and a strainer (*Yesit*) for filtering his drinking-water. The first four are private requisites (*Atwin-le-ba*), while the remaining four are public requisites (*Apyin-le-ba*). In addition to these eight essentials the priestly fan (*Awana*, *Tarapat*), made with a somewhat S-shaped wooden handle, so as to be borne on the arm or rested on the shoulder, and other articles to a total number of sixty, may be owned by the monk, but they are all things of no intrinsic value, and not such as can possibly excite cupidity or encourage avarice.

The priestly robe (*Thingan*) consists of the three garments which alone the *Rahan* is permitted to own, viz. the loose skirt (*Thinbaing*), reaching from the waist to the heels, and fastened round the loins with a leathern girdle (*Kában*); the rectangular bodice (*Kówut*), covering the shoulders and breast, and extending down to below the knee; and the rectangular cloak (*Dugók*), which, folded many times, is thrown over the left shoulder as a cloak, or else may be used to sit upon in default of any proper seat. The *Thingan* is dyed yellow with the wood of the Jack-fruit tree (*Artocarpus integrifolia*), and ought, strictly as prescribed, to be made only of rags picked up here and there and sewn together into a robe. Though often entirely disregarded, this prescription is usually nominally observed by the yellow silk or cotton (and generally the former), which is received from a pious layman, being rent into squares and then stitched together. In one of the corners of each garment the *Pôngyi* makes three ceremonial holes (*Kapa beindu*), in



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the form of the mathematical abbreviation for "therefore" ( $\therefore$ ), to indicate the "three precious gems"—Buddha, the Law, and the Assembly. Every priestly formula begins with the expression of the profoundest veneration towards these three gems.

The presentation of new religious robes to a monk takes place in the sacred period (*Kadein*), falling about our month of October (*Tazaungmôn*). The cloth presented by the pious layman is received in the chapel (*Thein*) by a chapter consisting of at least five monks, and the question is then put asking who stands most in need of a robe. This formula is generally disregarded, the piece of silk or cotton being handed to the *Rahan* engaged in reading extracts from the sacred writings. After this the assembled monks, assisted by the laymen present, tear the cloth into squares, make the three garments forming the robe, and then dye it yellow, the whole operation being performed in the space of one day. The most highly esteemed kind of robe is one (*Matho-thingan*) woven entirely within the period of the night of the full moon of *Tazaungmôn*.

No *Rahan* is permitted by the rules of the order to ask for anything, but this injunction is nowadays very often ignored. Seldom a month went past without my receiving requests, either orally or in writing, from some *Pôngyi* asking for a free grant of some valuable kind of timber for making a large canoe, or for repairing his monastery, or such purpose. If it be pointed out to him that this is hardly the right thing for him to do, he merely goes off and gets a layman to petition for him. Even before accepting any gift or offering (*Dána, Akát*) respectfully made by a layman the ceremonial question must be put, "Is it lawful?" This ceremony is likewise observed in such petty matters as when food or water is brought to the *Pôngyi* by the acolytes acting as postulants on such occasions. Indeed, any infraction of this ceremonial is considered a sin requiring confession and expiation.

The monastery, where the monks and others who wear the yellow robe live under the supervision of the superior, was in the primitive days of Buddhism merely a hut or

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shed built beneath the shade and shelter of trees as a fitting abode for recluse mendicants. As time went on, laymen anxious to gain religious merit vied with each other in founding commodious monasteries of imposing dimensions, often with enormous posts of teak, richly carved both inside and outside, and sometimes adorned with gold and coarse precious stones. By far the finest monasteries that have been built within the last half century are those which were to be seen in Mandalay previous to the incendiary fires of April, 1892, which unfortunately destroyed many of the finest of them, thereby inflicting on Burmese art a loss which can never again be repaired. With the breaking up of the Court of Ava in 1885, and the death of the last recognized archbishop in 1895, Burmese Buddhism has in fact received the greatest shocks it has ever encountered, and it may now almost be said to have no longer any great central stronghold. Though duly recognized as the national religion, it is no longer specially supported or encouraged by the State.

In the monastery early rising is invariably the order of the day. On getting up about daylight the *Póngyi* cleans his mouth and rinses it with water, washes his face and hands, and repeats the prescribed formulæ. A sin is committed by any priest who does not "eat" a toothstick regularly on rising every day before dawn, and before performing the prescribed ablutions. He then sallies forth about half-past seven o'clock, accompanied by monks, probationers, acolytes, and a few of the small schoolboys, to make the daily round for alms of food, thus allowing pious laymen to have an opportunity of acquiring religious merit by giving a cupful of boiled rice, vegetables, and fruit to the mendicant followers of the Buddha. The rice or food thus bestowed is called *Sun*, and "the acceptance of food" (*Sunkanthe*) is the term used for the daily morning perambulation.

The monkish procession moves slowly along in Indian file, "following in the manner of priests" (*Thingazin*). On entering the village it is not lawful for any of the religious to look more than six feet (four cubits) in front of him, and the almsgiver should remain at a distance of

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three feet when handing the dole of food. When offerings of food or other gifts are brought by laymen to the monastery they should remain at a distance of six yards (twelve cubits) from the *Pôngyi*. As the procession passes each house in turn it halts momentarily to allow the inmates an opportunity of placing a cupful of rice in the almsbowl (*Thabeik*), supported in front of the chest by a band slung over the neck. As the almsgiver approaches, bearing the rice in a lacquered basket (*Sundaung*) made for this purpose, each monk raises the tin lid of the almsbowl (a modern innovation on its primitive simplicity), allows a cupful to fall into it, and then, without any word of thanks or of recognition, passes forward and halts again for a moment before the next house. Should this opportunity of acquiring religious merit not be taken advantage of by the laity, it is the plainest of plain hints to any *Pôngyi* that he is not approved of, and that he had better go elsewhere or doff his yellow robe and become once more a man. For the collection of the food of the remaining inmates of the monastery two of the "little sons of the *Kyaung*" bear a larger uncovered almsbowl of suitable dimensions, into which food is cast in similar manner. During the rainy season, in all places where it is impossible to collect the alms-rice by foot, the *Pôngyi* makes his daily round in a long canoe (*Laung*) similar to a racing skiff.

Having made the daily morning round of the village, or of his own particular quarter of the town near which the *Pôngyi* resides, the procession files back about half-past eight o'clock to the monastery to partake of the two meals per diem allowed to the *Rahan*. These are the morning repast (*Manetsun*), partaken of about 9 a.m., and the midday meal (*Nesun*), which must be eaten before the hour of noon.

In taking any meal the layman is said to "eat rice"; but when the *Pôngyi* eats, the term employed (*Sunpôn-pethe*) literally means that he "gives glory to the alms-food." It being not for his own gratification that he collects food, but merely to allow the laity to have the opportunity of acquiring merit by a good act, he is only a means towards the attainment of a desirable end. The

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alms of rice thus glorified are, however, in the vast majority of cases not the "olla podrida" borne back from the morning round. These are usually given to the small boys, and what remains after they have satisfied their appetites is thrown out to the pariah dogs with which the precincts of every monastery abound. Tit-bits are generally supplied by the supporter of the monastery (*Kyaungtagá*) and by other admirers, being carried to the monastery in a flat tray (*Byat*) protected by a pagoda-shaped cover (*Ôk*). Both tray and cover are made only of teakwood, and are lacquered in red. As a matter of fact, the self-denying yellow-robed Buddhist mendicant usually fares on the best of food, obtaining the finest of rice, selected condiments, the best of seasonable fruit, and dainty sweetmeats. He lives on the fat of the land, like the Friar of Order Grey in days of yore. I have seen a *Pôngyi* in Upper Burma breakfasting at 7 a.m. on rice with no fewer than eight dishes of curry and condiments, while two begging-bowls stood on stands near him for the sake of appearance.

Eating is accompanied by various ceremonies. The food to be partaken of is placed in a "duty bowl" (*Wutkwet*), which is brought forward by an acolyte to where the monks are seated. The latter are forbidden to eat their food with relish. They are simply to regard the process in precisely the same light as the stoker regards the coaling of an engine's furnace. Each mouthful taken is to be small, and it is to be thoroughly masticated and swallowed before another is conveyed by hand to the mouth. At the principal or forenoon meal he is to take no more food than simply suffices to carry him on until next morning's breakfast. To curb any tendency towards eating for eating's sake, he is directed to reflect on the injunction that food is to be taken to support life and not for the indulgence of carnal appetite. Strictly speaking, the diet should be only of rice, vegetables, and fruits: but now the use of fish and flesh has crept in, like various other laxities among the priestly observances. It is true that the taking of life is a sin, and one of the worst of demerits; but the partaking of flesh thus obtained does not constitute anything like



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an abetment of the sin. Gorging and gluttony are, however, not chargeable to the priesthood. The monks are as a rule men of spare habit and more or less ascetic appearance; and this would hardly be the case if, with their life of bodily inactivity, they were at the same time classifiable as hearty eaters. Although the partaking of solid food on any day after noon is prohibited, yet four articles may be used when necessary to ward off the pangs of hunger—oil, honey, molasses, and butter.

Abstinence from intoxicants of all sorts, the fifth of the acts forbidden in the ten precepts incumbent on a priest, is rigidly and scrupulously observed. But, as a refreshing light stimulant is not especially forbidden in the holy writings, the chewing of a quid consisting of a piece of betel-nut of the *Areca* palm and a leaf of the betel-vine (*Chavica betle*), flavoured with a tiny bit of tobacco and a touch of lime, is largely indulged in, and smoking also to a less extent. Like the feeding-bowl, the betel box (*Kônit*) is always brought forward by an acolyte, and placed near the *Pôngyi*. When not either sleeping, eating, or engaged in repeating religious precepts, priests and monks may be said to be almost always chewing betel.

The dangers of a life of ease of this sort have been duly foreseen and provided for, and the *Rahan* is enjoined to tell on the beads of his rosary, at least one hundred and twenty times a day, the four meditations concerning the requisites of food, clothing, abode, and medicine:—"I eat this rice to maintain life and not to satisfy appetite; I wear this robe to hide my nakedness, and not from vanity; I live in this monastery to be protected from wind and weather, and not from vanity; I drink medicine to keep my health, and enable me to perform my religious duties." They are likewise ordered to repeat daily the forty great subjects of meditation which are detailed in condensed form in the forty sections of the meditative rite (*Báwaná*).

When not otherwise engaged, the *Rahan* can bring his mind into a contemplative mood by muttering the formula, "*Aneissa, Dókka, Anatta: Letkaná-thôn-ba,*"

## THE "RELIGIOUS" LIFE

leading his thoughts to the contemplation of "transitoriness, misery, unsubstantiality: the three unrealities" of the present state of existence—and surely a wide and profitable field of contemplation for all, whether professed Buddhists or not.<sup>1</sup>

The monks usually give themselves up to this sort of contemplation in a recumbent position after the midday meal, and soon meditate aloud with the heavy, regular, nasal intonation of snoring.

The rosary (*Seikpadi*: "beads for counting") used by monks, nuns, and laymen consists of 108 beads, representing the nine times twelve different kinds of living animals subject to the eternal law enunciated by Gaudama. The beads may be made of bone, of horn, of the hardened gum of the *Zi* tree (*Zizyphus jujuba*), of cocoanut shell, or of imitations of precious stones.

Viewed as a whole, there can be no doubt that, even among such a lazy and indolent nation as the Burmese certainly are, the life of a priest or monk is regarded by many as rather an easy and pleasant way of getting a living. They are not priests or monks in the Anglican or the Roman Catholic sense of the word, nor are they ministers of religion in the Scottish meaning of the term. They read the law to the laity on the four holy days of each month. But they do not, either by word or deed, exhort the men and women of the world to renounce its sins and temptations or to cling steadfastly to the better life. They merely read mechanically the scriptures containing the enunciation of the eternal law, and leave it to the men and women to devote themselves to works of merit or demerit as they may choose. In addition to repeating the five great precepts for lay life, and the principal tenets of the religious philosophy of Gaudama, the *Pôngyi* recites periods in praise of the

<sup>1</sup> Should these fields of meditation not suffice, he may lead his thoughts into such special channels as the five greatest sins bringing immediate retribution—killing a father, killing a mother, killing a *Rahanda* about to become a Buddha, raising a blister on a Buddha (whose life *cannot* be taken), and making a schism in the Assembly; the five great deeds of renunciation—surrendering one's children, property, life, wife, and one's own volition; the three ways of putting away sin—momentarily, temporarily, and entirely; and many others.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

venerable Buddha and dwells feelingly on the great merit obtained by almsgiving. Sometimes, it is true, the *Pôngyi* is called to the chamber of the rich. In this case, however, it is not to soothe the suffering sinner and to lead his thoughts into a religious channel that he is called, but merely because—a remnant of the geniolatry underlying Burmese Buddhism—the sick man hopes that the repetition of the pious formulæ will perhaps help to drive away the evil spirits causing his sickness. Here the patter of the priest is but the incantation which, it is hoped, will break the spell cast by the spirits. When asked to go on such an errand of mercy, the *Pôngyi* will say, "If circumstances allow, I will come." If any definite promise were made, one of the priestly rules would be violated.

The *Pôngyi* does not assume the yellow robe for the purpose of visiting and preaching to the sick or ministering to the spiritual wants of those who are saddened with sorrow or suffering from sin. This cold, cynical, atheistic religious philosophy is essentially different from the sympathetic charity of Christianity, calling aloud, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are weary, and I will give you rest." The layman becomes a *Pôngyi* simply and solely in order to save himself in the next state of existence by the acquisition of religious merit during this life. He neither cares, nor pretends to care, about any other person's hereafter except his own. He has no cure of souls. He feels no call either to reason with those who disregard the law or to rebuke those who habitually transgress it. By dedicating himself to the religious life he simply intends to walk more thoroughly in the true path of the eternal law, so as to obviate the chance of his rebirth as a brute animal in the next state of existence. By becoming a religious mendicant the *Rahan* merely transforms himself into an object upon which the religiously inclined layman can shower alms and pile up for himself merit in the shape of good works (*Kútho*), whose good influence (*Kan*) will affect his own future destiny.

Works of religious merit are various in description, including everything that may be of use to the public or

## WORKS OF MERIT

to the priesthood; but naturally, from the influence of the latter, the works of merit are chiefly for the benefit of the religious. Whoever supplies the *Pareikkayá* or eight requisites for the ordination of a probationer becomes a *Rahantagá*, whoever founds a monastery becomes a *Kyaungtagá*, whoever builds a pagoda becomes a *Payátagá*, and so on. The highest honour in this respect is the title of *Pyissi-le-ba Dayaga* to him who provides the four gifts of a monastery, a priest's robes, food, and medicine. One of the most useful of these customs is that of building bridges across streams and rest-houses (*Zayát*, from *Sáyat*, "a place of eating") near monasteries, pagodas, or alongside of the permanent roads or paths. These rest-houses are all raised above the ground and consist of a long open verandah leading into a somewhat higher but low-roofed chamber either unwallled or else closed on three sides. Many of them, in Upper Burma especially, are beautifully ornamented with carved wood-work all round the eaves and along the roof-tree.

Apparently tree planting has never in Burma been considered a work of religious merit as it was in Northern India even as early as the time of Asoka, according to the inscriptions on his monoliths dating from the middle of the third century B.C. But this probably was because, except in the dry central zone of Upper Burma, all the rough clearances for cart tracks or paths supplying the place of roads ran, for the most part, through tree jungle giving ample shade and shelter. One form of religious merit particularly agreeable to the weary wayfarer is the erection here and there of wooden stands (*Yeózin*) upon which pots of drinking water are placed to quench the thirst of the passer-by.

Consecrated property is divided into three classes—that belonging to monks of a particular locality, that belonging to *Rahan* and laymen alike, and that belonging to a Buddha and *Rahan* alike.

It is unfortunate, however, that merit for himself is not obtainable by any one who carries out repairs to a monastery or rest-house. Whatever merit is thereby acquirable goes to the account of the original builder. Hence, if a son or daughter carry out repairs to an



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

edifice built by their father or mother, it would imply that the life account of the latter was lacking in merit. The consequence of this is that after the lifetime of the builders the monasteries or rest-houses are very often allowed to fall into disrepair, and to become ruins harbouring snakes and other noxious animals. Moreover, there is now a distinct tendency on the part of men accumulating savings to hoard or invest them in place of spending them in works of this sort. Under Burmese rule, to be known or suspected of having wealth meant oppression and squeezing; whereas under British rule the Burman knows now that what he has he holds without fear of receiving special attention from those set in authority over him, except as regards the collection of income tax. It was not without good reason that the Burman included the governing classes among the five kinds of enemies—rulers, water, fire, thieves, and wind. This greater security of life and property under British government must contribute towards the gradual lessening of the hold of Buddhism on the people at large. It certainly has done so in Rangoon, where wealthy Burmans may now be seen driving about in carriage-and-pair with an ostentation which they dared not have ventured on under Burmese rule. In Moulmein, on the other hand, two builders of pagodas, one male and one female, have recently been rushing headlong to pecuniary ruin in the desire of each to acquire illustrious merit for themselves by outshining the other in the dimensions and magnificence of the pagodas built by them.

The mere giving of gifts is not in itself held to be indiscriminately meritorious, for a distinction is made between the gifts of the righteous man and those of the wicked. Further distinctions obtain, such as whether one makes gifts of articles superior, or equal, or inferior to what one uses one's self, whether the gifts are made freely or grudgingly, or whether they are made in a spirit of faith and with due respect to the *Pôngyi*.

The *Pôngyi* has always been treated with the profoundest veneration by every one, from the king downwards.

## INFLUENCE OF MONKS

It is considered a sign of extreme rudeness if any Burman passes a "religious" without stooping in an attitude of respect. This veneration is shown to him after death as well as during life; and the obsequies of a priest (*Pôngyi byan*) always constitute a great festival throughout the whole countryside.

The strong hold which the *Pôngyi* undoubtedly possesses over his co-religionists in Burma arises mainly from the two facts that his life is, save only in most exceptional cases, one of purity, and that for century after century the monastery has, until comparatively recently, been the only seminary in which the arts of reading, writing, and elementary arithmetic have been taught. Residence in the monastery is no life of mere mock modesty cloaking debauchery and sensuality. It is, even allowing for the relaxation that now exists from the primitive austerities, still a life of self-denial and continence. The custom of sending young boys to wear the yellow robe for a time and to live in the monastery has fostered a spirit of respectful deference and veneration which never becomes completely lost in later years; for the cleanness and the purity of a *Pôngyi's* life are very different from the sensuality of the Brahmin priest of India, who bullies his co-religionists and domineers over them.

The religious ceremonies connected with admission into the Assembly vary according as the postulant is an acolyte (*Shin* or *Maung Shin*) of tender years or a probationer (*Upazin*) who has reached the prescribed twentieth year of age.

Before a boy becomes a *Shin*, about the time of attaining the age of puberty, he is duly instructed in such matters as how he shall address his religious superiors, how he must dress and eat, what duties he must perform, etc. There is a separate ordinance (*Shin-kyin Wut*) detailing all these regulations. On the day fixed for this auspicious event the lad is decked out in whatever finery his parents possess or can borrow. Then he is seated on a pony, and with a golden umbrella borne aloft over his head for this one occasion—an honour otherwise reserved for royalty, or for those only who are thus favoured by royal prerogative—he is led circuitously through the

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

streets of the town or village to the monastery. This is the greatest festival in a Burman's life, for in the fun and jollification of his own obsequies he can obviously take no active part *in propria forma*. After preliminary beating of a small drum (*Paluktuk*) the merry minstrelsy strikes up and heads the procession wending its way slowly to the monastery. It is accompanied by a gay escort of friends and relatives, attired in gorgeous array and bearing gifts of every possible description, from eggs, fruit, betel boxes, bowls, and the like, to lamps, clocks, and even long arm-chairs. The greatest ostentation possible to the means of the parents is observed in order to mark the honour the lad is entitled to in thus turning his back upon the pomps and vanities of life, and seeking the seclusion of a monastery. Human nature is, however, much the same all the world over, and an imposing *Shinpyu* procession is regarded in Burma very much in the same light as "a fine wedding" in England.

On arrival at the monastery<sup>1</sup> the *Pôngyi* is found seated along with his monks and probationers, the faces of all being protected by their large fans from the disquieting influence of the eyes of the fair sex. Here the lad is stripped of his finery, while extracts are read from the sacred books. When his gay apparel has been replaced by a spotless piece of new white cotton, his long hair is cut off and handed to his mother or sister, to be offered up at any shrine or perchance to be used as a switch to supplement scanty locks. The tonsure is then applied, the lad meanwhile bending his head over a white cloth held at the corners by four of the elder male members of the family stock to which he belongs. His shaven head is next smeared with saffron and washed with a preparation of the fruit of the soap acacia (*Modecca trilobata*). Then he is bathed from head to foot, a rich waist cloth is wrapped round his loins, and he is ready to approach the *Pôngyi* with the request to be admitted into the monastery. Kneeling down in an attitude of respectful obeisance he repeats the prescribed formula

<sup>1</sup> In Lower Burma the ceremony often takes place in a temporary erection (*Mandat*) in front of the parents' house, but the proper ceremony is as above described.

## THE ACOLYTE

for permission to become a probationer for the priesthood. The eight requisites for a monk, having previously been provided by the parents or relatives, are handed to him by the *Pôngyi*, and this constitutes admission to the monastery.

Wearing the three yellow garments forming the monkish robe, he next morning takes part in the procession making the daily morning round for the alms of food upon which the religious body is enjoined to subsist. But, as a matter of fact, meals of the ordinary kind are often sent from his late worldly home for his special use.

In addition to practising reading, writing, and elementary arithmetic, the young lad is supposed to apply himself diligently to the study of the sacred books, and also to minister to the wants of the monks. Thus he brings forward their meals and a supply of water at the proper times, places their betel boxes in a convenient position, and performs many similar menial duties. He also accompanies them whenever they may have occasion to go abroad. During his residence in the monastery he must observe all the ten precepts binding on a monk, and not merely the five duties incumbent on the laity.

For at least seven days the acolyte must remain in the monastery, at the end of which time he may, with the consent of his parents, return again to the world; but it is considered much more becoming in a young lad to remain so long as to include at Least one Lent (*Wa*). This period may be, and very often is, extended to two or three years. Throughout such time he may visit his parents, provided that he is never absent from the monastery between sunset and sunrise. During this period he not unfrequently becomes imbued with the desire for the life religious, or else feels the easy, lazy, and highly respected status of a monk not at all a bad substitute for the harder life of a layman. If the latter have more pleasures, it has also greater hardships and greater temptations to works of demerit; hence the chance of becoming a dog or a cat, a snake or a worm, in the next state of existence is most easily and effectually circumvented by adhering to the placid monotony of life in the monastery. In this case the acolyte pays more



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

attention to the reading of the sacred books, and to the studies of the duties, rules, and obligations of the priesthood, and thus he becomes a probationer for *Rahan*-ship.

The ordination ceremony (*Theikka-tin*), by means of which a probationer is admitted into the Assembly, can only take place in a chapel (*Thein*) measuring not less than twelve cubits in length, exclusive of the portion where the probationer awaits ordination. Here the chapter assembled must number at least five monks in jungle places or small villages, and not less than ten in towns. The senior priest present is constituted the president (*Upazin*), while another *Pôngyi* undertakes the duty of "ordination teacher" (*Kammawá Sayá*), who reads the ordination service (*Kammawá*), addresses to the candidate the ceremonial questions prescribed in the latter, and thereafter presents the novice to the chapter for admission into the Assembly. The book containing the ordination service of the Burmese priesthood is written in the Pali character either on the palm leaf, or else on old waist cloths worn by the king, on metal, or on ivory. As no one was permitted to wear the old silk waist cloths of the king, they were lacquered first in black and then in red, till they became as flexible as thin whalebone, when they were cut into strips of about eighteen or twenty inches long by four and a half inches broad, and on this ground of smooth bright red lacquer the square Pali text was written with black varnish, an exudation from the *Thitsi* tree (*Melanorrhoea usitata*). Such are still not difficult to obtain, but those on ivory are rare and valuable.

This prescribed ritual interrogates the probationer as to his freedom from hereditary congenital diseases, such as leprosy and scrofula, as to his being legitimate and a freeman, and as to his being twenty years of age and provided with the eight requisites of a priest. It then proceeds to recite circumstantially the ten precepts to be observed by the religious, and ends with detailing and warning him against the four sins unpardonable in a monk, after which the candidate receives the *Upasam-padá* or full admission to the privileges of membership of the Assembly.

## EXCOMMUNICATION

Another ceremony, though one of rare occurrence, which can only take place in the *Thein* or chapel, is that of excommunication or "inverting the almsbowl" (*Thabeikhmauk*). No one who has been admitted to the duties and privileges of the religious can be excommunicated by any individual *Pôngyi*, a chapter of not less than five *Rahan* being necessary.

The monk charged with any of the four unpardonable sins of a priest is cited before the chapter. Standing in the place where once he stood as a probationer his case is investigated, portions of the *Kammawá* are read, the culprit's robes are taken from him, his almsbowl is inverted and placed mouth downwards on the ground, and he is driven forth, an outcast, to become a social pariah, from whom no priest will knowingly accept alms, and with whom no layman will willingly have any dealings. Thus banned, the excommunication is notified to all other *Rahan*, and all influential laymen in the district, by means of "letters to avoid" (*Kyinsa*).

True excommunication can only be carried out in the case of a member of the Assembly, for no one can simultaneously be both monk and layman. But a somewhat similar ceremony, known by the same name, is sometimes carried out when a *Pôngyi* in his daily morning round refuses the offering of any particular layman by inverting his almsbowl. No monk would dare to do such a thing without some well-established reason. When this proceeding is extended to a whole section of a village it is the most powerful protest that the priesthood can make against conduct to which they object.

As in the case of our own church, following the ancient custom prescribed among the Jews, Burmese Buddhism prescribes that a "day for observing the performance of religious duties" (*Ubóksaung Ne*) shall be set apart once a week. These duty days are fixed according to the phases of the moon, being respectively the day of the change to the new moon, the eighth day of the waxing moon, the full moon, and the eighth day of the waning moon. The days of the new and of the full moon are considered the most important for observance.

On the evening before the duty day the pious laymen

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

assemble at the rest-house (*Zayát*) and there spend the night in meditative preparation for the communion that is to be held on the following day. On all other occasions in life only the five precepts for laymen are binding, but during the whole time of *Ubók* all the ten priestly precepts ought to be observed.

The men occupy separate rest-houses from the women on these occasions of meditation and religious contemplation. One cannot fail to remark that the men and women who observe these holy days are for the most part very old people anxious to make sure about having a balance of merit standing to the credit of their life account. Next morning the *Pôngyi* and monks come to the rest-house, where, seated apart from the laity and with their large fans placed so as to screen their eyes from the fatal beauty of women, they read portions of the sacred books. After the reading of the law, the rest of the day is spent in the telling of beads, in repeating religious formulæ while prostrated in front of the pagoda or kneeling devoutly before some shrine containing an image of Gaudama, and in meditation. Secular conversation detracts from the merit otherwise obtainable. The duty day is thus a day of fasting, prayer, and communion.

The three months reckoning from the full moon of "the beginning of Lent" (*Wasó*, June or July), to the full moon of "the conclusion of religious duties" (*Thadingyut*, September or October) constitute the Burmese Lent (*Wa*), a season regarded by devout and especially by elderly Buddhists as a peculiarly sacred season to be spent in fasting, in regular attendance at pagodas and shrines, and in careful observance of all the prescribed religious duties. During this Lenten period a monk staying away from his monastery for a night loses his religious character through breach of monastic vows unless he continues repeating the prescribed formula for permission. The pious layman suffering from sickness should, to be orthodox, request a dispensation (*Waban*) from the duties of Lent.

The esteem in which a *Pôngyi* is held is gauged, *cæteris paribus*, by the number of Lents he has kept

## RELIGION AND NATIONAL CHARACTER

uninterruptedly without severing his connexion with the Assembly and mingling again with the laity. Even a superior or a bishop will pay respectful homage to a simple monk whose record in this respect excels his own.

The fixation of Lent during the three months of summer, and not in spring, most probably has its origin in the fact that in Maghada (Behar or Nipál), where Buddhism was founded, these constituted the height of the rainy season, when the monks keep as much as possible to their monasteries; and this would, of course, give them ample opportunities for studying the law and repeating it to the pious laymen who might flock there for instruction.

Without studying their Buddhism, their priesthood, and their religious observances it is impossible to acquire any true insight into the Burmese character, as it was, and as it still is. Their future is, alas! in some respects not a pleasant subject of contemplation for those who love Burma and the Burmese. This "anachronism," as the Burman has been called by more than one shallow and superficial observer (who, knowing little or nothing of the country save what can be read in lightly written books and supplemented by a fortnight's tour in Burma, flaunts his experience in print), is unfortunately likely to be only too soon brought up to date. But the so-called anachronism is the only possible product of the religious beliefs and the political and social evolution of Burma in the past. Since the annexation of Pegu in 1852, however,—indeed, dating from before the first Burmese War in 1826—missionary and educational forces have been at work which cannot be left out of consideration with regard to the future. Within the last sixteen years these forces have been vastly augmented by the deportation of King Thibaw in 1885, the annexation of Upper Burma in 1866, and the death of the Archbishop of Mandalay in 1895. Secular schools are bringing a wider education to young Burmans than could ever possibly be given to them by the *Póngyi*; and much is now also being done for the education of girls, who were entirely neglected under the Buddhist philosophy.

But other factors are also working besides education.



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

The acquisition of wealth is not now one of the greatest of personal dangers, as it was in the good old palmy days when the King of Ava was the secular head of the Buddhist church: and this directly influences the amount spent by many wealthy townsmen on special works of religious merit. Moreover, the population shows a decided tendency to become very mixed; and wherever there has as yet been any conflict of races, the easy-going Burman does not assert himself as the fittest to survive.

Slowly but surely the fabric of Buddhism, which has existed for over two thousand years in Burma, is being broken down and is crumbling away like so many of the pagodas and shrines built to commemorate its illustrious founder, Gaudama. Nothing is likely to intervene and stop the gradual process of deterioration and decay which has already begun in various parts of the country. Though Burma is, and will in course of time more and more become, the battlefield of Christian missions from many parts of the world, yet it is impossible to say in what direction the religious belief of the Burmese will tend—if they should happen to remain as a distinct nationality, which seems extremely doubtful.

One thing, however, is certain. Unless they abandon atheism, and become believers in some central being or power dominating and guiding all things, whatever change is produced in their religious belief will be a change for the worse. Cold, cynical, and thoroughly selfish though Buddhism undoubtedly be, yet it is still by far the purest and the noblest of all the creeds that have ever been established except that which inculcates the beauty of sympathy and of charity in addition to exhorting its professors to lead a life of purity, simplicity, and self-denial in order to fit them for a future state more glorious than *Neikban*.

## Chapter VI

### BURMESE BELIEFS AND SUPERSTITIONS

LIKE every other nation which has not advanced far up the plane of civilization and progress, the Burmese are superstitious—intensely superstitious, and consequently credulous to a degree. Their superstition and their credulity are practically unbounded. In their religious and *quasi*-historical writings time and distance are dealt with in the most open-handed and irresponsible manner imaginable. The ocean (*Thamud-dara*) is supposed to consist of equal parts of salt and water, and to be the scene of eight great wonders, viz., the continuous alternation of flood and ebb, the keeping back of the waters from submerging the land, the throwing up of dead bodies along the sea shore, the swallowing up of the five great rivers (not to mention the 500 minor streams), so that these entirely lose their names, the constant and unvarying volume of the waters, the complete fusion of the salt water so as to become but one substance, the gems and precious stones stored up there as in a repository, and the spirits (*Nat*) which have their abode in the waters. The earth (*Padawi*) supplies the element of which twenty parts of the body are formed, including the hair, nails, skin, teeth, bones, etc.

Each living animal body (*Kanda*) is formed of five constituent parts, viz., materiality, the organs of sensation, the organs of perception, the organs of reproduction and destruction, and the organs of intellect and thought. There are five good bodily qualities (*Kaliána*) associated with the flesh, bones, skin, hair, and one's age. The happy female possessing these five beauties would have a wealth of hair, ruby lips, regular white teeth, and a uniform colour or complexion not marked by any blemish ; while

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she would never look old even though she bore twenty children, nor have a single grey hair, though she lived to be 100 years of age. The full force of this last mentioned gift can only be duly appreciated when the barbarous seven days' roasting of young mothers at the time of childbirth is borne in mind.

Being fatalists to a very great extent, the Burmese duly recognize the destructive currents of life, which bear away human creatures. These fatal influences (*Awga*), fourfold in number, are caused by the currents of libidinous desire, of life's vicissitudes, of personal contact, and of ignorance and folly. In addition to the many other dangers with which the Burman's pilgrimage through the present state of existence is beset, he is exposed to the malignant influences of the three great evil periods (*Kat*), in which famine, pestilence, and slaughter are rife. Five kinds of enemies (*Yan*) have also to be contended against, viz., rulers of all sorts (including the sun and the moon, ruling the day and the night), water, fire, thieves, and ill-wishers. If a cultivator's rice fields have been parched by drought or destroyed by inundation, he will usually describe his misfortunes as caused by "the five enemies." There are four different kinds of fire (*Tezaw*) in the body, only one of which is beneficent, the fire (*Dat*) that prevents corruption even as salt prevents flesh from becoming tainted. The remaining three are malignant, including the fire (*Than-dabbana*) arising from sorrow and causing the body to waste as if it were burned, the fire (*Daka*) producing infirmity and decay, and the stomachic fire (*Pásaga*), that consumes the food partaken of. Finally, human beings have five great masters or tyrants (*Man*) in their animal constitution (*Kanda Man*), in their subjection to the operations of the four causes (actions, mind, season, and food : *Abithingáya Man*), in passion (*Kilethá Man*), in death (*Missu Man*), and in the chief of the evil spirits (*Dewaputta*, the *Man Nat*).

In closer proximity, and entering more thoroughly into the daily life of the Burman, are the good and the evil spirits (*Nat*) that abide in almost innumerable places. The *Nat* (from the Sanskrit *Natto*, meaning "lord" or

## THE LAND OF SPIRITS

“master”) are included in the term indicating rational human beings (*Lu*); but in common usage “*Lu*” means a man or woman only, while spirits of various kinds are grouped together under the term *Nat*. A good man may in a future state of existence become a *Nat*; and the correct expression for the death of a king is that “he has ascended to the country of the *Nat*.” The *Nat* is a being superior to a man, though inferior to a Brahma in status and in process of evolution. The land of spirits (*Nat Pye*) is located only in the lower portions of the celestial regions, though to many of them is given dominion over different parts of the ocean, earth, and sky, or of special trees, rocks, elements, etc. A *Nat* is, in fact, a human being who once was a man, but is now, after having passed through the ordeal of life with a credit balance in favour of his personal account, advanced one further step towards annihilation (*Neikban*). For specially meritorious actions a being of an inferior kind may even be advanced to the status of a *Nat* without first becoming a man, as in the case of the horse “*Kantika*,” which leaped over the Anawma river with Gaudama on its back and then expired from the effort. There are two distinct classes of *Nat*. Most probably the main body inhabiting spirit land was originally identical with the *Dewa* of Indian mythology, whilst the excrescence of dryads and spirits abiding in various animate and inanimate objects gradually became grafted on Buddhism through the influence of the Karens and other spirit-worshipping wild tribes with which the Burmans successively came in contact. The belief in good and evil spirits is one that would easily take firm root in the minds of so credulous and superstitious a race.

The spirit land forming the lower celestial regions consists of six divisions. In the first of these one day is equal to fifty of the years of men, and the year consists of twelve months of thirty such days. Spirits live 500 of these years, and consequently attain an age of nine millions of our years. In the second region they live for 1,000 years, each of which is equal to 100 of the years of men; hence their age runs to thirty-six million years as measured by our standard. In the remain-



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

ing four divisions the ages attained are respectively 144, 576, 2,304, and 9,216 millions of the years of men.

The most prominent and most powerful of all the spirits is the *Thagyá Min*, the chief of the thirty-three spirits located in the second division (*Táwadeintha*) of the lower celestial regions. This chief spirit was on visiting terms with the King of Burma. To facilitate intercourse, a hole (*Thagyábauk; Minbônauk*) was made in the ceiling of the palace on the north side to admit the *Thagyá Min*. In his abode in the lower celestial region the *Thagyá Min* sits upon a throne (*Bandukan*) forming ordinarily a cool, soft, and pleasant resting place, but which becomes hot, hard, and uncomfortable when anything requiring his assistance takes place here below in this world of men, or when anything is occurring to threaten danger to his exalted office. For example, when a good man is struggling with adversity the fact is thus communicated to the ruler in spirit land.

It is neither customary nor safe for people to speak about the spirits, lest they may be offended. Hence it is usual to refer to them as "master" or "great lord" (*Ashin, Ashingyi*). But apparently, as a body, the spirits are "kittle cattle"; for, however euphemistically and circumspectly they may be referred to, they cannot be depended on in any strait. An example of this fickleness on their part is exhibited in the Burmese equivalent to "out of the frying pan into the fire," as expressed in the rhyming couplet"—

Kyá chauk ló, Shín gyí kó ;  
Shín gyí, kyá tet, só.

Fearing the tiger, they trusted the *Nat*,  
But soon found this ally much worse than that.

From prudential motives reference to spirits is omitted from the list of the four things that cannot be trusted—a thief, the bough of a tree, a ruler, and a woman. In some parts of Upper Burma tigers are euphemistically referred to as "the incarnation of a body" (*Agaung Palaung*), in case they may happen to be spirits and to be displeased at being called tigers. More particularly is this the case with reference to man-eating tigers,

## TUTELARY SPIRITS

which are also often thus politely mentioned in Lower Burma.

The tutelary saint of fishermen is, however, a spirit (*Shingyi*). In inland fisheries a portion of the lake or pond is usually set apart and specially reserved for the benefit and the propitiation of the *Ashin*. Plays are often given in honour of the spirits, and are performed in sheds (*Natkána*) erected specially for the purpose. Large buildings (*Natkan*) are sometimes built and dedicated either to individual spirits or to the chief *Nat*, while smaller constructions (*Natsin*) are frequently to be seen near villages on the banks of streams where fisheries are formed. Such miniature spirit houses are still to be seen on all the principal buildings within the palace enclosure in Mandalay. Food and water are sometimes laid down in propitious places as an offering to the spirits by Burmans, and habitually by Karens; whilst provisional offerings are also made with the intention of being supplemented by more substantial dedications at some future date.

The spirits are not necessarily malevolent. They furnish the wild rice (*Nat Sabá*), yielding a scanty meal in time of famine. But the majority of them are evil spirits (*Natsó*); and in any case it seems to the Burman a good thing to try and keep on favourable terms with them, both individually and as a body. In most villages can be found persons possessed by a spirit, causing loss of reason or some other deplorable physical defect. Here and there, too, men can be met with who have spoken with the voices of children ever since the *Nat* stole away their own proper voices.

The chief of the good spirits (*Wathóndare*) is the guardian *Nat* of the earth. He is ever on the alert to record and to bear witness to the religious merit and the good deeds of the devout worshipper. It is to this guardian spirit that the Burman appeals as a witness when dedicating any religious offering. In case *Wathóndare* may perchance be otherwise engaged at the moment, it is with a view to calling his particular attention to one's own special devotion that the pious Burman invariably gives a sounding blow with the crown end of

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

a deer's antler to the lip of one or other of the large heavy bells (*Kaunglaung*) hung in convenient places round the platform of every pagoda. Certainly it would never be consistent with the idea of the debit and credit account system, forming the basis of the Buddhistic religion, if the pious Burman were to count his beads and worship in devout reverence without first making sure that he had secured the attention of the guardian spirit, who acts as the recording angel. It seems eminently desirable to the Burman to call the attention of the higher powers to the fact of the fulfilment of religious observances, and in this respect to be more of the Pharisee than of the Publican on such devout occasions. There are also many spirits who are something like tutelary deities to certain towns and families. Some are the genii of particular localities; others reside in the air or in clouds; and others again are dryads inhabiting trees, rocks, pools, etc. They take cognizance of the actions of men, sometimes sympathizing with those who act rightly, and at other times preventing the acquirement of merit by men who may supplant them in the possession of the various amenities and powers they have attained in spirit-land. Even if one only slips and falls to the ground, it is well to make an offering to the guardian spirit of the earth at the spot where one has received the fall; for who knows whether the *Nat* may be offended or not?

Guardian spirits are not all so well inclined or so easily dealt with as *Wathôndare*. On the founding of a new city by any King of Burma it was customary to perform *Sade*<sup>1</sup> by burying large jars of oil at each of the four corners of the city, whilst with much ceremony men were also either killed and buried or else buried alive, in order that they might become the permanent guardians of the city. Around the outer walls of Mandalay, at the four corners and close to the principal entrance gates, may be seen several small whitewashed stupas forming the abodes of these guardian spirits of the royal city (*Myosaung Natsein*). Even so late as 1878 in Lower Burma, after

<sup>1</sup> A somewhat similar term, *Sadi*, is used to denote any ceremony regarded as a charm to avert or remove evil (see page 163).

## EVIL SPIRITS

twenty-five years of British rule, the belief among the country people regarding the necessity of such a ceremony was so strong that when Government inaugurated the successful completion of a large engineering work by giving an open-air dramatic performance at Myitkyo, at the eastern end of the Pegu and Sittang Canal, no men attended on the first evening, and only comparatively few came armed with heavy bills (*Da*) on the second evening. This, too, was after solemn assurances had been given by the English magistrates and engineers that *Sade* was never practised by the British. A guardian of a different sort (*Uttasaung*) is the spirit of a deceased person guarding over property; for Burmans believe that the spirits of those who have during their lifetime inordinately hankered after riches become after death the custodians of the property they managed to acquire.

Offerings made to the guardian spirit of a town or village are called *Palinatsa*; but it is somewhat suggestive that this term is also applied to official underlings who wheedle money out of litigants under the pretence that they are able to influence their superiors in deciding cases in the law courts.

A troublesome spirit in home life is the *Deindalein*, supposed to cause a deceived husband to be infatuated with his wife, or vice versa. In other cases when the weaker vessel is taken possession of by a spirit she becomes a "Nat's consort" (*Natgadaw*), and as such is endowed with the power of prophecy or of revealing hidden secrets. They are frequently resorted to for obtaining information about stolen property, and, as they are gossiping busybodies who make a point of hearing and inquiring about everything going on around them, they often can suggest in whose hands stolen property will possibly be found.

There are many different kinds of evil spirits (*Natsó*) requiring propitiation. Thus the crying of infants is caused by the *Madare Nat*. The *Upagá* is another kind abiding, often gregariously, in trees and similar objects, which is said to be sometimes visible; for many have borne witness that, after a child had lost its mother, they had seen an *Upagá* rocking a cradle in the jungle



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

and personifying the mother. A more aggressive and dangerous kind of evil spirit is a demon, goblin, or ghoulish (*Kyat*), capable of assuming different forms and of actually devouring human beings. Another of a similar kind (*Thaye*) haunts burial grounds, forests, and lonely localities, enters and possesses men, and changes them into creatures of ghoulish habits.

The term for possession by an evil spirit (*Payawga*) may curiously enough mean either encouragement in a good sense, as to works of merit and so forth, or else the very opposite—instigation to evil. But, like many words in our own language (“prejudice,” for example) the common meaning of the term indicates a bad influence.

As evil spirits are stronger than men it is necessary to propitiate them, and this may be done in many ways. One way is for children to carry a small basket (*Kawkwet*) in which offerings of different kinds of rice, flowers, etc., have been placed, to the outskirts of the village, and there deposit it while they chant a rambling chorus. For personal protection charmed medicine may be tattooed into the flesh of one's body, in order to ward off the power of witches and warlocks. The proper kind of cup for the holding of such charmed medicine is made from the joints of the bamboo pole (*Taziwa*) used as a poker at the cremation of a dead body.

Although the Burman has a separate name for ghosts (*Tasé*), which haunt given houses and localities to the terror of residents or wayfarers after dark, yet he seems unable to make any distinction between ghosts and evil spirits. The former are, however, respectfully treated in similar manner to the genuine evil spirits by propitiatory offerings enclosed in *Kawkwet*. Immunity from seeing ghosts can be obtained by wearing on the smallest finger of the left hand a ring made of a hair from an elephant's tail. Such rings, costing about a penny, are often worn by women, and more particularly when they are in an interesting condition.

A special form of prayer (*Paveik*) is also used for preservation from evil, more particularly in times of sickness, and when taking up one's abode in a newly built house. In nearly every house there is a vase

## BELIEF IN CHARMS

(*Pareikó*) for holding charmed flowers, and charmed thread (*Pareikche*) is worn round the arm or leg. Such thread also forms the cord (*Letpákyo*) used in tying together the thumbs of the dead. Further, charmed or holy water (*Pareikyé*, from *pareik*, a "muntra" or prayer for preservation from evil) is either drunk or else sprinkled over the person and on the ground around the houses; and it is also thrown against the four corner posts, which are besprinkled both from the outside and the inside. In building a house a large square piece of white cotton is put on the top of each post, so that the four ends hang down from it, in order that they may form pleasant resting places for the guardian spirit of the house.

The belief of the Burman in charms is childlike in its simplicity and in its whole-heartedness. It is so absolutely boundless and unlimited that it might almost be said to form his strongest article of faith. Though the charms may time after time fail to work, yet his belief in their efficacy remains just as firm and unshaken as at first. If the spirits are unpropitious or the elements averse, is not their strength even mightier than the power of the charm? And if malign influences of a more powerful nature prevent the charm working, is that the fault of the charm? If you were to speak irreverently or disparagingly concerning any charm in the presence of a Burman, he would certainly think you a person much to be pitied, and indeed rather to be avoided, as perhaps exercising an evil influence over some charm that he might at the moment be employing for the attainment of any end which seemed desirable in his eyes.

The use of charms enters largely into the everyday life of a Burman. They range in scope and nature from any ceremony (*Sadi*) for removing or averting evil, through the processes of securing invulnerability or the love of some fair but coy maid, down to such practical affairs of daily life as insuring a profit on the sale of goods or acquiring sound sleep at night. Widely as the charms vary in their uses, so also do they differ in their nature or form.

One of the commonest kinds of charm is the amulet

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

(*Letpwè*), worn either for preventing evil or for obtaining good. The same term is also applied to the present made by the parents and friends of a bride and bridegroom on the occasion of their marriage. Sometimes its special object is to avert evil or calamity and to preserve from danger or harm (*Beka*); while at other times its use is more particularly to protect the wearer from the power of one of his enemies (*Yinka*). In recent days the latter term has also been much used in applications for a license to carry arms; and, curiously enough, the only word in Burmese for a gun or rifle (*Thénat*) means "the spirit of death." Again, when some definite but concealed and unproclaimed evil deed is about to be committed, a special charm is employed (*Akwéaka*).

For the securing of favour there are three kinds of medicines or charms (*Sho*), which have influence with kings (*Yázasho*), with women (*Piyasho*), or else have a sort of general efficacy (*Thabasho*).

When any one has been bitten by a dog, or has received a cut, or when a sore has made its appearance, or when the hoofs of a pony are abnormally large, a very simple ceremony (*Sadi*) is observed, which consists in merely inscribing a circle round the wound, sore, or hoof by means of a piece of teakwood charcoal, whereby peculiar *vis* or power (*Set*) is conveyed to the portion of the limb operated on.

Many of the charms in common use are for the gaining of the affections of some loved one of the opposite sex, the attainment of which by other means seems difficult or doubtful. The most potent of these are the philtre or love-potion of "softening medicine" (*Anúse*), and an amulet (*Hnôkngôn*) to ensure love being reciprocated. The latter is kept in his mouth when a youth goes courting. A decoction of various mysterious herbs and other vegetable substances collected with great secrecy is used for a similar purpose (*Minbaung*), and it has also the wonderful property of making one invulnerable. Compared with these marvellous and potent charms, that for ensuring a profit on the rate of goods (*Konsetaik*) is a very minor sort of aid to business.

But in this world of imperfection, surrounded as it is

## THE POWER OF CHARMS

by malignant influences each more or less powerful in its own degree, the efficacy of charms is affected by the deteriorating influence (*Tana*) of inappropriate acts. Thus the virtue of any charm suffers deterioration when the wearer passes below a bridge over which any one is crossing, or enters any house where a confinement is taking place. An indignity of this kind is said to have been offered to one of the British missions sent to Mandalay, the embassy being degraded in the eyes of the Burmese through being conducted to the royal presence by means of a path passing under an archway upon which people were standing. The embassy sent to Amárapura in 1795 was insulted in the grossest degree by being conducted to the palace through the western gate of the city (Symes' *Embassy to Ava*, 1800, page 357), the route by which malefactors were led forth to their death, and which, when traversed by a king, was the outward sign of his abdication of the throne.

Closely allied to charms of the above nature are the various means taken for becoming proof against bullets and wounds, or for flying through the air and performing similar feats beyond the unaided powers of ordinary human beings. Charms of the above category are of course highly valued by soldiers and robbers. One of the commonest and most potent of these charms, according to the received opinion, is any kind of calculus (*Amade*) formed in the body of an animal or plant. Thus the calculi formed in doves, partridges, snakes, or turtles, or in the jasmine, have the special power of rendering the wearer of such a charm proof against any wound inflicted with a sword or knife, and a like immunity was afforded by a preparation from the bark of the Ananbo tree (*Crypteronia paniculata*). A similar charm against misfortune and evil generally (*Yaungban*) was bound up and worn in their hair by Burmese soldiers. The professors of invulnerability (*Kayatheiddi Sayá*) often mix antimony along with other strange ingredients like calculi, amber, etc.

The power of attaining the state of mind (*Zana*) which enables its possessor to fly through the air, or to go through the earth, or to traverse other worlds than ours, is attained only through excellence in the religious gifts of



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

meditation, contemplation, mental abstraction, and ecstatic trance. The priest desirous of attaining this state must withdraw to some secluded spot and shut himself out from the world. Here, sitting cross-legged, he must so concentrate his mind upon one single thought that his soul becomes filled with supernatural ecstasy and serenity, while his mind, exalted and purified, rises above all emotions of pleasure or of pain and enables him to traverse space at will. Exaltation into this state of beatific religious trance is beyond the attainment of ordinary mortals; but if any "extraordinary person" (*Lusunkaung*) be the lucky possessor of a particular kind of precious stone (*Zawda*), he can, by inserting it in his mouth, acquire the power of flying through the air or of diving below water. This term is also applied to those who have escaped from prison by marvellous leaps, or by rendering themselves invisible and so on. But in the great majority of cases the word is employed in a bad sense, and its most frequent use is perhaps with reference to bold determined thieves and men of notoriously bad character.

Among so superstitious a race it is of course inevitable that magic (*Hmaw*) must play a great part. The Burmese have their warlocks (*Sun*) and witches (*Sunma*), for combating the power of whose spells the aid of the sorcerer, wizard, or wise man (*Wèza*) is invoked. Some of the spells are of the most fatal character, such as substances magically inserted into the stomach or other part of the body for the purpose of producing death (*Apin*). The Burmese magic is more particularly that influence by means of which various orders of beings are controlled; hence the necromancer (*Hmawwin*) possessed of it is the most important of all those practising this branch of occult science. But differences exist even in cases of possession or of injury inflicted through witchcraft, for whereas bewitchment by means of a wizard or a witch is a spell (*Pyusa*), that caused by some such superhuman agency as ghosts or by the spirit of any deceased person who has met with a violent and unnatural death is looked on as a "seizure" (*Pansa*). Old age, ugliness, and cantankerousness are apt to cause a woman to be branded

## WITCHES AND WIZARDS

as a witch ; while to be the mother of seven sons or seven daughters, without having borne any intermediate child of the opposite sex, is a sure indication of possession of certain supernatural powers. The wise men whose aid is summoned to counteract the influence of witches and warlocks are supposed to be endowed with the three miraculous powers of taking a retrospective view of deeds and actions that occurred during past ages of existence, of knowing the influence of a good or evil deed which causes an immediate result in the present state of existence, and of possessing the kind of wisdom attained by the extinction of evil desire. There are four kinds of wise men (*Wèza*), of whom the most highly esteemed practise their art by means of calculations on tables divided into columns, or squares, or other compartments (*Inwèza*). Even in necromancy it is well to be accurate. Are not figures almost as indisputable as facts ? The former power and influence of the *Wèza* are already on the wane. It is not uncommon to hear a person who does anything particularly well, or who has had a recent stroke of good luck, jocularly called a "*Wèz*" without incurring the fear or the displeasure of those within ear-shot of so flippant and irreverent a remark. Formerly this would not have been the case.

Of course there are also men skilled in the transmutation of silver and the baser metals into gold. There are various methods in which this and other varieties of the confidence trick are played upon ignorant men and women, but few of these swindlers are ever brought within the reach of the courts of justice.

Amid surroundings of spiritual beings, the majority of whom are more or less evil-disposed, the personal equation of any given individual receives its due share of attention, and brings its meed of weal or woe. This is the personal luck (*Kan*), which may either be good or bad. The primary meaning of "*Kan*" in the ancient Pali is simply a "deed" or "action" ; and the meaning now evolved denotes the secret influence of any action on one's future destiny. When a man dies, his "luck" is at an end from the mere fact of his having completed the present state of existence. To have good luck

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

(*Kankaungthe*) is therefore to be subject to the influence of a good action ; whereas to have bad luck (*Kansóthe*) is to eat the fruit of a bad action. "Luck" has consequently somewhat of a semi-religious character in the eyes of the Burman. Whether he has the good luck to reap a rich harvest or to pass near a venomous snake without being bitten, or the bad luck to lose his cattle or to make no profit on any of his mercantile transactions, depends, *cæteris paribus*, mainly on the influence of the good or bad actions committed by him—with the exception, of course, of cases in which the trend of affairs is influenced by charms, spirits, witches, or wizards. The *Kan* is also the cause of presentiments which from time to time impel the Burman to adopt some peculiar mode of action. The best method of being placed advantageously with regard to *Kan* is the due and careful performance of all the "great and little deeds" or duties incumbent upon the layman as well as on the monk. A different term (*Lat*) is also much used by fortune-tellers, traders, fishermen, and sportsmen in the sense of luck, its meaning being literally "anything obtained by gift" and corresponding more to the idea conveyed in such a phrase as "by pure chance." The term "eating a chance gift" is very commonly used colloquially as a euphemism for bribery.

Unmistakable though the influence of *Kan* be, yet it is not all powerful. It is but one of the strands woven into the thread of fate. The marks of destiny on the forehead (*Nabúsa*) are still more potent as indications of one's fate or fortune. They regulate by inevitable convergence of fate the intimate consortment of persons in this life who have during a past state of existence been more or less closely associated. When applied to a married couple, the expression *Nabúsa ba* conveys the idea that the destinies of the man and the woman are so bound up together that they are literally "consorts." An unhappy wife may sometimes say in confidence to a friend that she did not marry her husband because she loved him, but only because, her destiny being bound up with his, she was compelled to live with him. Again, the time and circumstances of one's birth (*Zada*) are

## AUSPICES AND OMENS

pregnant with fate; for one may be born to be a ruler, or born to be a thief. On matters of this sort light can be thrown by the horoscope (*Zadapôn*) cast for astrological purposes. A record of the time and circumstances of one's birth (*Neswe*) is therefore carefully kept.

Palmistry is not very much practised among the Burmans, although there are Brahmins (*Letkanápat Punna*) who predict a person's future by examining the lines and marks on the hand, and occasionally also on the soles of the feet. A colony of such *Punna*, who originally came from Manipur, lived a little to the west of Mandalay city.

Omens and auspices naturally receive their full and proper share of attention, and few affairs of anything but a trivial and commonplace nature are embarked upon without ascertaining whether or not the day be lucky for the enterprise. Unless a propitious day can be selected for an undertaking, the latter is deferred. For the determination of knotty points in critical cases the aid of the "indicator of evil" (*Bedin Sayá*) is employed, a man skilled in astrology and in the interpretation of the horoscope. But there are various broad generalizations which presage good or ill without elaborate calculations being at all necessary. Thus it is unlucky for any one to cut his or her finger nails or toe-nails in the house, as this is supposed to cause the poverty of the owner; hence it is necessary to go outside and perform such toilet operations. Each month is said to have two unlucky days, whereas there is always one day (*Yetyazá*) which is the most lucky of all. In the tenth month of the year, corresponding to December or January, it is considered unlucky to throw away the ashes of fires; hence it is called the month for "storing up ashes" (*Pyatho*). Again, if a water lizard (*Put*) comes up into a house, it is considered very unlucky, its arrival being a sure sign of poverty and misery. The crowing lizard (*Tauktè*) is commonly supposed by Anglo-Burmans to be a lucky animal to have in the house; but the Burmese look upon its bite as fatal and only to be cured by putting earth-oil on the tongue or by smearing it with a powder made from the fruit of the



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

corypha palm (*Pèthi*). Horses of a dark brown colour are considered to bring bad luck to their owner, while a blind horse will cause the destruction of a village, and a blind elephant the devastation of a city. A person who squints is one not to be offended, as he or she probably has the power of "overlooking" the person who is disrespectful or disoblising. In one of the teak plantations under my charge, where I had sometimes found it hard to procure sufficient labour at a fair rate of wages, no practical difficulty of this sort was encountered after a swivel-eyed forest ranger had been transferred to its charge; for his physical defect produced a great and awe-inspiring impression on the neighbouring villagers. It is deemed a lucky thing to possess a bullock having the left horn bent down, while the right horn stands upright; but the possession of one having the left horn upright and the right horn bent down must inevitably result in utter poverty. The circular flexures (*Bwe*) in the hair of animals are held to give unmistakable signs as to good or bad luck. This is more particularly the case with regard to ponies, in whose coats thirty-eight of these lucky or unlucky flexures may be distinguished and examined. The owner of an animal having a "rough flexure" (*Bwegyan*) is apt to be generally unlucky and falling into trouble; hence the expression "*Bwegyanthe Lu*" to denote a Jonah, bringing bad luck upon every one with whom he is associated in business or otherwise. In similar manner boats may be unlucky owing to their having what is considered a bad knot in one or other of the planks; and so on with regard to houses, etc. But bad luck may even come through carelessness in conversation; and if any one happens to speak about elephants or ponies in the vicinity of the Ruby Mines, this is supposed to cause the rubies to disappear. It therefore seems unfortunate for the shareholders in this speculation that all the travelling arrangements of their own employees and of all English officers in that district necessitate the use of elephants and ponies: but these mines are now paying, despite that.

Under the Burmese rulers it was considered ominous for any one to cross in front of the van of the army;

## AUSPICES AND OMENS

such an unfortunate person was generally put to death, often by having his breast cloven asunder.

On the other hand the flowers or the leaves of the *Thabyé* tree (*Eugenia*) were auspicious and were consequently worn by Burmese soldiers on the march as "flowers of victory" in the top-knots of their hair or in the large holes pierced in the lobes of their ears. In addition to selecting a propitious day for the undertaking, a sprig of these tender leaves is still often worn by ordinary persons when about to embark in difficult or dangerous enterprises. Tender lovers also make protestations of unswerving fidelity in the following time-honoured couplet :—

*Thabyéban ta két*  
*Mathwédan ta thét*

Like a spray of *Thabyé*,  
My love will last for aye.

The Burmese make no distinction whatever in the way of expressing our idea of "omen" in contrast to "auspice." Their only word (*Nemeik*) simply means a sign or token, and it is also the only correct term that can be applied to the mark or boundary of any individual property in land or of national territory. In the sacred writings the four great signs (*Nemeik-le-ba*) which induced Seiddatta (Siddhartha) to renounce the world previous to his becoming Gaudama, the last of the Buddhas, were respectively an old man, a sick and infirm person, a corpse, and recluse. The sign is either "good" and auspicious, or else "bad" and ominous; but when one Burman remarks to another that words just spoken have no significance, it is intended to imply that they are of bad omen. In the reading of omens, as well as in the interpretation of dreams, the *Punna* or Brahmins are supposed to have special gifts. And as the opinion is held that the first interpretation of a dream is the true one, it is considered a piece of impertinence to be resented if any person unsolicited and gratuitously gives an unfavourable interpretation to a dream.

Many practical examples might be given to show how the due observance of certain acts or the refraining from other acts is held in daily life to be auspicious, but it may perhaps be sufficient to note the following on

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

account of its peculiarity. Among the insects destructive to plants is one called *Pya*, which is more particularly inclined to attack leguminous crops. Hence, in the dry zone of Upper Burma, where pea crops are largely cultivated and form the staple food of the country side, pregnant women are not supposed to gather vegetables of any kind, as it is believed by their doing so the *Pya* is specially attracted to the plants touched.

For the interpretation of ordinary omens and dreams there is a special book (*Deittun*), whilst for the unravelling of unusually intricate or apparently contradictory cases the soothsayer (*Deittun Sayá*) can be consulted. According to the book of omens the three evil periods of famine, pestilence, and slaughter may respectively be foretold by fowls leaving their roosts even before dawn in an irregular manner and searching for food at this unusual hour, by dogs howling at night at an unseasonable time, and by crows flying about excitedly and screeching and cawing in a terrified manner.

Often when entering some little jungle village or hamlet one sees on the outskirts a little temporary pagoda built of sand, and carefully topped by an umbrella (*Ti*) of woven bamboos with paper flowers or pieces of tinsel and gilt paper. Something about its general appearance tells one that such a "sand-pagoda" (*Thè Sedi*) is more than the work of children at play. Though naturally given to making mud pies and revelling in dirt generally, Burmese children would not be allowed to amuse themselves in any way disrespectful to the Buddhist religion. If one asked what this temporary pagoda meant, the answer would be evasive. The actual fact, however, would be that it was built because such sand pagodas are believed to be of assistance in warding off pestilence, through the religious merit (*Kítho*) acquired in erecting them. On closer inquiry one would probably find that smallpox had broken out in one or other of the neighbouring hamlets, and that the simple Burman was pinning his faith on the efficacy of good works, with absolute indifference to the most elementary principles of sanitation. It is believed that during great and serious epidemics the waters in the delta of the Irrawaddy

## BURMESE MEDICINE-MEN

assume a dirty greenish tinge in place of the usual mud-brown hue arising from the enormous load of silt continuously being carried seawards.

Like all eastern races, the Burmese have an intense dread of cholera (*Kala Yawga*), though the same term is applied to any other epidemic for which no definite cause can be assigned in their list of the ninety-six diseases. In the larger towns cholera is always present to a greater or less extent during the hot months from March to June, and more especially in May toward the end of the hot weather and the beginning of the rains, when the mango fruit ripens. In Rangoon, for example, cholera is probably never really absent at any time of the year ; but the intensely hot spring-time is naturally the season when it is most apt to break out in epidemic form among the poorer population. Against the ravages of this deadly disease both the dietists (*Dat Sayá*) and the druggists (*Beindaw Sayá*), who form the two classes of medicine-men, stand powerless. They simply declare that the visitation is caused by evil spirits against whom their muntras, simples, and drugs are inoperative. Hence special measures are taken to expel the evil spirits from the town limits or the village precincts by an operation called "driving into the jungle" (*Tawtuk*). This consists in all the inhabitants of a village or of a section of a town simultaneously belabouring the roofs, floors, and sides of houses with bamboo poles, beating old kerosine tins or empty pots with sticks, and generally endeavouring with very fair success to raise an unearthly din. They certainly make a very unpleasant noise, even although they may not succeed in laying the evil spirit. The usual time for such demonstrations taking place is towards sunset ; but it may often also be heard in the morning and in the early portion of the afternoon. Under any circumstances the deafening din is an unwelcome sound if at all close at hand ; while, even if softened by distance, it always conveys unpleasing information. This ceremony is also performed on a minor scale for driving away evil spirits from persons who have been bitten by snakes, or wounded by wild animals, or otherwise, or who have sustained injuries by falling from trees.



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

When attacked by cholera, the Burman resigns himself to fate, whereas the native of India vows to dedicate some offering to his gods if they aid him in recovering. Shortly after my first arrival in Burma one of my Indian servants was attacked with cholera. Throughout the whole time I was dosing him with brandy and chlorodyne he kept vowing that if his life were spared he would offer up a kid as a sacrifice to one of his gods. A day or two after he had recovered he duly came and asked for an advance of pay, in order to buy a kid for the purpose of fulfilling the vow he had made whilst stricken with the black disease. He got the money; he bought the kid; and he faithfully performed his vow. But as he afterwards prepared a savoury stew with the sacrifice, and ate it with the assistance of a few friends, the transaction was after all no dead loss or pure waste of money. With the Burman it is different, because he is a fatalist in such matters.

Another superstitious custom resembling *Tawtuk* in so far that it is taken part in by a large number of people simultaneously and preconcertedly is the "pulling of the rope" or "rope festival" (*Lônswè, Lônpwè*). It is indulged in at any time between May and October, whenever it seems desirable to procure a fall of rain for agricultural purposes. It is nothing else than a huge tug-of-war, by means of which unique demonstration in their honour it is hoped the spirits having control over rain (*Pyitsun Nat*), will be induced to grant the special favour sought. At such festivals the country people often assemble in large numbers and decked in their best attire, when there is a vast amount of talking and shouting, accompanied by beating of drums and blowing of fifes, and the din of other musical instruments.

Minor superstitions exist about rainfall, such as are implied in the blossoming of the crocodile creeper (*Derris scandens*), whose wealth of white flowers is said to presage heavy rainfall, and in the saying that the Padauk tree (*Pterocarpus Indicus*) must flower thrice before the rains set in about the beginning of May. Even the majority of Anglo-Burmans believe in this

## FURTHER SUPERSTITIONS

illogical circumstance, although they should know that the flowering is merely the natural effect of physiological causes, and has nothing to do with foretelling the future.

For warding off evil of different kinds other superstitious customs exist besides those previously mentioned. Thus the idea is current that the possession of stakes or pegs which have been driven into any piece of ground that is about to be built on, is capable of warding off danger; and when the ground in question happens to have been consecrated, through having at one time been the site of some work of religious merit, there is often quite a scramble for such lucky bits of wood. If suspended from the roof of a house, such a prize brings immunity from bugs, while it is also of use in averting danger from fire. Such stakes likewise belong to the Burmese pharmacopœia; for the druggist class of medicine-men (*Beindaw Sayá*) scrape them into a powder, which forms one of the ingredients in the preparation of remedies against the power of evil spirits.

There is no caste at all among the Burmese, and they are an exceedingly hospitable race. It very frequently happens that English officers, in the performance of their ordinary district duties in the various departments of Government, go to places where there are no Government bungalows, no rest-houses (*Zayát*), and no protection against sun, rain, dew, etc. As a rule, only forest and survey officers have tents for their camp work; but not infrequently these officers prefer to lodge, as the men in other civil departments are forced to do, in village houses or monasteries rather than in tents, more particularly in the hot weather, when being under canvas is sometimes extremely trying. Through want of knowledge rather than through inadvertence, the young officer may often perform simple acts, such as trimming his finger nails inside the house, which must, if he were only aware of the fact, cause uneasiness to his Burmese host by threatening to bring down ill-luck upon the house. The host will be too polite to ask him to desist from so ominous a proceeding. But let the guest attempt to wake a sleeping person, and an inmate of the house will at once raise a hand or make some other gesture to

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

check so dangerous an act; for the "butterfly" spirit (*Leikpyá*), the "psyche" that inhabits the body as a soul, takes advantage of its owner being asleep to depart temporarily and wander far afield in search of its affinity. The separation of two spirits having affinity is always the cause of grief and lamentation, as in the case of an infant child and its dead mother, in whom the *Leikpyá* are supposed to be united. When the spirit happens to be frightened in any way (*Leikpyá lán the*), a derangement in the nervous system takes place and illness results. If a sleeper be suddenly awakened whilst the *Leikpyá* is momentarily far absent from the body, there is great danger that it may not be able to effect its re-entrance: hence any sleeping person suddenly awakened runs the risk of becoming deranged and weak in intellect. Composure or tranquillity of mind is supposed to be due to strength on the part of the *Leikpyá*, whilst discomposure is due to want of energy on its part. If a Burman looks sheepish and put out when stating a manifest falsehood, this discomposure is solely due to the *Leikpyá* feeling fluttered for the moment.

The Burmese have quite a well-stocked mythological menagerie of fabulous animals of all sorts and kinds, the representations of which form prominent features in wood carving, silver work, and the ornamentation in or around pagodas, monasteries, and other sacred buildings.

One of the chief of these is a kind of sea-dragon (*Nagá*), belonging to a race of animals inhabiting the first of the lower celestial regions located under the rocks (*Trikuta*) by which the sacred mountain (*Myinmo*) is supported, and the waters surrounding the world of men. Though in form like a deadly spectaclad and hooded snake, yet, so far as many of their actions are concerned, they appear to be more or less human. They can assume the form of human beings, though one condition of their doing so is that they must, under certain circumstances reveal their identity. The five conditions under which the *Nagá* cannot hide their identity are when they are in confinement, when they are changing their skin, when they are asleep, when they are living by themselves, and when they are in sexual intercourse. They are there-

## FABULOUS ANIMALS

fore more than spirits (*Nat*), being possessed of somewhat demi-godlike powers. They are represented as being usually favourable to Buddha and his adherents, though they become transformed into dangerous enemies when once their wrath is aroused. The interesting mud-volcanoes occurring in the petroleum districts of Minbu in Upper Burma and on the island of Ramri off the coast of Arakan are due to the scratching and rolling about of *Nagá*, while the Milky Way is one of the paths along which they proceed across the starry firmament when travelling to distant regions. On the coffins of deceased priests a murex shell in the shape of an ornamental representation of a dragon's head is placed by way of viaticum.

Another important monster is a red-eyed, long-toothed ghoulish (*Bilu*), which devours human flesh and is possessed of various kinds of magical power, such as assuming any form it likes. It haunts the burial grounds and crematory places, and watches for its prey in the lonely recesses of the jungle. Sometimes, when one is asleep, a *Bilu* comes and sits on one's chest; and this is the true cause of nightmare.

Of the Burmese lion (*Chinthé*) there are four varieties. One (*Tena*) resembles a speckled cow in appearance, and eats grass and herbage; a second (*Kala*) resembles a black cow, and is more or less carnivorous; a third (*Pandu*) is in colour like a faded leaf, and is purely carnivorous; while the fourth, "the king of wild animals," (*Ketharaza*) is also carnivorous. The mouth and the tip of the tail of the latter are red, and from its head three tawny lines extend down its back. Its mane and the bristles covering its body are said to be worth a lakh of rupees. The *Chinthé* is the emblem of fearlessness and intrepidity. For an army to retreat "like a *Chinthé*," showing a bold front to the enemy, is an exploit ranking next to a victory. This leogryph is the emblem on Burmese gold coins; and representations of it are to be found around most pagodas, more especially at the entrances. Wherever you find a flight of steps leading to any sacred edifice you will be almost certain to find *Chinthé* seated as griffins keeping watch and



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

ward on either side of the staircase, somewhat faintly suggestive of the unimpressionable Sphinx. These leogryphs are usually highly coloured about the face, with lines picked out in red, yellow, green, and blue, while quaintness of effect is heightened by their not infrequently having large balls of coloured glass standing out prominently as their eyeballs.

Another fabulous monster is the fish *Ngayin*, four of which sustain the earth on their shoulders. Earthquakes result whenever one or other of these four happens to change its position.

There are several kinds of mythical elephants. One of the most famous of these is the three-headed elephant (*Erawun*) upon which the chief of the evil spirits (*Man Nat*) is accustomed to ride. Another is the strongest and most excellent of elephants (*Saddán Sin*), whose strength is said to be equal to that of a thousand millions of men. This animal figures very frequently in pictures illustrative of the sacred writings (*Zat*) relating to the life of Gaudama, the Buddh. A Buddh is a match for ten of such elephants, hence his fighting power is something very formidable. During a previous stage of existence, Gaudama, then a *Bodisat*, appeared in the form of a *Saddán* elephant. One of the titles of the King of Burma was "lord of the white elephant *Saddán*," thereby implying that the slightly albino elephant maintained by his Majesty was a true *Saddán*.

Another fabulous animal (*Keinnara*) has the body of a bird and the face of a human being. It inhabits the innermost recesses of the Himalayan mountains. Both male and female are said to be found, the latter (*Keinnari*) being as nearly as possible a "harpy."

Instead of the man in the moon the Burmans see a hare, one of the sacred animals of Buddhism; while the peacock, their national emblem, is to be found in the sun. One mode of asserting undying affection between lovers is to swear to be faithful and fond so long as the hare is to be seen in the moon.

For the protection of large boats an image of a mermaid is placed at the prow as a figurehead, not for mere ornamentation, but for the special purpose of

## BURMESE OATHS

protection against the attack of any kind of monster. There are two of these protective kinds of mermaids, one having hair hanging down her back (*Yethu*), and the other (*Chu*) without such appendage. The latter affords the better protection. Before casting off from the moorings propitiatory offerings are made to the great spirit (*Shingyi Nat*) in order that he may be favourably inclined to the enterprise embarked upon. A bunch of plantains or a wisp of leaves is also often tied to the front part of a boat or a cart with the same intention. Before a young lad sets out on any journey he "begs pardon" of his parents, who wish him good luck by saying "May you not come in contact with stumbling-blocks or be caught by thorns,"—a response which is intelligible enough to those who have travelled over the rough jungle tracks in most parts of Burma. For the warding off of evil from his kingdom, there was a regular ritual of certain superstitious ceremonies prescribed for the use of the King of Burma.

Besides resulting from being overlooked by some witch or ill-wisher curses may take effect through having committed perjury, or having transgressed against parents in some unworthy manner, or having shown ingratitude to teachers or marked disrespect to elders. But to corroborate his words the Burman is not at all backward in calling down imprecations upon his own head if what he states be untrue. One of the direst of these is, "Let me be carried off by cholera if what I say is not true," when one wishes to remove all doubt as to veracity. Another form of obtaining a guarantee is to ask, "Would you dare to dive into the water on this statement?" To clinch some argument impulsively a not uncommon expression is, "If what I say be not true, may my head be split by lightning into eight pieces," or else, "May I burn away like a cheroot." The most common formula for backing up one's statement is, however, the simple imprecation, "May I be struck by lightning if I am not telling the truth." If you hear a statement you do not quite believe and you receive such confirmation of its correctness, you may in the great majority of cases believe the statement; for the Burman,

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

though he has no particular prejudice in favour of truth, is not yet such an accomplished and hereditary liar as many of the natives of India, among whom the Chittagonian Bengali is perhaps the archliar. A similar test of veracity is that implied in the query, "Will you venture to undergo one of the four ordeals to prove the truth of what you say?" these four ordeals consisting in the rate of the burning of a candle, the chewing and swallowing of a given quantity of rice in a given time, the diving under water, and the thrusting of a finger into molten lead, as previously described (vol. i., page 177).

The worst imprecation of all is, "If I should act falsely, may all the Buddhs, who are numberless as the grains of sand in the Ganges, be unable to release me from the miseries of successive stages of existence." The devout Buddhist must be very sure of himself before he ventures to back up any statement by the utterance of that awful imprecation: for the Buddhist hell (*Ngayè*) consists of eight infernal regions, concerning all the torments and miseries of which Buddha declared that it would take more than a hundred thousand years to give a full description. On the walls of some of the buildings in the vicinity of the celebrated Arakan pagoda (*Mahamyatmuni*) situated at the southern end of Mandalay, there is a blood-curdling collection of paintings illustrative of some of the torments of the damned, many of which it would be impossible to write about.

The infernal regions consist of eight stages or stories, each of which is encompassed by sixteen inner hells. Escape from any of these hells is impossible, as they are all situated deep down in the bowels of the earth.

## Chapter VII

### NATIONAL HABITS AND CUSTOMS

IN the Burmese language the term for a human being (*Lu*) comprises not only all men, women, and children, but also the spirits (*Nat*) inhabiting the six lower celestial regions and the *Brahma* of the twenty higher celestial abodes. In every-day parlance, however, the term is regarded as applicable only to the layman, and divisible specifically into male (*Yaukya*) and female (*Meinma*). Despite the facts that Burmese Buddhism makes no provision for the elementary education of girls, and that, whenever any woman recites her pious formulæ at any pagoda or other sacred shrine, she invariably prays she may be born again as a male during the next state of existence,—in order to have this essential qualification for attaining a higher future status in the ladder of life,—yet there is far more equality between the sexes than among other eastern races, except perhaps the closely related Siamese and the Japanese. Indeed, in many respects the women of Burma enjoy a freedom and independence far ahead of what as yet prevails among western nations.

In minor matters the wife wisely gives way. When going from village to village, for example, she follows at a pace or two behind her lord and master. At open-air theatrical entertainments she sits behind him, and even during the family meal she sees that the men have been attended to before she disposes herself to begin eating. But to call a woman “the weaker vessel” would be indeed a misnomer. She rules the household, often with a rod of iron. The wit and the general intelligence of Burmese women are decidedly above the



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

average of those of men. Their capacity for petty trade, and even for concerns of greater magnitude, is so well recognized that the Burman would perhaps just about as soon think of committing himself to any undertaking without duly consulting the soothsayer as to the propitiousness of any given day as of embarking upon the enterprise without the knowledge and consent of his better half. So much is this the case, that in 1891 the Local Government of Burma had to institute inquiries as to the extent to which the wives of Burmese officials used or abused their position for purposes of trade.

Even officially the wife will act for her husband during his absence in case of emergency. Thus, in 1885, when troublous times set in throughout Lower Burma, as well as in the conquered but not yet annexed kingdom of Ava, the wife of a subordinate magistrate ordered out the police and gave all necessary instructions for the routing of dacoits who had suddenly appeared in a neighbouring locality whilst her husband was pursuing them in a different direction. And many such examples of the capacity of women for action might easily be given.

Notwithstanding her talent for business and her administrative ability, however, it must still be recollected that a woman is one of the four things which cannot be trusted, the other three being a thief, the bough of a tree, and a ruler. Under the Laws of Manu, power is given to the husband to correct the wife by chastisement,—a procedure seldom adopted. Indeed, it is very often the other way, the hen-pecked husband being, as Burmese and Germans alike term the status, “under the slipper” of the exacting wife. To be “food for the sandal” (*Panátsa*) is a not infrequent term of reproach used by women towards men.

Some years ago (1889) a case of wife beating came on for trial before a Burmese subdivisional magistrate in the Toungoo district, who recorded in his judgment that the accused was guilty of too great presumption on his legal prerogative in beating his wife with a thick stick, and that though it was laid down in the laws of Manu that chastisement might be given, yet it should be confined to correction with a thin cane, for example.

## REPROACHES AMONG WOMEN

It must have surprised this worthy expounder of the law to find that the Judicial Commissioner had come across the case and had written a memorandum on it, in which it was pointed out, for future guidance, that (*autre temps, autres mœurs*) under British rule not even correction with a small stick or cane was permissible.

Among Burmese women barrenness is a reproach, and the term "barren woman" (*Amyínma*) is one of disrespect and derision. To have but one child seems only little better, for the "one-egg-woman" (*Utalónma*) is also held in scant esteem. To be prolific is to be honoured. Those remaining unmarried after attaining marriageable age are also disrespectfully called *Haing*, which literally means a full-grown male elephant with only one small tusk.

Burmese women believe, and assert, that they can foretell the sex of the child which may be in their womb. If manipulation shows that the fœtus is harder and heavier on the right side than on the left, the infant will be a boy; but if these indications are found stronger on the left side, it will be a girl. Even if such predictions do not always come true, no matter: the above is still held to be the general rule.

If a woman at all advanced in pregnancy dies, the fœtus is cut out from the womb and buried secretly, so as to be out of the reach of magic men, who would exhume it and work it up into charmed medicine. Otherwise the belief is that in a future state of existence the destinies of the husband and the wife would again bring them together with the same consequence to the woman and to the child she has conceived. When a child is produced stillborn, a piece of iron is placed on the body before it is wrapped in the swathing bands forming its shroud, and the formula is repeated, "Till this iron becomes soft as cotton, enter not again into thy mother's womb." If both mother and infant die during childbirth, they are each buried separately. Should the child remain alive, however, a wise woman, "the wife (or the daughter) of a *Nat*" (*Natgadáw* or *Natthamí*) is called in, with a view to winning back to the babe its soul, psyche, or "butterfly" (*Leikpyá*), which is sup-

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posed to have gone off in company with that of the dead mother. Unless this be charmed back, the babe must either die or else grow up in idiocy. The wise woman, having placed a morsel of cotton gossamer on a tiny piece of looking-glass laid near the corpse, holds a spotless bit of cloth below the mirror, and then with weird words entreats the dead mother not to take away with her the soul of her child, but to restore it to the earthly clay. When at length, wafted by any chance breath of wind, the gossamer falls into the outstretched cloth below, it is carried gently and laid on the infant's breast, accompanied by soft, soothing words and tender phrases.

The Burmese birth customs are savage and barbarous in the extreme. Nowhere in the world can maternity have greater penalties to pay than in Burma. Even the very name for a midwife, "she who pulls the womb" (*Wunswè*), or more politely, "she who presses with the hand" (*Letthé*), is gruesomely suggestive of heroic and drastic methods of treatment. On the birth of the child the mother is at once smeared all over with powdered turmeric (*Nanwin*), in order to correct the humours of the body and to counteract those of malign influence. This correction of the humours by means of turmeric lasts for seven days, during the whole of which period the miserable young mother undergoes a process of roasting. All ventilation of the chamber is stopped, and the air is maintained at a stifling temperature by means of wood fires in which bricks are also made incandescent. The kinds of wood specially favoured for this particular purpose are that of a creeper called *Bein*, and also that of *Palan* (*Bauhinia racemosa*) and *Mangyi* (*Strobilanthes flaccidifolius*). But in addition to exposure to the high temperature caused by this fire, the poor patient is heaped over with thick clothes and warm coverings of every possible sort, while from time to time she is made to inhale the smoke of a burning branch of black aniseed (*Samônnet*: *Nigella sativa*), and to take draughts of a medicinal infusion (*Seinse*) often even mixed with ardent spirits. On the third day, a change of blood is supposed to take place, and perfect quiet is enjoined within the house; but the

## BIRTH CUSTOMS

roasting process, the "pit of fire" (*Midwin*), lasts for seven days. After this firebath follows the festival (*Kinbóntat*) during which the infant and the hands of the guests are washed in a decoction of the pods of the soap acacia (*Kinbôn: Modecca trilobata*). On the seventh day after the birth of the child the midwife boils the fruit of this creeper and mixes it with seven kinds of *Tayaw* (a species of *Grewia*), with which infusion the body, and more particularly the head, of the infant is washed, and the hands of the assembled relatives or guests are rinsed. When this ceremony has been performed the midwife takes up the child in a white cloth and presents it to the mother, whilst all join in wishing good luck to the babe.

On the same seventh day, the period of the roasting of the young mother is at an end, and she is then given a steam bath by being made to sit for an hour over a pot of boiling water into which leaves of tamarind, thanáp (*Cordia myxa*) and grass have been thrown, and which is enclosed by mats covered with blankets. Immediately upon this follows a cold bath, and the birth ceremonies are concluded. The mother again takes to her bed, and the newly washed infant is put to the breast. In order to stimulate the powers of lactation, a decoction of "bitter curry" (*Henka*) is made of the leaves of *Kyanban* (*Saccharum officinarum*), *Danthalón* (*Moringa pterygosperma*), pepper, salt, and powdered fish. After these seven days' ceremonies the mother is allowed to go about the ordinary household avocations, so soon as she has regained sufficient strength.

When one considers the barbarity of this horrible treatment, it really seems marvellous that the Burmese are physically such a fine race as they undoubtedly are. Each birth ceremony must take years off the life, or at least off the reproductive age of women: and that this is so, is borne out by the fact that the census of 1891 shows the latter to vary among women between fifteen to thirty-nine years of age.

No benefit that the British have bestowed upon Burma can possibly be greater than that brought to



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

bear on the race by the Lady Dufferin Hospitals, where the science of western civilization is undermining the pernicious influence of the crassly ignorant and extremely superstitious "womb-pulling" midwives. The amelioration of the birth customs will, indeed, be one of the greatest blessings which Britain has conferred on Burma. It is impossible, without knowing these birth customs, to estimate the true value of the facts that in 1898 twelve Burmese women or girls qualified in midwifery and sick-nursing, while other eighteen were undergoing a course of study at the hospital. Nor, without this knowledge, can one comprehend the significance of the five good bodily qualities in a woman—hair like the feathers of the peacock's tail, lips of bright red hue, teeth of even growth and dazzling whiteness, skin of regular unblemished colour, *and that, though a woman should bear twenty children, she may never look old nor have a single gray hair, though living to 100 years of age.*

The navel string is buried; and the correct idiom for inquiring where any person's birthplace may happen to have been is to ask, "Where was your navel string buried?" The caul of an infant is supposed to bring good luck in the way of obtaining for its possessor the favour of those set in authority over him.

About seven or eight days after the ceremony of washing the child, its name is chosen. This ceremony is called *Gyothin Nanthinmi*, which literally means "to name according to the planet (*Gyo*) and to the day of the week on which one is born (*Nan*)." Great importance is attached to each of those details, and in Burmese time the day of the week upon which any witness happened to have been born was usually recorded in revenue proceedings. The eight planetary or erratic celestial orbs are *Taninganwé* or *Ne*, the sun, (Sunday); *Taninlá* or *La*, the moon (Monday); *Ingá* or Mars (Tuesday); *Buddahú* or Mercury (Wednesday); *Kyathabadé* or Jupiter (Thursday); *Thankkyá* or Venus (Friday); *Sané* or Saturn (Saturday); and *Rahú*, the dark and malignant planet, which is only visible when passing over the discs of the sun or the moon, thus causing eclipses. As there are only seven days in the

## THE HOROSCOPE

week, *Rahú* is attached as a second planet to Wednesday, and it is supposed to rule only from midday to midnight. These eight planets form the eight compartments of the astrological house (*Zadakwin*) necessary for casting the horoscope (*Zadapôn*) consulted in the selection of the fortunate day and hour for all the important occasions in life. The latter is thus formed by the horoscope-caster :—

N.W.	N.	N.E.	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px auto; width: 80%;"> <i>Rahú</i>                      (Eclipse planet)                      Wednesday :                      Midday to Midnight.                 </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px auto; width: 80%;"> <i>Thankkyá</i>                      (Venus)                      Friday.                 </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px auto; width: 80%;"> <i>Taninganwé</i>                      (Sun)                      Sunday.                 </div>	
W.	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px auto; width: 80%;"> <i>Kyathabadé</i>                      (Jupiter)                      Thursday.                 </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px auto; width: 80%;"> <i>Taninlá</i>                      (Moon)                      Monday.                 </div>	E.
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px auto; width: 80%;"> <i>Sané</i>                      (Saturn)                      Saturday.                 </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px auto; width: 80%;"> <i>Buddahú</i>                      (Mercury)                      Wednesday :                      Midnight to Midday.                 </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 5px auto; width: 80%;"> <i>Ingá</i>                      (Mars)                      Tuesday.                 </div>	
S.W.	S.	S.E.	

The four planets at the cardinal points, Venus, Mercury, Jupiter and the Moon, exert a benign influence over one's destiny, whilst the others, and more especially the dark *Rahú*, are malign.

The manner in which the horoscope is consulted in later life is extremely simple. The astrologer "versed in the (Brahminical) Veda" (*Bedin Sayá*) having ascertained the age of his client and the name of the day upon which he was born, divides the former by eight. Should the number be a multiple of eight, so that no remainder is left, the planet presiding over the day of birth gives the requisite sign (*Nemeik*), auspicious or ominous as the case may be. Should, however, the age not be a multiple of eight, but leave a remainder, then the astrologer counts round the face of the horoscope, beginning at the day of birth, in the direction

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

of movement of the hands of a watch, and the planet under which the last numeral brings him is that which will exert its influence on the enterprise.

As great importance is attached to the horoscope, the "record of the time and circumstances of one's birth" (*Nezwè*) is carefully taken for astrological purposes, even although the horoscope itself may perhaps not be drawn up for three, or four, or more years after the child is born.

The circumstances attendant on birth are, of course, of importance. Thus, the four most foolish kinds of persons consist of those born at midnight, those born on the last day of the lunar month, those born whilst the sky is overcast with heavy rain clouds, and those born in a dense forest. Darkness in the atmosphere at the time of one's birth is therefore, according to Burmese notions, very closely connected with dullness of intellect.

The ceremony of selecting a name for the child (*Gyothin Nanthin hmi*) when it is about a fortnight old is made the occasion of a festival as glorious and imposing as the means of the parents will allow. Relatives, friends, neighbours, and the elders of the village or quarter of the town are all invited to assemble near the house. Here they sit down, describing a gaily dressed circle, whose centre is formed by the mother and her child. The father is seated near by, occupying, of course, a somewhat less prominent position, and no doubt feeling rather uncomfortable. After a short time spent by all in general conversation, and as if in meditation concerning the most suitable name for the child, one of the elders of the party finally makes a suggestion as if it had just occurred to him as a very happy thought that the infant should bear this, that, or the other name. The matter is then discussed more or less thoroughly by all the assembled guests, with the result that the suggestion is adopted. But there is about as little chance in the matter as at baptisms in the churches of the west. The choice of the name is virtually made by the parents, and communicated to the elder, who brings it out as a bright suggestion. Even in the selection of a name by the parents, however, there is less of free choice than obtains

## THE NAMING OF CHILDREN

among western nations, for the *Gyothin Nanthin hmi* virtually prescribes that the name shall so be selected that one of the letters proper to the day of the week shall form the initial letter of the young child's name. The letters proper to each day represent the natural grouping of the consonants in the Burmese alphabet, and are as follows :—

For Sunday : <i>a</i> (chief vowel) „ Monday : <i>k, k', g, g', ng</i> (gutturals) „ Tuesday : <i>s, s', z, z', ny</i> (palatals)		For Wednesday : <i>y, r, l, w</i> (liquids) „ Thursday : <i>p, p', b, b', m</i> (labials) „ Friday : <i>th, h</i> (sibilants)
For Saturday : <i>t, t', d, d' n</i> (dentals)		

Thus boys might respectively be called Maung An, Maung Gauk, Maung Saung, Maung Lauk, Maung Bauk, Maung Meik, Maung Than, or Maung Taik, and girls Ma At, Ma Gyi, Ma Shwe Mi, Ma Yit, Ma Bwa, Ma Thet, and Ma Taw, according as they happened to be born on one or other of the days of the week. If etymologically examined, the names themselves have often the most curious meanings. Thus, Maung Gauk is “Mr. Crooked,” Maung Lauk means “Mr. Maggot,” and Maung Than is “Mr. Iron”; while Ma At corresponds to “Miss Needle,” Ma Gyi to “Miss Big,” Ma Bwa to “Miss Grandmother,” and Ma Thet to “Miss Life.” But, of course, these are no more curious than such contrasts as are found among ourselves in names like Long and Short, Sword and Gunn, White and Black, Good and Best, Head and Foote, or Blood and Slaughter.

The above rule is, however, not absolutely rigid. Not at all infrequently Burmese children are not now named in this conventional manner; but the rule is inviolable so far as regards the names accorded to all noviciates for the priesthood, when they discard their worldly name and attain the *Bwè* or honorary title which is to distinguish them throughout their life in the monastery. Thus the novice born on Sunday may become *Ayeindama*, the child of Monday *Gunama*, he who entered this world of transitoriness, misery, and unsubstantiality on a Thursday *Pandi*, or on a Saturday *Naka*, and so



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

on, the names being Pali, and mostly taken from personages mentioned in the ancient sacred writings. The choice of such religious name rests with the abbot into whose monastery the probationer is admitted. If the novice continue steadfast in his renunciation of the world he receives the honorific *U* before his priestly name when the number of his lents justifies this distinction. As a matter of courtesy every monk is thus addressed by a layman. Should the latter not know the former's name, however, then the correct phrase is to ask, "By what *Bwè* or honorific name is your reverence known?"

It is not customary for children to be called by the name the father bears or has once borne. The Burmese believe, and perhaps they might be supported in this belief by the experience of western nations, that more love is naturally bestowed by the parent on the child than is borne by the child towards the parent; hence the apothegm:—

*Lu Mé san sé,*  
*Ywa Mé sun sé.*

Let village names be handed down,  
But not a father's to a son.

In accordance with this rhyming couplet, when villagers migrate to distant tracts and found new hamlets there, these often bear the name of the village whence the colony was planted; but parents do not attempt to create family names. In order to fix the identity of any individual it is therefore necessary to describe him or her in all legal proceedings, and such like, as, for example, Maung Ka (or Ma Cho) the son (or daughter) of Maung Lugale—which would literally mean Mr. Bitter (or Miss Sweet), the son (or daughter) of Mr. Small Man (or Boy).

The names thus given during infancy do not necessarily cling to the individual throughout the whole of his or her lifetime. They may be changed as often as seems desirable before the age of puberty, and no regard need be paid on such subsequent occasions to the *Gyothin* or *Nanthin*, of the planets and the natal circumstances.

The ceremony observed on such occasions is simplicity itself. A red-lacquered, pagoda-like ceremonial dish (*Ôk*), similar to that used in making gifts of food, etc., to

## CHANGE OF NAME

priests, is sent round to all friends and relatives with small packets of pickled tea (*Letpet*), and with the intimation that Maung Sawka or Mr. Impudence desires in future to be known as Maung Byaung or Mr. Honest, or that Ma Nyo, Miss Brown, wishes henceforth to be called Ma Pyu or Miss White. There are thus no affidavits to be sworn, and no legal expenses to be borne. It might even, in fact, sometimes become a source of profit, for the presentation of small packages of pickled tea (*Letpet-tôk*), which accompany invitations to entertainments and ceremonials of all descriptions, has gradually become the equivalent of a polite request for a slight monetary contribution towards the expenses of any feast to which the invitation refers. The change of name, however, does not rank as any suitable occasion for feasting or entertainment. It is merely one of those minor details of life which are of too trivial and commonplace a nature to be marked out for any special celebration. One result of this very common change is that the name borne on any *Zada* or horoscope usually differs from that by which the boy or girl is known after about twelve or thirteen years of age.

The Burmese girl, on changing her state and entering into the bonds of matrimony, still retains her maiden name, and remains as before Ma Pyaw, Miss or Mistress Pleasant, the wife—literally “the woman” (*Meimma*)—of Maung Shwe Thet, Mr. Golden Life.

When the young babe has acquired his first name—or first and last as the case may be—he is fully launched upon life's troublous sea. He (or she) is made a great deal of, and remains far longer as a suckling than is perhaps the case with regard to the young of any other nationality. It is not at all an infrequent sight in a village to see a child being passed from one matron to another to be nursed simply as a matter of ordinarily polite attention. No doubt the comparative lateness of weaning, which may be fixed at about two to two and a half years on the average, helps to account for the Burmese belief that the mother's milk only becomes completely absorbed in the system at forty years of age—a curious idea, for which no reason seems apparent.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

As a matter of fact one child practically appears to be suckled so long as lactation continues, or until displaced by another, or till it shows loathing for the mother's milk: Long before the child ceases to be a suckling he or she has been introduced to the soothing influence of a cheroot. It is also by no means an uncommon sight to see a mother place her large lighted cheroot—consisting more of leaves, dried wood, and molasses than of tobacco—into the mouth of the child of about a year or fifteen months of age, immediately on it being removed from the breast; and the suckling appears to derive equal enjoyment from the cheroot as from its previous occupation. At any rate it performs its new function with the indifference common to all very small children when engaged in any occupation that happily keeps them quiet.

The Burmese cradle (*Pakét*) deserves a word of mention. It consists of a small oblong crate or open box swung sideways by long ropes from one of the roof-beams or attached to the joists of the flooring of the upper room. It has been asserted that this long, pendulum-like motion is apt to affect the eyesight of the child; but, as a matter of fact, cross-eyedness does not appear to be more common in Burma than elsewhere. On the contrary, the supposed influence of the evil eye would otherwise be less deeply impressed upon the superstitious. Ophthalmia is, however, as in most hot countries, somewhat prevalent. The birth customs, coupled with the extreme ignorance of the midwives, no doubt have a good deal to do with the contraction of contagious conjunctivis by children at the time of birth.

Until about seven years of age or more the little boys and girls pass the time in one continuous round of play, sometimes dressed very much like grown-up people and sometimes in a state of either partial or complete nudity, save on festivals and ceremonial occasions, when they are decked out with such gay raiments as their parents can afford. Then they form the exact counterparts in miniature of grown-up men and women, and, conscious of their finery, deport themselves with quaint gravity very amusing in its staidness and self-consciousness. During

## ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

the long period of the rainy season, lasting from May till October, a more or less amphibious life is led, and it is simply a marvel to the European how the little naked urchins continually wading about in the water manage to escape malarious fever and dysentery, or to be ever free from coughs and colds.

At about eight or nine years of age this happy time of unrestricted nudity and amusement comes to an end, when the boy goes to the monastery in order to struggle with the difficulties of the Burmese equivalents to pothooks and hangers. But even here, while acquiring the elements of reading, writing, and elementary arithmetic, it is by no means all work and no play, and "the little son of a monastery" (*Kyaung Thagale*) or "disciple" (*Tabyi*) has an uncommonly joyous and merry time of it. He can revel in all sorts of games, and indulge his roguish little propensities for mild, harmless practical joking upon his fellow pupils, but *never* upon those wearing the yellow robe.

What is there taught and the method of instruction are equally simple. On entering the monastery the boy is given a *Parabaik*, or coarse papier-maché, slate-like, black writing pad, though black wooden boards (*Thinóôn*) are now also largely used as slates, about a couple of feet long and seven or eight inches broad, upon which he draws with steatite or soapstone (*Kingusan*) the characters representing the thirty-one consonants and the ten vowels of which the Burmese alphabet consists. These consonants are in a way very much more interesting than the bald A B C of the Latin and Teutonic languages, for nearly every one of them has a descriptive definition. Thus the first letter, "big K," is differentiated from the second, "curved K," the "round S" from the "rolled up S," the "pot-bellied T" from the "elephant fetter T," the "deep P" from the "capped P," and both of these from the "hump-backed B," and so on. The acquisition of the alphabet is therefore not so unquestionably a mere effort of memory as in regard to many other languages.

Group by group the various letters are drawn and committed to memory, the whole class of boys repeating



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

them for half an hour very early every morning, and then again from about an hour to an hour and a half during the course of every afternoon. After the alphabet has been thoroughly mastered, an advance is made to the most simple combinations of a vowel and a consonant, and then by well considered gradations to words of complex structure. This whole system, an excellent method of attaining its purpose, is briefly comprised in the "great basket of learning" (*Thinbôngyi*). When the *Thinbôngyi* has been assimilated, a gradual course of instruction is given in the religious precepts and in the simpler instructions relating to the tenets of Buddhism. These are first of all recited by the *Pôngyi* and repeated many times in chorus by the small boys, who then write them down, phrase by phrase, on the *Parabaik*, and continue repeating them in as loud a tone as they feel inclined to. When each lesson is ended, the *Parabaik* are all simply sponged over and scrubbed in order to remove the soapstone characters, and then hung out to dry until required for the next lesson. They are blackened by being occasionally rubbed with ground charcoal and rice water. Of "the three R's," arithmetic is that which is dealt with in the most elementary and perfunctory manner, as the multiplication table (*Kogyauung*, or "nine combinations") only ascends to nine times nine. In exalted language the latter is referred to as the *Maungma Sadeik*, or "concubine's figures," because it is supposed to have been introduced into the palace of one of the kings by an inferior queen.

Noise is the unavoidable accompaniment of instruction imparted in this manner. But the din and clatter of tongues become intensified should any European visitor venture into a monastery whilst lessons are going on. The clamour becomes deafening, the urchins all raising their voices, either to display their zeal in the acquisition of learning or else from pure love of mischief. It sometimes happens that, when travelling in the jungle, the European officer has to reside in a monastery or in some rest-house immediately adjoining a monastery. Woe betide him in the early morning! Even if he sleep through the sound of the *Kaladet* or call to morning,

## THE ACOLYTE

noon, and afternoon lessons,—a gong made of a piece of wood hollowed out and with a narrow longitudinal slit along the top,<sup>1</sup>—yet the Babel of shrill young voices very soon arouses him from his slumbers. About four or half-past four o'clock the little disciples begin their lessons by the dim light of little oil-cruses; and on such occasions the tasks always seem to be begun earlier, to be conducted in a higher, more ear-piercing tone of voice, and to last much longer than under ordinary circumstances.

After having spent about a year and a half to two years in the monastery, the small boy returns again to his parents, until, at about twelve years of age, he temporarily assumes the yellow robe of an acolyte (*Shin, Koyin*), according to the ceremony already described (page 148). Previous to this his ears are bored, the procedure being similar to that adopted in the case of girls, with whom it constitutes a great ceremonial, a description of which will be found on page 201.

The *Shinpyu*, or ceremony of becoming an acolyte, is, next to birth and death, by far the most important event in any Burman's life. In comparison with this, such an event as marriage is a mere incident of much less significance. Until he has worn, even but for the short space of seven days, the yellow robe of the *Shin*, has, in assuming the garb of humility, entered upon a life of mendicant poverty, and has, in renouncing the pomps and vanities of this world, turned his back upon its snares and delusions, the male Burmese ranks as but little, if anything, better than a mere brute beast. Indeed, in some respects he is worse off than the lower animals; for he can incur religious demerit (*Akúthala*) without having arrived at a condition in which it is possible for him to gain merit (*Kútho*) wherewith to augment the credit side of this life's account—the supreme end and aim of the cold, callous, selfish religious philosophy of Buddhism. Should a boy die before the *Shinpyu* ceremony has been performed, it is held by many of the stricter Buddhists that such state of existence cannot be reckoned as human in

<sup>1</sup> A very similar sort of gong was formerly used in the Harz Mountains as a call to the charcoal burners on their meal of *Köhler-suppe* being ready.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

the transmigrations which must be made by his soul. Hence, in becoming a *Shin*, the lad receives at one and the same time his religious baptism and his confirmation in the true religion of the venerable Buddha.

There is no corresponding all-important ceremony in the life of a woman. She, poor thing, with a debit balance on the closing of life's account, may become a cat or a viper, unless her sins are sufficient to condemn her to punishments of a more fiery and horrible nature; but she must sooner or later be born again as a man before attaining, by any possibility, the status of a *Nat* or superior being inhabiting one of the six lower celestial regions. Hence the fervency with which, kneeling reverentially before some pagoda or shrine, with her feet tucked below her out of sight, and holding a flower in her clasped hands, women of all ages invariably, along with the usual pious formulæ, express the special wish that they may be born as male children during the next state of existence. For them this means promotion to a higher rung in the ladder of existence.

After arrival at the monastery and receipt of the eight requisites for the new life of poverty and self-denial, the *Shin* or *Koyin* continues his studies in the Buddhistic sacred writings, and makes whatever advance in letters the duration of his association with the learned *Rahan* there may permit of.

The education thus obtainable from about seven or eight to fourteen or fifteen years of age is certainly narrow and circumscribed. But it has this advantage, that the proportion of literates to illiterates is as 487 to 513, according to the census of 1891, which bears very favourable comparison with the other nationalities forming our Indian Empire. That only five women out of every thousand, or one-half per cent., can be classed as literate is a matter for regret, though the ratio is likely to improve soon.

There can be no doubt that the influence of the priesthood is on the decrease, and that this must consequently lead to a falling off in the number of boys sent to the monasteries for elementary instruction. But this does not necessarily imply retrogression, as the number of lay



## TATTOOING

schools and the attendance at them are rapidly increasing. Recognizing the inevitable march of events in this direction, some of the heads of monasteries in Upper Burma, shortly after the annexation, sent out probationers to the outer world as laymen in order to qualify in the normal schools of Government, and then, after obtaining a teacher's certificate, return to resume the yellow robe and become re-admitted into the *Thinga* as a *Rahan*. Even as long as over twenty years ago a *Pôngyi* of Kyaikto, in the Shwegyin district of Tenasserim, had himself taught surveying by the Assistant Commissioner then stationed there, in order that he might train up some of the cleverer among his pupils to acquire a sufficient grasp of surveying to fit them for obtaining employment under Government as headmen of revenue circles.<sup>1</sup>

At any time from the age of about ten to fifteen years the boy may, according to his desire, subject himself to the process of tattooing. There is no fixed time or age for this event. It may take place before the lad becomes a *Shin* or after he has left the monastery and returned to the world as a layman. As it causes severe pain, it is sometimes not carried out at all: but, in this case, the boy has to endure very much the same sort of unenviable reputation as a "softy" that an English schoolboy would incur if he shunned cricket, football, and other games. The name given to the operation is itself suggestive of pain; for it is called *Togwin togyin*, from *tó* "to shoot as pain," *Kwin* (*gwin*) "a field (or unit of the design)," and *tó* "to thrust or pierce." On the whole, however, tattooing is not now nearly so almost universal as it was previous to the British occupation of Burma; and this is merely one of the many minor signs showing how the national customs and character are gradually changing under our rule.

When a boy has become desirous of undergoing the operation, and his parents think, or have ascertained

<sup>1</sup> The *Pôngyi's* name I have forgotten, though I used to know him. I may perhaps be allowed, however, to mention Lieutenant (now Colonel) Thomas Morris Jenkins, M.S.C., as the Assistant Commissioner who thus usefully employed his leisure time in a lonely small town, where he was the only European.



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

from the horoscope, that the time is auspicious for the event, the tattooer (*Togwin Sayá*), also more politely termed the "artist in ink" (*Hmingyaung Sayá*) is called in to operate. When complete, the whole "field" of tattooing operations extends from the waist, on a level with the navel, down to below the knees. Within these limits all the skin is covered with figures of strange and wonderful shapes. As the skin covering the lower abdomen and the interior of the thighs is not by any means the toughest portion of the human hide, an idea can easily be formed of the pain which must be caused to the boy when the continuous pricking action of the style or needle succeeds in thoroughly irritating the skin and more acute irritation begins to be felt by the introduction of the tattooing ink into the blood. So great is the pain produced that, even although the boy may previously have been drugged with opium, he sometimes yells and screams as if he were being mercilessly thrashed. I recollect once, when riding through the town of Paungdè, hearing such fearful yells, that I felt compelled to dismount from my pony and proceed to the place of disturbance, in order, as I thought, to perhaps succeed in preventing murder. But the scene that met my gaze was a circle of quiet and peaceful onlookers watching with breathless interest the *Hmingyaung Sayá's* operations upon the hips of a boy of about nine or ten years of age, who, with head bent low on the split-bamboo floor and stern reared high, lay bellowing while his body was becoming embellished with the national adornments of manly beauty. And there is no doubt that when a Burman girds up his loins for convenience at any kind of bodily exercise or during laborious occupation—which he does by raising his *Kalanan*, or narrower waist cloth than the ordinary *Pasó*, up to his loins, bringing the front end through between his thighs, pulling it as tight as convenient, and then tucking in the end behind into the top of the portion fastened round the loins (*Kadaungchaikthe*)—the effect of the deep blue tattooing against the dark olive-brown skin is distinctly ornamental. Thus tattooed, his skin suggests but little of nakedness. And more especially is this the case with the Shans, who

## TATTOOING

tattoo themselves completely from above the waist down to below the ankles. All the great masters of the art of tattooing are Shans, who surpass the Burmese both in lightness of touch and in the beauty and clearness of the designs drawn.

The "artist in ink" begins operations by first of all drawing in the various *Kwin*, or independent portions of the design, with a camel's hair pencil before proceeding to render it indelible by the use of the tattooing instrument (*Sut*), a style made of brass. It consists first of a thin, solid, lower portion coming to a fine pencil point, divided into four or eight tiny prickers, which form the business end of the instrument, four of the slits being prolonged about three inches up so as to hold the ink as in a draw-pen, then of a hollow joint, from which the manipulation takes place, and also of a heavier solid portion above this, often weighted in order to enable the skin to be lightly punctured. Bit by bit the design previously drawn is executed, the style being guided between the forefinger and thumb of the left hand, whilst the instrument is rapidly raised up and down with a light dextrous play of the thumb and forefinger of the right hand. The ink used is lampblack obtained from the smoke of sessamum oil and diluted with water. On being introduced below the skin it turns the same blue colour as gunpowder when similarly used among soldiers, sailors, and schoolboys.

With an eight-pronged tattooing instrument, work proceeds so rapidly that a person's whole body might be covered with elaborate designs in a single day. Owing to the pain produced, however, the usual operation from the waist to the knees is only done in patches; sometimes it is completed in three or four consecutive days, and sometimes at one sitting of about four hours: but such details vary in accordance with many circumstances, being, along with various other individual items, more or less dependent on the degree of elaborateness of the designs. After the operation has been concluded inflammation sets in, the thigh swells, and the muscles become so rigid that lameness results. A Burmese lad, whose thighs I have just examined, tells me that in his

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

case the operation was performed when he was fifteen years of age, that it was done on three consecutive days, and that he was a cripple for about twenty days after that: but then the integral parts of the design all round the thighs consist of tigers and fabulous flying animals like winged lions, which are much simpler and less painful than more elaborate designs, such as demons, dragons, and the complete set of the signs of the zodiac. He has one or two peacocks and fish above his hip joints, and one or two demons and quails round his knees; but the various "fields" all round his thighs and elsewhere on the tender skin are filled in with cats and flying animals. The artist's charge for operating upon him was two rupees, which does not seem an exorbitant price to pay for an indestructible pair of skin-tight breeches of beautiful figuring and indelible colouring.

In addition to this regulation adornment of the male person, many other tattoo marks are often to be seen on the chest, back, arms, and elsewhere. These are all charms of one sort or another—love charms, invulnerable charms, and the like—and they are usually tattooed in vermilion. In the kingdom of Ava a black spot used to be tattooed on the side of men who belonged to the King, this "palace-mark" (*Nanzá*) being the Burmese equivalent of our broad arrow.

Burmese girls are not tattooed, though among the Chin hill tribes it was customary to tattoo with narrow lines the whole of the faces of young girls so as to render them less attractive to raiders, and to make them recognizable among the reprisals made during successful punitive incursions into the raiders' territory. Wherever the Chins have now settled away from the frontier districts, as in Thayetmyo and Prome, this practice is fast falling into disuse.

During their earliest years girls have hardly as good a time as boys, for they are not allowed to take part unrestrictedly in all the games, the paddling in the water, and the other amusements into which their small brothers enter with such keen relish. And then for them, too, education does not mean shouting out easy lessons in the monastery, or accompanying the priest on his daily

## EAR-BORING

round for rice, and other light tasks sweetened by the games and mild practical jokes indulged in within the monastery grounds. In place of being introduced to the good things contained in "the great basket of learning," girls gradually get initiated into the mysteries of spinning, weaving, sewing, sweeping up the house, husking and winnowing the rice, preparing the meals for the household, and performing all the many duties and drudgeries that fall to her lot in life.

After receiving her name when about a fortnight old, the first great and real event in the life of a girl is the ceremony of ear-boring (*Nadwin Mingalá*), sometimes performed as early as six or seven years of age, but more commonly coinciding with the attainment of puberty, when she is about twelve or thirteen years old. This *Mingalápyu* is the Burmese equivalent of the *début*. Until this ceremony has been celebrated it is improper for the young girl to wear jewels of any kind, or gold ornaments of high intrinsic value. *Mingalá* is a Pali word meaning "whatever is propitious, gives happiness, or averts evil," which has come to be applied to any religious ceremony. Hence the term *Mingalásaung* may be applied to any solemn ceremony, though it is mainly applied to the marriage customs. The depreciation which has taken place in this word during the course of time can very well be illustrated in the fact that the royal elephant was called *Mingalásidaw Sin* or "the elephant ridden by the blessed one."

As a matter of course, an occasion of this importance necessitates a reference to the horoscope, to ascertain when the most propitious moment arrives for puncturing the lobes of the ears. The needles used for this purpose are like very large sharp-pointed French nails, and are invariably of silver among even the very poorest classes, though always of gold, and often adorned with jewels, in the houses of parents in better circumstances. When the auspicious day and hour have been fixed, a feast is prepared to which all relatives and friends are invited in the usual manner, by means of sending round small packets of tea, and music of one sort or another is arranged for. Conversation and music while away



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

the time—the English proverb “time is money” would not be intelligible in Burma—till the astrologer intimates that the most auspicious moment has arrived, when the two huge needles are forced through the soft lobes of the ear by a professional ear-borer. During this operation the girl, whose nerves have by this time been excited to a state of high tension, requires to be held very forcibly by her female relatives in order to maintain her in proper position, whilst her shrieks and screams during the painful operation are more or less drowned by the deafening music provided. Until the edges of the wounds thus made heal up and cicatrise, the needles are moved once or twice a day. When the wounds are sufficiently healed, the needles are withdrawn, and the holes are filled up with smooth round thin stalks of the *Nagyè* grass or of the inner stem of the elephant grass (*Saccharum spontaneum*), after which the process of enlargement takes place. This is gradual and occupies a long time, which may be easily understood when it is known that the ordinary “ear cylinder” (*Nadáung*) is usually about an inch to an inch and a quarter long, and from half to three-quarters of an inch in diameter. It is somewhat larger at the ends than in the middle. Hollow ear tubes of this sort made of coloured glass can be seen in thousands in the bazaars; but the orthodox kinds are solid cylinders made of amber or some other less valuable material not of too heavy a nature. Of late years the custom has become prevalent among the richer classes of having gorgeous ear ornaments (*Nagát*) of diamonds and rubies set in gold, and joined with a screw fixed from behind—just, in fact, like any enormous stud or sleeve link in two pieces which might require screwing together in place of being otherwise inserted into position. But this is probably an innovation, and not an old national ornament.

When once the needles have been withdrawn and the original aperture has been filled up with small smooth stalks of grass, one stalk more is added thereto day by day until the opening in the lobe is large enough to admit the full-sized ear cylinder.

Neither men nor women have any pockets in the light

## EAR-HOLES

cotton or silk clothing they wear ; hence the hole in the lobe of the ear (*Nabauk, Nadwin*) is very useful, when not otherwise occupied, as a place for holding anything like a half-smoked cheroot. In going along a country cart-track or path a man or woman will often be seen thus carrying the stump of a cheroot that is too good to be thrown away yet. In fact, the ear-holes are much more used for such a purpose than for opportunities of adornment ; and, as might be expected, the holes are therefore largest in the case of men belonging to the working classes, like boatmen, fishermen, and such others as labour with their short waistcloth tucked up between their thighs. When the perforations are so large as to be unsightly, they are called *Napet* ; but it is very seldom that one sees the lobes actually torn. From such a man I once purchased in Bhamo a large ear cylinder, consisting of a written charm rolled up in leaves and encased in the thin cuticle of a bamboo spathe, measuring about two inches in length, and so large in diameter as to be only with difficulty spanned between the thumb and forefinger. It is very much more of a curiosity than of an ornament, and it is desirable to wash one's hands after admiring it. As it is the biggest ear cylinder I have ever seen in use, I was as much pleased at getting it as its possessor was amused at my wishing to have it. And, after all, one cannot expect very much in the way of even a second-hand ear ornament for two annas (twopence), especially with the latent possibilities of a potent charm thrown into the bargain.

Until about thirteen years of age young girls wear the hair of the head tied stiff like a bunch of quills, which gives the name (*Kyettaungsi*) to this inelegant fashion. Till then her education has been confined mainly to household duties, and to repartee and gossiping with other young girls when they go in the late afternoon to the village well to bathe there, and also bring back water for the household requirements. When towards sundown one meets a troupe of young girls and women coming back in Indian file from the well or the village stream, each carrying a chatty or round

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

earthen jar of water poised on her head, and can, unnoticed, hear their merry unconcerned laugh and talk, one cannot help thinking that they must be as happy as the day is long. Let them catch sight of the stranger, however, and more often than not they assume a grave and preoccupied air as if the cares of life had already begun to sit heavily on them.

In jungle villages and remote hamlets the Burmese girl simply grows up, gets courted, and enters through the gates of matrimony into womanhood. But in all the larger villages, and in the towns, there is a distinct and definite sort of finishing course given to the education she has hitherto been allowed to grope her way into. This completion of her education takes place in the bazaar or market hall of her native place. Here, towards the age of seventeen or eighteen, she goes and for at least about a year keeps a stall—*Ze yang the*, she “sells bazaar”—in whatever portion of the market hall her parents can afford to set her up. Those who are best endowed are naturally to be found in the silk bazaar; but, in whichever department she operates, the experience acquired very soon sharpens her naturally keen mercantile instincts and business capacity, and makes her mentally a much readier reckoner than her brothers who have been taught in the monastery to write down and repeat the multiplication table up to nine times nine. A Burmese girl of nineteen or twenty is consequently much smarter at business than a lad of the same age; and she undoubtedly maintains all through life the advantage thus won. Hence she naturally rules the roost, and gives the advice which is usually accepted in business transactions, though often clever enough (and wise enough) not to make this too apparent.

It is in the bazaar that the European will have by far the best opportunity of forming his opinion of the Burmese girl; and a high opinion it is bound to be. She has a grace and freedom of manner entirely devoid of anything like forwardness or “bad form,” which cannot fail to charm, though her face be not fair or, judged by western standards, possessed of even the slightest claims to beauty. Though not witty, yet she has a keen sense

## FACE-ENAMELLING

of humour; she can take a joke and give a *quid pro quo* without being in any way offended or offensive. For example, in once taking my wife, then still a young bride, through the silk bazaar in Toungoo some years ago, we stopped and talked with a girl at one of the stalls; and in the course of conversation I happened unwittingly to make some remark which caused a slight laugh at the latter's expense. She said nothing, but smiled, took two or three long whiffs at her big green cheroot, and then, pointing with her chin to my wife—a habit the Burmese have in place of indicating with the finger, which is considered extremely unrefined—quietly asked, “Who is that you have with you? It's your daughter, I suppose?” I might have promptly replied, “Oh, no! my granddaughter”; but she had scored the point before I had thought of this retort.

Burmese girls may perhaps be no vainer than the fair daughters of western and more civilized nations. Whether this be so or not, however, they certainly take fewer pains to conceal their vanity and their love of making themselves as attractive as possible. As one walks through the silk bazaar, where the prettiest and the best dressed girls will almost always be seen, these damsels will be found in the intervals of custom sitting in front of a small tilted up mirror and engaged in beautifying themselves by rubbing in *Thanátka*, a cosmetic formed of the finely ground bark and root of the *Thanát* tree (*Murraya exotica*). This is rubbed down into a fine impalpable powder with water on a close-grained sandstone platter with a groove running all round like that on a solitaire board. This cosmetic can be obtained in another part of the bazaar ready made in the form of small pellets requiring only to be dissolved in water to be ready for use; but a *belle* prefers to prepare the cosmetic for herself. When sufficient *Thanátka* has been rubbed up, it is smeared over the whole of the face from ear to ear and from the roots of the hair on the forehead down to the throat, then allowed to dry and remain thus for about an hour. During this time the damsel is *en déshabille*, and her face is not a pleasing object to the eye, as the daubing makes her look



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

exactly as if her olive skin had been coarsely and badly washed over with thin yellowish straw or cream-coloured distemper, for lightness of colour is considered a special kind of beauty among the olive-brown Burmese. In Upper Burma, where the people are generally somewhat darker skinned than in Lower Burma, a whiter cosmetic called *Lwinhmun* is made from rice, but its use is not very extensive.

Whilst the *Thanátka* is being allowed to dry in, the fair maid will proceed to do her hair. As smoking is inconvenient during this operation she may perhaps first of all pull over her *Kunit* or lacquered betel box, with its delicate designs in yellow, brown, red, green, and black, and carefully prepare a quid. First of all she clips off a piece of areca nut with cutting shears; then selects a leaf of the betel vine, puts a touch of white lime or of red, or of both on it, adds a sprig of tobacco, folds up all within the leaf and inserts the quid in its complete state (*Kunban, Kuntayá*) into her mouth. When this preliminary has been arranged, she proceeds to business.

Taking up her big semicircular comb (*Bi*), made of the wood of the tree from which the *Thanátka* is ground, she lets down the long coils of her hair and combs it out freely. Whilst doing this she lays down quite openly the switch (*Sazú*) used to supplement her own locks when these are not sufficient to form an imposing top-knot (*Sadín*). For this purpose girls may either treasure up their own hair as it comes out, or they may annex and utilize the long hair shorn from their brother's head when he enters the monastery as an acolyte, or they may wear false hair obtained from some one else. Both males and females have long coarse jet-black hair, which is in each case tied up in a top-knot, but the coils of which are differently arranged. Its length may be judged of by the fact that the measurement of it is made in cubits, and spans, and finger breadths. Whilst thus engaged the damsel from time to time interrupts her occupation to eject the red-stained saliva drawn into her mouth by the mastication of the betel quid. This is by no means what one would class among celestial manners, though it is mentioned as being eminently characteristic; for as you

## SMOKING

slowly approach the stall of the *belle en déshabille* the chances are rather in favour of than against her going through this objectionable ceremony in order to show how unconcerned she is and how oblivious of your approach. Her long black hair, glossy and lustrous with cocoa-nut oil, having been duly combed, coiled, and secured with a long skewerlike hairpin, she now thinks about the next portion of her toilet, the enamelling or polishing of her face after a sufficient time has passed to allow the cosmetic to dry thoroughly.

Before beginning this she will probably open some larger betel box or a drawer, from which she will select a cheroot to enjoy now that the quid of betel has been quite disposed of. Here she has a choice of either of two kinds of cheroot or "rolled tobacco" (*Seleik*). If in the ordinary form and made entirely of tobacco leaf, it is distinctively called a "roll of strong (pure) tobacco" (*Sepyinleik*); while if it is one of the large variety, facetiously called "Burmese cigarettes" by Anglo-Burmans, it is a "roll of light tobacco" (*Sepawleik*). The latter are about seven to eight inches long, and vary from, say, half an inch in diameter at the small end to about an inch and a quarter at the large end. This class of Burmese cheroot is made up of chopped tobacco-leaves, pieces of the stem of the tobacco plant, and pieces of chopped wood, that of the Ôkhne (*Streblus asper*) being most frequently used. These ingredients, after being sprinkled with a solution of jaggery or with tamarind syrup, are rolled up in a wrapper which varies in nature in different parts of the country. Most commonly this outer casing consists of the green leaves of bambwe (*Careya arborea*) and thanat (*Cordia myxa*), or else of the soft white sheaths of the *Pyaungbu* or maize (*Zea mays*).

Having lighted her cheroot and settled herself comfortably, the girl proceeds to arrange her mirror in front of her and begins to enamel or burnish her face with the middle finger of the right hand. This polishing (*Putgyin*) is a very much more delicate and lengthy operation than the mere smearing or laying on of the cosmetic in the first instance. For at least an hour—one is almost tempted to say for hours—she sits working in the

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

*Thanátka* enamel evenly, delicately, and smoothly till the skin assumes a pale, soft, pliant and by no means unpleasing appearance. Whilst this long operation is being slowly developed the girl pauses from time to time and examines herself critically in her mirror to see if the enamel is being worked in uniformly and satisfactorily into the skin; and no beauty throughout Europe or America can well enjoy more gratification from beholding her face, figure, and dress in the largest and costliest of pier-glasses than the Burmese *belle* probably derives from her little looking glass of about twelve or fifteen inches by eight or ten inches, and often much less. At any rate such is the conclusion that the ordinary male creature must arrive at, judging from the frequency of the critical examinations of the fair face and the length of time devoted to admiring herself.

When this enamelling process has been satisfactorily concluded, the eyebrows are carefully pencilled and made to stand out sharply from the beautified skin, and then the toilet is completed by arranging coquettishly some seasonable flower—a rose, for choice—in the dark lustrous hair. No headdress is worn, merely a natural or artificial flower being inserted into the raven-black mass of hair. When walking abroad, however, a kerchief (*Pawá*) like a man's silk turban is held in the hand or thrown lightly across one shoulder, to give a sort of finish to the costume. A bunch of keys is often tied to one corner of this kerchief, and a very mild form of vanity is perhaps excusable in parading more keys in this way than the fair damsel has drawers or boxes to lock up.

Having thus completed one of the serious duties of life—for an elaborate toilet of this sort can only be made once every two or three days, leaving all special occasions out of consideration—she is able to light another cheroot and converse with the neighbouring stallkeepers, or with strollers passing through the bazaar, whilst she sits or lies down awaiting the receipt of custom. If a passer-by halt for a moment and speak to her, he will be sure of a civil and courteous reception. If he tells her she is a pretty girl, she will probably make a contemptuous gesture, like turning up her nose. Nay, if he pay her the



## THE BAZAAR

greatest of compliments and say, "You are very beautiful, and you walk like an elephant," she will most likely only reply "Hèh!" in a contemptuous fashion, although the compliment may be quite in accordance with her own estimate of herself. Strange that the action of an elephant should be the type of graceful motion! But it is difficult to walk in, or even to keep on the feet, loose sandals fastened only with thongs from the top to the sides, passing in between the big toe and that adjoining it: and if one walks behind elephants, as I have done in Burma for many hundreds of weary miles, one cannot fail to perceive a regularity and imposing solidity about the motion of their hind legs, though it does not exactly amount to our ideal of graceful movement.

If one have sufficient assurance to inform the Burmese *belle* that she is possessed of all the five good bodily qualities (*Pyinsa Kaliána*; softness of flesh, goodness of bones, smoothness of skin, beautiful hair, and youthfulness), and that her eyes are bright as diamonds, her lips red as rubies, and her teeth white as pearls, she would probably sneer out the same contemptuous monosyllable, although perhaps possessed of vanity enough to be conscious of fully meriting the compliments. But compliments of this effusive nature, paid *coram publico*, are apt to be seriously misinterpreted, and to set tongues wagging. The bazaar is the home of gossip, and there are ever busybodies, aptly termed "bell-clappers" (*Kalauksan*), who revel in scandal. No young Burman who is fond of a girl keeping a stall in the bazaar would go and pay her marked attention of this sort in broad daylight. All love affairs are conducted in strict accordance with ancient usage and custom. The wooer pays court to his innamorata in the evening, at "the time when youths go courting" (*Lubyohlethe achein*), which, being interpreted, means from about eight to ten o'clock at night. It terminates with the "return of the young lads" (*Nalin-byan*) corresponding to about ten p.m. It is only then that it is considered correct for the swain to address the damsel in the "language of courtship" (*Lubyo sagá*).

In every small village, and in each quarter of the larger villages or the towns, the "young single men"



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

(*Lubyo*) band themselves under the leadership of a "head bachelor" (*Lubyogaung*), who exerts an authority over them very much resembling that possessed by the captains of the bands of apprentices in the days of old London, centuries ago. Indeed, there are many other things noticeable in the towns of Burma that also remind one somewhat of the condition of old English towns in days long since gone by,—as, for example, the way in which the houses of those following different occupations are all grouped together in separate streets or quarters of the town. Thus you will find a "blacksmiths' row," a "dyers' row," or a "carpenters' row," and so forth, all branching off from the *Lanmadaw* or main road and leading to the minor thoroughfares where those following one and the same trade or occupation are to be found congregated together.

In the evening, after the short tropical twilight has quite faded away, and "the time when, meeting, two brothers can barely recognize each other" has deepened into the darkness in which "one can scarcely see the interstices between his fingers," if the hand be held up before the eyes, the "time of courting" comes round. Before then the lads under each *Lubyogaung* have arrived at the meeting-place previously fixed on, and the mode of spending the evening is discussed.

As they go the round of the village or quarter of the town, the lads drop off either singly or in twos or threes, and the lover makes some sort of sign before venturing up into the house where his beloved resides. In some parts of the north of Upper Burma, and among the Karens, the correct etiquette for young men in approaching their sweethearts is to slap with the right hand upon the muscles between the shoulder and the elbow of the left arm, the hand and forearm of the latter being placed across the body at right angles to the shoulder bone—which also forms the challenge given at boxing matches. But it more usually consists merely of a preliminary cough or two, and such inquiry as "Hèh, Ma Pyu; are you at home?" On receiving the reply affirmative, he then asks, "May I come up?" and, permission having been given, ascends the stairs to find the girl duly attired according to her

## LOVE-MAKING

class and station so as fitly to receive the attentions of a lover. Probably the first thing she will do will be to pick out a good cheroot and light it, then hand it to him to smoke. This is merely an ordinary polite attention. Should the parents happen to be present when the lad enters the main upper room, they remain for a short time, and then one or other of the aged couple will say, "I'm tired; I think I'll go to bed"; the other responding, "So am I; I'll go too." Thereupon they withdraw to their chamber, but not to sleep.

Left thus to themselves, the young couple indulge in lovers' talk, and tell each other the old, sweet story as eternal as time, as variable but enduring as human nature itself, and coming to each human being but once, like the springtime of the year. Nominally the lovers are left quite to themselves,—“under four eyes,” as the Germans say; but practically a considerable amount of chaperonage is exerted by the parents, seeing that the partition separating them from the young couple consists only of thin split bamboo matting or of half-inch planking at most. Besides that, there is usually a small aperture in the walling arranged “for the purpose of noticing,” unobserved, what goes on. From behind this coign of vantage the mother chaperons her daughter, though the daughter is quite well able to take care of herself. Here the old people talk over whatever concerns them at the moment, and very often criticise the wooer. If he be not, happily for him, all eyes and ears for his sweetheart, he will certainly be rather disconcerted at the free criticism bestowed upon him by the parents. His personal appearance is freely discussed, and if his mouth be too large, his nose too short and broad, or his eyes too angular, he will have a very fair chance of becoming acquainted with all such shortcomings. Or, if he comes nicely dressed, in a bright new waistcloth and a gorgeous headdress of silken kerchief bound round his raven-black hair, he may hear himself referred to as a bit of a coxcomb, a *Paukban*—the gorgeous, but scentless and useless, yellowish-red flower of the *Butea frondosa*. His appearance and manners, his parents, relatives, and friends, his present and future position and prospects, and all matters con-

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

nected with him, may all be discussed, *sotto voce*, quite loudly enough for him to hear every word that is said. Perhaps his ears may tingle so much that he does not stay very long : but if he is apt to be utterly disregarding of time, his companions outside of the house will remind him in due course by coughs and calls that they too have young lady friends to pay attention to, and that his visit is beginning to exhaust their patience.

A more public form of courting is the attention which may quite correctly be paid to girls keeping stalls at a night bazaar, held in the open air, where articles of food of various descriptions are exposed for sale. There, by the flickering flame of the oil lamp, the *Lubyo* may laugh and chat and smoke with his particular friend without compromising either himself or her. But the girls attending the night bazaar are not quite of the same social status as those to be found keeping stalls in the better portion of the big day bazaar.

At such lovers' interviews there is no kissing, no "sniffing" or "smelling," as the term *Nanthe* literally means ; for they are rather an undemonstrative race in such matters. On the whole, there is likewise very little impropriety, though the Burmese can hardly be called very rigid moralists. When courting time is at an end, and the hour of the return of the young men has arrived, the *Lubyo* meet again in twos and threes and return to their headquarters. Unless the attentions of all the lads are confined to girls living in the same quarter, there is, and must be, danger of friction between the *Lubyo* of the quarter and the poachers. But in some places, and especially in Rangoon, the gangs of lads are headed by notoriously bad characters, who are a terror and a scourge to the residents and a cause of anxiety to the police.

In theory, at least, and according to the ancient rulings of the Laws of Manu, a girl or woman is merely one item in a man's possessions, and primarily not the principal item. In this one plainly sees traces of the Brahminism against which Buddhism was a protest, and upon which it was an improvement. According to Manu, the lawgiver, the most serious offences were those relating to the boundary marks of land, next came

## MARRIAGE

those dealing with the life and limbs of the person of a man, and thirdly, those affecting other property. First in the latter class came offences connected with a wife, who thus merely occupied the rank of the most highly valued of all the articles of movable property. According to the *Dammathát* the marriage tie can legally be formed either by the parents giving the bride and bridegroom to each other, or by obtaining the consent of the respective parents by means of a go-between or matchmaker, called the "overcomer of difficulties" (*Aungthe*), or else by mutual consent. Even in the latter case the tacit consent of the parents is implied. The first mentioned was most probably the usual mode of procedure adopted with regard to youths and young maids; the second was perhaps customary when the contracting parties had arrived nearer years of discretion; and the third may have been framed for the purpose of preventing scandal when lovers, meeting with opposition, took matters into their own hands. But elopement and maternity did not preclude the parents, and more particularly the father, from exercising their right as to the disposal of a daughter in marriage, though failure to exercise this authority legalized irregular marriages of this sort, if the parents were cognizant of the abode of the runaway couple. As a matter of fact, however, such primitive legal restrictions have long since been demolished, and the Burmese girl is practically just as free to exercise her choice in the selection of a husband as is her sister among the the western nations. When a love match turns out unfortunate it is believed to have been occasioned either through the destinies of the man and woman being bound up together (*Nabúsaba*), or through their having been co-offerers of religious gifts in a past stage of existence (*Yesetba*).

Whilst a young girl had no legal right to exercise in the matter of taking a husband, the action of a widow or a divorcée was uncontrollable. The wording of the law is very clear on this point—"Let the woman who has had a husband take the man of her choice; but a woman who has never had a husband may not take one without the consent of her parents or guardians."



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

Throughout Burma early marriage is the rule, but there is nothing corresponding to the child marriages so common in India. Usually a Burmese lad marries before he is twenty or twenty-one years of age, though formerly the ceremony was more commonly delayed till about the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth year. When he had made his choice of a sweetheart, he informed his parents, who proceeded, accompanied by one or two of the elders of the village or quarter of the town, to the house of the girl's parents. Here, after receiving the contents of the trayful of pickled tea or sweetmeats and fruits borne by the mother on her head—ceremonial visits are never made empty handed—and talking about anything except what was the object of the visit, the proposal was suggested that the young man should be made free of the house. If acquiesced in, the betrothal, for such it amounted to, though no direct mention was made of marriage, lasted for three years, during which time the young couple had full opportunities of further falling into, or altogether out of, love with each other.

At the end of this period, if the match was still on, a similar ceremonious visit was again paid by the parents of the lad and the village elders, when the hand of the girl was formally asked in marriage. In discussing the question of dowry a substantial money present was usually made to the parents of the girl, which seems to point to the indefinite traditionary maintenance of the primitive idea as to a woman being a mere chattel according to the law. Any dowry the girl had, remained her own; and if the marriage was subsequently dissolved, that remained her own together with all property acquired by her through trading or inheritance.

When all the preliminaries had been discussed and determined, the horoscopes of the young man and the woman were consulted by the astrologers with a view to fixing an auspicious day for the happy event; and this was by no means an easy matter. After all such difficulties were overcome, a bridal chamber was prepared in the house of the girl's parents, and a feast held there by the parents of the bridegroom. Here the *Mingalá-saung* or main ceremony consisted in joining together the

## MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

hands palm to palm (*Letset* or *Lettat*) at the moment predicted as auspicious, in eating out of the same dish, and in placing morsels of food in each other's mouths in token of their vow to love and to cherish each other. Here also the presents were made by the bridegroom's parents, as previously stipulated in fixing the terms of the marriage contract. These consisted in old days of slaves, elephants, cattle, or articles such as jewels, ornaments, silk, etc., according to the social status of the contracting parties. As the name for these (*Letpwè*) corresponds with that for an amulet, either for preventing evil or bringing luck, these presents were apparently superstitious offerings as well as ceremonial gifts.

While the festival was being kept up in the evening the young couple retired to the bridal chamber amid showers of saffron-dyed rice, and remained there in seclusion for seven days, during which time they were cut off from all intercourse with the outer world, their food being sent in to them. For some years the youthful couple stayed with the parents before setting up house for themselves. When the young wife was an only daughter, or the last daughter to be espoused, the married pair continued to reside indefinitely with the parents during their life-time. Thus, in place of losing a daughter, the old folks gained a son-in-law,—an additional relative sometimes little appreciated by wealthy parents in Europe.

The old customs have in course of time become somewhat altered, and the period of betrothal has been very much shortened. Lads and lasses fastidious and exacting in the choice of a wife or husband are respectively termed *Mayásanywe* and *Linsanywe* (from *San* "a test," and *ywe* "to select"). But in the vast majority of cases, when the preliminary courting has been recognized by the lad getting the run of the house, the marriage subsequently takes place. The formalities are still observed, but the astrological calculations have been much simplified or neglected, and the long period of betrothal curtailed. During the celebration of the marriage the *Mingalá Kyedaung* or "demand for largesse" is made by the *Lubyogaung* on behalf of the bachelors of the

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

locality. If not freely and liberally given they pelt the house with brick-bats and stones. The custom of the young man residing with his parents-in-law for two or three years is now less frequently observed; but when still acted on, between the wife and the mother-in-law he gets fairly well broken in to the conjugal yoke, which is not, after all, a galling chain in Burma. In rural districts the advent of a young able-bodied man in the family circle is a distinct gain to the agriculturist, while in the towns the son-in-law is seldom in a position to set up house for himself until after the age at which the national usage sanctions or demands the taking of a wife unto himself.

As has already been described (vol. i., page 181), marriage being a purely civil contract there is vast liberty of divorce, which would almost degenerate into license were not the exercise of rights in this respect restrained by rather intricate laws regarding the division of property. Sometimes husband and wife separate temporarily from motives of expediency owing to the malign influence of the planets on their union, and this is often made a pretext for final separation. The social danger thus existing through the laxity of the marriage laws is to a great extent obviated by the affectionate nature and the buoyant disposition of both sexes. But popular opinion also exerts powerful sway; for a woman "without a half" (*Takúlat*) or a man who is a lay "recluse" (*Tawtwet*),—the terms applied to such as have been once or oftener divorced,—is looked upon with but little respect.

There are three recognized ways of earning a livelihood—by relying on the favour of another, by relying on fortune or destiny, and by relying on one's own industry. Each of these inclinations makes itself more strongly apparent in different classes of society, though on the whole the national idea of getting through life with the minimum of discomfort is a compound of all three methods. And anything that will minimize having to depend on one's own industry seems, to the male Burmese especially, worth spending a great deal of time over. No race of men throughout the whole world would take more kindly to absolute idleness and lotus-eating than

## BURIAL CUSTOMS

the Burmese, whose womenfolk are the great workers and taskmasters.

Hitherto the richness of the soil, the favourable nature of the climate for agriculture, and the absence of competition have made life easy for the Burman. Now, however, circumstances have begun to change, and men will have to work harder than in the past or else go under.

While the death of any member of the family is of course a cause of sorrow, given vent to in loud lamentation, the following obsequies, culminating in the funeral or "unpleasant" ceremony (*Mathá*) are, like all their other religious rites, somewhat of the nature of a festival. This is more particularly the case with regard to the funerals of priests, which will be elsewhere described.

As soon as convenient after death the corpse is placed in the open front portion of the inner raised part of the house abutting on the verandah, and is there washed and laid out before being swathed from the chest downwards in cotton cloth of spotless white and then robed in gay garments. The thumbs and the big toes are next tied together with a ligature consisting either of a cord made with the hair of a son or a daughter or else of twisted white cotton. Often, too, a small silver coin is placed in the mouth for payment of the "ferry toll" (*Kudóaká*) into the land of spirits. The straightening out of the body and preparing it for the coffin are performed by men called *Sandalá*, and in the vicinity of Mandalay the *Punna* or Manipur Brahmins living to the west of the city had a practical monopoly of this class of work. Burial grounds and crematory places are almost invariably situated to the west of any village or town, that being always the ominous and accursed direction, while the east is ever bright and auspicious. But the north is the most glorious of all the four cardinal points from the fact of Gaudama, while on his deathbed, having directed his disciples to bear him forth and place him under the shadow of a *Sál* tree with his head directed towards the north.

On hearing news of any death the relatives and friends flock to the home and assist in the preparations for the funeral ceremony, while dirge music is played almost



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

without intermission by a band outside on the roadway, and busy hands are preparing the coffin (*Talá*), enshrined in a lofty pyramidal bier or spire of many tiers constructed of wood, bamboo, and paper, all gaily coloured and ornamented with gold and silver paper and other tinsel. The coffin itself is almost always made of light letpan wood (*Bombax Malabaricum*), and is coarse and flimsy in construction. Special offerings of food (*Thabeik-thut*) are also made at the monasteries on behalf of the deceased, and may even be repeated on the anniversary of the death.

By the time the corpse has been nailed down into the coffin the priest and some of the monks of the neighbouring monastery attend and "render assistance" (*Thingyo haw*) by reciting extracts from the sacred writings relative to the transitoriness of existence, its misery, and the immateriality of all things, the sad wail of the Buddhist religious philosophy and its creed of life,—*Aneissa, Dókka, Anatta*, "impermanence, misery, unreality." For obvious reasons in so hot a climate, the funeral rites are proceeded with as rapidly as possible. The bodies of poor people are disposed of on the following day at latest; but the richer the deceased, the greater is the delay in completing the obsequies and the more imposingly spectacular is the display connected with the preparations and the funeral ceremonies. Lest the solemnities partake too much of a festive character professional mourners or "weepers" (*Gnogyinthe*) are sometimes employed, though this practice is now confined to Upper Burma. Women were formerly employed for this purpose, but men have now a monopoly of this strange mode of livelihood.

When the time comes for the funeral procession to set out westwards towards the burial ground, the *cortége* is usually headed by one or two priests, behind whom follow the band of music, the coffin, enshrined in its spire-like decoration of wood, paper, and tinsel, and borne either by friends or else by hired mutes, and the line of mourners and friends of the deceased. On arriving at the place (*Thingyaing*) where the final funeral rites are performed the dirge music at length ceases, and the

## CREMATORY RITES

priests enter one of the open rest-houses, (*Zayát*), always provided for such purposes, while the coffin is placed, together with offerings to the priests, on the northern side in front of the building.

After reciting extracts from the sacred writings the priests retire with their followers and the offerings made to them on behalf of the deceased. The coffin is then borne to the spot where the grave has been dug by gravediggers (*Sandalá*; but also called *Thuba Yaza*, from the Pali *Thuba* "pleasant," and *Yaza* "a king"), one of the four infamous outcast classes. After being swung backwards and forwards for a few times as if bidding farewell to the corpse, it is lowered into the ground. Earth being sprinkled over the shell by the nearest relatives, the grave is filled up by the gravediggers. When this has been completed, the oldest male relative present opens a kerchief, and, holding it out, calls aloud, "Come, come away with us," so that the psyche or "butterfly" (*Leikpyá*) of the deceased may not remain behind as an evil spirit haunting the burial ground. Closing the kerchief suddenly, it is taken back to the home of the deceased and placed between two of the houseposts on the left side of the house for seven days. On the seventh day after the burial a sort of purification feast (*Yettèsun*) is given to the priests and guests who attended the funeral, and the kerchief in which the "butterfly" of the dead man has meanwhile found rest can be removed, as the danger of the psyche becoming an evil spirit is then at an end. The clothes of the deceased are usually sewn together to form curtains (*Kalagá*) to screen off different portions of the house when desired.

Cremation or "fire rites" (*Mi Thingyo*) are, however, much more common than burial or "earth-covering rites" (*Myewut Thingyo*) among all the well to do classes. In the former case the body is conveyed as before to the burial ground and laid upon four logs of wood placed two upon two so as to form a sort of hollow square which is filled with pieces of fragrant inflammable wood. After the pyre has been lighted and the coffin and body are consumed, the fire is allowed to burn itself

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

out. When the ashes have cooled sufficiently, the three nearest relatives of the deceased search for such bones as they can find, wash them carefully in cocoanut juice or scented water, and place them, wrapped up in white cotton, in a new earthenware pot. This is taken back to the home of the deceased till, seven days later, the purification feast is celebrated, when the pot containing these last earthly remains is carried to the vicinity of some pagoda or other sacred shrine and there interred. Wooden posts or brick monuments can be erected over such last resting places, though they may not be made in the shape of a pagoda over the bones of any but priests and those of royal blood. Sometimes the bones are pulverized, mixed with lac and sawdust, and formed into images of Gaudama, which are either placed in a sacred edifice or else retained in the house. But such images are never worshipped in any way, there being no trace of ancestral worship among the Burmese, nor of idolatry in any form as part of the Buddhist religion.

In the case of the obsequies of children there is of course, as with us, much less ceremonial and display. Infants are usually buried in their cradles, and small children in plain coffins unornamented with any decorative spire and tinsel work; and in either case the burial takes place as soon as possible after death.

## Chapter VIII

### TRAITS OF BURMESE CHARACTER

IT has frequently been said that the Burmese are the Irish of the East. But this vague epigrammatic description rather lacks definition, besides being altogether wrong in many important respects. There are, it is true, various outstanding traits of character in common, such as pride of race, love of laughter, joking, and amusement, light-heartedness, want of providence or of any Martha-like concern for the petty things of life and the cares of the morrow, occasional outbursts of brutality, absence of self-control, and entire want of anything like "sweet reasonableness" either individually or as a race. On the other hand, however, points of difference might be scored to an even greater extent than the tale of characteristics common to the two races.

Proud of their nationality, the Burmese consider the Chinese, Siamese, and Shans as of the same stock (*Amyó*) as themselves; though the Chinaman regards himself as much superior to the Burman. The hill tribes, consisting of the Karen, Kachin, and Chin dwelling within the forests on the hills between the main valleys, the Burmese class indifferently as wild men (*Luyaing*); while all other nationalities are considered rather contemptuously as "foreigners" (*Kalá*), a word, however, only applied to persons of non-Mongolian race, but otherwise used very much in the same way as the ancient Greeks originally applied the term *βάρβαρος*. This word is never used as a designation for any of the Shan, Siamese, or Chinese races inhabiting any portion of Further India and China. *Kalá* is supposed to be a corruption of the Pali word *Gawla*, originally meaning a Buddhist immigrant from



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

India. The Siamese apply this same term to the Burmese.

The Burmese are on the whole decidedly truthful, though it would hardly be correct to describe them as truth-loving. They have no particular prejudice in favour of truth, or dislike to falsehood *per se*. A man or a woman would just about as soon tell a lie as the truth; and out of a feeling of inborn politeness he or she would naturally prefer to make, with complete indifference, whatever statement might be considered the more acceptable to the person addressed. Thus they will often say "Yes" when they really mean "No," simply from disinclination to offend. But they are not habitual liars by centuries of heredity like their near neighbours, the Bengalis of Chittagong. If they tell a lie with some personal object and the falsehood is detected, they merely laugh and try to turn it off. They feel "ashamed" (*Shetthe*); but it is at being found out and having no luck, for there is no actual shame felt about the falsehood itself. When a Burman does lie, which is not infrequently the case, he lies somewhat more boldly and comprehensively than judiciously and discreetly; hence detection is comparatively easy. According to their code of honour the use of falsehood is quite justifiable in escaping from the snares of the deceitful. If there is ill blood between two villagers and one trumps up a false charge of having lent money before witnesses whom he produces, the opponent will not attempt the difficult task of trying to prove a negative; he will bring witnesses in equal or larger numbers to prove *that he paid the money back again*. And the friends of each party who come as false witnesses will not see anything particularly wrong about their friendly procedure.

From the above it will be seen that sincerity is not a leading characteristic. This want of conscientious scruple not infrequently gives rise to very peculiar cases in court. It has previously been noted that notwithstanding the freedom of intercourse between young lads and lasses there is comparatively little immorality. Cases do however occur, and if found *in flagranti delicto* the girl will often sacrifice her lover by bringing a charge of rape against him. So much so is this the case that rape

## LEADING CHARACTERISTICS

charges in general tax to the utmost the discriminative powers of the magistracy. One or two exceedingly amusing tales might be told in connexion with cases of this sort if only the subject were less unsuitable for these pages.

The Burmese are credulous and superstitious to a degree. One is almost tempted to say that it forms one of their most constant and unvarying characteristics. Their credulity with regard to persons claiming to be invulnerable, to be endowed with supernatural powers, or to be a member of the royal family of Alaung Payá amounts to something that is difficult for the western mind to understand. Along with this they are arrogant and boastful, although they are by no means courageous individually; nor were they brave as an independent nation. They know no happy mean, but exhibit the utmost extremes of fear or timidity and of unbounded arrogance or boastfulness. Either a man is powerful and therefore to be feared, or else he is weak and consequently may be despised. As might therefore be expected, they are timid and obsequious in the presence of those having authority over them.

Though sometimes performing acts of great daring and fearlessness, yet the Burman has little or none of the active courage founded on self-discipline, just as he has no self-control and no thrift. With passive courage, however,—in submitting cheerfully to the inevitable, or in enduring adversity which has befallen them or is about to happen—the Burmese are well endowed; and the high bearing they then often maintain is no doubt the direct outcome of their religious philosophy and their belief in destiny being controlled by the influence of past deeds. Another characteristic arising mainly from their religion is their marked tolerance. In matters of religion this even goes to an extreme, as all their most sacred shrines, such as the Shwe Dagôn pagoda in Rangoon, are swept and scavenged by low caste natives of India not professing Buddhism. And in other matters tolerance and non-interference are also observed, for the Buddhist is not his brother's keeper. Their religious superstition can easily be worked upon, even commercially. Thus, the owner of

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a small local two-foot gauge railway running from Thatôn to Duyinzeik near Moulmein, wanting a village settlement at the latter terminus on the Dômdami river, invested in an image of Gaudama to which he applied a coat of luminous phosphorescent paint. Planting it where he wished the new colony to spring up, the fame of the miraculous image soon spread, a pagoda was erected enshrining it, and the settlement of a village quickly followed as a matter of course.

Though not exactly what one would call witty,—for their jests are too often characterized by coarseness rather than by any finer quality,—yet they are gifted with a very keen sense of humour and a great love of laughter and banter. They laugh merrily at any joke or misfortune having a comical side ; but as is usual with the practical joker they look very shamefaced when the laugh turns against themselves.

While the men are easy-going and fond of idleness, the women are energetic and rather inclined to be greedy and grasping in monetary matters. Apart from money spent on works of religious merit, specially undertaken for the salvation of the soul of the benefactor and from these selfish motives only, generosity is wanting. Many years ago Government wished to found a small hospital at Kyaikto, a little town on the Sittang plain, and the Assistant Commissioner was instructed to invite the headmen and elders to a meeting in order to explain the object and intention of Government to them and to see if they would contribute in any way. After much explanation of the benefits, and many inquiries as to whether contributions would have to be made monthly, annually, or once for all, the list was opened by one of the most influential men present saying he would give sixpence (four annas) ! Nor is gratitude a common feature in the Burmese character ; it is just as rare as generosity. Not one of the high officials of the Court of Ava was willing to accompany their royal master into exile in 1885 ; and it was even with difficulty that Burmese attendants could be obtained to accompany the King and Queen as personal servants to the place of banishment, the fortress of Ratnagiri on the Bombay coast.

## NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Though naturally lazy, the Burman quite understands the value of diligence. Indeed, his religious philosophy teaches him that when the influence (*Kan*) of his past deeds is not sufficient to ensure him success in matters like agriculture and trade, this can only be attained by working hard.

As a race the Burmese have no mechanical ability or inventive talent, and altogether they are lacking in initiative. Consequently administration was usually weak throughout the country, at any rate during recent historical times.

Impulsive and illogical, they are fairly law-abiding, notwithstanding the ease with which bravos claiming supernatural powers and invulnerability can usually get together a band of dacoits—that is to say, a robber gang consisting of five men or more—when the harvest brings money into the hands of the villagers.

Submissive in trifling things, the women are frequently violent in temper; and then they display remarkable command of a copious and forcible language of abuse.

Not directly cruel, they are yet callous beyond measure to the sufferings of either human beings or the lower animals. Yet in their disposition they often show kindly traits. They are very hospitable, and most houses have a room known, whether otherwise used or not, as the guest chamber (*Ethé-kan*).

They are not demonstrative of joy or pleasure, though apt to lose control during anger or great grief, when they become very excitable and frenzied.

As it is considered impolite to express surprise or astonishment, the Burmese often appear to foreigners apathetic and indifferent, though this is in reality far from being the case. On the occasion of an embassy passing through Rangoon about 1883 on its way to Calcutta, the members were shown all the wonders on board a man-of-war then lying in the harbour; but no word of surprise fell from them, and they even went so far as to draw upon their imagination to the extent of saying that the quickfiring guns and latest novelties of armament were just like what they had in Mandalay.

The Burman never goes straight for any point he



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wishes to attain. The gist of what is wanted only comes out at the last moment of an interview, just as if it were a happy thought striking him for the first time.

Idiot children are exceedingly rare in Burma; but adult idiots and lunatics are regarded with much awe as being inspired. They are allowed to roam about the villages, and it is considered very unfortunate when such cases find their way into the Government lunatic asylum. Those afflicted with blindness also receive great consideration and care.

The Burmese are, like most Eastern nations, keen judges of character. They epitomize such opinions by having nicknames for all the civil officers in the different districts as well as for not a few of the merchants at the seaports. Many of these names hit off personal appearances, while others touch on peculiarities of mind or manner. Some are complimentary, and others quite the reverse. "Thunder and lightning" was known for promptitude and decision, while "Next Time" was the name applied to an officer who very frequently in sentencing a prisoner told him he would get a heavier punishment if brought up again.

"Golden Face" was killed in the war, but "Pot-belly" still, from one of the high seats of administration, throws a shadow far more ample than it was when he first received this *soubriquet* more than two decades ago; while the "good-natured Assistant Commissioner" yet retains the golden opinions of the people, and is perhaps the most popular of all officers with Burmese and Europeans. Some of these nicknames are distinctly graphic, and at times very appropriate. "Square bottle" is decidedly suggestive of the weary district officer, whose flagging appetite needed ante-pastal fillips of hollands and bitters.

Though the Burmese affect to despise deceit, to be known as an "honest man" is equivalent to being considered a fool, much in the same way as being considered good-natured is apt to mean that one permits oneself to be easily imposed on.

Affectionate in family life, they have a happy buoyancy of spirits, such as usually accompanies the spendthrift

## MODESTY AND MORALITY

disposition. There is, however, a lack of demonstrativeness surprising in a race so impulsive. Kissing is unknown, the nearest approach to it being a sort of sniff or "smell" (*Nanthe*), and even this is seldom given. After long absence on business I have known a husband return to his wife, when the first greeting and conversation were simply as follows: "Are you well?" "Yes, I'm well." "Are you hungry?" "Yes, hungry." And forthwith the wife placed the rice pot on the cooking-place to prepare food for the husband. A short inquiry after health is the usual form of salutation. In India it is necessary to inform a visitor that he has "permission to leave"; but in Burma the visitor, or the person meeting an acquaintance casually, himself terminates the interview by saying, "I am going," to which the other then replies, "Go," or "All right."

In personal behaviour they are singularly modest. Though the open skirt (*Tamein*) is difficult to manage in windy weather, and shows up to above the knee at each step, yet the Burmese woman exhibits marked modesty in all her movements. In ordinary everyday intercourse the behaviour of Burmans towards their womenfolk is habitually courteous and entirely free from anything like coarse familiarity.

Judged without bias, the Burmese are distinctly a moral race; but, in arriving at this judgment, it must be taken into consideration that their ideas concerning morality are based on views obtained from a very different standpoint from the highest level of western ethics; and that makes all the apparent difference. Allowing for parallax in traversing this aspect of character, the Burmese must be considered a moral nation, which shows comparatively fewer lapses below the norm of their own standard than is probably the case in more civilized countries.

Many of the traits of Burmese character can well be judged by data furnished by themselves. Gentle affection, kindly regard, benevolence, and freedom from all kinds of desire are considered the four cardinal virtues. Three kinds of maturity are recognized as to size, age, and virtue, throughout the three states of

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

existence—past, present, and future. Six senses are accorded to human beings, in the shape of the faculties of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and thinking. The four infidelities are due to selfish desire, ill-will, ignorance, and fear ; while the five greatest sins that bring immediate retribution are killing a father, killing a mother, killing a monk, raising a blister on a Buddh (whose life cannot possibly be taken), and making a schism among the disciples of a Buddh. The five things difficult of attainment are being a Buddh, hearing the Law, becoming a priest, being a righteous man, and becoming a human being. The four things that cannot be trusted are a thief, the bough of a tree, a ruler, and a woman. The five masters or tyrants are animal constitution, subjection to the operations of the four causes (influence of past deeds, mind, season, and nourishment), passion, death, and the chief of the evil spirits (*Mán Nat*). Water, fire, rulers, thieves, and evil-wishers constitute the five kinds of enemies, that can best be overcome by the exercise of truth, principle, industry, and the giving of alms. The four most foolish persons are those born at midnight, those born on the last day of the lunar month, those born when the sky is dark with clouds, and those born in a dense forest. The three ways of earning a living are by relying on the favour of another, on fortune, or on one's own industry.

Much can also be learned concerning national character from the proverbs, the crystallized condensed wisdom of past generations, current among the people. There is a book of proverbs (*Nimi*), divided into three sections containing proverbs relating to religion (*Damma Nimi*), to everyday life (*Lawka Nimi*), and to government (*Yáza Nimi*), and many of them are in the form of rhyming couplets. A general idea of the sense may perhaps be obtained from the following selections, but, as human nature is very much the same all the world over, the general drift of meaning corresponds with that incorporated in our own proverbs. "The King's waistcloth is pure silk." "In a forest of softwoods, the castor-oil plant is king." "The higher the master, the lower the servant." "Desire for haste brings de-

## BURMESE PROVERBS

lay." "Only something substantial can cast a shadow."  
"Rough speech comes from rough people." "Don't  
break the branches of the tree that shelters you." "When  
the front part of the house is hot, the back part will  
not be cool." "Who is fond of betel nut should go to  
Toungoo" (a district celebrated for its areca palms).  
"When two buffaloes want to fight, the grass can't  
prevent them." "Breaking one leg of a centipede won't  
stop its progress." "It isn't the cock-crowing that  
brings the dawn." "One doesn't see one's own want  
of beauty when laughing at the ugliness of another."  
"When clearing reeds, don't let the roots remain."  
"It is bad to help a man, or to salve an official's boat."  
"A spark from a rubbish heap can burn down a tower."  
"The worth of a fowl can be estimated from its bones,  
that of a man from his kith and kin." "Opposite  
natures don't mate in the same house." "Hot ashes  
won't scare a man who comes from the lowest hell."  
"When her neighbours are good, a girl can easily find  
a good husband." "Gold won't buy a good character."  
"Unwise acquisition becomes theft." "When a mad  
dog fights with a healthy one, it is always the healthy  
dog that gets its ear torn." "When a flea hops on a  
dog it raises no dust." "A dog's bark won't make an  
ant-hill run away." "Even a small elephant is still as  
big as a buffalo." "Although a hen may cackle all  
day, she will only lay one egg." "Remaining silent  
is worth a thousand pieces of gold." "Hare-lipped  
people mustn't blow the fire." "The cattle come before  
the plough." "Even a fine river is spoiled by shoals."  
"One bird is as beautiful as another." "No one heeds  
a dog that is always barking." "Unused iron soon  
rusts." "When once the elephant's tusk protrudes, it  
is not withdrawn again." "One may give a sniff (kiss)  
without being in love, and can draw one's breath with-  
out actually giving a sniff." "Burning the granary be-  
cause one dislikes a rat." "If you don't know the market  
rate, go by the village price; if you can't knot your  
hair, follow the village custom." "Live near a thief,  
you may become a thief: live near a fisherman, you may  
become a fisherman." "If you want good pickled tea,



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don't hurry the hill men." "A wasteful eater soon grows poor." "Snakes bite snakes." "Show the king of the crocodiles what to do in water." "One knows best when one's own belly pains." "Like moonlight in the hollow of a bamboo." "It can't be darker than at midnight." "Birds die even though one can shoot with the crossbow." "Spirits can do what men can't."

The Burman has a strong personal feeling that it is impolitic and useless to strive against those set in authority over him. In this respect he seems to have been so thoroughly disciplined under Burmese rule that the lesson has become hereditarily engrained in him.

A good many years ago, while I was on tour in the Shwegyin district in company with the Deputy Commissioner, our guide towards the next camping ground was a man who was gradually, by means of many questions, drawn out to speak of himself and his affairs. Apparently these had formerly been, but were not now, fairly prosperous. He had saved a little money, which, in an evil moment for himself, he had lent to the headman of the village; and now he was not able to get it back again. On the Deputy Commissioner asking him why he did not file a suit in the court against the headman, the reply was promptly given that it was of no use because the latter was a powerful man and could make it very uncomfortable in the village for our guide if he dared to bring a lawsuit.

The idea, however, seemed to bring a ray of hope to the poor man. Later in the evening, after the assembly of notables and inquisitives of the place had left our camping ground and returned into the village, a few forced coughs were heard, and our guide of the morning became dimly visible in the usual attitude of obeisance. He had come to speak about the money that was owing to him by the headman, and the gist of what he said was this:—"You see, sir, if I bring a case against him, I won't get the money; and he'll make it so nasty for me here that I shall not be able to stay in the village. But you are far more powerful than he is, and you would be sure to get it back for me. So, as I daren't bring the case, if you do, *I'll give you half the money.*" Here,

## INNATE POLITENESS

in a nutshell, are very typical examples of the national traits in fearing a ruler and in relying on the favour of those in high places.

Politeness and innate good breeding are marked features of Burmese behaviour. Although they may feel nervous and ill at ease, both Burmese men and women possess a great deal of natural *savoir faire* and comport themselves in a most becoming manner in the presence of those superior in position to themselves. Respect is very fully shown in their demeanour as prescribed by their code of etiquette; and although it may strike the stranger unaccustomed to Eastern formalities that in this matter they leave deference behind and appear cringing, yet there is none of the grovelling obsequiousness common to many of the Indian races.

This innate politeness, in addition to suggesting to them replies intended to please rather than crudely true answers to questions put, often exhibits itself in giving non-offensive names to objectionable things. Thus opium is very frequently spoken of euphemistically as "black medicine," although they have a horror of any one who falls under the toxic influence of either this drug or of alcohol; for, of course, the national want of control makes narcotics and stimulants exceedingly dangerous to the Burmese. Hence the stringent measures adopted by Government to try and confine the use of drugs and drink to non-Burmans. Moreover, the use of intoxicants is also, with wise prevision, stringently forbidden by the Buddhist religion.

In Arakan, however, partly no doubt from its proximity to Chittagong, and partly also perhaps from the notoriously malarious nature of its climate, the use and consequently the abuse of opium have been spreading within the last twenty or thirty years. About eighteen years ago I was once talking on this subject with an old Arakanese, a village headman in the Kyaukpyu district, and he was deploring the results of the use of opium. Finally, he summed up the position by remarking, with a laugh, "First of all the Bengalis come down from Chittagong and work for us as coolies in the fields; and then from one step to another they go on

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till they end by becoming the fathers of our children, and that is all because of the opium—*Tè ket the*, it is very annoying.”

No account of Burmese character would be complete without reference to their gambling propensities, which they have in common with their Chinese relatives. But they have less control over themselves than the latter, and are not infrequently reduced to utter poverty through this vice. This, however, is not, like opium and liquor to a certain extent, due to the advent of western civilization and British administration; for under their own rulers gambling was unchecked. It was even encouraged in the shape of lotteries at Mandalay, while one could legally reduce oneself together with one's wife and children to the status of slaves by inability to withstand the temptation of gambling.

These traits of the national character, and more especially those of the male Burmese, are hardly such as can reasonably be expected to maintain the race in the competition, now commencing and soon likely to assume vast proportions, between them and Chinamen, Shans, and natives of India; and the consequence must be that, even although Burmese may remain the language of the country, the population which will be found throughout the province a century hence will most likely be of an exceedingly mixed character. The Burmese hold the country at present, but their *vis inertiae*, strengthened by the heredity of generation after generation, is so great that it seems improbable they can continue to maintain this advantage.

Though they are often very aggravating by their passive resistance when it is desired to get work out of them, it is impossible to help liking this jovial, laughter-loving, indolent race; and Burma will be a much less desirable place to live in than it hitherto has been, when once the present happy, careless, casual incarnation of “lotus eaters” has given place to a more industrious, a more thrifty, and a more calculating race of people.

## Chapter IX

### THE SOCIAL SYSTEM

WHEN the young Hindu known in early life as Seiddatta, the son of Suddawdana, Rajah of Kappilawut and Ruler of Maghada (Nipál or Behar), broke loose from the tyranny of the Brahmins or priestly caste, and subsequently as Gaudama, the recluse, founded the religious philosophy of Buddhism, he snapped asunder, once and for ever, for his religious followers the fetters of caste with which those professing the Hindu religion are to this day enthralled. Buddhism recognizes no caste, and the Burmese have perhaps fewer social distinctions of this nature than any other nation. In no other country could mere claims of birth be less regarded than in Burma. The true extent to which this national freedom from either religious or social caste differences goes could, however, only be fully seen in Upper Burma while it still retained its independence as the Kingdom of Ava; because changes have long been gradually taking place in this as in many other respects under the bureaucratic officialdom of British rule and through the development of commerce and of the material prosperity thereby fostered.

While still an independent nationality there were seven classes of society distinguishable. These consisted of the Royal family, the priesthood, officials, traders or merchants, cultivators and handicraftsmen, slaves, and outcasts. Priests and monks have always enjoyed special consideration on religious grounds, while officials formed the most powerful section of society under the Burmese rulers. Short of royalty and the throne, any individual



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belonging to one of the classes other than the slaves and outcasts could rise to the highest position in the land. But slaves and criminal outcasts were entirely debarred from the rights of freemen. Among the social outcasts were included the "four infamous classes" (*Sandalá-le-só*),—gravediggers, beggars, prostitutes, and lepers; while pagoda slaves were regarded with hardly less repugnance, as they were mostly pardoned convicts or persons condemned to this servitude on account of crimes. Even when released from slavery on the British occupation, they continued to be regarded as low and degraded. The *Lamaing* or predial slaves, who tilled the royal lands around Mandalay, were mostly the descendants of captives taken in the wars with Manipur and Assam. Though outcasts, they were not so low as pagoda slaves or any of the four infamous classes. Thus, considerable administrative difficulty on a small scale was once created with regard to the services of a township officer in Lower Burma, who by ability and good service had risen to the highest rank in the subordinate judicial service, but who had the misfortune to be the son of a pagoda slave.

When any one rose to high rank by royal favour there was no false shame or tacit disowning of humble relatives. The latter paid due deference to the exalted destiny of him who had thus been promoted through the merit of past deeds: but it was seldom that such promotion led to arrogance and to contemptuous neglect of poor relations.

The natural veneration for royal blood was extreme, and amounted, in fact, to a superstition. To pretend to royal blood obtained for any plausible rogue as credulous support as claims to special sanctity or supernatural powers. And yet the royal family, the house of Alaung Payá (Alompra), thus superstitiously venerated with servile devotion, was itself a mere mushroom growth dating only from the middle of the eighteenth century. Alaung Payá's career resembles Napoleon's as being an example of a man of comparatively humble origin rising through sheer ability, force of character, intrepidity, and absence of anything like conscientious scruples, to the

## ALAUNG PAYÁ'S CAREER

highest national power by the time he had attained the age of thirty-nine years.

Alaung Payá or "the incarnation of a Buddh," the name chosen by this adventurer when he usurped the throne and founded the last Burmese dynasty in 1755, was born in or about 1714 at Mòksobo, now called Shwebo. As *Mòksobo*, "the hunter's cooking place," may also mean the "leader of a band of huntsmen," this has given rise to the erroneous idea among Europeans that Alaung Payá was originally a hunter. As, however, a huntsman, a man deliberately and personally destroying life as a means of livelihood, is almost as bad as one of the four infamous classes, the fact of his following such an occupation would have effectually debarred him from attaining royal honours.

Originally his name was Maung Aung Zeya, or "victorious conqueror," and he was, though distantly connected with the Burmese royal family,—the kingdom of Ava being then under the subjugation of the Môn kingdom of Pegu,—merely a revenue subordinate (*Kyégaing*) of a village headman before being promoted and made *Myo Thugyi* or headman of the town of Mòksobo. On the conquest of Ava by the Môn or Peguans, Aung Zeya was confirmed in his headmanship, but at once began to plan a revolt. Early in 1754 he collected about a hundred followers and massacred the small garrison of Peguans quartered on the town.

Reporting the matter as a furious outbreak of the townspeople whom he, as headman, had been unable to control, the Peguan governor of Ava sent only a small body of troops to revenge this outrage and bring in the headman. These being vanquished and pursued, Aung Zeya pointed out to his fellow-townsmen that, the hand having thus been put to the plough, the revolt must continue; and, trading on the boundless credulity and superstition of the Burmese character, he caused imaginary prophecies to be noised abroad that he was to free his countrymen from the yoke of the Peguans. Men flocking quickly to his standard, he marched on Ava, where the Burmese rose and massacred the Peguan soldiery. Placing his second son in charge of Ava,

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he returned to Mòksobo and busied himself with the recruitment and disciplining of troops.

By the time the Peguans reached Ava, Aung Zeya had collected a sufficient number of men to overthrow the army sent to crush him, and this defeat so enraged the King of Pegu that he put to the sword all the Burmese captives then in his hands. Infuriated at this, the Burmese rose and slaughtered the Peguan troops wherever these had been quartered on their towns. Collecting an army, the King of Pegu proceeded up the Irrawaddy, but was defeated at Prome by Aung Zeya, who speedily descended the river and took Bassein. Possessed thus of the chief seaport of the delta, and having his two sons in charge of Ava and Mòksobo, and being subsequently successful in routing the main Peguan army near where Rangoon now stands, Alaung Payá in 1755 declared himself King of Burma and Pegu. Following the usual custom of the King of Burma in assuming a new name by which he was henceforth to be known as a monarch, he bestowed upon himself the apotheosis indicated in the title "Alaung Payá." He also at the same time created his elder son Prince of Sagaing, while the younger was made Prince of Myedu.

Alaung Payá wreaked a fearful vengeance against the Peguans and changed their name from Mòn into *Talaing*, literally meaning "downtrodden," a difference which is still rigidly distinguished even to the present time, although the term has long since lost its original meaning. Thus, if asked what race they belong to, the great majority of the prosperous peasantry throughout the delta of the Irrawaddy will at once reply, "Downtrodden Burmese," in contradistinction to the Burmese not of Peguan origin.

While there are no caste distinctions, there is also no landed aristocracy; but there is a nobility. To be appointed an official was in itself practically of the nature of conferring nobility, while merchants and large traders who acquired property were registered by royal edict as "rich men" (*Thutè*). This included all such as farmed the royal monopolies, who were thus formally placed under the protection of the Court.

## THE NOBILITY

In the olden times this class is traditionally supposed to have contained 80,000 nobles (*Amát*), but the tenure of nobility or official rank depended absolutely and entirely on the royal will and pleasure. The King could raise up any man or woman from the lowest degree to the highest, and he could cast them down again. There was no security in prosperity, as all offices were bestowed and retained solely by the royal favour. At the Court the badge of nobility was a chain (*Salwé*) of gold suspended across the chest from the left shoulder to the right hip. It consisted of several strings or strands, fastened at each end and at the centre by bosses. The lowest degree of *Salwé* had three plain strings, while that with three twisted strands ranked next above it. Higher degrees of nobility were represented by six and nine strings, whilst chains with twelve strings were worn by Princes and the four Mingyi or Secretaries of State. The highest order of all, the *Salwé* of twenty-four strings, was worn by the King himself.

The umbrellas borne over the nobility were also indicative of rank. A white umbrella could only be carried over the King and his chief Queen. Red umbrellas with straight handles could be borne over the heads of all officials, but only those of high rank were entitled to have them borne aloft with deeply curved handles.

The *Bwè* or rank of nobility accorded by the King was a personal title and not necessarily an adjunct of office. It was considered a grave breach of etiquette to call any official, even of low rank, by his name. He was always addressed by his official title, followed by the *Bwè* or personal distinction.

With regard to punctiliousness as to titular distinctions and forms of address the Burmese are, if this be possible, even worse than the Germans. In speaking of or to inferiors the prefix *Nga* is used, and for equals *Maung* or "brother," while the prefix *Ko* or "elder brother" expresses respect, and *U* or "uncle" implies the deference to be shown to men considerably older than the speaker. In Upper Burma the word *Bagyi*, meaning "a father's elder brother," is frequently used in this sense in place of prefixing *U* to the name of the person addressed. In



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speaking to an equal the word *Min* is used for "you," while the form *Maungmin* is somewhat imperious and disrespectful, and *Kodaw* or "royal self" indicates great respect. The word perhaps most frequently used in this way throughout the whole country, however, is *Kinbya* or "friend," corrupted from *Thakin Payá*, "lord and master." The use of *Nin*, "thou," is as disrespectful as the German "*Du*," and is seldom used save in anger. *Shin*, "master," is the term of compellation used by women only, to men or women somewhat above them in rank. If, however, works of special religious merit or public benevolence have been undertaken, the persons in question are invariably addressed or referred to as *Payá-tagá*, *Kyaungtagá*, *Zayátagá*, or *Ahlutagá*, according as they may have respectively built a pagoda, a monastery, or a public rest-house, or have made large gifts to priests. When once lads have returned to the laity after being acolytes (*Maung Shin*) at the monastery, they are often addressed as *Maung Shin* by their parents.

Young girls or women socially inferior to the speaker are addressed as *Me* or "daughter," though the use of this word to adults is distinctly impolite. The prefix indicative of equality is *Ma* or "sister," while *Mè* or "mother" expresses respect and deference to seniority. A mother or an elder sister is often addressed as *Mámá* or "madam." Again, one may speak of one's own *Mayá* or "wife"; but, if referring to the wife of another, it is more polite to use the word *Meinma* or "woman"; while the wife of any official is addressed and spoken of by adding *Gadaw*, meaning "lady" or "consort," to the official designation of her husband. The wife of a town magistrate is thus the *Myóók Gadaw*, just as in Germany she would be the "Frau Bürgermeisterin." When writing to his wife, a husband usually calls her *Hnitma* or "younger sister." In the eyes of the criminal law all prisoners at the bar and all convicts in jail are *Me* and *Nga*, as representing a low grade of society.

Priests and monks are invariably addressed as *Payá* or *Kodaw*, "lord" or "master," and are referred to by placing *U* before their monastic name; while nuns are

## FORMS OF POLITENESS

addressed as *Sayá*, "learned," or *Bwathula*, "producers of religious merit." When monks converse among themselves, the senior calls the junior *Awathaw*, while the latter addresses the former as *Bande*.

Equally strict regard is also paid to the use of the first personal pronoun and its equivalent in addressing others. *Nga*, the equivalent of our "I," writ very large, is only used in the sense of great superiority, as arrogated to oneself during bickering and quarrels. The general term used even in addressing persons lower in the social scale is *Kyunók*, "your servant" or, literally, "the slave ruled over." Otherwise, in addressing superiors, humble and depreciatory terms are employed, such as *Kyúndaw*, "your honour's slave," or *Payá-kyúndaw*, "your lordship's slave," while any high official would be addressed in equally servile language, as *Kodáw-ashin* or "your royal self, my master," which is, along with the term *Payá* addressed to officials and priests, the nearest equivalent for "sir."

When about to mention anything before parents, elders, or priests, which is likely to offend against good taste unless previously apologised for—thus, for example, in speaking of the feet and other parts of the body considered inferior and objectionable—the speaker prefaces his remarks by "begging pardon with head and hair." It is considered a mark of disrespect to crack the knuckles of the fingers in the presence of a superior, although this amusement or nervous habit of "breaking the fingers" (*Letchó*) is common among the Burmese.

When not in the presence of a superior, the Burmese sit on the floor—for the use of chairs is just beginning in the chief towns, and there only among such as ape western habits—in a cross-legged position with the heel of each foot drawn in towards the thigh of the other leg, so that the knees are "bent so as to be level with the hip" (*Tinba-pyin-gwè*), the posture in which most images of Gaudama are cast or sculptured. The respectful attitude, however, is to kneel down and draw the legs closely together, the head being, three times in succession, bent down till it almost touches the ground, so that the forehead rests on the thumbs of the hands clasped

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together, palm to palm, in token of veneration. The crown of the head thus facing the object of veneration, hardly any part of the legs can be seen, while the feet, considered in more than a literal sense the most inferior part of the body, are entirely hidden from the person to whom homage is thus paid. This national form of obeisance before all religious shrines, princes, rulers, and those in authority is properly termed "abasing the tuft of hair on the crown of one's head" (*Usunshet*), though it is more commonly known as *Shekó* or simply "homage," which also implies the act of kneeling down and sitting on one's feet. But, as the latter, it formed the stumbling-block to the maintenance of diplomatic relations with the Court of Ava during the last ten years of Burmese rule, as has elsewhere been described (vol. i, page 30). In order that the top-knot and the crown of the head should be duly exposed in making obeisance the wearing of a filet (*Pawlón*) of muslin, bound round the head above the temples in place of the ordinary turban-like kerchief (*Gaungbaung*) of coloured silk, was compulsory on all who entered the palace at Mandalay.

Polygamy is permitted by law, and in the olden time the laws of Manú recognized a head wife (*Mayagyi*), a lesser wife (*Mayangè*), and six kinds of concubines (*Apyaung*). But it was only the king who followed the doubtful example of Solomon's wisdom in respect of having many wives and maintaining a large harem. Polygamy is indeed now rare, as may be gathered from the fact that the census of 1891 showed returns of 1,306,722 husbands to 1,307,292 wives. The custom does, however, exist; and it is authorized by law. Sometimes the monogamy is even broken at the request of the first wife, as the following example may show. The little town of Shwegu, about thirty miles below Bhamo, is the headquarters of a good many elephant owners, who are now becoming Government contractors for the extraction of teak timber for delivery to the Forest Department. The most influential of these is a comparatively young man, the younger son of a late Burmese magistrate of Rangoon, who rose to the highest rank he could attain under British administration. Before

## POLYGAMY

settling at Shwegu this son was married to a lady formerly belonging to the Court, who held land in her own right bringing in about £54 a year. When her husband obtained the timber contract from Government, she found herself unable, owing to weak health, to accompany him to a place so damp, uncivilized, and malarious as Shwegu is in comparison with Mandalay. But she advised her husband to take a junior wife to make him comfortable there, and even assisted him in the selection of an exceedingly pretty young helpmate, judged even by western standards of beauty. The chief wife goes and visits the lesser during the cold season of the year, and returns to her own home in Mandalay during the rainy months.

Sometimes it even happens that both wives reside under the same roof, though this is exceedingly rare; and in fact, notwithstanding legal right, monogamy has now become customary, while polygamy is no longer considered quite so respectable as it once was. The maintenance of concubines, in addition to the great and the minor wives, has now almost absolutely and altogether ceased, except perhaps among the Shan chiefs. In the olden days two classes of concubines were recognized, the *Apyaung Mayá*, who were not bought with money, and the *Athein Mayá*, who were "taken possession of" after payment. A female debtor slave could also be used as a concubine if the amount of her debt was over twenty-five rupees (£1 13s. 4d.); but if she bore a male child, this cancelled the debt; and, in any case, concubinage itself at once cancelled debt for a less sum.

The Village Community system, having already been fully described in chapter vi. of vol. i (pages 162-165) need not again be referred to in detail. Subject to the payment of the royal demand in the shape of a house-tax levied on each town and village to the extent of about ten rupees (13s. 4d.) per house, these communities were left very much to themselves to be administered by the headman (*Thugyi*) and the elders (*Lugyi*) of the people. After the annexation of the kingdom of Ava this simple and effective system of administration, well suited to the country and the people,



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was retained under the Upper Burma Village Regulation (1887); and subsequently the Lower Burma Village Act was passed in order to re-introduce, so far as possible, into the southern portion of the province the old Village Community system which had fallen into disuse and been to a great extent supplanted by other methods owing to the lines of administration followed after the annexation of Pegu and Martaban in 1852.

Under this Act the authority of the village headman was extended, and his responsibility increased; while in the towns the chief of the elders of the people were, as honorary magistrates, given a larger share in the conduct of affairs and the maintenance of law and order. The weight of their influence in this respect, no doubt, contributed to improve the state of towns at a time when a decided tendency to lawlessness was manifest, before the province had recovered from the state of ferment into which it was temporarily thrown after the third Burmese war. Thus, the honorary magistrates of Rangoon in 1888 made the following resolutions relating to keeping the peace, etc., in the suburbs of the city:—

1. Persons going out after ten o'clock at night must carry a lantern with them.
2. In the suburbs, where palm leaves and split bamboos are used for roofing, fire hooks, fire extinguishers, and pots of water shall be kept at each house.
3. In such suburbs the cooking place of each house shall be made by digging a hole in the ground, and carefully walling it in.
4. Patrol shall each night be kept by four or five persons in company with the police.
5. Endeavours shall be made to arrest bad characters lurking about the suburbs.
6. Every resident must render assistance in case of fire breaking out in any quarter of a suburb.

There can be no doubt that in consequence of British administration bringing increased prosperity, security of possession, and freedom from oppression by those administering the laws and collecting the revenues, the old simple social system is gradually undergoing considerable changes; and these are of course greatest and most noticeable in the immediate vicinity of the seaport towns, and especially of the provincial metropolis.

## DEGENERATE YOUTH

There is a growing want of respect and deference such as was formerly paid by young men to their seniors ; and the old veneration for the religious precepts and those devoting themselves to a religious life is gradually disappearing without anything equally good taking its place. The pious "filial duty" (*Mibawut*) owed by children to their parents is no longer so rigidly observed as formerly.

How sadly the young Burman has already changed may be gauged from the following extract from the Lieut.-Governor's resolution on the report on crime in Burma during 1898-99 :—

With the new generation of Burmans, the carriage of clasp-knives, loaded sticks, or other dangerous weapons has become a common practice in some districts, and these are used without hesitation at *Pwè* (theatrical or other assemblies) and drinking bouts. The offenders are often young men in good circumstances, over whom their parents are said to be unable to exercise any authority.

In the class of house inhabited there is little to mark the social condition of the owner, except in the case of officials. The residences of the latter were generally surrounded by a high fence woven of split bamboos, and had a crossbar painted red across the top of the gateway. The houses themselves were also usually characterized by being built of teak-wood posts and planks in place of less valuable jungle woods or bamboos. Houses built of brick were and are still uncommon, save in the chief towns ; and there for the most part they are owned by foreigners.

Owing to the heavy and constant rainfall throughout most parts of the country during the south-west monsoon period, the ordinary Burmese houses are oblong, and are invariably built on posts planted in bays of eight or nine feet apart. They mostly consist of two distinct portions built so as to run with their long side parallel to the roadway or path forming the street. The open front consists of a verandah, or "place for hanging the cattle bells" (*Kalaukswè*), raised about two to three feet above the ground, and occupying the whole of the three or four bays between the first two lines of posts, with, perhaps, the cooking place at one end in the shape of a large

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shallow box filled with earth for use during the rainy season. From this verandah a ladder leads up to the dwelling-rooms raised about seven or eight feet above the ground. Here the accommodation consists of two or more sleeping apartments (*Eikthe Akan*), one of which is usually designated the "guest chamber" (*Ethé Kan*), behind which a platform often extends containing the cooking-place and the storehouse for odds and ends of all sorts. Not infrequently one end of the upper floor is left open with the cooking-place free at the corner; and in this case the family collect here at meal times around the tray containing the boiled rice and condiments. Otherwise the verandah generally fulfils all the requirements of dining-room, parlour, store shed, and reception room. Here too, in many instances, the good woman of the house exposes wares for sale if she trades but does not keep a stall at the local bazaar. During the dry season the cooking is mostly done out of doors or below the house, as the Burmese detest the smell of frying in oil. The open space below, between the posts, also serves as the storage place of all articles and implements requiring protection from the sun or rain. It is there, too, that the handloom of the house finds its place unless it occupy one end of the verandah. More than this, the vacant space under the higher portion of the house forms the place into which all the dirt and refuse from above is swept through the chinks in the flooring, to be cleared by the pariah dogs, the scavengers that swarm in all towns and villages. In every Burmese house, from the palace to the poorest hovel, there are either chinks between the bamboos and boards, or else holes actually pierced as spitting-holes for use during betel chewing.

When the dwelling-rooms occupy more than three bays in depth, the house usually has a double roof consisting of two parallel ridges with a gutter between, though this is of course only necessary in the larger houses. The roofs end in gables built, like the walling, of planks or bamboo matting. Thatch made of Thekkè grass (*Imperata cylindrica*) forms the general material for roofing, and affords the coolest shelter, but split

## EFFECTS OF CIVILIZATION

bamboo and palm leaves are also used for this purpose. Roofs of such inflammable materials are dangerous even in small villages; hence pots of water, extinguishing clappers, and firehooks are kept outside each house to deaden sparks and tear down burning thatch in case of fire.

In all the towns, and of course more particularly near the centres of European civilization, the materials with which the houses are built are becoming more costly as the value of land rises. Here the roofs are often formed of small flat tiles or teak-wood shingles, or even of corrugated iron. In certain portions of the chief towns consideration for the general wellbeing necessitates restrictions being placed on the indiscriminate use of dangerously inflammable materials in house building. In all the better classes of houses the flooring consists of planking and wooden beams and joists, but in the humbler abodes it is formed merely by lashing small bamboos closely together over joists of larger bamboos.

Under British administration the general increase in prosperity throughout most districts with ample rainfall, and especially along the seaboard, together with the greater security from illegal oppression and the feeling that it is no longer necessary to refrain rigidly from any of the outward signs of being prosperous, have led to many advances being made with regard to household accommodation. Where twenty to twenty-five years ago poor, miserable-looking hamlets nestled on the banks of tidal creeks, large, well laid out, prosperous villages with substantially built houses are now to be seen. And this progress is general in all localities having direct contact with the centres of commerce.

This tendency towards improvement in household surroundings is also exhibiting itself in the desire, often marked, to abandon the previous national simplicity with regard to household articles. The national custom was, and is, to sleep on the floor, as well as to sit and eat there, and the use of a low plank cot was reserved for those of high degree; but now cots, tables, and chairs have for years past been gradually finding their way into the houses of dwellers in the towns; and



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naturally they bring coarse glassware lamps and the like in their train. Throughout the vastly greater portion of the country, however, the Burmese still live in their former state of simplicity, and are certainly as happy under it as they could possibly be with a multiplicity of household requirements less easily satisfied.

Except at the Court of Ava, there were not, and there are not now, any marked or recognized differences in the dress of men or women indicative of social rank. Of course there is a natural tendency for the rich to array themselves in more costly garments than can be afforded by those who are not so well off; but on festival days, when every one puts on his or her best apparel, it would often be impossible to determine the social rank simply from outside appearances; and as the work-a-day dress consists merely of old gay garments, or of cotton cloth instead of silk attire, there is then the same difficulty in distinguishing high from low merely from their attire. The everyday clothes of cultivators are woven by their wives and daughters from home-grown cotton dyed with local forest produce, while holiday clothes are, as a rule, bought in the bazaar, whether made in Burma or imported. As regards food there is either little or no difference between the rich and the poor, for the primitive simplicity still obtains throughout the country at large. It is only in the chief towns that a higher standard of living is forcing itself on the younger generation. No liquid is drunk while eating, but the food partaken of is, on the meal being concluded, washed down with a draught of water ladled out of the earthenware pot with a water dipper made of cocoanut shell or the lid of a betel box. A smoke or a chew of betel nut is then taken to promote digestion or increase the feeling of after-dinner satisfaction.

In the richness of the jewellery worn by the women, however, a more direct indication of prosperity can be obtained, although this would be just as misleading with regard to any attempt to fix social status as it would be in European cosmopolitan gatherings. Even among the ordinary agricultural peasants a family must be poor indeed which cannot muster gold ornaments for women

## NATIONAL COSTUME

and children on great occasions. But ear cylinders, necklaces, and rings studded with diamonds and rubies can of course only be acquired and retained by those fairly well endowed with the world's goods.

The national dress is simple, though gorgeous in colouring. The men's waistcloth (*Pasó*) is originally made eighteen yards long and twenty-two and a half inches wide. The ends being folded back, it is stitched together, forming a plaid nine yards long and one and a quarter broad, which is fastened round the waist either by tying or hitching in the end, the remainder forming a bag-like kilt in front or else being thrown jauntily over the left shoulder. A white cotton or silk jacket is worn down to the waist, or longer in Upper Burma, while the top-knot and hair are either bound up in a gay silk kerchief or else a *filet* of muslin is tied round the head with the ends pointing up behind. The latter is really the national headdress, compulsory at court, which is usually worn by all old men, and such as have attained high position. The female skirt (*Tamein*) consists of an upper part of common stuff, a broad centre of rich design, and a border also of fine work, all of which are sewn together lengthways to form a garment like a small table-cover about four and a half feet wide and a little more in depth. The upper part is folded across the breasts and fastened by a hitch in the cloth, while the lower portion remains open with the end touching the ground. Thus at each step the leg with which a pace is being made is exposed up to above the knee. A jacket of white cotton or silk, or of coloured velvet, is worn above this, and a kerchief is loosely thrown over the shoulder. Only the men wear this silk scarf as a headdress.

The villages are usually prettily ornamented with fruit trees, such as mango, jack, tamarind, cocoanut, toddypalm, and many others planted along the roadway, while here and there other large trees, like pipul and padauk, also offer a cool and shady resting-place for wayfarers, and serve as the meeting-place of the elders when village affairs require discussion. One often finds around sacred fig trees, or large spreading tamarind trees,

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a platform of boards erected on a parapet of brickwork forming something like a local *forum* ; and this custom extends right across the hills from Upper Burma, through the Shan States and Yunnan, into Szechuan.

Each house has its little plot of land extending at any rate to the back of the house, and fenced in with split bamboos. Sometimes a few fruit trees are grown in this small "compound," but there is seldom any attempt at gardening.

There is, as yet, little or no sanitation in the majority of villages. Even in the smaller towns the simple measures taken in this respect are hardly what can be considered very effective. The large numbers of pariah dogs, which are allowed to breed and rear their litters unchecked by the people, are the chief scavengers, and dirty-looking pigs often assist them in this work. Sometimes the administration has to take measures for reducing the number of pariah dogs, which are often allowed to increase in dangerous numbers. More humane methods are now employed ; but many years ago this necessary work had in the town of Shwegyin to be done by natives of India, for the Burmese would not deliberately take life in this manner ; and the coolies employed clubbed the male dogs only, so as not to spoil their trade in future.

The old order of things is changing, and is giving place to a new social system under which wealth is beginning to be held in estimation in a way that would not have been possible in former days. Then, to be known or reputed wealthy was to render a man liable to oppression, from which a way of escape could only be conveniently found in works of religious merit and public benevolence. But now, along with the old social system, the Burmese race itself is gradually disappearing ; and a century hence there will probably remain little or nothing more than traditions of the former, and but mere remnants of the latter.

Hitherto this has not been the case in any very marked degree, and the Burmese have perhaps in this respect shown an almost Celtic-like power of assimilating the lesser tribes and the immigrants of other nationalities.

## THE FUSION OF RACES

Thus, in 1872 the proportion of Burmese to the rest of the population throughout Lower Burma was as 236 to 100; while in 1891, notwithstanding better enumeration of the Karens and other hill tribes and a then weak influx of foreign immigrants, it had only decreased to 188 to 100. But the forces that are now at work in the shape of British administration and improved communications by railway, river, and sea, are all of such a nature and magnitude as have never previously been encountered; and they are such, moreover, as will soon produce an enormous influx of population from India and China, which is far more likely to impress its various and different leading features upon the future inhabitants of Burma than to be absorbed by the existing Burmese nation.

This fusion of races will be rendered all the more rapid and complete by the comparative ease and alacrity with which the Burmese woman mates with men of other than her own nationality. To the Chinaman, her fellow Mongolian, she brings an industry well suited to this his own great characteristic; while in grasping greed and love of money she is thoroughly qualified to be the mate of the rapacious Hindu or the Mohammedan from any part of India. But she still, to a considerable extent, looks down upon the *Kalá* or "non-Mongolian" native of India, as belonging to an inferior race, to mate with whom involves a certain amount of degradation and loss of social status, unless he happen to be rich.

To be married to a Chinaman is for a Burmese girl rather like drawing a prize in the matrimonial lottery. The Chinese consider themselves, and are considered, as belonging to a race superior to the Burmese: and they are frugal, industrious, and affectionate. The fruits of such mixed marriages result, as might be expected, in a finer breed of children than the issue of unions between Burmese women and men of non-Mongolian race. Of the former, known among the Burmese as *Baba* or *Bawa* (a corruption of the Malay word *Wawa*, meaning "half-breed") and among the Chinese as *Shipyittem*, the boys are brought up, dressed, and taught to jealously consider themselves as Chinamen, while the girls are



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usually made to adopt the dress, language, customs, and religion of their Burmese mothers.

More nearly allied ethnographically, the union of Burmese and Shans results in a mixed race differing but little from either of the parent stocks. It is only throughout the northern portion of the province, however, where the Shan tribesmen were broken and scattered,—after having centuries ago invaded Ava, crossed the Irrawaddy, and founded the Shan dynasty, of which Sagaing was the capital,—that the strain of Burmese and Shan half-breeds has maintained itself among those who now call themselves *Kadú* and have adopted a racial language and customs of their own.

The offspring of Burmese women by natives of India, whether Hindu or Mohammedan—and, curiously enough, when one speaks of a “native” in any of the towns of Burma, this invariably means a native of India and not one of the race indigenous to the province—are called *Zairbaddi* by the Indians, although they are simply included among the general run of *Kábyá* or “half-breeds” by the Burmese. As children they are often of remarkable beauty, with lovely eyes, but as they grow up they are apt to develop traits of character of a very unpleasing nature.

The children of unions, usually only temporary, between Europeans and Burmese women are on the whole an unsatisfactory cross-breed. No good purpose would be served by here discussing the morality or immorality of such alliances. So far as the Burmese girl is concerned, the union is not degrading to her. From her point of view she is married to the European; and she knows quite well that in perhaps more than nineteen cases out of every twenty the time must come when there will be a separation—that is to say, a divorce—desired by the husband. In becoming the *Gadúw* or “lady” of any European she is not quite on the footing of a woman married formally under the national custom of eating together from the same dish; but at the same time she thus raises herself to a position where she receives many marks of outward attention and homage, and she not infrequently utilizes this position to her own advantage

## CONFIDENTIAL CIRCULARS

in respect of the supposed influence she has with him whom she addresses as *Shin*, "lord and master." As previously remarked, this term of compellation is only used by women: and it sounds curious when inadvertently used by men, as, for example, on one occasion, when a young officer undergoing examination in the Burmese language addressed us, his stern examiners, with this soft insinuating term of respectful endearment.

There have been various circulars issued confidentially by Government concerning unions of this nature between young civil officers and Burmese women. The first, issued about 1872, is said to have resulted in a match, at a Rangoon race meeting, between two ponies named, *pro hac vice*, "C.C.C.C." (Chief Commissioner's Confidential Circular) and "Physiological Necessity." The latter won, and the threats of the circular were thus smothered in ridicule.

In 1878, another confidential circular was issued. This took the much more sensible line of deprecating the practice owing to the imputation, to which it laid the reputations of the officers concerned open, that the people at large might believe influence was thus brought to bear on official matters resting within the jurisdiction of the former.

Since then, other two confidential circulars have been issued on the subject. The last of these, hurled at the malpractice in 1894, and threatening stoppage of promotion of offenders, immediately resulted in several marriages, *bonâ fide* unions registered under English law, between members of the Indian Civil Service and young Burmese women already living with them. This unexpected result caused Government practically to retract the circular, for it has since remained a dead letter. One young civilian, stationed in a lonely township where he was cut off from the district headquarters save by steamer communication about once a fortnight in the dry season and once a month in the south-west monsoon months, even went the length, as official registrar, of marrying himself to his Burmese girl, in order to legitimize the child about to be born of the union; and the trustees of the Bengal Civil Fund refused to recognize

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

the act as legal or as entitling the woman and her child to be thus brought on the Fund as possible annuitants.

This is not a very savoury topic for discussion. But the great majority of those who may perhaps feel themselves called upon to preach on this subject cannot know what they are talking about unless they have personally experienced the depressing effects of the climate and the dismal, soul-deadening solitude of residence in a small out-station, where for weeks and weeks, often for months, the young European either enjoys no companionship at all with his own fellow countrymen or at best only occasionally sees one or two, who are for the greater part of their time occupied in touring about in the jungle. Taking into due consideration the several influences of climate, environment, human nature, and the facts of medical science, one can quite understand the position taken with regard to this matter by those—and there *are* many such—who think the lapse from virtue in respect of such connubial relation with a daughter of the land is perhaps the least pernicious of all the vices in its immediate and its ultimate effects on that noblest of temples, the human body which enshrines the soul, the image of God.

Sometimes the Eurasian children resulting from temporary unions of this kind are brought up as Burmese, and sometimes as Europeans. If they dress and class themselves as Burmese, it is really best in many ways. The absence of caste prejudice, the tolerance of Buddhism, and the prestige of their admixture of European blood, are all more favourable for the growth of self-respect among such half-breeds; whereas the social, religious, and political position of those who are brought up to consider themselves and to be considered as of degraded European origin is full of sadness and misery.

The children of Europeans and Burmese women not formally married and registered under English law have no claim on property left by the father in Britain. But it is a point perhaps capable of argument, and one which the High Court of Burma recently established in 1900 will probably one day have to decide, whether or not the property in Burma of a man dying intestate cannot be

## MISSIONARY WORK

claimed by the Burmese widow and the children begotten of her before he entered into marital relations binding under English law. For the Burmese *Min Gadaw*, the temporary wife of a European, is in her own eyes, and in the eyes of her fellow countrymen, truly and honourably united to her husband *pro tempore*. The relationship thus created is not a degrading one for her; and after its dissolution she frequently marries well, without a taint of immorality besmirching her reputation on account of such previous union.

In addition to the causes already noted as gradually altering the social system among the Burmese, there is one other whose effect is likely in course of time to become all the more marked in proportion as the religious philosophy propounded by Gaudama gradually relaxes its hold on the Burmese nation. This remaining cause is to be found in the work of Christian missionaries belonging to various denominations; but its results are as yet noticeable only on a comparatively small scale and rather as regards the spirit-worshipping Karen tribesmen, with whom it is almost becoming the national religion, than with respect to Burman and Talaing Buddhists.

At the time of the census of 1891 there were 112,000 Christians in Lower Burma or about twenty-four per 1,000, while in Upper Burma there were less than 9,000 or only three per 1,000. But these figures convey no idea of the influence which mission work has already begun to exert on the national character, while the blow which was struck to the prestige of Buddhism by the downfall of the kingdom of Ava and the present absence of any Archbishop (*Tháthanabaing*) formally recognized by Government are contributing towards the decay of the Burmese national religion. Most likely the census of the present year will show a marked increase in the number of Christians, and each decennial return will probably record a further rise in the proportion of those professing the religion taught by the Europeans.

Needless to say, the first workers in this vineyard were the Roman Catholic missionaries; and at a very early date, when Philip de Brito y Nicote, the Portuguese



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

Governor of Syriam, was impaled in 1613, his colony was transported to Ava and settled in villages on the banks of the Mu river, where traces of them are to this day to be found in people with hair and eyes lighter than is usual among the Burmese. When Alaung Payá took Syriam in 1756, the number of these Christian settlers was increased; and on Ayódya, then capital of Siam, being captured by the army of King Sinpyuyin in 1767, they received still further additions in the shape of the Vicar Apostolic and part of his flock. With the characteristic tolerance of Buddhism, these penal colonists were allowed to retain their own religion.

In 1719 the first priest of the Barnabite mission arrived in Burma. On his death in 1727, he was succeeded by Father Gallizia, who, returning in 1743 as first consecrated Bishop of Elisma *in partibus*, was slain at the capture of Syriam. His successor, Bishop Percoto, followed his flock to Ava, where he died in 1776. But the best known of these Barnabite Fathers is San Germano, who lived in Burma from 1783 to 1806. The French Revolution, war in Europe, and loss of missionaries through the unhealthiness of the climate led to the mission being given up by the Barnabites to the Priests of the Propaganda, by whom it was in 1840 transferred to the Society of the Oblats of Turin. Owing to political troubles in Italy it was finally made over to the Seminary of Foreign Missions in Paris in 1856, when Father Bigandet, the learned author of the *Life or Legend of Gaudama*, was consecrated Bishop of Ramatha and for forty years controlled the duties of the Pegu and Ava missions. By this time the annexation of Pegu by the British had enabled the missionaries to work under much more favourable circumstances than during the Burmese rule.

The American Baptist mission has also a long record of good work, chiefly among the Karens. In 1807 Messrs. Marsden and Chater, of the Serampur Mission, came to Rangoon, and were soon followed by the Careys, father and son; but it was not till 1813 that the special Burma Mission was founded by Messrs. Judson and Rice. Troublous times were passed through till the conclusion

## MISSIONARY WORK

of the first Burmese war, when Messrs. Judson and Rice, who had been thrown into prison at Ava, were employed as intermediaries in negotiating the Treaty of Yandabú in 1826. A branch mission was then started in Tenasserim and attention turned to the Karens, who proved willing to become converts.

Being regarded as Englishmen, the position of the American missionaries became untenable in Pegu, and they had to withdraw to Tenasserim and Arakan, where the malarious climate of the latter soon killed them off one after the other. In 1852 the annexation of Pegu once more enabled missions to be re-established in the Irrawaddy valley; and Rangoon, Bassein, and Toungoo were made the centres of mission work, special success being achieved by Dr. Mason among the Karens at this last place. Subsequently work has been undertaken among the Karenni to the north-east of Toungoo by Dr. Bunker, and among the Shans by Dr. Cushing.

Church of England missionary work was not entered on till 1859, when Dr. Parish, chaplain to the troops at Moulmein, induced the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to commence work in Tenasserim. The missionaries of this Society are now to be found in many other parts of Burma, and particularly in the central portion.

The youngest of the missions is the Methodist Episcopal Church, which commenced work at Rangoon in 1879 and numbers about thirty teachers and catechists.

The most valuable work that has yet been accomplished by the European and American missionaries has been in the field of education. Here their success has been large and well deserved. Under the energetic guidance of the Rev. Dr. Marks, St. John's College in Rangoon, founded in 1869, is doing splendid work both among Burmese boys and among the Eurasians, chiefly the offspring of temporary alliances between Europeans and Burmese women. For the girls of both classes equally beneficent work is also undertaken by the Roman Catholics, while the American Baptist Schools are mainly employed in the education of Karen children. But all the missions are doing excellent educational work, which

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

must exert a very marked and important influence on the coming generations in Burma.

It is impossible to forecast what results will arise in the future from the energy displayed at so many points by missionaries of various denominations. But the fact is clear that missionary enterprise is already making itself felt in the towns which form the centres of mission work; and year by year this influence is gradually, along with other causes, producing vast changes in the whole social system of the country. A good Buddhist is a much better man or woman than a bad Christian; and those may perhaps be excused who are doubtful about nothing but advantages being brought to the nation as a whole if such as show themselves lax in the religious observances of Buddhism become easy converts in professing Christianity. The missionary movement is, however, a powerful influence by which the present social system is bound sooner or later to be affected in one direction or another. This new subversive force is the direct antithesis of Buddhism; for whereas the latter teaches that everything which happens is the result of *Kan*, "the influence of past acts," the former aims at influencing future events themselves by forming the character in a nobler mould during the present.

## Chapter X

### NATIONAL FESTIVALS AND AMUSEMENTS

WITH their buoyant, careless, happy-go-lucky, laughter-loving disposition, the Burmese spend an inordinate amount of time in festivals and amusements. Curiously enough, all their feasts and their amusements, except games and racing with boats or ponies, are, or at any rate have originally been, directly connected with the national religion. All their public festivals, no matter of what description, bear the name of *Pwè* or *Thabin*, both meaning "assemblies." They are invariably accompanied by music, and they of course are always considered great holidays, when the gayest of clothing and the richest jewellery are worn. Those who do not possess necklaces and bracelets of gold hire them for the occasion, unless too poor to do even this.

The two great national festivals are those connected with the New Year and with the conclusion of the period of stricter observance of religious duties during the three summer months which, for want of a more appropriate term, is called the Burmese Lent. But there are many other public festivals varying from an almost national down to a more or less local character, such as the annual "assemblies" at the great pagodas, which are mostly held in spring. The chief of these are at the Shwe Dagôn in Rangoon, the Kyaiktayó pagoda near Sittang, the Seven Pagodas near Toungoo, and the great Kyundaw festival near Shwegu (Bhamo), all of which are celebrated during the month of Tabaung (February, March), and the Arakan pagoda festival in Mandalay at the end of Lent. But nearly every pagoda has its own local festival, at which the village people rejoice and



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

make merry. As a typical example of a great Burmese national fête the *Kyundaw Payá Pwè*, or "festival of the pagoda on the sacred island," is in many respects the most interesting.

These assemblages are all characterized by the same features. Vast crowds of people of all sorts collect from far and wide, residing for the two or three days of the festival in huts made of bamboos or grass, and sometimes so numerous as to form a temporary town of fair dimensions regularly laid out in rectangular streets and definite quarters, according to the orders of the responsible magistrate. The whole assemblage partakes as distinctly of the nature of a fair as of a religious gathering. All along the temporary streets goods are offered for sale in booths, while music resounds throughout the day and theatrical performances go on nearly all day and night. Along with gold leaf, candles, streamers, flowers, and such manner of articles for votive offerings at the pagodas and sacred shrines, marionettes and toys of strange and wonderful description are exposed for sale; while the people regale themselves with food at Chinese booths. Even brightly coloured ice-creams are vended from stalls, where also sweet mineral waters can be obtained in almost any colour of the rainbow. On the evening of the last day of the festival the vast crowds dissolve with marvellous rapidity. By nightfall the spaces between the lines of booths so lately thronged are all but empty of people, and almost the only signs of life are the pariah dogs feeding on the stale boiled rice which has been thrown aside and scavenging according to their wont. Next day the removal of the huts takes place, and the scene becomes again deserted until the festival of the following year.

The obsequies of a royal personage or of the head of a monastery are also made the occasion of great public assemblies, in which the religious character of the ceremony is more or less disguised by the distractions provided. But even family affairs afford pretexts for frequent assemblies of friends and neighbours; and as *Pwè* of every sort are free to all who care to come, each gathering is sure to be numerously attended. Thus

## THE NEW YEAR'S FESTIVAL

the naming of a child, the boring of a girl's ears, the entry of a boy into his acolytehood at a monastery, and the funeral rites following on the death of any man or woman, all form occasions which even the poorest of the poor try to celebrate as well as they can by some sort of entertainment.

The New Year's festival, the *Thingyan*, known among Europeans as the "Water Festival," is the only one actually observed everywhere throughout Burma. The commencement of the new year falls within the month of *Tagú* (March, April), but the precise day and date are fixed by the *Punna* or Brahmin astrologers in Mandalay. It is always some time between the 10th and 14th April. Even before the advent of British rule into Upper Burma the festival had come to be usually celebrated on the 11th April, and this date is now likely to become permanently fixed.

It is supposed, however, to synchronize with the precise moment upon which the *Thagyá Min* or King of Spiritland (Indra), descends from the abode of the *Nat* and spends three days upon this earth. The story runs that long ago the *Thagyá Min* and a *Brahma* called Athi, one of the beings inhabiting the higher celestial abodes, disputed about a mathematical calculation and each wagered his head as to being in the right. The *Thagyá Min* was found to be correct and forthwith chopped off the *Brahma's* head. Then he was confronted with a difficulty about disposing of it. Afraid either to throw it down upon this earth or to cast it into the sea, he gave it into the keeping of the seven daughters of the *Nat*. Once a year the gruesome head changes hands among these seven sisters, and at this particular season the *Thagyá Min* finds it convenient to visit the scenes of men. The precise moment of his arrival forms the commencement of the new year, but the 12th of April must always be included in the three days of his stay on earth. As the astrologers claim to be able to foretell how he will come, whether bearing a waterpot, a staff, a torch, or a spear, they can predict a year of abundant rainfall or of great heat and drought, of plenty or of scarcity, and of peaceful progress or else

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

of disturbance and unrest. At the precise moment of the commencement of the new year three guns were fired in the palace, so that the people might know the *Thagyá Min* had descended.

During the three days of this festival, and more particularly on the first day of the new year, the young men and women find much amusement in drenching with water every one who comes in their way; and the more frivolous even invade the houses of officials with waterpots and big squirts to give the occupants a good sousing. All are fair game for the merry-makers. All are liable to receive a wetting save any woman who requests not to be touched. This is at once regarded as conveying intimation of her being in an interesting condition, excluding her from participation in the fun.

The more stately and staid manner in which superiors, such as officials of high rank, are visited on this occasion and an oblation of water poured out before them by the visitor, with thrice-repeated obeisance and exclamation of "*Kadáw bá*," or "beg pardon," seems distinctly to point to this festival being a remnant of the religious ceremony (*Mingalá*) of pouring out water as at the *Abeiktheik* ceremony, the equivalent of the "anointing" of a king when he ascended the throne of Burma. A similar ceremony is performed in March at sacred shrines by lads dressed in white, when pots of filtered water, protected from dust by pieces of white muslin spread over the mouths of the water-pots, are solemnly poured over the images of Gaudama (*Payáyelaung*). This sacred ceremony nowhere receives more particular attention than at the Shwesandaw pagoda in Prome. Offerings of filtered water are also placed on the shrines and are made to the priests and monks in the monasteries.

The *Táwadeingtha* festival, the second in national importance, held at the end of the Burmese Lent, is not celebrated everywhere throughout Burma. It is more the festival of the towns and the richer centres than of poorer tracts.

Quite a variety of festivals occurs at the full moon of *Thadingyut* or "end of Lent," when the monks are

## THE END OF LENT

freed from the austerities and laymen from the stricter observance of religious duties prescribed during the previous three months, or four in every third year. The chief of these is the *Táwadeingtha* festival commemorative of Gaudama's ascent up *Myimmo* (Mount Meru) into the land of spirits to expound the Eternal Law to his mother, Maya, who was then a queen among the *Nat*. It lasts for three days, the third day being that of the full moon of *Thadingyut*.

A lofty platform, surmounted with a gorgeous paper and tinsel *Pyathat* like the spire of a monastery, is erected with a long inclined plane on either side leading up to it from east and west. On the first day of the festival an image of Gaudama, placed on a kind of trolley, is made to ascend from a shrine at the eastern end to about half way up the inclined plane leading to the apex of the platform. The point thus reached is supposed to be the *Ugandaw* hill, where he rested before arriving at *Myimmo*. The next day it ascends to the top of the platform representing *Táwadeingtha*, the second of the *Nat* countries in which his mother then dwelt. Here the image of Gaudama rests for the second night in the attitude of enunciating the law to numerous smaller images placed round about him on a lower level. On the third day the image of Gaudama is made to descend the western inclined plane and to enter into a building representing the Neikban monastery in which he resided.

Throughout all the three days passages from the sacred books are read to the assembled crowd. When the descent of the image has been completed, offerings to the priests and monks of all the neighbouring monasteries are borne through the town in procession, accompanied of course by music, on three branching, conical, tree-like stands before being deposited at the feet of the religious. These branching stands represent the miraculous *Padétha* tree, which grows on the north island and produces whatever any applicant may desire to have. Often comprising articles of considerable value, these gift-trees are hung with very miscellaneous articles ranging from eggs and candles to washhand basins,



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looking-glasses, and thick yellow flannel coverlets for the coming cold season.

Immediately after the *Táwadeingtha* festival the pagodas, and the whole town in fact, are illuminated for three nights by the simple method, very effective from a distance, of filling tiny, shallow earthenware saucers with cocoanut oil in which a wick is placed and lighted. All along the streets and in front of the houses these little lamps are protected from any chance breeze by films of pale rose, blue, yellow, and green tissue paper pasted to thin pieces of bamboo bent so as to form a lotus-leaf. This is, in fact, the national method of illumination, and it is very beautiful in its soft blending of delicate colours. Fire-balloons of paper are also set off to mount skywards till the supply of oil becomes exhausted in the cup forming the cradle. At the same time lights are tied on floats and allowed to drift down the river or stream. This festival of the fire-rafts was probably originally to propitiate the river spirits. But it is now said to be commemorative of one *Shin Upagá*, a novice in a monastery, having, during a previous state of existence, in jest carried off the clothes of a bather, since which time the *Shin* has been expiating his offence by remaining naked in the water till the arrival of the next Buddha, when he is to be released from his awkward position and will become a *Rahanda* or priest of saintly life, endowed with a purified and exalted nature. It has been ordained that this sixth Buddh, Arimataya, will attain omniscience while reclining under a Gangaw tree (*Mesua ferrca*); so in many monasteries Gangaw trees are planted and carefully tended to provide the necessary shelter should any of the monks within the monastery happen to be the Buddh in embryo.

Simultaneously with the "fire festival," great offerings of food (*Sundawogyi*) are often made at the monasteries to celebrate the conclusion of Lent and the relaxation of the monastic austerities, while at the same time the people amuse themselves with theatricals and merry-making. The *Wingabá* or "labyrinth," forms part of the festival on the full moon of *Thadingyut*, when vast

## THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES

crowds throng the mazes of the bamboo-trellis labyrinth. It has its origin in the banishment of Wèthandayá to the *Winga* mountains when his father, King Theinsi, found himself forced to exile the prince in order to pacify his subjects enraged at Wèthandayá's gift of the white elephant to Brahmins as an act of merit.

Among national amusements the theatricals easily take first place, followed at a long distance by pony races, boat racing, buffalo fighting, boxing matches, and games of various sorts.

The theatrical performances were originally entirely, and still are to a very great extent, illustrative of the *Zat* or "birth-stories" of Gaudama. In this respect they bear strong resemblance to the early English Mysteries and the continental Passion Plays dealing with events in the life of Christ.

The performances are either acted by men and women (*Zatpwè*, *Pyazat*), or else are given by the manipulations of marionettes (*Yókthèpwè*). In both cases the performance is given in the open air. But in the former the stage consists merely of a cleared circle in the centre of which stands a "flower tree" (*Panbin*) consisting of a plantain stem or green branch stuck in the ground and surrounded with mats; while in the latter it consists of a bamboo platform raised four or five feet from the ground and backed with matting, behind which the strings moving the various limbs of the little puppets are manipulated to accompany the recitative. In many villages and towns such *Pwè* are often given by local companies, but there are regular troupes which stroll from place to place giving performances on payment of fixed scales. The boats in which they travel by river are usually gaily bedecked with streamers to indicate them, while the big drums are easily distinguishable marks when proceeding overland by cart. Sometimes the prices these strolling players command run to a considerable sum for a company of repute, especially if it should have come from Mandalay. Even in Burma the art of starring in the provinces is fully understood. In former times the most famous actors came from Kyaukyit, a large village in the Sagaing district

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

near the confluence of the Chindwin river with the Irrawaddy. Whenever a *Pwè* is given any one who pleases may come and look on. But those whom the giver of the entertainment wishes to specially invite receive a summons in the shape of a little packet of pickled tea. On such occasions it is customary to respond to the invitation by sending back some slight monetary contribution towards the expense of the entertainment; and guileless Burmans of authority and influence have sometimes found this to be an occasional source of profit.

The performances are usually held at night, and some of them last for several nights in succession. Soon after sundown a large crowd of townspeople or villagers flocks to the scene of the performance—which is often in front of the house of the donor where his chief guests are received and fêted—bearing with them mats for sitting upon. The whole family goes—father, mother, and children, even sucklings being carried there; and when the performance ceases for the time being in the early hours of the next day many of them sleep on their sitting-mats in place of at once going home.

The performance is accompanied by the unceasing music, the band being seated near the stage. The ear-piercing clarinet, the clash of the cymbals, and the constant booming of the gong-drums sound rather discordant to any unfortunate European who happens to be encamped near where a *Pwè* is being given; and there is little chance of sleep for him till the early morning.

As soon as the folks collect for the performance, a night bazaar springs up on both sides of the path leading to the stage; and here women and girls sell such wares as sweetmeats and other edibles, cigars, and so on.

The interest of such performances is not of a very enduring nature for the European. After some few times of looking on he will seldom be induced to go near one unless merely out of compliment to the donor who may have sent him a special invitation. Perhaps one of the things that strikes the western stranger most

## THE MONASTERIES

is the calm way in which the actors will stop and replenish the footlights with earth-oil or will walk up to the *Panbin* in the centre and re-light a cheroot which may have gone out.

The prettiest performance of all, however, is the *Yeingpwè* or "posture dance" performed by girls and young children, accompanied by choruses and adaptations from one or other of the *Zat*. The most celebrated of these companies are of course in Mandalay, but at many villages the children are trained for local performances. As everywhere in the East, the dances are purely posturing, and are not particularly graceful from a European point of view. This is clearly indicated in the name, as *Yeing* means "to lean," "to be inclined." There is no quick movement of the limbs, but rather a series of slow contortions of the trunk, limbs, hands, and feet, not particularly suggestive of grace or beauty to the western mind.

As brawls and riotous behaviour are only too apt to occur at night plays, permission to hold a *Pwè* has to be obtained from the magistrate, and performances are usually limited to nights upon which there is a sufficiency of moonlight to assist police supervision in case of accidents.

Even the holy days occurring with each change of the moon are regarded as holidays so far as the donning of fine attire is concerned. Those dedicating the day to worship retire to the rest-houses near the monasteries, and hear the law read by the priest.

The monasteries (*Kyaung*) are usually to be found in what are, or once have been, the suburbs of towns and on the edge of villages, so as to be as near as possible to the forest. They are almost always surrounded by enclosure (*Parawun*). Here, under the shade of fruit trees, or among the posts below the flooring of the monastery itself, the little schoolboys loll idly or fill in their abundant leisure time with play, while pariah dogs swarm around the building. Usually there are one or more pagodas near the monastery. Tall flagposts, too, surmounted by an effigy of the sacred Brahminical duck (*Hentha*), bear long, circular, serpentine streamers (*Tagôn*)



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

or prayer flags, which sway to and fro with every breath of air.

The flooring of a monastery is never on or near the ground level, there being always a space of at least six to nine feet between them. In all the larger monasteries this platform is gained by a flight of brickwork steps, on either side of which a fantastic leogryph (*Chinthé*) or a grotesque demon-like monster (*Bilu*) is placed as if keeping watch and ward.

Of course monasteries vary considerably as to details ; but, as a rule, each consists of two or of three wooden pavilions, mostly connected, and all standing on the same level on a platform raised well above the ground. At the top of the steps there is a broad open verandah, often running all round the edge of the platform on which the group of buildings stands. The main pavilion consists of a hall in which the boys are taught, and where visitors are received. The end at which the priest and the monks sit is raised slightly above the rest of the flooring where the visitors squat in attitudes of obeisance. At the back portion of this dais stand one or more images of Gaudama, richly carved and gilded boxes for holding manuscripts, and offerings of all sorts.

The dormitories and the refectory are usually included in a separate building ; while at the other end of the platform, mostly on the eastern side, stands a smaller hall containing a large image of Gaudama. Wherever the great enthroned images of Gaudama may be placed, either in the central hall or in a separate chamber, it is there that the spire (*Pyathat*) rises, when there is one. The graduated roofs of the spire vary in number from three to nine, though even the largest only appear to have seven until the false roofs making the sacred nine are discovered.

Sometimes the central hall looks as if it consisted of two or three storeys. But the interior invariably extends right up to the roof, as it would be a religious offence if any one, even the head of the monastery, were to walk above any chamber in which monks are.

When any much revered priest dies, the performance of his obsequies forms a festival in which the whole

## CREMATION OF A PRIEST

country-side joins. The corpse is first of all embalmed, swathed in linen bands, put into a coffin hollowed out of a single piece of wood, enshrined in a gilded shell, and then placed in state in a temporary building (*Neikban Kyaung*) within the monastery grounds. Here it remains, surmounted by a murex shell in the shape of an ornamental dragon's head, till sufficient funds have been collected to celebrate the cremation on an adequate scale. This great event, called the *Pôngyi Byan* or "return of the great glory," usually takes place in February or March after the rice crops have been reaped and sold, when money is circulating freely.

When the day fixed for the cremation has arrived, the country people from all directions flock in crowds to the scene of the ceremony, dressed in their gayest garments, and intent on pleasure making. The funeral pyre and the lofty, tapering, seven-roofed bier, gorgeously adorned with pictures, gold-leaf, tinsel, and coloured paper, are usually erected either on the knoll of a hill or else on some clear space in the open fields. The lower part of the structure is filled with combustibles and chips of fragrant woods, while the receptacle for the coffin occupies one of the upper tiers of the seven-roofed spire. The golden case enshrining the coffin and corpse is brought from the *Neikban Kyaung* to the place of cremation on a four-wheeled car richly decorated. Ropes are attached to each end of the car, and when it reaches the pyre a great tug-of-war ensues before the sacred casket is placed in position. The pulling from side to side takes place without any prescribed method. Men take sides as they please; and as one side needs strengthening, people rush forward to lend it their assistance. The origin and the signification of this procedure are now obscure.

When sufficient amusement has been derived in this manner, the coffin is raised into its proper position on the pyre, and the priests and monks, who have until now been reciting portions of the sacred writings in temporary rest-houses, return to their monasteries with many gifts.

The ignition of the pyre is effected by large rockets

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

(*Kyódon* or "rope tubes," consisting of pieces of bamboo filled with gunpowder) attached with rings to guide ropes, fired from one or other, and often from all four sides of the car. As the Burmese are not good mechanics these rockets sometimes get disengaged and shot into the dense throng of people. The fall of each badly aimed missile affords much amusement to the crowd, but a great shout arises when at last one reaches its goal and smoke is seen to issue from the pyre. The cremation is then soon effected. The ashes left are afterwards examined, and any bones found are interred near some sacred shrine or have a small pagoda built over them. Particularly throughout the northern districts of Burma these last resting-places of the partial remains of monks are marked by teak-wood memorial posts (*Ayo-ó Hmattaing*) about six or seven feet high, richly carved and surmounted with lotus-leaf ornamentation. It is only over the ashes of priests or of princes, and not over mere laymen, that pagodas may be erected.

The obsequies of ruling princes are celebrated with a similar amount of gay and almost theatrical ceremony. In July, 1897, I was present in Taunggyi at the funeral rites of the late Sawbwa of the Shan State of Nyaung-ywè, which was a very gorgeous spectacle. But an even gayer scene was that which I had the good fortune to see at Toungoo in April, 1888, when a bishop (*Gaing Ok*) and four heads of monasteries (*Póngyi*) were cremated simultaneously during one afternoon.

Apart from festivities of the above different kinds having a more or less distinct connexion with religion, the chief amusements of the Burmese consist mostly of boat racing and pony races. But they are keen supporters of other forms of amusement which serve as a means of indulging their favourite vice of gambling, which is in fact the great national vice.

Boat races (*Hlé Pwè*) are generally held at the full moon of *Thadingyut*, just after the festival of *Táwa-deingtha*. By that time the great floods on the main rivers are over, but there is still a large volume of water. Formerly every district was proud to strive after attaining the headship of the river in this respect. Each

## BOAT RACING

town and big village had its own racing canoe (*Laung*) and its crew well trained to the use of the short paddles with which they are propelled. The boat races were formerly regular annual festivals, but now they are only held here and there, wherever the local officials care to countenance and encourage them.

The racing canoes are keelless skiffs of thirty to fifty feet long and two to three feet in breadth, hollowed out of a log of teak or of the lighter wood of the Yamané tree (*Gmelina arborea*) and painted jet black with a coating of Thitsi varnish (*Melanorrhæa usitata*). Along both sides of the dug-out a little water boarding rises to a few inches in height, and is kept well caulked to prevent shipment of water. The paddlers, numbering up to a couple of dozen or more, sit in a long line paddling on alternate sides, except in the larger canoes, where the centre seats are broad enough to seat two men. All the great canoes have their names, such as *Sún*, "hawk," *Aungban*, "the flower of victory," and so forth, by which they and their crews are known far and near. The position of honour is that of steersman, the "headman of the boat," who sits at the end on very nearly the same level as the paddlers, and guides the canoe with a large sweep, worked now on one side and again on the other as the steering may require. For racing, the paddlers tuck up their waistcloths tightly between their thighs (*Kadaung cheikthe*) and discard their headdresses. Then they tie an old handkerchief tightly round their chests so as to come just below the scapulæ and the breast muscles. Concerning the object of this I have never been able to get a clear explanation from any Burman; but it is probably done with the idea of bracing up the upper muscles of the trunk chiefly used when paddling with a very short, quick stroke.

As usual in all Burmese gatherings, a boat race forms a grand spectacle of colour. All the people collect from far and near, decked in their gayest attire and intent on enjoying themselves to the utmost. The Burmese being inveterate gamblers, boat racing affords them grand opportunities for indulgence in this vice. In this respect it beats cock fighting and even pony racing, the other



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two great forms of sport in which money changes hands freely.

The races are rowed in heats, the canoes changing places after each heat. Only two boats contend at one time. It is not considered a true victory unless one boat wins two consecutive heats, one being obtained on each side of the stream. Otherwise the advantage may be mainly owing to luck in having a stronger current on the side where the first and the third heats were gained; for the races always take place down stream for a distance of about one half to three-quarters of a mile. With a current running at about four or four and a half miles an hour, up-stream paddling would be difficult and very slow. During a gala day of boat racing held at Toungoo in 1889, one of the items was an eight-paddle competition over a short course between the clerks in the various Government offices. When they had reached the winning-post and tried to paddle back, neither of the crews could make any headway against the current, so both had ignominiously to row down stream to where they could conveniently effect a landing whence they might return to receive the congratulations, and the chaff, of their friends.

As the canoes are paddled up to the starting place, offerings of fruit and flowers, for the propitiation of the spirits of the river, are to be seen on the prows of the contending boats. Whenever a start has been effected, the previous ceaseless chatter and noise are stilled, and the whole of the dense crowd becomes intent on the struggle going on. As the boats at length approach at the rate of about ten or twelve miles an hour, louder and louder are heard the shouts of the steersmen and the crews, "*Yaukya batha! Lu la, Kya la? Hlaw laik hè, Kat laik hè; Yaukya batha; Yó, Hí*"—"Like a man" (lit. "man's custom")! Man or tiger? Row, paddle, like men; Raise the paddle, dip the paddle." Gradually the people are roused to intense excitement.

The winning-post consists of a small canoe moored in the middle of the stream and allowed to swing with the current so as to point straight up and down stream. At the prow a hollow bamboo is placed horizontally on supports,

## PONY RACING

and is fixed so as to project an equal distance on each side from the central point. In the tube rests a piece of thin rattan projecting a few inches on either side ; and the drawing out of this rattan constitutes victory in the heat. Formerly a "flower of victory" was attached to each end of the rattan, whence the name of *Pandan* or "flower rod" for the winning-post.

As the boats near this goal the man at the bow ships his paddle and seats himself in the prow, leaning forward in close contests so as to try and gain the advantage of a few inches in seizing the rattan. Sometimes the finishes are very close and exciting. In the autumn of 1877 a late Commissioner of Pegu (then Assistant Commissioner, Kyaikto) and I had the felicity of sitting in the canoe forming the winning-post at the Sittang regatta. The very first heat rowed had a most exciting finish. The prow man of each canoe seized hold of the projecting end of the rattan, and a short, sharp struggle for its possession took place, during which we two occupants of the seats of honour had to cling to both sides of the canoe to prevent ourselves being overturned into the river. The rest of the races we saw from a safer position on the bank.

As soon as the actual result of two or more heats is known the jubilation of those who have won money on the event is almost unbounded. A free rein is for the moment given to the excitable national temperament. Men and women, calm and comparatively unemotional under ordinary circumstances, behave as if possessed, and make themselves figures of fun. On gaining possession of the "flower rod" of victory, the men forming the winning crew vociferate and gesticulate with great vigour. They stand up, shouting, flourishing their paddles, and performing antics which often end in upsetting the canoe.

Pony racing (*Myinpyaing Pwè*) is another favourite amusement and means of gambling. Here, again, the races are all matches between two ponies, and are run in heats, in which the ponies change sides. The Burmese pony, varying from about eleven and a half to twelve and a half and rarely thirteen hands or more in height, seems naturally to take very keenly to racing.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

Seldom under any circumstances tender-mouthed, when once it has been raced it soon acquires iron jaws and a strong tendency to bolt on the least provocation. Most of the ponies are now more or less of the Shan breed, and but few are to be found of anything like pure blood of the renowned old Pegu strain. Usually a lean, sinewy, mischievous-looking, high-withered, ewe-necked little animal, the true Pegu pony was fleeter of foot, more iron-jawed, and hardier than the bigger, sleeker, and handsomer Shan pony from the hills, with its thick, well-arched neck and its gentle eye. The Burmese hog their ponies' manes, but never clip their tails. With them a pony loses greatly in value if its tail is cut, while mares command a much less price than horses or geldings. No entire ponies are brought down by the Shans.

The course run is usually about half a mile, and in a straight line. It is marked out by a central line formed with reeds, straw, or twigs, any crossing of which constitutes a foul. Umpires are selected to see that everything is fair, and to decide questions as to fouls which either owner may choose to bring to notice. The riders are usually small boys, catch weights being the true Burmese method. These feather-weights ride on the ordinary Burmese saddle—a straw pad cased in red felt cloth—with short stirrups, in which only the big toes rest. The girth is of narrow cotton belting. Seated on this small embroidered pad resting on the pony's back, the jockey's knees are turned quite outwards, while his heels touch the sides of his steed. Crouching down, very much like a monkey, he leans forward—somewhat in caricature of Tod Sloan's method—grasping the thick, round, tasselled reins of twisted cotton fastened to the simple snaffle, and flourishes a thin cane quickly from side to side horizontally above the pony's head, shouting at the same time. From start to finish the ponies race like mad at top speed. There is no spurring or flogging, and no riding for a finish. All the jockey does is to flourish his thin wand and yell. His seat is pure balance; and if he were to move or the pony were to swerve, he would be thrown heavily on the ground.

## RACING AND GAMBLING

Near Rangoon pony races take place early every Sunday morning, on the Prome road, between the fourth and fifth milestones. That the hard mettled roadway is apt to knock the ponies' hoofs to pieces is of little consequence to the Burman. The road is straight, which is the main thing. Partly arising from sporting instincts, these informal matches are to a great extent utilized mainly as a means of gambling. In addition to umpires and referees, arrangements are also made for having a stakeholder (*Daing*), who keeps the prize money till the heats have been run and the match eventually decided. Sometimes the *Daing* levants, but that is not common. In any case it is a position of profit, as he usually receives a percentage for his trouble. This much resembles brokerage, and of course it is in the interests of influential *Daing* to encourage pony matches as much as possible. But the gambling spirit is strong enough to require very little encouragement for its manifestation.

Cock fighting (*Kyettaik Pwè*) is general in all jungle villages, and a good gamecock is worth money. Sometimes fine gamecocks are speckled over with white spots. These, called "dewdrops" (*Hninthi*), are produced by blood stains which have not been wiped off after a fight.

Even small miniature skiffs, with feather sails, are made to speed across tiny ponds carrying the wagers of their owners. Perhaps the most common form of gambling, however, is the Chinese raffle, known as the thirty-six animal game (*Ti*). The name of one of thirty-six animals is written on a piece of paper, rolled up, and placed in a bag. Money being staked, whoever has correctly divined the winning animal (*Paukgaung*) receives thirty-five times his stake. The odds are, of course, always in favour of the banker, and the Chinaman can easily increase his advantage surreptitiously. Chinese dice (*An Kasá*) and cards (*Pè Kasá*) are also used as means of gambling, which has certainly hitherto formed the greatest national vice.

Cart racing (*Hlèpyaing Pwè*) is chiefly confined to the lower plains of the Sittang and the Salween, where the



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

breed of clean-limbed, sleek-coated cattle sometimes furnishes animals remarkably swift of foot. The racing carts are very light, and are richly decorated with carving. The cattle sometimes become very excited, breaking away from the track and smashing the carts to pieces. Further south in Tenasserim, from Moulmein to Mergui, buffalo fights (*Kywètaik Pwè*) are not uncommon. The most celebrated are those which take place on the plains near the town of Tavoy. The beasts are trained for the fray in all the villages around. When the day of contest arrives, the rival animals matched against each other are ridden by active young men, who urge on the brutes to attack each other. Each guides his mount with a rope, fastened to a cord piercing its nostrils, and on either side of the animal's head men stand by with flags, so as to keep it facing its opponent. Sometimes the animals fight viciously, but more often they either keep their heads locked together or else one gets frightened and bolts out of the arena. When a real fight does take place, it is a repulsive spectacle; but the victorious buffalo is wreathed with garlands, and led about with music and rejoicing.

The boxing or wrestling matches (*Let Pwè*) are very poor affairs. The challenger, naked except as to his tucked-up waist-cloth, strides about the ring with left fist clenched and left arm folded across his chest, while he slaps the muscle of the upper portion of the arm with his open right hand, shouting out in defiance, *Hè : Yaukya bātha*, "Come on, like a man." Sometimes, when his challenge is accepted, he will bolt out of the ring in abject fear,—a proceeding quite in keeping with the national character,—if the acceptor is the bigger man; for equality in height is considered one of the essentials in a match.

When two men are actually found who stand up to each other, there is a good deal of this arm-slapping and vociferation while the combatants walk round the ring watching for an opportunity to take each other unawares. Suddenly there may be a rush forward, then a few kicks, strokes with the knee, and swinging of the hands, followed by a grip and a wrestle. As soon as there is a

## BURMESE FOOTBALL

fair fall, shoulders touching the ground, the match is over. Failing this, however, victory rests with the one who happens to draw first blood from the other. If either of the competitors complains of being hurt, the match is also stopped; but sometimes the referees (*Nabán Daing*) have to interfere and separate the wrestlers when they begin to get warmed up to their work and show signs of becoming viciously pugnacious.

The chief among Burmese games is a kind of football, played with a *Chinlón* or "round basket," a very light ball, formed by plaiting thin strips of rattan loosely together. The players, with waistcloths tucked up to give their legs free play, stand about a couple of yards apart and forming a circle. The ball having been tossed up into the air, on its descent it is kicked up with the instep, knees, or sole of the foot. Kicking with the toes is a mean form of the game. The masterstroke consists in turning round as the ball descends and making it remount with a stroke delivered backwards with the sole of the foot. Sometimes it is played with, tipped lightly up, and caught in the hollow of the elbow or on the shoulder, before being quietly dropped for another kick up into the air. It may be struck by any part of the body except the hand. When it comes in any one's direction, he endeavours to keep possession of it till some upward kick sends it within reach of one of the other players. There is never scrambling for the ball. Each gets it only as it comes in his direction, and the skill consists in any individual keeping it in play for some length of time. This is the great national game among lads and young men; and I have seen even grey-haired old magistrates, the chief officials in large subdivisions of districts, enjoying themselves among the young men at this pastime in the evening.

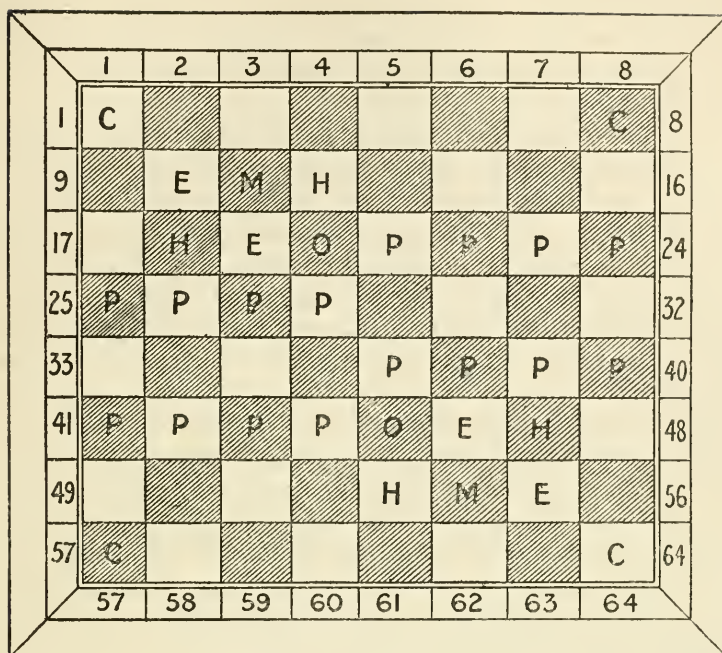
Equally universal throughout all the districts of Burma is the game, something like ninepins, called *Gónnyintó*, played with the seeds of the *Gónnyin* creeper (*Entada pursaetha*). This woody climber festoons lofty forest trees and produces huge pods often more than a yard in length, and containing large, flat, glossy, tamarind-brown seeds about an inch and a half to two inches in diameter. Up to

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

ten or twelve of these are placed on edge in a straight line at right angles to the line of play, while the player spins another seed from the thumb and forefinger of each hand at a distance of about six or seven yards, or more. It requires a considerable amount of knack and of practice to be able to knock down all the seeds. This is the favourite game of children in nearly every village ; but it is also much played, for stakes, by grown-up men, both young and old.

Less used for gambling purposes, and essentially a game of skill like our own form of it, is Burmese chess, called *Sitduyin*, "mimic warfare," or *Sitpayin*, "the Commander-in-Chief." The pieces on each side consist of eight *Nè* or "pawns," two *Yatta* or "chariots," two *Sin* or "elephants," two *Myin* or "horses," one *Sitbó* or "officer," and one *Mingyi* or "minister of state." The "chariot" corresponds to our castle, the "horse" to a knight, and the "minister of state" to the king. The "elephant" can move only one square at a time, either diagonally or else straight on when advancing, but diagonally only when retreating ; while the "officer" only moves diagonally one square at a time, whether advancing or retreating. In Upper Burma the "minister of state" was called the "king," and the "officer" the "commander," while the game itself differed in certain respects from the form general in Lower Burma. The pawns move and take as in our game, but in the opening move they can only advance one square. On a pawn reaching the opponent's base line only the "officer" can be recovered, and no other piece. If all pieces have been captured except the "minister of state," which cannot be taken but only placed in check, and the opponent has his "minister," "officer," and a "chariot" left, checkmate must be effected in sixteen moves, otherwise it is a drawn game. If "minister," "officer," and one "elephant" are to accomplish the task, forty-four moves are allowed, while sixty-four are permissible for checkmating with "minister," "officer," and one "horse." When opening the game, as played in Upper Burma, the disposition of the pieces on the board is as follows :—

## BURMESE CHESS



Number.	Name of Piece.	Symbol.	Position on squares for	
			Black.	White.
2	Chariots	C	1, 8	57, 64
2	Elephants	E	10, 19	46, 55
2	Horses	H	12, 18	47, 53
1	Minister of State	M	11	54
1	Officer	O	20	45
8	Pawns	P	21-28	37-44

A sort of backgammon (*Pasit*) or "cowry game" (*Kywékasá*) is played with six cowry shells in place of dice. The shells are cast lightly into the air and allowed to fall into a small bowl; then the moves take place according to the manner in which the shells rest, mouth or back upwards. Less dependent on skill than chess, it lends itself better to gambling, and is consequently a game much liked by men. Dominoes are



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

also played, but more by Chinamen than Burmese. Both this and the *Metti Kasá*, a sort of *rouge et noir* with dice, are almost always played for stakes and not as a mere pastime.

The little boys have plenty of amusements. English marbles have found their way into most jungle villages, and a game has evolved itself quite different from any known here. Kite-flying is common, and even grown-up men sometimes amuse themselves this way; for the Burman never outgrows his innate desire for idle amusement. When the rice crops have been reaped, the small boys have great fun in the fields in shooting at doves and other small birds with crossbows and clay pellets or with feather darts puffed through long bamboo tubes. But these latter are too silent occupations, and therefore less beloved than the noisy *Gónnyintó*, when at each shot one can cry "*Kalí, Kaláw,*" or "*Di, Di,*" and use other quaint expressions. Small Burmese boys are perhaps the happiest creatures in all the world; and, fortunately for them, they retain their love of the lighter aspects of life and their power of enjoying these even until death.

It has often been said that dacoity, or gang robbery by five men or more, forms one of the national amusements of young men in Burma; but these opinions are based on pure misconception. Dacoity has always been prevalent under Burmese rule,—or rather, under native misrule, and in the absence of the strong hand of a secure government,—just as it still is in parts of China and Siam. Considering the Burmese character, it is easily intelligible how young men could be cajoled or frightened into joining the band of a dacoit leader; and, once committed to an outlaw's life by participation in crime, it would have required more moral and physical courage than the average Burman possesses to have returned to one's village and run the risks of arrest and of punishment, probably of a savage and ferocious nature. Even in the hot blood of youth, the Burmese are extremely averse to running personal risks; they are well endowed with the instinct of self-preservation. It is rare even to find a sportsman among them. For choice, the Burman prefers shooting doves among the stubble on the fields to

## DACOITY

almost any other sort of jungle game, furred or feathered. Men of this stamp are hardly those who would take naturally, as a youthful form of national amusement, to dacoity with its harsh stern discipline, its hard life in the jungles, and the main chance of ultimate capture with a short shrift and a bloody end. The prevalence of dacoity in the past was mainly due to defective administration. That fault is now remedied, though occasional outbreaks of gang robbery must be expected as the inheritance of centuries of weak government, and as the outcome of the physical conditions of a country thickly forested and thinly populated. Organized dacoity by long-standing bands of outlaws is now, however, already a thing of the past; and it can never occur again under British administration, as it habitually did during the later years of Burmese misrule which amounted in some districts almost to anarchy. Similar conditions also existed, and still exist, in the French possessions of Tonquin. Hence the suppression of this barbarous state of affairs may well form a work of friendly rivalry between our French neighbours in Indo-China and ourselves, for the promotion of civilization and the general prosperity of the nations respectively under their and our protection.

## Chapter XI

### SCIENCE AND ART AMONG THE BURMESE

IF one were forced to deliver a terse, categorical opinion on the subject, it might well be said that the Burmese have no Science, while their Art is crude. But the substitutes which take the place of the former, and the latter itself, for its own sake, are well worthy of more than mere passing remark, because the national ideas of art are vigorous and original. Possessing neither constructive talent nor any desire for knowledge of the laws of nature, and receiving no education save of the most elementary kind (and that, too, chiefly confined to the inculcation of the leading principles of the Buddhist religious philosophy), the Burmese have neither science nor any word which is equivalent to the term as understood in western civilization. The nearest approach to this in their language is the word *Pinyá*, meaning "wisdom," but also applied in recent years to education and general knowledge. The only other word of this kind, *Atát*, the nearest equivalent to our term art, means "ability to do" or "acquaintance with" anything. In all, eighteen *Atát* are recognized, which include what are sciences and arts with us. Whoever has the slightest smattering of, or even makes pretension to, special knowledge of any art or science is distinguished by the term *Sayá*, or "doctor" in the academic sense. Of the most vital of the sciences for the well-being of a nation, medicine, the Burmese have the crudest notions possible. The savage and barbarous birth customs, which make Burmese women age prematurely and soon destroy their reproductive power, have already been described (page 184).

## TWO CLASSES OF DOCTORS

There are two classes of doctors for bodily ailments, one of which prescribes drugs (*Beindaw Sayá*) while the other (*Dat Sayá*) prescribes dieting only. The former is by far the larger class, but the methods of both are the sheerest quackery. Each has its book of rules (*Kyan*), and each system professes to be based upon the fundamental principle that the human body is composed of the four "elements" (*Dat*),—earth, air, fire, and water. They differ essentially, however, in the methods of treatment, the one class prescribing a diet intended to supply the element whose deficiency appears to be the cause of the disease, while the other, the larger school, consists of medicine men.

The main causes of sickness and disease are looked for in the four-fold influence of previous actions (*Kan*), of the mind (*Seik*), of the season of the year (*Udu*), and of the food eaten (*Ahára*), also in the manner in and degree to which these may be affected by disturbance of the four elements whose normal balance constitutes a healthy condition. If the influence of past actions be considered the chief cause of disturbance, special treatment is temporarily refrained from in order to allow the *vis medicatrix naturae* to have a fair chance first of all. In other cases a dietist or a druggist is called in, whose prescriptions are followed. Massage or shampooing (*Hneikpe*) is almost always applied, apart from any special prescriptions.

The first step taken by either class of doctor is to consult the patient's horoscope, in order to ascertain what planets are exerting a baleful influence on the elements of the body and are disturbing their normal state of equilibrium. The particular temperament and habits of the individual are ignored. No attempt whatever is made to diagnose the disease. Sometimes the tongue is looked at, in imitation of the procedure known to be followed by qualified medical practitioners; but no examination of fæces or other secretions ever takes place, or would convey the slightest gleam of information if undertaken. The rate of circulation of the blood conveys little or no information to such doctors. Nor do they understand measurement of the temperature of the body by any



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

other method than roughly estimating the presence or amount of local inflammation with the palm of the hand.

For accidents, smearing with powdered barks and ointments forms the limit of treatment. Neither dietists nor druggists have any knowledge of anatomy, and the drawing of blood is horrible in the eyes of the Burman. Hence there is no surgery, and the use of surgical instruments is abhorred. Abscesses and tumours are allowed to burst; no attempt is made to correct congenital or acquired deformities; and amputations have never been performed save as a criminal punishment in the time of Burmese rule.

All the ills that flesh is heir to are comprised in "the ninety-six diseases" (*Sanawuddi* or *Kóséchauk Yarwga*), a term applied to sickness in general. When any one is very much out of sorts he or she is spoken of as afflicted with all the ninety-six diseases, not differentiating one or more of them in particular.

The mortality of the province varies from about twenty to twenty-five, while the birth-rate ranges from about twenty-five to thirty, per thousand. By far the most prevalent diseases are malarial fever, dysentery, and diarrhoea, which are accountable for about three-fourths of the annual death-roll. Small-pox was formerly one of the great scourges of the country, but much has been done by vaccination to check its ravages. Cholera is endemic, the slums of Rangoon being probably never entirely free from it, though it seldom occurs epidemically on any extensive scale. Ophthalmia is frequent in Upper Burma and the Shan States. Leprosy is not yet stamped out by segregation, and venereal disease is much more common than it would be if a Contagious Diseases' Act were enforced.

When afflicted with any complaint, the Burmese infinitely prefers his own native doctors rather than undergo treatment at the hands of the medical men in town hospitals established by Government. Even among the better educated going to hospital is looked on with dread. Some years ago one of the clerks in my office in Rangoon was continually absenting himself through fever. As he was more often absent than at

## THE "MEDICINE MAN"

work, I had at last to request he would go to hospital and remain there under treatment. In reply, a petition came from the clerk asking for a few days' leave, and stating that the excellent Rangoon hospital was "a veritable hell upon the earth" where he "would soon die of the ninety-six diseases." Even the thought of going there had such an effect upon the sick man that he was soon able to resume regular attendance at office.

As might be expected from so superstitious and credulous a race, quaint reasons are adduced for the causes of specific afflictions. Various malarious influences are believed to be occasioned by malevolent spirits in the shape of birds and snakes, while paralytic strokes and nervous disorders are induced by unlucky currents in the air. A sty in the eye is the result of being deceived by some one, thus forming a curious parallel to our vulgar phrase of being "done in the eye."

The pharmacopœia of the *Beindaw Sayá* or "medicine man" is vastly comprehensive, strange, and wonderful as to materia medica never thought of elsewhere. Most of the drugs are merely raw vegetable products, such as barks, roots, leaves, seeds,<sup>1</sup> gums, and simple minerals; but they are usually compounded with sedatives or stimulants, often poisons of a very dangerous nature. The common term for medicine (*Se*) includes not only all kinds of drugs, but also tobacco, unguents, and pigments of every sort. Many years ago I saw a man digging on the Myitkyo embankment of the Pegu and Sittang canal, a snake-infested earthwork, with a lot of dead snakes beside him; and as it was unusual to see a Burman deliberately taking the life of any animal, as seemed here to be the case, I asked him what he was doing. "Digging for cobras," he replied; and he then told me he dried the heads and sold them to doctors for pounding up and mixing with other drugs. Even perspiration from a horse is used, though only for outward application, this being the specific for curing a dark,

<sup>1</sup> The nux vomica tree (*Kabaung: Strychnos nux vomica*) is very common all over Burma in the forests up to 2,000 feet elevation. If the ruling price in Europe makes it worth while, enormous quantities are very cheaply obtainable in Burma.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

blotchy skin-disease called *Tindeik*. Like other orientals, the Burmese appreciate medicine most when it is disagreeable to the taste and drastic in its action. Medicines are therefore often rubbed on the tongue so that none of the flavour gets lost.

Magic-waters and charmed medicine are often given for such purposes as procuring sleep, curing the bite of a mad dog, and restoring to their proper senses those who have been "overlooked" or are possessed by an evil spirit. One of the medicines given as a preservative against evil spirits consists of a powder made of scrapings from a wooden stake driven into ground upon which a house, or still better a monastery, is about to be built.

While undergoing a course of medicine the patient is not allowed to bask in the morning sun, an occupation which the healthy male adult infinitely prefers to work. When the patient is sick nigh unto death the doctor "ceases taking care of him," which is the Burmese equivalent for giving up hope of a recovery. The fee for a doctor's visit is usually only about fourpence or sixpence, and seldom exceeds a rupee (1s. 4d.). If he finds the case beyond his skill, the Burmese *Sayá* usually contents himself with declaring that the patient is possessed by an evil spirit.

When dietists and druggists fail, and often without even giving them a chance, the witch-doctor (*Wèza*) is called in. A consecrated cord (*Tami*), woven with seven threads and tied in seven knots, being cast over the neck of the patient, so as to prevent the escape of the witch, the wise man recites incantations and asks whence the witch has come, why she has possessed the patient, and what she wants before she will leave his body again. Whatever the patient may then say is regarded as the witch's reply. If any particular object be asked for, it is put on the ground in front of the house and left there during the night. If nothing is said, this contumacity on the witch's part necessitates the patient being soundly cuffed or beaten with a stick. Sometimes the beating is done with a short thick conjuring rod (*Ywétan*) about nine or ten inches long, covered with

## ASTROLOGERS

cabalistic figures. Once alarmed, the witch, unable to escape beyond the charmed cord, must at length yield answers by the mouth of the patient. When the witch remains very stubborn the patient is at times beaten to death in the effort to arouse the former to make some utterance. When he sees that his treatment is not likely to prove effective, the witch doctor informs the relatives that the patient is possessed by a malevolent evil spirit, powerful enough to resist the potency of his charms.

Cases of manslaughter by dietists, druggists, and witch doctors indiscriminately, are still not at all infrequent even in the urban centres where the people are brought closely in contact with everyday evidences of civilization. At Meiktila, a small town forming the headquarters of the Meiktila division of Upper Burma, notwithstanding its complement of civil officers from Commissioner downwards, its garrison of European and native troops, its hospital, its irrigation works, and its railway line, a typical case of this sort occurred so recently as the spring of 1897, when cholera had broken out to a slight extent. An old Burman, whose life's race was all but run out from natural causes, being stricken with the fell disease, a *Sayá* or doctor was called in who prescribed that thirty pots full of water should be poured over the poor old man at a late hour of the night. This was done. By the time the last pot was emptied only a corpse remained, the spirit of life itself having been driven from its earthly tenement. And such cases are very common indeed in the rural districts and the forest tracts.

The credulity of the Burmese as to charlatanism of this sort can perhaps best be shewn by the fact that, including about six hundred astrologers, genealogists, and horoscope casters, there are something like twenty thousand *Sayá*, about half of whom are to be found in Lower Burma. More than the one hundred and fiftieth part of the total population of the province is thus supported by the healing profession.

The astrologers or *Bedin Sayá*, those "skilled in the *Veda*" or four Brahminical books, who can by a study of the horoscope of any person foretell auspicious and ominous days for enterprises of all sorts, for the regula-



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

tion of health, the warding off and the cure of diseases, are just about as much entitled as the dietists and medicine men to rank as scientists. Of this class the *Punna*, or members of a small Brahmin colony from Manipur which long ago settled near the royal capital, are regarded with most awe, their services being also much in demand for interpreting dreams and performing ceremonial rites in connection with marriage and death. Retaining the hereditary greed and grasping characteristic of their caste, the phrase of "asking like a *Punna*" is proverbial for extortionate persistence and importunity.

The manner in which astrologers utilise the horoscope or astrological house (*Zadapôn*) has already been indicated (page 187). But it is not too much to say that hardly any enterprise is entered on without the assistance of the astrologer in determining the lucky days, and specifying those threatening misfortune. The auspicious day for commencing ploughing operations each year, the best moment for setting out on any journey, the most opportune time for building or repairing a house, and all matters of this sort, are decided only after the horoscope has been submitted to the astrologer. His procedure is purely ignorant mechanical rote and rule of thumb, without scientific basis of any rational description.

There is of course a recognized astrological scheme (*Pyet Kadein*) based on the eight planetary celestial orbs, and this formed the groundwork for sidereal calculations that were made by the court astronomers when forecasting the almanac (*Thingyansa*). This was made early in each April by the royal Brahmins at Mandalay, sometimes assisted by the Ministers, and it purported to foreshadow the great events of the coming year.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following *Thingyansa* for the year 1884-85 may serve as an example of the sort of forecast given:—

"The old year (1245) will end on Friday, the first day after the full moon of *Tagú*, at four hours, fifty-three minutes, and twenty-four seconds after noon. The new year (1246) will commence at eight hours, fifty minutes, and twelve seconds on the morning of Sunday, the third day of the waning moon of *Tagú*, when the *Thagyá Min*, the King of the *Nat* country, will descend riding on a tame bull, holding an axe in one hand and a reaper's sickle in the other, and will change his residence

## CHRONOLOGY

Including the religious epoch dating from Gaudama's attainment of Neikban (643 B.C.), there have been five eras in Burmese chronology; but that now universally obtaining was established by Pupasaw in 639 A.D., when he usurped the throne of old Pagán, near Tagaung, on the Irrawaddy, about one hundred miles to the north of Mandalay. Hence the present year of grace, 1901 A.D., appears, subtracting 638, as the year 1263 in all Burmese petitions and vernacular documents coming before courts and officials. In all offices, almanacs are therefore required for collating with the English standard such dates as the twelfth day of the waning moon of the month of *Tabódwé* in the year 1259.

The annual period, commencing, say, with the first day of the waxing moon of *Tagú* (in March or April) is divided into twelve lunar months consisting alternately of twenty-nine and of thirty days. To maintain something like approximate fixity in the time at which *Tagú* begins, a thirteenth month is every third year intercalated between the fourth month (*Wasó* or "beginning of Lent") and the fifth month (*Wagaung*) in the form of a "second *Wasó*," thus prolonging the Lenten period (*Wa*). From the first to the fifteenth of each month the days are reckoned with the waxing moon (*Lázan*), whilst from the sixteenth to the end they are designated as such and such a day of the waning moon (*Lábyigyaw*). The full moon (*Lábyi*) is, except as regards the commencement of each

from the Pisces (*Mein Yathi*) to Aries (*Mésa*). In this year evil will befall all persons born on a Sunday. There will be cyclones and heavy winds. Rainfall will be light at the commencement of the monsoon, good about the middle, and plentiful towards the end. The fields will prove fertile; and though the grain may look poor, yet it will be sweet to the taste. People will enjoy prosperity, happiness, and comfort; so they will be able to make large offerings and gifts. The *Pébin* palm (*i.e. Corypha umbraculifera*) will reign as king, and stars will rest on palm trees. All kinds of white substances will be exceedingly dear. Rain will fall on the sixth day of the waxing moon of *Tagú*, and will continue throughout the water festival, falling heavily on the fourteenth day of *Tagú*. The south-west monsoon will commence from the eighth day of the waxing moon of *Kasón*, and the ceremonial ploughing in the royal fields (*Létun Mingalá*) must take place before ten o'clock on the forenoon of Sunday, the eleventh day of the waxing moon of *Tawthalin*." And so on.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

new year, the season at which all religious festivals take place, whereas the time of total obscurity (*Lágwé*) is of comparatively little more significance than the ordinary "duty days" (*Ubôksaung Ne*) occurring with each of the four changes of the moon. Three seasons of the year, of about four months each, are informally recognized. The cold season (*Saung Udu*) commences on the first day after the full moon of *Tasaungmôn* (in October or November), the hot weather (*Nwe Udu*) on that after the full moon of *Tabaung* (in February or March), and the rains (*Mo Udu*) on that of *Wasó* (in July or August).

In addition to this, the minor flight of time is also marked by weeks consisting, as with us, of seven days each. The days bear the names of seven out of the eight planets (*vide* page 186), but leave out of account the dark and mysterious *Rahú*, visible only when occasioning an eclipse by crossing in front of the sun or the moon.<sup>1</sup> Each day was under Burmese rule divided into sixty hours (*Nayi*), and sub-divided into eight watches, each of about three of our hours, which varied in length at different seasons of the year according as the days and nights were relatively longer or shorter. The *Nayi* or "time measurer" was a copper cup having a tiny perforation at the base, which, being inserted in water, sank to a particular mark within a given time. The *Nayi* had various subdivisions from "ten winks of an eye" (*Kaná*) upwards, but these terms were seldom used except in astrological works. As each *Nayi* was thus measured off a gong was beaten, and at every third hour the great drum-shaped gong was sounded from the *Pahózin* or timekeeper's tower within the inner precincts of the royal palace at the eastern gate. One beat of the drum denoted nine o'clock in the morning or evening, two beats twelve o'clock, three beats three o'clock, and four beats six o'clock. From the *Pahó* the beats were repeated on large bells by all the guards throughout the palace. To ensure attention to this matter in the

<sup>1</sup> *Rahú* is also an *Athúra*, a sort of Titan or fallen spirit, the greatest of all the *Nat* in Spirit land. He is said to be 576,000 miles in height, and to eat the moon once in every six months.

## MEASURING TIME AND DISTANCE

olden days, the timekeeper could be carried off and sold in the public market if he were negligent in the discharge of his duties, being then forced to pay a fine in the shape of ransom. Now, under British rule, wherever there are jails, police stations, treasury guards, and so forth, the hours are marked off by beat of gong. Hence, in towns, the word *Nayi* has now come to mean both the hour, measured by the European method, and the clock or watch by which it is measured. In the rural tracts and jungles, however, there is still no such advanced or precise standard. If asked what *Nayi* it may be at any particular time of the day or night, a peasant would probably give some such reply as "before the brightening of dawn," "about the second time of cock crowing," "about breakfast time," "when the sun is beginning to descend," "the time for the evening meal," or "sleeping time." And in the same way there are rough and ready measurements of distance, such as "within hail," "as far as the lowing of a bullock can be heard," "a quid of betel" (ten minutes), "as far as a cheroot lasts" (half an hour), "as far as one can go before eating food," or even "needing to sleep two nights on the way there."

The standard of measurement of distance was the *Ta* of seven cubits, one thousand of which formed the *Taing* or Burmese mile (equal to about two English miles), ten of which make a *Thaung*. The *Yúzana*, or unit of distance, always mentioned in sacred books and mythological narratives, consisted of 6,400 *Ta*; but it is never used colloquially in this manner. For smaller measurements the span (*Twa*) of nine inches, and the cubit (*Taung*) of about eighteen inches are the most common terms in use.

It can hardly be said that literature is a living art in Burma. Close upon three thousand males were thus classified during the census of 1891, but these were almost entirely copyists in monasteries, employed merely in transcribing the sacred writings on palm leaves with an iron style (*Kanyutdan*). Most monasteries possess a small library (*Bidagat Taik*), but, with the increasing use of the printing press, the copyist's art has already begun to fall into desuetude and will soon be a thing of



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

the past. Sitting round the camp fire, or during journeys by land or water, there is generally some wag of the party who can improvise snatches of song; but the national body is not at the present moment endowed with the living spirit of literary creation. The interesting literature of the past, mostly of a purely religious character, will be dealt with in another chapter.

It is a sad but an undeniable fact that contact with western civilization has soon led to the corruption and decay of Burmese art. It has rapidly become debased, and the bastardizing and deteriorating process is still in progress. And, what is more, nothing can prevent this. Nowhere is this decline more noticeable than in the wood carving and the silver work for which Burma was justly famed. None who knew the platform of the great Shwe Dagôn pagoda in Rangoon about twenty-five years ago can have revisited it within recent years without a pang of regret at the innumerable signs of the decadence of wood carving. More than twenty years ago the crude, but bold and artistic, teakwood carvings of pure Burmese design with which the shrines and prayer poles were adorned had begun to give place to more elaborate work degraded by contact with Italian and English influences; and this loss of artistic sense soon degenerated to such an extent that within a few years buildings with galvanized iron pillars, corrugated roofs, and abominations from a Glasgow foundry, in the shape of cast-iron imitations of Burmese carving, were allowed to be put up as ornamental eaves-boarding and finials. It was nothing short of desecration, almost amounting to sacrilege, to permit such hideous monstrosities to be placed side by side with the purer "works of merit" already collected under the shadow of the great golden pagoda.

Till the downfall of the kingdom of Ava in 1885, Mandalay was the great centre of Burmese art. But even there it did not escape the effects of contamination with Italian handicraftsmen. Founded in 1857 and occupied as a new capital in 1860 by a monarch of advanced tastes and commercial instincts, the royal buildings were for the first time roofed with corrugated

## CRITIQUE OF BURMESE ART

iron. Many of the stone edifices were ornamented in stucco with hybrid designs showing Italian influence. Balustrades were made of green glass in place of being turned in teakwood, and glass ornamentation was a feature of some of the reception rooms. The palace buildings, taken as a whole, however, were essentially Burmese in general design and artistic features; while most of the monasteries around the city, built of teakwood richly carved and gilded, were beautiful specimens of pure Burmese art. The destruction of many of these during the incendiary fires of April, 1892, was an irreparable loss, though some of the finest and purest specimens are fortunately still spared.

The leading characteristics of Burmese art are boldness and freedom of design. It lacks finish; but then any very high degree of finish would be artistically inconsistent with the whole genius of the more or less hereditary national designs. This want of finicking finish is no more a drawback to the artistic value of Burmese wood carving and silver work than the want of minute detail in works by the impressionist school of painters. Rougher and more impressionist, the teak carvings and the silver work of Burma, when of pure uncontaminated Burmese design, stand on a much higher artistic level than the blackwood carvings and the Cutch silver work, of somewhat similar design, produced on the Bombay side of India, because they have a boldness and a freedom, which are essentially strong and virile. For very fine finish the royal teakwood would in any case have been unsuitable from its coarse grain. There is a national individuality about Burmese carving, which distinguishes it entirely from Chinese art, and raises it above the more closely allied Siamese designs.

Unfortunately, however, it is now extremely difficult to obtain recent work of pure Burmese design, or to ensure that orders given shall result in work of this class. Even the carvers and silversmiths themselves seem to be rapidly losing all trace of hereditary instinct with regard to what ornamentations are truly Burmese and what are innovations of western origin.

About 1883 Government began to interfere actively

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

with "*a scheme for the encouragement of art industries,*" and established an art workshop in Rangoon, which did much to hasten the process of degradation of art in Lower Burma. Under this, to quote from an official record,—

The improvement of art work after Burmese models has been sedulously fostered. Workmen are provided with photographic models of good work, servile imitation of non-Burman work is discouraged, and effort is made to secure the development of a thoroughly national school of art. All the best workmen now devote their energies principally to the production of work which is Burmese in character, and their productions during the year (1885-86) have, with few exceptions, been Burmese in shape, design, characteristics, and details. . . . The scheme for the encouragement of art industries advanced another step in the direction of self-support. At the close of the year (1886-87) five of the leading artists in Rangoon associated themselves together and formed an informal company. They have obtained the services of a trustworthy clerk, who will act as secretary and accountant, and will see to advertising in the Indian papers, to the proper registration of orders, to their execution in due rotation, and to their despatch. . . . The object of Government is slowly to withdraw its support from the artists and to keep a keen look out that the handicrafts of Burma are not debased into manufactures where hundreds of articles of exactly similar design are produced in a slovenly and inartistic manner. There has been a steady demand for the silver work of Thayetmyo and Rangoon during the year. The wood carving institute has done well and has more than paid its way notwithstanding a heavy charge for establishment. Government connection with this institution ceased with the close of the year. . . . The prices of art ware have remained steady throughout the year.

With such a foster-mother, how could poor Burmese art thrive? It naturally sickened and declined; but, from the combined influence of various causes, this was bound to happen as the necessary result of the various political, social, and material changes which have been taking place throughout the valley of the Irrawaddy during the last half-century.

Sometimes Government have permitted acts of sheer vandalism to be perpetrated by their Public Works Department, which are almost incredible. Thus, there were nine golden thrones in the royal buildings at Mandalay, though only four of these now exist; the rest were dismantled. For years the pieces lay about the passages in the palace buildings, but now they have long since vanished, having probably been broken up as fire-

## WOOD CARVING

wood by natives of India employed within the palace precincts. Some of these were certainly deserving of being sent to South Kensington as objects of unique interest. Again, in November, 1891, immediately before the Commander-in-Chief (Sir Frederick Roberts) revisited Mandalay on tour, many of the rooms of the palace, in which the military offices were located, were whitewashed with lime over the rich gold gilding that covered the whole of the ceiling and the walls. Of this there is no doubt, for I saw the whitewashing being done.

The carvings in and around monasteries are often illustrative of legends, or of episodes in the life of Gaudama as described in the *Zat* or "birth-stories." In the exterior carvings there is usually a careful balance. A central piece (*Damán*), richly carved with figures, terminates in a long ornamental pole capped with a miniature umbrella (*Ti*), whilst on either side of this carved wings (*Apyáuk*) extend symmetrically either in one piece or else in wave-like sections. The outer wings in all important pieces of carving—as on the royal thrones, over the entrances to monasteries, or forming the gable-ends of roofs having ornamental eaves-boarding and finials—invariably point inwards towards the central portion, and thus form a characteristic feature in Burmese design. Around the eaves, the carving is in wave-like sections, the highest being at the corners and in the middle of the building. They consist of separate pieces representing Gaudama, monks, men making obeisance, or birds, or else they may be mere indefinite ornamentation, each item being larger than that next below it. It has been suggested that these pieces represent tongues of fire shooting upwards, but this seems rather a fantastic and far-fetched notion; for on the Burmese throne, around the principal monasteries, and in all the more highly finished carvings to be seen at Mandalay these upward pointing pieces are elaborated with figures. It is only in the coarser work, and on commoner buildings like rest-houses, that the designs become less definite; and even then they far more closely resemble the upper portion of a bird than tongues of fire. Moreover, tongues of fire have no connection with



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

Buddhism unless they might be taken to represent the burning flames of lust and passion referred to in Gaudama's celebrated Sermon on the Mount, in which he first enunciated the mystery of the law to his disciples. These pieces very frequently, when exhibiting a fair amount of finish, unmistakably represent the breast, neck, and head of the peacock, the royal bird of Burma; hence it seems not improbable that the small graded uprights in each *Apyáuk* or section of carving are more likely abortive representations of peacock's heads rather than tongues of flame. Even the carvers themselves, however, can give no satisfactory account of what they mean. According to them, they are merely *hla bo*—"for the sake of ornamentation." Leogryphs, demons, dragons, mythological birds and figures, and running leaf-scrolls are freely scattered throughout most of the more ambitious designs, while they form the most important features in all minor pieces of carving.

As teakwood is somewhat light in colour, the effectiveness of large pieces of Burmese carving is much heightened by the dark coating of earth-oil given to preserve them against the ravages of climate. Many of the carvings, exterior as well as interior, in the royal and the sacred buildings at Mandalay were richly gilded and often ornamented with mosaic work in coloured looking glass. Many were also picked out in colours with red, blue, yellow, and green paint. The results are somewhat crude and barbarous, though undoubtedly effective; for the strong sunshine and the whole environment seem to permit glaring combinations of colour that would be displeasing under other circumstances. Now that the thick gilding has been washed off to a great extent by the rains of the last fifteen to twenty years, many of the monasteries around Mandalay convey only a faded and imperfect impression of what they once were, while the incendiary fires of 1892 caused much irreparable loss.

The palace at Mandalay contains many examples of coloured looking-glass work, but some of the finest specimens of this, and of the application of colours to wood carving, as distinct features in Burmese decorative art are to be found in lonely jungle shrines far off

## SILVER WORK

the beaten track. One of the finest specimens of this particular kind of ornamentation is to be found at Bawyethat, in the Southern Shan State of Nyaungywé, about ten or twelve miles north of Fort Stedman, where the carving is of a high order, while the looking-glass mosaics and the vivid colouring with paints combine to form a singularly complete example of pure Burmese art of this description. This picking out of carved work with gaudy and often startlingly unharmonious colours, and tricking it up with coloured looking-glass, are certainly crude and somewhat barbaric methods ; but, if not examined too closely, the work is very effective, and in front of it one feels face to face with what is undoubtedly art, though it follows lines diverging widely from those along which Western ideas run. It is perhaps in such out-of-the-way places that the gems of Burmese wood carving are most often to be found.

Ivory carving of great delicacy is executed by artists in Moulmein, who have a practical monopoly of this kind of work. The designs are very much the same as in wood carving, with of course a higher degree of finish.

Next to wood carving, silver work occupies the chief place among the arts of Burma. The ornaments attached to the court dresses of high officials consisted of richly chased masses of silver, but the great bulk of the work executed by silversmiths was in the form of bowls of different sizes, in shape somewhat like the lower half of a barrel only more convex, of betel boxes, cups, and small boxes for lime. Teapots, vases, racing cups and such like are all of them European innovations. Although the designs on these may be Burmese in form, such productions can never be considered specimens of pure Burmese art work in silver. On many of the larger bowls legends and episodes from the life of Gaudama were often represented, as in the more ambitious wood carvings, while the smaller and more solid articles were chiefly adorned with designs of animals and chasing of scroll tracery varying in depth. The elephant figures frequently among the designs in silver, whereas it is much less common in wood carving. One of the most

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

typical standard designs on silver cups (*Palá*) consists of the twelve signs of the zodiac, each embossed within one of a series of shields or divisions of equal size.

When orders for any work are given to a silversmith, rupees to the required weight are handed to him for melting down, and an advance has at the same time to be made: for it is seldom that any Burmese handicraftsman commences work of any sort without receiving a cash advance in accordance with custom. The silver is first of all cast in the form of a plain bowl or cup. Then it is filled with melted lac; and when this hardens, repoussé work of figures, animals, and scroll tracery is blocked out before the finer chasing is done with very simple graving tools. Almost invariably a line of chased ornament running round the top or the bottom represents the leaves of the sacred lotus or water lily.

Boldness, breadth, freedom of design, and a general want of careful finish, are the leading characteristics of Burmese silver work; yet some of the chasing and engraving on small solid boxes, more especially on those made by Shan silversmiths, show that some of their artists were capable of imparting a very high degree of finish to their work.

Old silver can often be obtained in the bazaars for a mere trifle in excess of the weight of the articles in coined rupees. Many a pleasant half-hour can thus be spent in the Mandalay *Zegyo* or chief market place by those acquainted with the language and desirous of collecting the old specimens of Burmese silver work which sometimes find their way there in the shape of unredeemed pledges. To estimate the quality of the silver a fine-grained, smooth, black, waterworn test-stone (*Hmat Kyauk*) is handed to the would-be purchaser, who rubs the edge of the bowl or box on this stone in order to compare it with the colour of the rubbing from a rupee. According to the amount of copper that has been used as alloy, the rubbing shows a yellowish red divergence from the clear white of pure silver.

Niello work (*Meinla*) is occasionally executed, though to no large extent and chiefly by Shans. The greatest

## GOLD JEWELLERY

recent artist in this branch was a leper who used to live in the town of Shwegyin, and who died there about twenty years ago. Some of his productions were very superior ; but, as a rule, most of the specimens of this class of work are unfortunately to be found worked into inferior silver.

Silver ornaments are despised by the Burmese, except perhaps as charms to be worn by children ; and often they constitute the whole clothing that is given to these. Gold jewellery alone is worn by the women, in the shape of solid bangles, ear cylinders, rings, and necklaces. The spittoons and betel boxes used by the king and the Shan chiefs were of solid gold, and small images of Gaudama in pure gold are known to have existed ; but otherwise gold was, and is, used entirely for ornamental purposes. A good set of gold ornaments is a safe form of regular investment, as money can always be raised upon them, whenever necessary. The rings and the front end of the ear cylinders are often set with diamonds, rubies, spinels, and sapphires. In Arakan the necklaces are mostly in the shape of large hollow beads, but in Central Burma the favourite form is the *Dalizan*, consisting of rows of peacocks' heads or other ornaments connected with each other by small chains and diminishing in number from the upper row downwards. Necklaces are usually stained to a dark reddish colour by being boiled in a decoction of tamarinds and many other strange ingredients.

A form of art which has now all but disappeared in Burma is gold lacquer work. Formerly the interiors of monasteries were often decorated in this manner, the whole of the walls being covered with legendary designs in black and gold ; but now almost the sole remaining traces of the art are the small boxes, platters, and tables—these latter purely European in design—which are made in Prome. Twenty-five years ago a splendid specimen of this art, dating from before the second Burmese war, was to be found in an old, abandoned monastery at the southern end of Myanaung on the Irrawaddy ; but, neglected and left to the ravages of a hot, damp climate, for years back not even traces of



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

the handsome work have there remained any longer in existence. The whole surface having been gilded, designs were drawn in black varnish (*Thitsi*) and the intervening portions were coated with goldsize; when dry the whole was gently washed with warm water, when the figures and ornaments stood out in black from the background of gold, and the whole was fixed with a coating of transparent varnish. Covers and trays (*Byat* and *Ôk*) for carrying offerings to priests, presents of pickled tea, and so forth, are also made of lacquered ware, though in Mandalay these used to be richly gilded and studded with imitation precious stones.

Lacquered ware in colours is manufactured in several parts of the country, as all the drinking cups and most of the betel boxes are made of it. This industry is followed at Prome, in Lower Burma, but the great centre is Pagán, in Upper Burma, where the workmanship often rises to a really artistic level. The basis of the box, platter, or cup is formed of very fine bamboo wickerwork to ensure great flexibility. The interstices being filled up with a coating of cowdung and black varnish, the rough shell is dried for four days at a temperature of about 130°. It is again coated over and dried, before being put on a rough lathe and polished with silicious bamboo or a pumice of sand and lac. When smooth, a coating of bone charcoal and black varnish is applied, which, when dried and hardened, forms the groundwork of the designs cut out with an iron style. Except where figures and ornaments are to stand out in black, this groundwork is cut away for some depth and a coating of body colour is given. When this has thoroughly hardened in about a fortnight's time, the article is again polished till the black design shows up completely. The style is again used to cut away all parts not intended to show up in this first coat of colour, and a coating of a different colour is then applied. Similar operations are repeated as often as necessary, only so much of the last applied coating of colour being left unremoved by the style as forms part of the intended design. Only three body colours are thus used besides the black varnish of the groundwork—

## LACQUER WORK OF PAGÁN

Chinese vermilion for red, and orpiment for yellow (imported largely from Yunnan for this purpose), while green is formed by adding indigo to the orpiment. Each of these main colours, or whatever shade of them be desired, is slightly mixed with black varnish to enable it to set and harden quickly. When these three or more successive coatings of paint have been applied and polished, the figures and main designs appear in rich black, with an edging, say, of red, which may rank next in importance in the scheme of colour. Beyond the red appears the yellow throughout the design: and last of all comes the green relieved by dots and lines of the original black. The whole is like a geological map of regular design, the black being the elementary rocks, and the red, yellow, and green forming successive strata always occurring in regular sequence. After the last pumicing, by which the colours are softened into slight blending, a final polish is given with a little oil and paddy-husk. Some of the *Zat Kuneik*, or more elaborately ornamented betel boxes of Pagán, are quaint and interesting objects of Burmese workmanship.

Most of the designs on these are demons and mythological animals, very much like those which form the stock-designs of the "artist in ink" when tattooing boys' thighs, as previously described (page 197).

The arts which have as yet remained almost absolutely untouched by contact with Western ideas are sculpture in alabaster, and the founding of brazen images of Gaudama, of all sizes. The great centre of these art-handicrafts—in the pursuance of which, however, there is little opportunity for individual talent, as the images follow precisely the lines of hereditary conventional types—consists of little villages situated immediately to the south of Mandalay, below the great Arakan pagoda. Alabaster is quarried largely for this purpose at the Sagyin hill, about twelve miles to the north of Mandalay, and also in the Sagaing hills on the western side of the Irrawaddy. The most colossal images are those made of alabaster and representing the Buddha in a recumbent position; but those made in brass and marble in largest numbers represent Gaudama seated, cross-legged, in an attitude

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

of deep contemplation, his left hand resting across his knees, while his right hand hangs downwards in front of him. Upright figures are more frequently made of priests than of the Buddha himself.

The most famous of the brazen images is that in the Mahamyatmuni, "the great saint's" or Arakan pagoda at Mandalay, which was brought across the Arakan Yoma by the Padaung pass near Prome in 1784, as a trophy of the conquest of Arakan by King Bodaw Payá in 1783. Peculiar sanctity is attached to this image, as it is said to have been made during the life of Gaudama and to have been miraculously founded after several unsuccessful efforts. It is about twelve feet in height, and represents the Buddha in the usual sitting posture, abstracted in profound meditation. Popular report says this colossal image was brought over from Arakan intact, but it really was conveyed in pieces. For the service of the temple enshrining this sacred image 120 families of the defenders of Arakan were condemned to slavery, and an endowment of one *Pè* (1.75 acres) of land per head was made for their subsistence.

In founding brazen images, the design is first fashioned in clay and then coated over with wax to the thickness of about half-an-inch, over which another coating of clay and chopped straw is packed and allowed to dry for some days. Apertures are made in this for the subsequent pouring in of the metal, and air-holes are provided with pieces of straw. The whole is then placed in a furnace and the molten wax allowed to run off through a hole at the base left for this purpose. This being plugged up after all the wax has been removed, the now hollow mould is ready to receive the molten brass. At this stage there is often failure, and only one out of every three or four moulds proves successful. When the outer casing of clay has been removed, the work of filing and burnishing the metal occupies a considerable time.

Besides founding images of Gaudama, the chief use to which brass is put is for making gongs and pagoda bells. In the Shan country and Karenni the national form of gong (*Kyezín*) is in the shape of a drum, open at one end; but the true Burmese gong (*Maung*) consists of a

## THE CASTING OF BELLS

roughly triangular disc of brass with turned up corners, somewhat concavely hollowed at the centre but thickening towards the outer edge. These are suspended by a string or rope, and are struck with a wooden mallet on the corner to make them revolve while emitting their note. As the yellow-robed priests make their mendicant round every morning, one of the small attendants keeps beating such a gong so that those living along the line of progress may be ready with their dole of rice. The tone of each gong depends on its size, on the thickness of the metal, and the concavity of the central part; but the richness and mellowness of the note is increased when silver has been added, as is sometimes done.

When bells (*Kaunglaung*) are being cast,—which usually forms the occasion of a great local festival,—silver, gold, and jewellery are frequently thrown in large quantities into the cauldrons containing the metal to be poured into the earthen moulds. The pieces of gold and silver are often plainly noticeable in the bell through incomplete fusion with the rest of the metal. The casting takes place much in the same way as with the brazen images. The bells are thick and massive, being supported by a ring at the top so that they can be slung to a crossbar supported by two uprights. There is no clapper, the note being struck by hitting the lip of the bell with a wooden pestle or with the rosette end of a stag's horn. On all pagoda platforms, and near sacred shrines, large bells are to be found with wooden pestles and deers' antlers for sounding them: for the Burman is careful to call in this manner the attention of the good spirits concerned to the fact of his being about to earn religious merit for himself by repeating the religious formulae. There is no hiding of such light under a bushel.

There is a smaller kind of tiny bell (*Swèlwè*) often attached to the "umbrella" or iron framework surmounting pagodas. This is provided with a clapper in the shape of a thin piece of tin or iron, cut in the form of the leaf of the sacred *Ficus religiosa* and generally gilded, which is suspended by a thin chain from the roof of the bell. With each breath of air these "fig-leaflets" are borne against the sides of the bells, which thus tinkle day and



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

night while the air is in light motion. Sometimes these pagoda-bells make a sweet melody during the stillness of the night, though often they seem rather to jangle unmusically when too close at hand.

The largest bell in Burma is that at Mingun, on the western bank of the Irrawaddy, a little above Mandalay. Here the foundations of an enormous pagoda having a square base of 150 yards in length were laid in 1771 by King Mintayágyi, which, had it been completed, would have formed the largest pile of brickwork in the world. But it was destroyed by an earthquake in 1839, when it had risen to a height of 165 feet, or a little under one-third of the total 500 feet in height which the original design contemplated. Close to these massive ruins is the large Mingun bell, probably only outrivalled in dimensions by the great bell of Moscow. Popular report credits it with weighing 555,555 viss, or 905 tons, but the Burmese royal chronicle assigns to it a weight of 55,500 viss or about 90 tons; while more recent estimates, based on measurements and rough calculations, show that it must weigh about 80 tons. It is twelve feet in height, and ten feet in external diameter at the lip, while it varies in thickness from about six to twelve inches. For many years it remained resting on the ground, having fallen from its supports; but in 1896 it was raised again on substantial iron uprights and crossbeam, and has since been enshrined in a rich housing of carved teak.

In some respects the most interesting bell in Burma, however, is the famous *Mahaganda*, a great bell weighing about twenty-two tons, enshrined in the north-eastern side of the platform of the Shwe Dagôn pagoda in Rangoon. Presented to the pagoda by King Sinpyuyin in 1774, when he visited Rangoon in order to gain religious merit by repairing the brickwork of the pagoda, by regilding it from pinnacle to base, and by replacing the old Talaing *Ti* (or metal "umbrella" surmounting the top) by a new one covered with gold and profusely studded with jewels, which he had constructed in Ava for the purpose,—on which occasion he also slaughtered the aged Byahmaingdi, his prisoner, the last King of Pegu, together with many of the Talaing chiefs,—this bell was

## BURMESE MUSIC

removed by the British prize-agents in April, 1825, for shipment to Calcutta as a trophy. Whilst it was being conveyed on a raft to the ship *Sulimany*, it heeled over and sank not far from the river bank. In January, 1826, it was raised by the British from the mud of the river-bed by mooring it with two cables to a brig at low water, along with which it rose on the return of the inflowing tide; and the Burmese were then permitted to haul it on shore, and remove it once more to its place on the pagoda platform. This was done, *more Burmanico*, with extravagance of delight and public festival. The bell was garlanded with flowers, and preceded by music and dancing. During the last seventy years this has of course developed into the legend that the bell was raised easily by the Burmese, after all attempts on the part of the British to recover it had resulted in failure.

Another large bell, of about nine tons weight, hung in the south-east corner of the same platform, was founded and placed there early in 1843 by King Tharrawaddi to replace one which had been presented about 1460 by Dammazedi, King of Pegu, but which had been lost in the Pazundaung creek about 1600, when the Portuguese Governor of Syriam, the notorious Philip de Brito y Nicote, also known as Maung Zingu, was carrying it off.

As in the other arts, so also with regard to music there seems to be an entire lack of inventiveness and creative power. All the existing tunes having apparently been handed down by ear from generation to generation, musical notation being quite unknown to the Burmese. In speaking of music they vaguely recognize only five kinds of musical instruments (*Turiyá* or *Tihmôk Tazá*, "instruments to be beaten or blown"), but in reality they employ a larger number in making the dreadful noises which can often only be recognized as intended for music when assisted by the enchantment of being heard from a considerable distance. The taste for Burmese music close at hand does not grow on one. For two years I lived in Shwegyin in immediate proximity to the place, near the northern gate of the main bazaar, where all the funeral processions halted on their way to the crematorium and burial ground; yet the shrill, piercing notes of the

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

horn and the loud booming of the frame-drums on these almost daily festive occasions seemed unmusical to the end. It is little short of agony to be encamped too near to any *Pwè* or theatrical performance on account of the loud, discordant accompaniment to the play.

The principal wind instrument is a clarinet (*Kayá*, *Hnè*) widening like an oboe towards the lower end, and with a short, spreading, bell-shaped brass termination like the base of a bugle; and there is also a pipe or flute (*Palwè*). A variety of drums exists, as noise is one of the most striking characteristics of the national music; but the chief of these is the *Saing*, consisting of a circular framework with thin, ornamental wooden balustrades in which a peal of small drums of different sizes and tones is fixed in regular gradation. These are played on by hand by a man sitting in the centre. To accommodate this *Saing* in processions, the musicians are usually seated in one or more carts. For making these drums the wood of the Bôn-mèza tree (*Albizzia stipulata*) is invariably used. A smaller instrument of similar shape is the *Kyi-waing* or "circle of gongs," which are struck with a stick. The chief stringed instruments are the *Saung*, a harp or lute of nine to thirteen silken strings, made of Padauk wood (*Pterocarpus Indicus*) with a sounding-board of doeskin, and the *Migyaung* or "crocodile," so called from its shape, a guitar of three strings strung lengthwise above a cavity hollowed out of teakwood. There is also a kind of violin (*Tayaw*), with three strings, forming one of the minor instruments. Of those played by percussion the brass cymbals (*Lingwin*) easily take first place, but the *Pattala* or harmonicon constructed with some twenty or more pieces of bamboo, about an inch and a half wide but graduated as to length, hung along two strings in a sounding box made of teakwood deeply hollowed out, is more sweetly toned. To add to the volume of sound bamboo clappers or castanets (*Walet-gôk*, *Hnyap*) are also beaten together, sometimes with the hands, sometimes with the feet; but these can hardly be considered musical instruments, though nearly always to be found in a band.

The high-pitched, shrill, piercing clarion notes of the

## BURMESE MUSICAL SCALE

*Kayá* proclaim the dominant theme and variations of the tune; and, accompanied by the loud harsh clash of the brass cymbals, they make themselves heard above everything else in Burmese music. The man who keeps continually moving about beating the drums hung within the framework of the *Saing* has on the whole the hardest work, for he who plays the *Kayá* usually has support in the shape of a man (called the *Nauktaing*) sitting behind him, back to back, against whom he can lean when he begins to feel tired.

The use of musical instruments is confined almost entirely to men. Girls sometimes, though very rarely, play the bamboo harmonicon, but not any of the other instruments.

The Burmese musical scale consists of an octave having nearly the same notes as the European diatonic scale; but the interval between E and F is not a semi-tone as in our octave. The Burmese F is sharper than F natural, and yet is not the true F sharp; while B is also sharper than the European B natural. Little attention is paid to pitch, and the instruments are for the most part such as require hardly any tuning. Very few of the stock tunes have been written down by Europeans, though the great national air, the *Kayá Than* or "Sound of the Clarion," has been set both for piano and for a military band. Freed from the element of noise produced by an unmeaning use of drums and cymbals, it is a quaint and distinctly musical air, in parts sparkling, bright and gay, and in others plaintive and sad.

In Burmese tunes the first notes in bars are usually emphasized, the following ones being played more and more softly, then often almost dying away altogether.

Some of their short lyrics, almost always sung to sad and plaintive tunes, are very impressive if heard in the soft stillness of the mild tropical evening, when the mind is best attuned for receiving impressions of this sort. The echoes of one such, heard in the gloaming more than twenty years ago amid the jungles fringing the banks of the Sittang river, will ever linger in my mind associated with the scene around me at the time. I had been out all day in the dense elephant-grass jungle directing



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

operations for capturing two female baggage elephants which had been lured away by the males of a wild herd, and I was sitting by the bank of a small stream meditating on the contrariness of things in general and the perverseness of female elephants in particular. The evening sky was weird, shot with most of the colours in the rainbow, and filled with the faint, pale lemon-hued lights which seem to induce sad feelings so readily and undesiredly. Following each other in quick succession flights of various kinds of birds, homing westwards to their nesting places in the forests of the Pegu Yoma, had passed far overhead, and the daylight was fast beginning to fail. All around was the dark brown, mud-laden water flowing towards the main river ; because it was the month of August, when the highest floods were out and the vast inundations covered many scores of square miles of low-lying lands throughout the Sittang valley. Just as it was about time to wend my way back to the hamlet where I was encamped in a monastery,—for the higher land is then usually swarming with cobras and other snakes driven up by the waters, and a certain amount of daylight is essential for wary walking,—the sound of a plaintive song, well sung, came faintly through the jungle, growing gradually stronger and louder as it came nearer. Suddenly the prow of a canoe shot out from behind a thick clump of tall elephant-grass, and a merry singer burst forth with a new verse commencing "*Maung Shwe Maung . . .*" Naught save the first few notes and the first nasal variation had been trolled forth, when the lad seated paddling at the stern of his canoe caught sight of me on the bank, and the love-song was stilled. Averting his head shame-facedly as he paddled by, he soon made the small canoe shoot past quickly, and was lost to view behind other jungle. That is long, long ago now ; but whenever I have since heard it said, and that not infrequently, that the Burmese have neither poetry nor music in their composition, then the memory of the plaintive notes of that song and the untold tale of Maung Shwe Maung rise up within me in silent protest against the critic, who has never felt and understood the deep pathos of the simple folksongs that some-

## PICTORIAL ART

times break the stillness and silence of the lonely recesses in these often very depressing tropical jungles.

In painting, the artistic feeling is much less apparent than in carving and silver work, although the mural decorations in the Kupyaukgyi, Kuzeik, and other older shrines in Pagán disclose evidences of an art now lost to the Burmese. The subjects chosen are usually either legendary or intended to represent celebrated pagodas and shrines. The colouring is crude in the extreme, and the technique grotesque, while there is a total disregard of even the most elementary axioms of perspective. At some of the religious edifices the various torments inflicted in the many different kinds of hells are most graphically represented. One of the most complete and gruesome of these collections is at the Arakan pagoda at the southern end of Mandalay. Torments are there depicted with much detail, such as the most ultra-Calvinistic of Scottish divines could hardly have found himself able to conceive and describe, so blood-curdling and realistic are they. Whenever Englishmen form the subject of Burmese pictures, they are generally represented in absurd situations and with a number of beer bottles around them, mostly empty.

Another form of minor decorative art consists in embroidered curtains (*Kalagá*) or appliqué work of red cloth with figures sewn on that have been cut out of black and coloured cloths, spangles being often added to heighten the effect. This is the only approach the Burmese have to anything in the way of tapestry. Some of the legendary designs thus treated are effective pieces of colour, though rather crude and meretricious from the artistic point of view.

At Bassein, Sagaing, and Shwebo a somewhat coarse sort of art pottery is manufactured to a slight extent in the form of terra cotta adorned with rough models of elephants, monsters of various sorts, figures of men, and floral tracery, all highly glazed. The ordinary brown glaze is produced by coating the articles, while still unfired, with a wash of galena (*Chaw, Bwet*) and rice water, while sulphate of copper is added if a green tinge is desired. Under King Mindôn efforts were made to

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introduce glass-blowing into Mandalay ; but this never attained much success, although the title "Chief of the Glass Boilers" (*Pangyet Wundauk*) was borne by one of the most influential among the younger officials at court during both Mindôn and Thibaw's reigns. It was this *Wundauk* who was sent in 1885 as Ambassador Plenipotentiary to reside permanently in Paris (see vol. i., page 73).

Even in many such minor matters as the embroidery of felt saddles, or leather harness, etc., there is a strong hereditary artistic feeling among Burmese handicraftsmen ; and it is matter for regret that this is inevitably being thrust aside and gradually obliterated in consequence of contact with European trade and civilization. Decay in all the various branches of national art is, however, merely one of the inevitable items in the total price that Burma is paying for the loss of its separate national existence, and for its rapid material progress under the present more civilized administration, which has for its chief aims the protection of life and property, the advancement of education and sanitation, and the expansion of trade and commerce.

In referring to the treatment of diseases nothing has been said above about veterinary work, though this is of great importance in an agricultural country where serious epidemics often cause a heavy bill of mortality among cattle (see vol. i., pages 309, 310). Government have done much to try and remedy this by suitable instruction ; but, as might be expected, the Burmese methods which obtain are very primitive and barbarous, entirely empirical, and altogether devoid of scientific knowledge or of humane feeling for the sufferings of the brute creation. Thus, injections of curious mixtures are frequently made into the eyes of ponies and cattle, when they are out of condition through over-work or over-exposure to the sun. One such recipe consists of a mixture of *betel-leaf*, *cloves*, *tobacco*, and *salt*. These are all pounded together, mixed with water, and applied while fresh. This "eye-opener" often (it is said) stimulates energy for the time being ; but it must be horribly painful to the poor dumb animal, already suffering from illness. It must certainly act powerfully as a counter-irritant.

## Chapter XII

### LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

**T**HE Burmese language, with its half-dozen local groups or dialects, belongs, together with the various Chin and Kachin tribal languages, to the Thibeto-Burman family of what may perhaps be termed the polytonic languages of Indo-China. The other families occurring, or spoken at all, in Burma include the Chinese, the Môn or Môn-Annam, the Shan or Tai, and the Karen languages.

The Môn or Peguan language, more commonly known as Talaing since the downfall of the Peguan kingdom in 1757, is still spoken and taught in monasteries in the villages between Moulmein and Amherst, though nothing is done for its special encouragement. It has a literature of its own, and numbers of inscriptions are recorded in it. The only known offshoots from the ancient Môn are the Palaung hill tribes chiefly to be found in the Ruby Mines district, and the Khamu tribes near the Mekong river. Taic Shan includes all the languages spoken by the Shan and Chinese-Shan tribes, the Laos and the Siamese. The Karen language includes the three groups, Sgaw, Pwo (inclusive of Taungthu), and Bwè or Bghai.

The classification of the Aryan, Semitic, and Dravidian families of languages as monotonic, in contrast to these polytonic families, is of course somewhat arbitrary and artificial; but tonal variations are in the latter case so essentially characteristic of the spoken language as perhaps to justify the distinction thus made. The Shan language, for example, contains five tones when spoken; and in some of the syllables there are three series of these, giving fifteen possible different pronunciations of



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

a single syllable. Fortunately, however, these tonal possibilities are not fully utilized in conversation. In Burmese there are three tones, so that any given syllable may have three entirely different meanings only distinguishable by the intonation when spoken, or by accents or diacritical marks when written.

The Burmese alphabet, however, is borrowed from the Aryan Sanscrit, through the Pali of Upper India. This was the language spoken by Gaudama during the sixth century B.C. ; and it was in Pali that Asoka's inscriptions, dating from about 241 B.C., were recorded.

Although the languages themselves differ greatly, all the alphabets in use throughout Further India have been derived from the old Devanagari or Pali characters. The oldest inscriptions as yet found in Burma are Sanscrit records in the Gupta character of Samvat 108, or 416 A.D. ; while the national language seems to have come from Ceylon and Southern India along with the Buddhism which became the national religion. Nearly all the older stone inscriptions found in various parts of Burma are recorded in square Pali characters ; but as all the manuscripts were made by graving with a style on leaves of the Talipot palm (*Borassus flabelliformis*), the letters gradually acquired their present rounded forms.

As a matter of fact the Burmese possess two languages, the ancient classical Pali, and the more modern vernacular Burmese. Their genius is different ; for Pali is a polysyllabic language, while Burmese is monosyllabic. All Burmese words are monosyllabic, except those derived from the Pali ; yet even these are usually pronounced as if each syllable formed a separate word. The purely monosyllabic nature of Burmese is, however, very frequently masked by the common habit of combining words of synonymous, similar, supplementary or modifying character to convey one complete idea, or else by the necessity for combining two radicals, either nouns or verbs, to convey the idea expressed by one word in our language. Thus *Kyauklanthe*, "to be afraid," is composed of the monosyllabic words *Kyauk*, "to fear," and *Lan*, "to be startled," while *Yanpyithe*, "to quarrel," is made up of *Yan*, "strife," and *Pyit*, to throw. In

## PALI AND BURMESE

Burmese it very frequently happens that two monosyllabic words are required to express an idea which may be represented and conveyed by one word of English.

All classical, religious, legal, astrological, pseudo-scientific and technical terms are, as a rule, Pali; and great numbers of Pali words of two or more syllables are easily detected among the pure Burmese monosyllabic radicals of the current vernacular language, e.g. *Kana*, "a moment," *Yaza*, "royal."

Occasionally hybrid polysyllabic words are to be found consisting of Pali combined with a Burmese radical, as in the word *Yandaraset*, where *Yandara* means a "machine," and *Set* "joined together." The whole Public Works Department in Burma is naïvely comprehended in this mongrel word for "wheels within wheels."

Connected with these two classical and vernacular languages there were also two alphabets, having respectively square and circular letters, though these have long since become combined in the Burmese alphabet taught at the monasteries. The whole alphabet was, of course, originally derived from Pali; but so many changes, both as to the shape and the phonetic value of many letters, took place in accommodating the characters of an ancient Aryan polysyllabic, monotonic language to the essential requirements of a modern polytonic, monosyllabic language, that the resulting alphabet really embodied two classes of letters, one being ancient and the other modern.

Of the thirty-one consonants in the Burmese alphabet, six are never found elsewhere than in words of Pali origin; and at least four more are much more common in classical than in vernacular words. The main consonants are arranged in five groups, that of *K* forming the gutturals, of *S* the palatals, of Pali *T* the cerebrals, of Burmese *T* the dentals, and of *P* the labials. Each of these five groups consists of five letters, the first being the simple consonant, the second its aspirated form, the third the rough or hardened form of the first, the fourth the aspirated form of the third, and the fifth the nasal belonging to the series. Thus, giving the *a* vowel inherent in

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each letter when no other vowel is indicated or when this inherent vowel is not annulled by a *that* or "killing-mark," the guttural series is *ka, k'a, ga, g'a, nga*; while the labials are *pa, p'a, ba, b'a, ma*. Besides these five series of five letters each, there are six nondescript, unclassified consonants of a soft, liquid, aspirate or other nature (*ya, ra, la, wa, tha, and ha*). There is neither an *f* nor a *v* in the alphabet. In foreign or Pali words in which these occur they are represented by *p* and *w*: thus Mr. Victor Fraser would appear as *Weiktaw Parésa Thakin* when translated into Burmese.

Including the inherent vowel, there are ten vowels in Burmese, which may be transliterated as *a, á, i, í, u, ú, e, é, aw, áw*, pronounced much as in German or Italian. Combinations of these have the value of the sounds *ei, ai, au*.

The language is written from left to right in what appears an unbroken line. But there is no difficulty or confusion thus caused to those who understand the language. Each syllable or word is definitely intelligible by its inherent or specific vowel, or by the tonal diacritical marks attached to it; while the end of clauses or sentences is marked by verbal affixes, and at times even by a full stop in the form of a single or double upright bar (I or II). Erasures are not made in manuscripts, but cancellation is effected by placing a heavy dot in the centre of each rounded part of the letter or letters to be passed over. The manuscripts are all on palm leaves cut to the size of about two and a half inches broad and a foot and a half or so in length. They are preserved by being rubbed from time to time with earth-oil; and this also, by dirtying the graven letters, makes these stand out for easier reading. Volumes are formed by a bamboo peg near each end impaling the leaves placed one on the top of the other; and the whole manuscript is enclosed within wooden boards on the top and bottom, and tightly rolled in cloth or paper and tied. The monosyllabic roots or radicals forming the basis of the language are either nouns or verbs. Out of these the language is built up with the aid of vowel prefixes or affixes of various sorts. By the addition of these the

## GENDERS AND GENERIC AFFIXES

verbal roots can be turned into nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. They give the tenses to verbs; and they form, alone or in combination, the prepositions, conjunctions, interjections, adverbs, etc., of the language. The masculine (*Apó*) and feminine (*Amá*) genders are recognized, but the noun radicals have no gender whatever. For example, an elephant is *Sin*, a word having no gender of its own, and giving no indication of the gender of the animal spoken of. A male elephant is *Sindi*, and a female *Sinna*; *Kyetbo* is a cock, and *Kyetma* a hen. Two elephants are *Sihnuiti* or "elephant, two beasts of burden." These generic affixes to substantives are a peculiar feature of the language, and are often extremely useful. Many mistakes occur about a boat (*Hlé*) or a cart (*Hlè*); but *Hlétazin*, "boat, one long thing," cannot easily be confounded with *Hlétazi*, "cart, one thing for carrying." Again, a cheroot, *Setaleik*, "tobacco, one rolled thing," is easily distinguishable from a pill, *Setalôn*, "medicine, one round thing."

The sequence of words and phrases in Burmese sentences is such that one can very often, and is sometimes even obliged to, begin translating from the end of a sentence and working back. This peculiar arrangement of words in sentences, their reversal of their natural order judged by our standard, is common to the other two branches (the Chin-Lushai and the Kachin) of the Thibeto-Burman family, in which respect it differs from the other three families (Môn-Annam, Shan, and Karen) of the polytonic class.

There can be no doubt that Burmese is a very poetic language. It is one of the most fascinating languages that an etymologist can conceive. Of course, as might be expected, one finds many words and ideas clearly derived from India, as, for example, *Gyun*, "wheat," *Lelan*, "an auction," *Zat*, "race, birth - story," *Sadi*, "birthplace," *Bilat*, "a western country," clearly identical with the Indian words *Gihon*, *Lelan*, *Jat*, *Sadi*, and *Walayat*. The strong desire to have obsequies performed by sons or daughters is likewise a remnant of Upper Indian custom.

A vast number of words and phrases in ordinary



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everyday use are full of beauty, or of suggestion. One's birthplace (*Chetmyôk*) is the place where "the navel-cord is buried." Youth (*Lulin*, pronounced *Nalin*) is "the dawn of manhood." A gun (*Thénat*) is "the spirit of death," while a percussion-cap (*Ngayèmi*) is "hell fire." A mischief maker (*Kalauksan*) is "a bell clapper." A pensioned official (*Anyeinsa*) "eats repose," and one who lives at ease without requiring to work for a livelihood (*Taingsa*) is said to "sit and eat." To make a mental estimate of any one's character (*Akèkatthe*) is "to assess the alloy." To ruin a man is "to break his rice pot." To be annoyed by hearing unpleasant news is "to feel it bitter in one's ear," while pleasant news are "sweet in the ear." The soloist or leader of a chorus (*Thansôndaing*) is he "who gives the warp in (weaving a) song," while the chorus furnishes the woof and plies the shuttles. A lenient magistrate writes "with a soft quill pen," while the severe judge uses "a hard quill." The late twilight, "when two brothers meeting can scarce recognize each other," is succeeded by the time "when one cannot see the interstices between one's fingers"; and this is followed by the "utter darkness." From 8 to 10 p.m. is "bachelors' courting time"; about 9 p.m. is "when footsteps are noiseless"; and after that is "when youths return from courting." Death is merely "departure," and a funeral (*Mathá*) is neither more nor less than an "unpleasant" ceremony.

Place-names offer almost equal attraction to the etymologist. The vast majority of towns, villages, and hamlets are named either after physical features of the country or other natural objects, and especially after trees. Then follow names arising out of special occurrences which have happened locally. Thus Sagaing, a corruption of Sitkaing, is so called from the raft of the two princes who founded the city having there been caught in "the branch of a Sit tree" (*Albizzia procera*), according to the legend.

Villages abound with names like Tantabin, "one toddy palm," Nyaunglebin, "four *Ficus* trees," Zibinhla, "beautiful jujube tree," Kyungôn, "teak knoll," or Letpangôn, "cotton-tree knoll." Magwe and Myitkyo both mean "the bend of the river," while Myitkyina is "near the great

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river." Chaungzauk is "the steep bank of a stream," and Kanbyo stands "where the river bank has fallen in." Magyilaha is "the tamarind plain," and Kyatpyin "the narrow plain." Toungoo is Taungngu, "the spur of the hill," while Shwegyin is "the gold sifting" town. Myohla is "the fair city," Kyauksè "the stone weir," Mòksobo "the hunter's cooking pot," and Hngetthaik "the bird's nest." Taungnyo is "the brown hill," Kyauktalôn "the one rock" village, and Sinthe "where the elephant died." At Yedashe traces can still be seen of "the long embankment" to which the town owes its name; Akyab, the chief town of Arakan, is only known to the Burmese as Sittwemyo, "the city on the battlefield"; and its northern suburb Satyogya, corrupted by the English into Cheerogia, is "where the stag shed its antlers." The town of Zalôn has some connexion with "a large bowl"; while the town of Bhamo is a corruption of Bamáw, "the village of the earthenware water pot," derived from two Shan words, *Ban*, "a village," and *Maw*, "a chatty, or earthen water pot." In addition to its interesting and important geographical position, Bhamo has the unique peculiarity of being practically a Chinese town, though bearing a Shan name, and located in Burmese territory.

In conversation and everyday language the use of rhyming increments having no really definite meaning is frequent. Thus, at a railway station, one's servants may be heard speaking of *Wun ságale págale*, where *Wun* means "baggage" and the rhyming increment is not only added by way of euphonic effect, but also to convey an idea of something like "odds and ends of baggage."

From this it may at once be anticipated that the Burmese are prone to onomatopœia; and this is the case, though their ideas of imitative sounds sometimes differ from ours. Thus *Lele* is used in calling pigs, *Tidi* in summoning fowls, and *Yawyaw* for collecting cattle and ponies; but for cats *Miumiu* and *Nyaungnyaung* are unmistakable.

As can easily be understood from what has above been remarked about the language, Burma possesses two kinds of literature, Pali and Burmese.

The Pali literature is of course by far the most ancient, including, as it does, the Buddhist scriptures that origin-

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ally found their way to Burma from Ceylon and Southern India. Comprised in the *Bidagat-thónbôn*, or "three baskets," these scriptures consisted of the three divisions, *Thuttan* or instructions to laymen, *Wini* or discipline of religious men, and *Abidamma* or metaphysics applicable to dwellers in spirit-land and in the celestial regions. They are metrical, and consist of eighty-four thousand sections or verses. All of these are ascribed to the Buddha himself, except two thousand added by his disciples. Supposed to have been preserved for about four centuries by oral tradition, they were only reduced to writing about 80 B.C., when the literary period of Upper India began. An abridgment of the *Wini* is to be found in the *Patimauk* or "supreme beatitude," the manual of Buddhist monks. The whole of the Pali literature concerns itself exclusively with religious subjects.

The Burmese literature is also for the most part metrical, and consists of religious romances, chronological histories, and songs.

The religious romances are of two kinds, *Zat* and *Wuttú*. The *Zat* or *Zattagá*, the *Jataka* of India, are "birth-stories," supposed to have been related by Gaudama himself; while the *Wuttú* are religious romances or narratives extracted from the Buddhist scriptures.

There are in all no less than five hundred and fifty *Zat* contained in the Burmese sacred writings, all referring to different existences of a Buddh—and particularly of Gaudama, the last Buddh; and all of them are expressly intended to inculcate some special moral lesson. Ten of these stand out as great works in respect of length, interest, reputation, and literary value, namely, the *Temi*, *Zanekka*, *Thuwunnashan*, *Nemi*, *Mahaw*, *Buridat*, *Sanda Gumma*, *Nárada*, *Widura*, and *Wéthandará*. Both in popular estimation and as a literary work, the last named is the most important of all these ten great *Zat*. It is the masterpiece of Burmese literature, and as such, a *résumé* of it is given in the chapter following this. The remaining five hundred and forty are comparatively minor productions, often merely simple fables, many of which have a close resemblance to those current in Western

## THE ROYAL CHRONICLE

lands. All of this early Burmese literature bears unmistakable evidences of Indian origin and influence.

The *Wuttí* are works of considerable interest and merit, the best of which were written by a native of Mòksobo (Shwebo), who only died within the last hundred years. Several kinds of these narratives are distinguished as Abidamma, Zat, Damma-pada, Manikuntala, Mileinda, Yadanagara, Thukáwahá and Hitáwpadétha *Wuttí*.

The *Maha Yazawin* or "Royal Chronicle" forms the great historical work of Burma. Histories of this sort are a characteristic of Indo-China, as all the various kingdoms throughout Further India maintained their own chronicles.

The Burmese chronicle may be roughly divided into a purely mythical or fabulous, a legendary or quasi-historic, and a more or less actually historic portion. Even the latter can hardly be truly termed history, however, as it never records anything but the triumphs of the Burmese kings, and the victories and conquests achieved by the Burmese arms. When an army was forced to retire, the King had simply been graciously pleased to forbear from punishing his enemies to any excessive extent. When Arakan and Tenasserim were ceded to the British in 1826, the King merely permitted the British to reside there. After the second Burmese war no record was ever made in the *Yazawin* that Pegu had been torn away from Burma. It was certainly an authorized history, but one in which everything unflattering to the Burmese monarchs has been rigidly suppressed.

The legendary portion of the chronicle carries back the foundation of the kingdom of Burma to early in the tenth century B.C., or some six hundred years before Alexander the Great invaded Northern India. Even before Maha Thambawá established a dynasty at Thare Khettara (Prome) in 483 B.C., a long list of mythical kings is given, who are supposed to have come from India and to have ruled at Tagaung. And at best the chronicle can only be considered as legendary or quasi-historic till the reign of Anawratazaw during the eleventh century. After that the royal records rest on a more



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

substantial basis of facts, but these reduce themselves to a comparatively small compass. Still the *Maha Yazawin* is instructive as a specimen of Burmese literature, and as a practical illustration of the national character: for of this it is very characteristic indeed.

The Royal Chronicle contains interesting anecdotes illustrative of legal decisions, reminding one strongly of the judgments of Solomon. And altogether, in many respects, an interesting parallel might well be drawn between it and the Old Testament forming the *Maha Yazawin* of the Jews.

Three versions of the chronicle are known, which differ from each other both in their rendering of the legends and in the dates assigned to the events. Recent discoveries of lithic inscriptions are, however, of use in helping to fix dates, and future discoveries will probably also be of great assistance in this direction.

The *Maha Yazawin* is, it should be recollected, purely a monkish work. It was written either by monks, or by those who had become laymen again after a long period of monastic life. It was put into its present form by a body of learned monks, and of laymen who had been monks in 1824 at the time of the first Burmese war. The fact of this monkish origin explains the constant praise of gifts to monks continually met with both in the Royal Chronicle and in the *Zat* forming the chief portions of the national literature.

From the *Zat* has sprung the modern Burmese drama or *Pyazat* (from *Pya*, "to show"), first of all in the form of religious performances, like the early English Mysteries or Passion Plays, and subsequently in a less religious but more popular form. Even these later "play-actor" *Zat* are all, however, taken from ancient stories referring either to events in the various existences of Gaudama or in the lives of princes supposed to have ruled near where Buddhism had its origin.

The chief legal works in Burmese are the *Dam-mathát* or Digests of Buddhist Law. The original digest is supposed to have been drawn up during the reign of the legendary King Maha Thambawá in the fifth century B.C. by Manú, who from being a cowherd when a child

## CLASSIC WORKS

rose to the rank of a great law-giving judge or minister. From time to time this legendary code seems to have been revised to suit changing requirements, for the statute law (*Dammathát*) was occasionally modified by fresh enactments of Government (*Yazathát*).

The standard edition known as the "Laws of Manú," already referred to in detail (vol i., page 179) was drawn up in the Burmese language—the ancient laws having been in Pali—about the year 1775 A.D. But a new Digest of Buddhist Law, the *Attasankhepa Vannaná Dammathát*, first published in Upper Burma in 1882, has recently been revised and printed in 1899 by the ex-Kinwun Mingyi or late Prime Minister of the kingdom of Ava. This monumental work, consisting of a digest of all the laws obtaining in Upper Burma during the reigns of Mindôn and Thibaw, is the last and the most authoritative word on modern Burmese Buddhist law-texts (see vol. i., pages 190 and 454).

As a classic specimen of Burmese literature, however, the *Thudammasari Pyatdôn* or "Decisions of the Princess Thudammasari," though brief and fragmentary, can hardly be overlooked. They strongly resemble portions of the Royal Chronicle and of the Laws of Manú in relating legal decisions in the form of short stories, somewhat in the manner in which moral truths are exemplified in the fables of Æsop and Phaedrus.

Other characteristic forms of national literature are the works on astrology and magic, the books of dietist and druggist medicine-men, those relating to the interpretation of signs and dreams, the book of proverbs and so forth, to which specific reference has been made in the chapter relating to Science and Art. Though now written in Burmese they are thickly strewn with Pali phraseology, and were doubtless derived directly from Indian sources.

Along with the more recent of the *Pyazat*, modern Burmese literature is chiefly made up of *Linga* or lyric poetry. The songs are often sung separately, besides being incorporated in the theatrical performances. Many of the dramatic artists (*Zatthama*) have a good gift of improvisation, to which they give free rein while acting.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

Most of the lines contain from four to seven syllables, and they even frequently rhyme in all four syllables when the shorter metre is adopted. With a free use of rhyming increments and affixes this is an easy enough matter. It would be impossible to reproduce such monosyllabic *Linga* with anything like approximate accuracy in English; but the following is something like one of the most popular of the songs of recent years in Rangoon, though I have only tried to give the general drift and feeling of the lay, without attempting the impossible task of reproducing the original form of the poem :—

### MA KIN'S LAMENT: A BURMESE LOVE SONG.

I lie on my bed and weep ;  
I fret, and I cannot sleep,  
While with other girls you stray,  
Faithless and fickle Maung Pé.

Even my sandalwood bed  
Is wet with the tears I've shed :  
Naked I lie, cold, shiv'ring,  
With grief my heart all quiv'ring.

Come back, O Lord of my life,  
And end this wearisome strife,  
That tortures both heart and brain,  
Driving poor Ma Kin insane.

Like a torrent fed by rain  
Flow the tears I can't restrain ;  
With burning heart all the day  
I long but for thee, Maung Pé.

I beg, beseech, and implore—  
Come back to me : stray no more.  
'Tis only close to thy breast  
Poor Ma Kin can feel at rest.

The census of 1891 showed some 3,000 men classed as earning their livelihood from literature. But these are almost entirely scribes engaged as copyists in monasteries. Here, on palm leaves, they transcribe with an iron style (*Kanyutdan* or "asparagus stalk") the sacred writings for the monastic libraries. Owing, however, to the extensive use now made of the printing press for reproducing both religious and secular literature, these scribes belong to what will probably soon become almost an extinct profession.

## Chapter XIII

WÉTHANDAYÁ: ONE OF THE TEN GREAT  
"BIRTH-STORIES"

**A**FTER Gaudama attained omniscience he journeyed forth into the country of Baranathi (Benares), where he gave knowledge of the truth to five hermits and over a thousand other recluses. Thence he went with his converts to Razagyó, in accordance with a promise made before he became Buddha, and spent the winter in the Weluwun monastery. Here two heretic priests, becoming converted, attained a high state of knowledge, and the number of holy men of high degree waxed greatly, rising to ten thousand.

Learning that his son was in Razagyó, King Suddawdana ten times sent an invitation to him by a nobleman with a retinue of a thousand attendants; but all these became converts, and remained with Gaudama. At last, however, he yielded to the paternal wish and set out for Kappilawut, marching twelve miles each day, and spending two months on the journey.

Arriving in company with his 20,000 monks, like a glorious moon surrounded by innumerable stars, he took up his abode in a monastery specially built for his reception. His haughty kindred, proud of their royal lineage, wished that only the members younger than Gaudama should make obeisance to him, while they themselves should first receive a greeting from him. Divining their thoughts, Gaudama rose miraculously in the air, so that all the princes, from King Suddawdana downwards, made humble obeisance before him. The haughty pride of his relatives being thus broken and humiliated, Gaudama descended again to the earth and



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

took the seat prepared for him. As he did so a thunder-storm rent the air, and ruddy brown raindrops fell to the ground, like rain falling gently among the tiger-lilies. But it wetted only those who wished to be wet, while those who wished to remain dry felt no rain.

After performing this miracle Gaudama meditated for some time, and then related the *Wéthandayá Zat* in an unbroken flow of words, which welled forth like water from a pitcher; and this is what he said,—

### PART I.—PRINCE WÉTHANDAYÁ, THE “PAYÁLAUNG.”<sup>1</sup>

Ages ago, a king named Thiwa reigned over Sedutaya, in the land of Thiwa. He had a son named Thainsi, who took unto himself as chief Queen Pothadi, daughter of another King called Madda. Pothadi was then sixteen years of age, and surpassed all other maidens in loveliness and beauty. Her marriage with King Thainsi took place with splendid ceremonies, the southern palace being appointed as her residence, and her maids of honour and female attendants numbering 16,000. But this great distinction was not merely fortuitous.

Many cycles of years before the present era of existence, when Wipathi Buddha was living in the Migadawun grove, the King of Bandumadi received gifts of costly sandalwood and a necklace of gold. Giving them to his two daughters for their own use, these bestowed them on the Buddha. In presenting the perfumed sandalwood the elder daughter desired that she might in future time become the mother of a Buddha, while the younger more modestly asked that, till such time as she might attain Neikban (Nirvana), her body in each term of existence should bear imprinted on it a semblance of the necklace.

In course of time the princesses died, and were translated, after the manner of kings and queens, to the abode of the *Nat* (spirits). For ninety-one cycles of years the elder princess passed to and from the land of men and the home of the spirits without once falling into demerit, and at the end of this period she became the

<sup>1</sup> *Payálaung* means “the Incarnation of a Buddh.”

## POTHADI

blessed Mayá, the mother of Gaudama Buddha. The younger sister likewise passed through many states of existence before she became one of the eight daughters of King Kiki, when she attained Neikban. One of her sisters, Thudamma, by virtue of the many charitable deeds she performed, after passing several existences between the abodes of men and of spirits, was eventually born as the daughter of King Madda by his chief queen, and was given the name of Pothadi because she was born all fragrant as though her body had been washed with water perfumed with sandalwood.

Just before entering upon this last existence Pothadi was the wife of the Thagyá Min (Indra), or chief of the spirits (Deva). Knowing from five different signs that the life of his consort was about to end, the Thagyá bore her, accompanied by her attendants, to the Nandawun garden. Here, placing her on a richly jewelled couch and seating himself beside her, he sang her praises in a thousand stanzas, and promised, because of the love he bore to her, to grant her any ten favours she might ask.

Unwitting of her impending change of existence, Pothadi understood nothing save that she felt ill in body and uneasy in mind. Then the Thagyá made known to her that she was soon about to pass over into another state of existence, and besought her, by his affection for her, to accept the ten favours offered.

Now perceiving the situation, and knowing that the law of transmigration cannot be obviated, Pothadi looked round to see where a new existence could best be commenced, and then made the ten requests. These were that she might be the chief Queen in the palace of King Thainsi ; that her eyes might be brown like those of a fawn ; that her eyebrows might also be brown ; that her name might be Pothadi, as whilst consort of the Thagyá during this present existence ; that she might have a son worthy, on account of his merits, to receive homage from kings, and ready to bestow upon suppliants all they might ask for, even were it his head, his eyes, his heart, his royal white umbrella, his children, or his wife ; that the natural beauty of her body might remain

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

unimpaired, even though she were about to become a mother ; that though she might bear several children yet she should not become aged in appearance, but have a swelling bosom as in the flower of her youth ; that her hair might not whiten with age, but retain its colour as during her prime ; that her bodily beauty should be preserved unblemished, pure and clear ; and that she might be gifted with influence to save from death those who might fall under the King's displeasure.

These ten requests being granted, Pothadi passed forth from the Nat country and became reincarnate in the womb of King Madda's chief queen, to reappear among men as Princess Pothadi.

On her marriage with King Thainsi, the Thagyá looked down from the land of spirits to see how it now fared with his late consort in her new state of existence, and then set about fulfilling her desire as to a son. Searching for a being worthy of such a mother, he found in the abode of spirits the future Gaudama, whose existence among the *Nat* was about to end on his becoming a Payálaung (or embryo Buddh). He therefore arranged that the Payálaung should become incarnate of Pothadi on passing over to the world of men. To provide suitable companions on such an auspicious occasion, he also urged 60,000 Nat, whose periods for transmigration were also approaching, to become likewise incarnate in the noble families of Thiwa.

From the time of her conception Pothadi delighted in making religious offerings, and begged King Thainsi to have six rest-houses built at each of the four main gates of the city and at the four palace gates, so that 600,000 offerings might daily be made in charity. Amazed at such a request, Thainsi asked the astrologers for an explanation, and was informed that his princess had conceived a son whose delight would be in acts of charity and whose desire of making religious offerings would prove unlimited. Rejoicing thereat, Thainsi fulfilled his consort's request ; and from that day Thainsi's revenues increased greatly, while gifts from other umbrella-bearing sovereigns poured in upon him.

When about to become a mother, Pothadi desired to

## WÉTHANDAYÁ

go forth and see the city ; so Thainsi ordered it to be decked for a royal procession, and accompanied her in state. Before the perambulation of the city was completed, the time of maternity arrived for Pothadi, and she bore a son, open-eyed and free from all blemish, in a building hastily erected by the way. As this was in the trading quarter of the city, the child was at once named Wéthandayá (derived from *wé* "to buy," and *than* "to trade"). Stretching forth his tiny hands the new-born child said, "Mother, I would make an offering. Have you any money ?" Placing a packet of a thousand pieces near his hand she bade him do as he wished.

As a birth-present a young elephant, white as silver and perfect in shape, was borne through the air to him from the Himawunta forest (Himalaya). Its name was Pissayá, because it was destined to be of assistance in bringing future greatness and prosperity to Wéthandayá.

For the nursing and tending of the young prince two hundred and forty nurses were selected, free from any physical blemish or taint, and every twenty-four minutes throughout the day and night four of these took charge of him. By one he was bathed or washed, the second dressed him, while the third fanned him, and the fourth carried and nursed him.

Receiving a necklace worth one hundred thousand pieces from his father at the age of about four years, he gave it to his nurses. Fearing to refuse it, yet still more fearing the King if they accepted it, they first received it and then tried to get the prince to take it back again ; but he would not. Then they told the King of the matter, who bade them keep the child's gift. Nine times were such costly ornaments presented to Wéthandayá, and each time he at once gave them to his nurses.

At the age of eight years he one day, while reclining on a golden couch within the palace, meditated on the greater joy which would thrill his heart if he could make gifts of an inner, personal, subjective nature rather than of a merely external, impersonal, and objective description. "Were any one to ask for my heart's flesh," he thought, "I would cleave open my breast and give it ; or were my eyes sought, them too would I give ; or if the flesh of my



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

body were asked, I would cut it off with a knife ; or if I were demanded as a slave, I would give my body up to slavery.”<sup>1</sup>

As he formed this virtuous resolution the world trembled with a noise like the roar of a wild elephant, and the Myinmo Mount (Meru) bowed its head like a green cane roasted before a fire. The heavens resounded with the noise of the earthquake, flashes of lightning broke from the clouds, and rain fell heavily, though it was not the rainy season. The ocean broke its bounds, the Thagyá clapped his arms in joy, the array of Brahma in the celestial abodes applauded, and the sound of a great noise was heard throughout all the universe.

At sixteen years of age the Payálaung was master of the eighteen branches of knowledge, and his father took counsel with his chief Queen, Pothadi, with regard to giving him a palace and an umbrella, and thus establishing him in life. A suitable consort for him was found in Madi, daughter of the Queen's brother, Madda. Preliminaries having been arranged, Madi was brought with much rejoicing and married to Wéthandayá, who was made Prince of the province of Saduttaya. Madi was appointed his chief Princess, and given a retinue of sixteen thousand attendants. From the day of his nomination as Prince, Wéthandayá each day gave away six hundred thousand pieces of money as offerings. Six times in each month, mounted on the white elephant, Pissayá, he visited the six shrines at which these charitable gifts were offered.

Madi in due time bore a son, who was called Zali, and a daughter to whom the name of Gahnazaing was given.

### PART II.—THE DECREE OF BANISHMENT.

About this time a severe famine was raging in the neighbouring kingdom of Kalaingka, owing to a long drought. So great was the scarcity that the people devoured each other, and the whole country became a scene of rapine. Calling upon their King in their dis-

<sup>1</sup> Slaves formed one of the four degraded classes among the Burmese, (see page 234).

## THE WHITE ELEPHANT

tress, he quieted them by saying that rain would soon fall; and he fasted for seven days praying for rain. But no rain came, so he assembled his nobles and soothsayers, who told him that Wéthandayá owned a white elephant, and advised the King to ask it for a gift as Wéthandayá delighted so much in making charitable offerings that he would give not only his priceless white elephant, his white umbrella, his palace, and his wealth, but also his eyes or his heart to any one who asked for them.

Selecting eight clever Brahmins, the King provided them with plentiful supplies and sent them forth to obtain the white elephant from Wéthandayá.

Their arrival fell upon the day of the full moon. Early in the morning Wéthandayá had ridden forth upon Pissayá, having left the palace by the eastern gate accompanied by a large retinue. As the throng of nobles and people was great, the Brahmins saw they had little chance of obtaining speech of the Prince, so they hastened to the southern gate and stood upon a mound awaiting his arrival.

On his coming, after having visited the shrines of offering near the eastern gate, they stretched forth their hands and cried aloud, "Hail, Prince, victory be with thee!" Perceiving from their words of praise that they sought alms, Wéthandayá asked what it was they desired. Hereupon the Brahmins related how the land of Kalaingka was famishing for want of rain and overrun by robbers; and they asked for a gift of the sacred white elephant in order to put a stop to this distress.

Meditating upon his resolution to give even his head or his eyes if necessary, he at once gave his peerless elephant to the Brahmins, saying, "I give you this elephant without any reluctance, though no one upon earth is worthy to ride it but myself, and though it is mine only through my excellence." Dismounting, he examined the animal and its caparison; then, placing the end of its trunk in the hands of the Brahmins and pouring perfumed water upon it from a golden vase, he made over the precious gift to their keeping, together with a large number of attendants to minister to its

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

wants. Then again, as once before, the earth now trembled greatly and made a mighty noise, so that the whole country was astonished, and the people raised a great shout.

Seeing the Brahmins riding on the sacred white elephant and taking it away towards the land of Kalaingka, the crowd which gathered round about them to hinder their progress reviled them, and asked by whose authority they rode the peerless Pissayá. Scorning such opposition the Brahmins replied that the Payálaung had bestowed it upon them as a gift ; and they forthwith pushed onwards along the road leading back to Kalaingka.

Restrained by the influence of the *Nat* abiding in the land of spirits, the people allowed the Brahmins to take away the sacred elephant ; but they went to the palace of King Thainsi and clamoured before him, asking why his son Wéthandayá had bestowed in alms upon mendicant Brahmins from a far country the peerless white elephant unmatched for beauty, strength, or courage.

While not demanding of the King the imprisonment, beating, or execution of his son, the populace insisted that Wéthandayá had acted foolishly and wrongly in giving away the sacred white elephant which had brought highest repute to the King and vast prosperity and security to the country ; and they demanded that Wéthandayá should be deposed from his principedom and banished to the Winga hills (the Siwaliks and the Terai).

Deserted by all save Pothadi, his Queen, the King found himself unable to resist the demands of the people, and begged that at any rate Wéthandayá might be allowed to remain in his palace for one night longer ; for he hoped that the savage mood of the people might perhaps change before the morning dawned. But at the same time King Thainsi sent a trusty noble to his son's palace to inform him that the whole nation had arisen in anger against him, clamouring for his banishment, and that when the next day dawned they would assemble and drive him forth from the land.

Meanwhile Wéthandayá had come back on foot to his palace, after bestowing his noble gift upon the Brahmins

## THE GREAT OFFERING

from Kalaingka, and was seated under the royal white umbrella surrounded by his sixty thousand nobles.

Here the messenger of evil sent by the King broke down, on arrival, at the sight of the Prince's beatitude. Tears welled to his eyes as, kneeling in obeisance, he prayed for pity and asked that his life might be spared though the news he brought were full of evil and foreboding.

Hearing of the fury and the clamour of the people because he had given away the white elephant, Wéthandayá exclaimed, "Seeing that I am willing to give even my head, my arm, my eye, or my heart, why should I hesitate to make offerings of such articles as silver, gold, jewels, horses, elephants, land, or men? About no offering do I hesitate, and my heart delighteth in giving. If I am to be exiled for having made an offering, let the people of Thiwa banish me; if they wish to kill me, or if they would hack me in pieces, let them do so; but from offering gifts I will not refrain."

Then the messenger of his father spoke, saying that the people demanded his banishment to the Arinsara hill, near the Kuntimára river, the place to which exiled Princes were usually sent. Wéthandayá replied that Princes were only sent there when they had broken the law, whereas he was innocent of any crime; nevertheless he would go there if the people wished this.

But before he went, he desired to make the great offering of the "seven hundreds," and therefore bade his royal father's messenger beg from the people the delay of one day for this purpose.

### PART III.—THE GREAT OFFERING.

Summoning one of his nobles, Wéthandayá ordered the necessary preparations to be made for the great offering on the following morning. Seven hundred elephants, seven hundred horses, seven hundred carriages, seven hundred fair maidens, seven hundred milch cows, seven hundred male slaves, and seven hundred female slaves were ordered to be collected, together with all sorts of meats; and even intoxicating drinks were to be provided



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

too, in case any should ask for such,—for the Prince feared lest anything asked for might not be obtainable on the solemn occasion of this, his last great princely offering.

Then the Payálaung wended his way to the palace of the Princess Madi to break to her the news of his banishment, and to advise her to conceal the riches which King Madda, her father, had bestowed upon her.

Having throughout innumerable past existences been closely associated with many Payálaung and holy men of saintly lives, from the time of the Buddh Dipinkará downwards, the Princess Madi was incapable of feeling greed or avarice. Marvelling greatly at his warning her to conceal her treasures, she asked her husband where she should place them for security. In reply he said that though she hid them in a treasure-house or in the earth where the five enemies<sup>1</sup> could not harm them, yet treasure could only be safely guarded for ever in the great storehouse of religious merit and of charity untainted by avarice. So she acted on her husband's advice.

Continuing, the Payálaung exhorted his wife to love and cherish their two children even more in the future than in the past, and to respect his parents. He also told her they must now part, and conjured her to be, as she had ever been to him, a faithful consort to any other Prince who might demand her in marriage, so that she might not be distressed or feel she had no one to protect her.

Surprised at hearing such words Madi asked their meaning, and was informed of the banishment impending over her husband. At once she declared her intention of accompanying him along with their children to the Himawunta forest. Though she had never been there, yet she described in glowing language the delights and the beautiful scenery and flowers they would enjoy in the forests, trying thus to comfort him.

Just then Pothadi, the Prince's mother, having heard of the conspiracy, came to the palace and broke out into pitiful lamentation. Loud were her praises of her son, and heartrending her lamentations over his fate. Returning to her own palace she upbraided King Thainsi and

<sup>1</sup> Fire, water, rulers, thieves, and ill-wishers (see page 156).

## OFFERING "THE SEVEN HUNDREDS"

exhorted him not to acquiesce in the demands of the populace by sanctioning Wéthandayá's banishment.

Louder still grew the lamentations of poor Queen Pothadi over the fate of her son, and she declared that if he were banished she would soon die of grief. All her handmaidens joined in setting up a great wailing, to which Madi's 16,000 attendants added their voices, while all the other inmates of both the palaces joined in the chorus of lamentation. And thus passed the night.

When day dawned Wéthandayá, after bathing and robing himself, went to the place of offering accompanied by 60,000 noble attendants. All day long the great offering of the "seven hundreds" went on, clothes, food and drink being given to all those who asked for them. All the Brahmin mendicants, rolling in the dust, cried aloud that if the Prince were banished they would no longer have any refuge or protector. All his relations, nobles, and friends also lamented, saying how unjust it was that the Prince should be banished for giving away what was his own property.

As regarded the seven hundred fair maidens, the spirits beneficently sent the rulers throughout Zampudeik to ask for them in marriage, so that each received one to wife together with eight handmaidens given as attendants.

When making this great offering Wéthandayá lifted up his hands and formed the pious wish that he might attain the universal knowledge, the Buddhahood, by means thereof. And as he did this, for the third time the earth quaked with a mighty noise and turned round like a potter's wheel, while the great Mount Myinmo again bent down its head towards Saduttaya.

All day long the Prince remained at the place of offering; but at sundown, accompanied by Madi, he went to his father's palace to have a last interview with his parents. They bade him an affectionate farewell and expressed the wish that his pious desires might be fulfilled by his becoming a monk, though they endeavoured to dissuade Madi from accompanying him, as a wife would interfere with progress towards saintship. But Wéthandayá said he had no longer any authority over any one, so Madi must

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

decide for herself about going with him or staying behind. She went, having no desire for happiness or comfort apart from her husband, and not being terrified by the dangers of the forest.

Unable to oppose her resolution, the King asked that his two grandchildren might be left with him, but was told in reply that they were dear as life to their mother and would be her consolation and comfort in trials. In vain he pleaded throughout the night for their retention in comfort and luxury. When day dawned the Prince's chariot appeared at the gate drawn by four swift horses. Taking leave of the King and Queen, and of her attendants and friends, Madi seated herself and her two children in the chariot. Lingered but a moment to make obeisance to his parents, the Prince stepped in beside her and drove towards the Winga hills accompanied by his 60,000 noble companions; while the people thronged the streets to witness his departure and receive his farewell blessings, in which he wished them health, prosperity, happiness, and freedom from danger, together with power of making offerings and of practising virtue. Meeting mendicants on the road, he made eighteen gifts of the jewels he wore.

Being seized with the desire to see his home once again after he had left it some distance behind, the great earth paid tribute to his merit by becoming cleft where the chariot stood and turning round like a potter's wheel, so that the city and the palace of his parents were brought before his eyes. Then for the fourth time the earth quaked with a loud noise, and the great Mount Myinmo bent its head like a drooping flower. Here, weeping, the Prince bade farewell to his 60,000 companions, and resumed his onward journey, accompanied only by his wife and children.

Not long after this four mendicant Brahmins, who had missed being present at the offering of the "seven hundreds," were seen pursuing the Prince, who halted his chariot and waited for them. They begged for the four horses that drew the chariot, and at once received one each, with which they departed. But this act of merit proved no bar to the Prince's progress, as four spirits

## JOURNEY INTO EXILE

immediately took the form of wild bulls, submitted their necks to the yoke, and drew the chariot. Soon, however, another mendicant came along who asked for the chariot and received it. Then the four bulls vanished, and the travellers had to proceed on foot, the Prince carrying Zali and Madi bearing the younger child, Gahnazaing. As they walked along the road, fruit trees bent down their branches so that the ripe fruit might be plucked, although no breeze was blowing ; while the spirits shortened the road lest the children should be over-fatigued. Thus, at the end of the first day they reached Madda, the chief city of the Zéta country, ruled over by the Prince's uncle, having travelled thirty *Yúzaná* (360 miles) in one day. Instead of entering the city the Prince stayed, like any ordinary traveller, at a rest-house at one of the gates. After having, like a dutiful wife, wiped the dust from his feet and massaged them, Madi went outside the rest-house in order that she might be seen of the people passing in and out of the gate. Recognizing her, they went straightway to the King and told him that their Princess, his daughter, who had always been borne in a golden litter, had now to tread the ground with naked feet. Sixty thousand of her relatives came forth to meet her, weeping bitterly, beating their breasts, and bursting into a torrent of questions.

The Prince related to them the details of his gift of the priceless sacred white elephant and of his banishment, and asked the way to the Winga hills. The Zéta princes justified him in his blameless conduct, but begged him to reside among them while they endeavoured to obtain his recall into his own country with becoming state. Pointing out to them the uselessness of such endeavour, he consented to stay one night among them. Then they tried to persuade him to remain among them and become their king, but in vain. Despite entreaties, he proceeded on his journey next morning after performing his ablutions and partaking of food, being accompanied by his 60,000 relatives to the edge of the great forest lying at the foot of the mighty Himawunta, a distance of fifteen *Yúzaná* (180 miles) from Madda. Here, weeping, they took leave of him after detailing the landmarks showing the



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

way to the Winga hills, still distant other fifteen *Yúzaná*, and telling him where he could best reside and erect a hut near a pleasant lake surrounded by fruit trees. So the Prince and his loved ones journeyed forward under the guidance of a man skilled in woodcraft. Two days later he bade his guide return, after bestowing upon him the gift of a golden hairpin. Following the windings of the gorges and precipices, and feeding themselves with wild fruits, and buds, and lily sprouts, they travelled onwards through the dark, dense forest, following the courses of the streams, till at length they reached the end of their weary pilgrimage, a pond covered with water-lilies.

Looking earthwards at this time and seeing *Wéthan-dayá* entering the *Himawunta*, the *Thagyá* sent down a young spirit to construct a suitable dwelling for the good Prince. To the north-east of that small lake two huts were prepared and each was provided with the necessaries for a recluse, while flowers and fruit trees were raised round about them, and all demons, evil spirits, and birds or beasts of prey were driven away from the vicinity.

Following a tortuous path from the north-east corner of the little lake, the *Payálaung* came upon these two hermitages and knew they must have been prepared for recluses. Leaving his wife and children at the entrance of one, he entered and found an inscription setting forth that it had been prepared for him by the *Thagyá*. Changing his garments for a monastic robe placed ready for him, and grasping a bamboo staff, he became suffused with great joy and burst forth into a song of praise at the joy and happiness of becoming a recluse. So uplifted did he become, and so changed in appearance, that *Madi* failed to recognize him at first. Then she burst into tears and prostrated herself at his feet. Going into the hut prepared for her, she soon re-appeared also in the dress of a recluse, and the two children were made to follow their parents' example. Imploring *Payálaung* to allow her to collect the fruits of the forest for food, *Maya* was informed that as they had now both become celibate recluses it was necessary to bear this fact constantly in mind in order to guard against anything incompatible

## LIFE IN EXILE

with their new position. Accepting this hard condition, they entered upon their new life in the forest.

For a distance of five *Yúzaná* (sixty miles) around their hermitage all the wild creatures of the forest lived in peace and happiness, so great was the Payálaung's virtuous influence. Each day at dawn Madi brought water, placed in readiness the tooth-stick and the water for the Payálaung's ablutions, swept out his hut, and then, leaving the children with him, went forth into the forest to collect the roots and fruits for the evening meal. In the cool of the evening, after the children had been bathed, the four partook of their simple repast. Then they retired to rest, the Payálaung going to his hut and Madi and the two children to their separate abode. Thus they dwelt in the peaceful solitude of the Winga hills throughout a period of seven years, the loving husband and wife leading celibate lives, though happy in their daily intercourse, in the society of their children, and in the practice of virtue.

### PART IV.—AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF EXILE IN THE FOREST.

After about seven years had thus passed a mendicant Brahmin, named Zuzaga, was living in the village of Dônniwita in Kalaingka. Though he had amassed one hundred pieces of silver by begging, yet his avarice was not yet satisfied. Handing over this hoard to another Brahmin for safe keeping, he set forth on a begging expedition, but on returning found his friend had meanwhile spent all the money. So the latter gave Zuzaga his daughter, Ameitta, to wife. Though thus given in marriage without affection, Ameitta proved so dutiful a wife that all the other Brahmins quoted her as an example to their own wives. This roused dislike to poor, dutiful Ameitta, whose life the village women now tried to make a burden to her.

One day, when she had gone to draw water at the river, a torrent of abuse and reproach was poured on her for having mated with a man so much older than herself. Returning home in tears, saying she could never again

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

go to the riverside for water, Zuzaga tried to console her and said he would henceforth draw the water and do all the outdoor work himself. To this she objected as improper, and threatened to leave him unless he should get some slave to do work of this kind. Poor and unable to work, he asked how he could possibly afford to buy a slave, and at once received the reply that if he went to Wéthandayá, living in the Winga hills, and asked for a slave, he would be sure to get one. Zuzaga then reasoned with his wife, and said his going to the Winga hills was out of the question, for it was a far journey, and he was already old and infirm. Then she flung coarse taunts at him, threatening to leave him and go to a younger husband. Stung by her taunts and insults, Zuzaga, though stricken in years and bent with infirmity, toothless, white-headed and grey-bearded, hollow-cheeked, and standing near the threshold of death, resolved to perform the journey for love of his young wife. So, while she prepared food for his long absence, he repaired the flooring and walls of his hut, saw to the fastenings of the door, and laid in supplies of fuel and of water. Then he put on his mendicant garb and his sandals, slung the bag of provisions over his shoulder, grasped his pilgrim's staff, weepingly bade farewell to his wife, and set forth on his tedious journey.

On arriving at the prosperous country of Saduttaya he inquired for Prince Wéthandayá, but was hooted and pelted with stones by the people, who attributed the loss of their Prince to the importunities of just such greedy old Brahmin mendicants. Running away in great fright, he was guided by the spirits who watched over the Payálaung's attainment of perfection, and was thus led in the direction of the Winga hills. In passing through the forest at the foot of the hills he came near the man who had acted as the Payálaung's guide and was pursued by the pack of savage dogs with which this fellow was then ranging the woods in pursuit of game. The old man ran for his life; but, seeing neither path nor help, he soon had to take refuge in a tree, while the hounds yelped and kept guard below.

Here he had time to meditate on the evil deeds, com-

## THE BRAHMIN'S DECEIT

mitted long since, whose influence had now brought upon him the ridicule of his neighbours, the taunts of his wife, the undertaking of a journey unsuitable to his time of life, the maltreatment at Saduttaya, and the flight from the fangs of a savage hunting-pack of dogs. Bewailing his fate, he cried aloud asking where Wéthandayá, the refuge of mendicant Brahmins and the haven of rest to the weary traveller, might be found.

The guide, happening to pass near by, heard these lamentations. Reflecting that the Brahmin's visit probably meant no good to the Payálaung, as the Prince would give away anything, even his wife and children, if such a gift were desired, and would then be left quite alone in the forest, he made up his mind to kill the Brahmin. Stringing his bow and fixing a poisoned arrow, he reviled the mendicant, setting forth that it was owing to him and his like that the Prince was now an exile. Then he bade the Brahmin prepare to die, as his heart and liver would be torn out and offered to the guardian spirits of the forest and of fire as soon as his breast had been cleft by an arrow.

The wretched old Brahmin summoned courage for making one effort to save his life. First he pointed out that religious recluses and Brahmins should not be put to death, and that the same protection should apply to ambassadors sent by kings in charge of affairs relating to their countries. Reciting this as an ancient maxim, he forthwith declared he had been sent by King Thainsi to inform Wéthandayá that the wrath of the people of Saduttaya had passed away, so that they were now sorrowful about his exile and wished him to return to them. Therefore he wished to know where the Prince could be found.

Pleased to hear such good news the simple hunter called off his dogs, tied them up, made the old man descend from his perch in the tree, and gave him a good meal, together with gifts of honey and dried meat, before pointing out to him the path he must follow and giving minute details as to the trees he would pass and the birds he would see before arriving at the Prince's abode. The Brahmin was also told that on the way he would



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pass the cell of a dust-smear'd hermit who could give him further information.

Resuming his journey full of hope Zuzaga duly arrived at the hermit's cell, and asked if he were well, found plenty of roots and fruits, and were free from trouble by insects, reptiles, and wild animals. Being replied to in the affirmative, water was given him to wash his feet and to drink, and fruits were offered him to eat. Making homage to the hermit Zuzaga returned the fruit, explained that he had come to do obeisance before the exiled Prince Wéthandayá, and asked to be directed to the Prince's abode. Guessing that the true object of his guest was to beg the gift of Princess Madi and her two children, the hermit asked what advantage there was to be gained by such a visit, and was told that Zuzaga had formerly been the Prince's religious teacher, and that he was now desirous of again seeing and conversing with his beloved pupil. Otherwise, he added, he had no object in view; and he had no intention of asking for any gift. Zuzaga's plausibility thus deceived the hermit, as it had previously deceived the hunter. The recluse invited him to abide in the hut for the night, and promised to put him on the proper track early next morning, and to tell him about the birds and trees to be met with on the way.

So Zuzaga journeyed on, arriving at his destination towards nightfall. Saying to himself that women were naturally jealous and suspicious, and thinking that although the Prince might be ready to grant the gift he asked yet Madi might interfere and prevent him, he resolved to wait till the next morning and then, while Madi was absent gathering wild fruits for food, approach the Prince to beg a gift of the two children and carry them off before their mother's return.

Now, Madi felt vaguely conscious of some impending danger. Just before day dawned she dreamed that a dark, ugly, armed man, wearing a dyed robe and having his ears bedecked with red flowers, had forced his way into her hut, caught hold of her by the hair of her head, thrown her on the ground, torn out her eyes, cut off her hands, and then plucked out her heart. Awaking in

## ZUZAGA'S ARRIVAL

terror and knowing there was no one at hand except the Prince who could interpret her dream, she hastened to his hut and knocked at the door. Rebuking her for this seeming desire to break through their celibate resolves, he was told the cause of her trouble, and knew at once that the dawn would bring to him a call for the exercise of his unbounded charity. To save Madi trouble and sadness, however, he kept this knowledge to himself, and tried to soothe her by saying that agitated dreams were not necessarily a foreshadowing of misfortune. Her fears being thus quieted, she returned to her couch. When the morning broke, Madi performed her usual duties, kissed her children and told them to be very careful of themselves as she had had a bad dream, took them to their father and asked him to watch over them during her absence, and then went forth with her spade and basket to gather roots and fruits as usual for the household wants.

Descending from a neighbouring hill, where he had spent the night, Zuzaga went to where the Payálaung was sitting like a golden image in front of his hut while the children played near him. Seeing the Brahmin at a distance pleasure took possession of the Prince's soul, who rejoiced once more, after seven long years of exile and of abeyance of charitable gifts, at being able to make an offering. Calling to him his son Zali, he asked if a Brahmin mendicant were not approaching. The boy ran towards the stranger and offered to carry his burden for him, but was harshly thrust aside. Wondering at this rough discourtesy, the boy looked carefully at the old Brahmin, and at once noted in him the ten characteristics of a vile man.

Drawing near to the Prince, Zuzaga greeted him with the usual inquiries about his health, the abundance of his food, and immunity from annoyance by insects and other animals. Replying suitably to these courtesies and saying that no one had visited him during these last seven years of exile, he invited the old man to enter his hut, wash his feet, and partake of fruits and water. Then he asked him the reason of his visit, and was told that its object was to ask a gift of the Prince's two

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

children. Bursting into joyful song, the Payálaung offered his son and daughter to the Brahmin, to be his slaves, but entreated him to abide there that night and not to depart till the following morning, as Madi, the children's mother, would not return before nightfall with the fruits she was then collecting in the forest. Zuzaga artfully replied that women are full of artifice and not to be relied on, so he would rather depart with his gift before Madi's return. The Prince was willing to permit this if the Brahmin would promise to take the two children to their grandfather, King Thainsi, who would be exceedingly glad and would bestow great gifts on the mendicant. But to this the cunning old man raised the objections that the King on seeing the children without their parents might punish him, even with death, or sell him as a slave, and that in any case he could not be sure of getting a large gift; while if he went back without slaves he would certainly have to bear the scorn and abuse of his wife, Ameitta. The Prince assured him that King Thainsi must rejoice greatly at seeing his grandchildren, and grant him rich gifts. But Zuzaga replied that he desired not wealth, and only wished to take away the two children, so that they might be slaves to work for and wait upon his Ameitta.

Hearing these harsh words the children were sore afraid, and went and hid themselves in a clump of bushes behind the hut. Unable to feel safe even there, they ran about hither and thither, and finally fled to the waters of the pond, immersing their bodies in this and keeping their heads hidden among the leaves of the water-lilies. Then Zuzaga reviled the Prince, accusing him of having winked to the children to run and hide themselves, and declaring him to be the greatest deceiver in the whole world.

Perceiving that the children had run away and concealed themselves through fear, the Prince traced them to the little lake and bade Zali come forth that his father's gift of charity might be made complete, and might lead him further onwards towards the attainment of Neikban (Nirvana), for the rescue of all the *Nat* in spirit-land as well as of all mankind on earth.

## THE CHILDREN'S RANSOM

On hearing his father's words Zali, filled with filial piety, resolved to bear whatever treatment the Brahmin chose to give him, and came up out of the pond, falling in tears at his father's right foot. Addressed in similar manner, Gahnazaing also came weeping and threw herself at her father's left foot. Mingling his tears with those of his weeping children, the Prince bade them rise, assuring them that they would not for long be the slaves of the vile Brahmin. Then the Payálaung told Zali that if any one wished to redeem him whilst he was the Brahmin's slave, his price should not be less than one thousand pieces of silver, and that if any one wished to espouse Gahnazaing, her ransom should not be less than one hundred male slaves, one hundred female slaves, one hundred elephants, one hundred horses, one hundred bullocks, and one hundred pieces of silver. Returning to his hut with the children, the Prince gave them to the Brahmin, at the same time pouring out water from a water-pot, and repeating the pious wish that this charitable deed might promote his attainment of omniscience.

As the water fell to the ground the whole earth shook violently and resounded with a great noise, while all mankind was made to shiver. The mighty waters of the ocean became white with waves, and the great Mount Myinmo bent towards the Winga hills, like a green cane roasted on one side by fire. The Thagyá applauded, slapping his arms, while the King of the Brahmas and all the spirits joined in a chorus of praise, the sound of which ascended even to the highest heaven. The heavens resounded with the noise of the quaking earth, and heavy rain fell. Lightning flashed from thick clouds, while all the guardian spirits of the earth and the trees cried aloud, and the wild beasts of the forest roared with a great noise. Thus, for the fifth time, the mighty earth quaked while the Payálaung gave his children to the Brahmin and sat gazing on them as Zuzaga bound them together by the wrists with a tough creeping-plant and, beating and goading them, led them off bleeding and trembling into slavery.

Old and infirm, the Brahmin tottered and fell while



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

showering blows on the unfortunate and unhappy children. Undoing their bonds, they ran back to their father, and Zali narrated how he had noted in Zuzaga the various evil characteristics which showed he must surely be no human being, but some wicked ogre who meant to eat them. He implored his father not to allow him and his sister to be taken away before Madi, their mother, had come back from the forest, or at any rate only to send him away, and allow his tender little sister to remain behind. He pleaded touchingly that the little girl must die of grief if taken away from her mother, and that each of their parents, but especially their mother, must feel the heavy burden of grief if deprived of both their children.

Just then the Brahmin returned and took possession of the children again, tying them with creepers and beating them as he dragged them off. As they were forced away, Zali told his father not to be unhappy, but to say to their mother they were quite well and to give her their toy elephants, horses, and oxen to remind her of them in her sorrow. Then the Payálaung was shaken with deep grief and trembled violently. Tears welling to his eyes, he entered his hut and gave way to great lamentation. Knowing that his tender children would suffer hunger and hardships on their long journey with the pitiless, cruel Brahmin, he was of a mind to follow the dirty old mendicant in order to slay him and bring them back.

Then he communed with himself, and saw that perfect knowledge could only be attained by the performance of great sacrifices as to property, human ties of all sorts, and even life itself. Should he therefore now repent of his gift, or strive onwards for the supreme attainment? Resolving to overcome prudence by wisdom, and anxiety by steadfastness of purpose, his mind once more became tranquil and he went forth from his hut.

A second time the old Brahmin slipped and fell, and the children untied their bonds and ran back to their father; but Zuzaga followed them, bound them together again, and beat them severely. As they were for the third time being dragged away under blows,

## MADI'S APPREHENSIONS

Gahnzaing turned and asked her father how he could remain unmoved when he saw how shamelessly the old ogre was abusing them. Then poignant grief seized hold of the Payálaung. His heart grew like red-hot iron, his breath came and went so that his nostrils seemed too small for its passage, and he wept tears of blood. But the thought still sustained him that it was his duty to rise superior to mere human affection ; so he controlled his natural feelings and his mind became suffused with a pious calm, while in tears and sorrow his children pursued their weary way across the Winga hills.

When Madi went forth into the forest, she was haunted by her evil dreams of the past night and made up her mind to return home long before sunset. Even as she thought thus within herself, she became filled with vague feelings of dread, her right eye twitched violently, and she became giddy. So she determined to return home at once, fearing lest some mishap had befallen her children.

Now, the *Nat* in spirit-land, who had heard the quaking of the earth at the Prince's last great gift as well as the cries and lamentations of the two children, foresaw that if Madi returned early to her hut she would learn what had taken place, would follow her children, and would be lost or devoured by wild beasts in the forest. So three guardian spirits were directed to assume the forms of a lion, a tiger, and a leopard, and were made to guard certain tracks till after sundown.

As Madi attempted to get back to her hut she found every path blocked by one of these wild animals. Whichever way she went, a savage brute seemed to threaten her destruction. Coaxingly she spoke, making lowly obeisance and offering a share of the roots and fruits she had collected ; but all further progress was barred till the sun had sunk behind the hill-tops (this being the day of the full moon), when the three great beasts of the forest stood aside and departed to their own home. Then Madi continued her way. As she came near the hut she wondered why the children did not come running to meet her, as was their wont. Approaching nearer, the ominous silence filled her heart with awe ; and when she saw the Payálaung sitting alone and silent, her soul was

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overcome with grief. In vain she asked if the children had been killed by wild beasts, or carried off by eagles, or if they had perhaps been sent to their grandfather, or were asleep within the Prince's hut. But she received no answer, the Payálaung remaining silent notwithstanding all her grief and lamentation.

At last she appealed to him, by the love which had sustained them happy even in banishment and exile, not to add to the pain of losing her children the still greater sorrow of her husband not speaking to her. To do this, she said, would be like beating a man who was dying from the bite of a serpent or through falling from the top of a lofty palm-tree, or like irritating a deep wound with a sharp thorn. Tortured thus, she added, it would be impossible for her to live through the coming night.

Then the Payálaung broke silence. Seeking to divert her thoughts from her children, he spoke harshly to her, as if piercing her heart with a needle, upbraiding her for having remained out so long in the forest. Endeavouring to justify herself against these cruel insinuations, she narrated all that had befallen her in the way of evil dreams, of omens such as she had never before known during their seven years' exile in the forest, and of hindrances delaying her return before dark, and besought her husband not to be angry with her. As he remained silent, she then resumed her supplications, detailing all that she had done to try and make her husband and children happy, and ending by asking him to give to Zali a lotus flower she had brought from the pond and to Gahnazaing a brown lily, to bedeck themselves with. But still the Payálaung remained silent, offering no word of explanation to his sorrowing wife. Retiring to her own hut, Madi beheld the toy animals with which her children used to play, and broke into grief so loud that even the beasts of the forest slunk away in fear and the birds flew off trembling. Weeping, she hastened from place to place seeking and calling on the children; but in vain. Then she returned to the Payálaung and upbraided him, though gently and lovingly. But still he spoke no word, and she withdrew trembling. All night long she wandered through the forest seeking her lost loved ones.

## MADI'S GRIEF

When the next day dawned in sorrow she again sought the Payálaung, telling him how she had wandered to and fro all through the night without finding any trace of her children, who must certainly be dead. Saying this, she fell into a deep faint. Thinking she was indeed dead, the Prince trembled violently and lamented that she had died in exile far away from all her own kith and kin. Placing his hand upon her breast, thus touching her for the first time during seven long years, he became filled with the hope that life was not yet extinct: so he made haste to bring a pitcher of water, and to bathe her face and head while chafing her bosom in tearful efforts to restore her to consciousness. Soon regaining her senses, she started up in confusion, made obeisance before the Payálaung, and asked what had become of the children. Then she was told how a Brahmin had begged a gift of them, and they had been given to him. Chiding her husband, she asked how he could have been so cruel as to allow her to wander about in sorrow all night long looking for the children. In reply the Payálaung said that as even he, a man, felt deeply grieved about their loss, he feared that she, a woman, would break her heart on learning what had happened. Then he tried to comfort her, saying that though it was true he had given the children to be slaves to the old Brahmin, yet when these passed through the country of Saduttaya the glory of the gift would become known, and they would be recalled from exile, their children and all their former possessions and prosperity being restored to them.

Thus he encouraged her and endeavoured to obtain her acquiescence in the offering he had made. Then she congratulated him at having quite set his mind at ease and freed himself from wavering, and hoped that he might even make some still greater sacrifice yet, while he related to her the wonderful signs given by the earth in token of approbation at the time of the great offering being accomplished.

Whilst they were thus conversing, the Thagyá, from his ruling seat in spirit-land, bethought him how he might prevent any vile person demanding a gift of the peerless Madi; for if this gift were demanded of the Payálaung it



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

would surely be made, and then he would be left helpless and alone in the forest without anyone to minister to his wants. So the Thagyá resolved to himself adopt the form of a mendicant Brahmin and beg the gift of Madi, in order that the Payálaung might thus have the opportunity of ultimately attaining supreme knowledge; and when this attainment was achieved, Madi would be restored to the Prince.

Next day at dawn the Thagyá assumed the form of a mendicant Brahmin and appeared before the hut of the Payálaung, making the usual inquiries if he were well, if his wants were easily supplied, and if he were free of trouble from insects and other animals; and he was invited to enter the hut, wash his feet, and refresh himself with sweet fruit and cold water. Then the object of the visit was asked, the Brahmin being informed that during the last seven years this was but the second time any stranger had come to their abode. The pretended Brahmin at once said that, hearing of the inexhaustible charity of the Prince which resembled the never dying source of a great river, he had come to beg the gift of Madi. Giving no heed to the thought that this meant loneliness and solitude in the forest, the Payálaung became filled with the quintessence of charity and benevolence and led forward Madi by the hand, while the forest and the hills resounded with a great noise. In making the gift of the peerless Madi, the Payálaung said that his yesterday's gift of his children and the gift now of his beloved Princess had not been made because he loved them little, but solely in order that he might thereby attain the great omniscience. Pouring forth an offering of water he gave Madi to the Brahmin, while the earth shook and for the sixth time showed wondrous signs of approbation.

Silent, Madi stood gazing at the Payálaung's face. She neither wept, nor cast angry looks at him. Knowing herself to be beautiful in all respects and a true subject to her husband's will, she felt assured that his giving her away could only be to attain some great object; so in place of appearing unhappy, she endeavoured to help him to attain this supreme wish. Recounting how, all through

## EIGHT WISHES GRANTED

their married life, her one desire had been to please him, she bade him do with her as he will, and said she would not be vexed whatever he did.

Perceiving the excellent disposition of the peerless Madi, the Brahmin congratulated the Payálaung on having overcome the human desires for the luxuries and comforts of prosperity, and told him that while the whole earth resounded with admiration at the renunciation of his children and his wife, the fame of these great gifts had spread even to the realms of spirit-land. He further extolled the good deeds performed by the body, the lips, and the mind in obtaining the merit of charity, the most excellent conveyance along the road to perfection, and declared that charity was now perfected for the Payálaung. Then he restored Madi to her husband, saying that they were in all respects worthy of each other, their minds uniting indistinguishably, as the waters of the Ganges and the Jumna are indistinguishable below where they join. Before departing to his throne in the land of spirits, the Thagyá manifested himself in his proper form to the Payálaung, his spirit's body shining resplendent as the sun. Offering to grant eight boons, he asked the Prince to name his wishes. The eight things desired were that his banishment should cease and restoration to his former princely state take place; that he might never be disposed to order the execution of any malefactor; that all people should look to him for help and support; that he might never desire the love of any woman save his own wife; that he, and his wife, and their children might be granted health, happiness, and long life; that all food and other necessaries of life should be provided each day at dawn; that he might have abundant riches to bestow freely in alms and other charitable gifts; and that finally, after having passed from the present state of existence into the fourth heaven of the land of spirits, he might be born again in this world of men and then obtain supreme omniscience (*Neikban*: Nirvana). Hereupon the Thagyá intimated that before long King Thainsi would desire to see his son, and would recall him and restore all his former dignities in Saduttaya, while the other seven wishes would also be

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

duly fulfilled in course of time. Then, disappearing from view and returning to his realm in Távadeingtha, the Thagyá left Wéthandayá and Madi happy in each other's company in their lonely abode in the forest.

### PART V.—THE RECALL FROM EXILE.

In making their long journey with Zuzaga the two poor children had much to endure. Each evening at sundown the old Brahmin tied them up among the bushes, while he himself climbed up into the fork of a tree to be out of the reach of wild beasts. But whenever he fell asleep two spirits would arrive in the shape of their father and mother, who unbound the cords of twigs with which the children's hands and feet were tied, washed and dressed them, and gave them food. Then, preparing a soft couch, they would watch over the sleepers till the morning dawned. Just before vanishing, they would tie up the two children again as the old Brahmin had done the night before. Thus protected, Zali and Gahnazaing got safely through their long journey.

At the same time these two guardian spirits misled Zuzaga, so that at the end of fifteen days in place of arriving at his own village of Dónniwita in Kalaingka, he reached Saduttaya. Now, it happened that on the morning of their arrival there, King Thainsi had a remarkable dream. He dreamt that, while seated on his throne in open court, he was approached by a dark-visaged man who presented for his acceptance two blossoms of the lotus-lily. Placing one of these in each ear as an ornament, the stamens fell from the flowers on to his breast. As soon as he awoke, the King commanded his soothsayers to interpret the dream, and was told it was of happy augury, meaning that he should soon see beloved relatives from whom he had been long separated. Rejoicing at this prospect, the King arose betimes and washed his head, this being the day of the month for performing that ceremony. Then he proceeded to the Hall of Justice and seated himself on the throne, surrounded by his nobles.

Just at this time Zuzaga, led by the guardian spirits,

## THE CHILDREN RANSOMED

passed along the road in front of the open court. Perceiving the two children, the King remarked their beauty, and said they reminded him of his two dear grandchildren, Zali and Gahnazaing. Commanding the Brahmin and the two children to be brought before him, the King asked whence they had come and whither they were going. Impelled by some strange power, the Brahmin, instead of lying as was habitual to him, replied truthfully that he had obtained a gift of them a fortnight ago from Prince Wéthandayá, renowned for his charity. But the King refused to believe so incredible a story as that any one could thus give away his own children into slavery. And all the nobles likewise murmured among themselves against this inhuman act of Wéthandayá. Then Zali, divining their evil thoughts, related how their father's heart had been hot with sorrow when he gave them away to this ogre, who failed to observe the law as any true Brahmin would; but as he had neither gold nor silver, nor other possessions left to bestow in charity, the Prince could only give what he had,—his children.

Then the King's heart burned with grief at seeing his grandchildren bound as slaves of the Brahmin. Asking what value their father had put upon them when giving them away, he commanded that all the great ransom should be paid even as Zali detailed what the Payálaung had said. All the requisite moneys, elephants, horses, bullocks, and slaves having been paid over in redemption of his two grandchildren, the King added further gifts to the Brahmin and provided him with a palace surmounted with a seven-roofed spire. Thus Zuzaga became possessed of greater wealth than he had ever seen or conceived of, and was filled with happiness. Here the guardian spirits now abandoned him, and he soon over-ate himself so much that he died of indigestion. His body was honourably cremated by order of the King, and it was proclaimed by beat of gong that his heirs might obtain the possessions he had left behind. But none came forward to make any claim, so all the ransom came back again to the King as ultimate heir.

Having regained his grandchildren, King Thainsi made



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

servants wash their heads, perfume their bodies, and dress them in splendid clothes. Then he took Zali on his knee, while Gahnzaing sat on the lap of her grandmother, Queen Pothadi; and thus he made inquiries about their parents and the life they led in the forest. The King's heart bled when he heard of the privations they all had to suffer, and especially the tender, gently nurtured Madi, whose body and limbs were so thin, wasted, and dust-stained from the labour of finding food for all, that she had become faded like a brown lily withered by the scorching rays of the sun. Her beautiful hair had been mostly torn out by the thorns of the bushes among which she crept, while her only garment was the skin of a black leopard, and her only couch the bare ground. On ending this painful recital, Zali naïvely asked why his grandfather had not cared for his son and daughter-in-law as other men care for their children. Then the King's heart waxed exceedingly sorrowful within him, and there rose up before him the grievous wrong he had done in consenting to the banishment of the innocent Prince, which had brought great trouble upon both of them. So he bade Zali return to the Winga forest and recall his father from exile; but the boy replied that his father could not be expected to return unless the King himself went to invite him and reinstate him in power, even as a faded drought-stricken tree is restored to vigour by refreshing rainfall.

Summoning his chief nobles, and telling them of his intention to go to the Winga hills and recall his son from exile, King Thainsi ordered all his elephants, horses, and chariots, and all his men-at-arms and his Brahmins to be collected, and the road to the hills to be put in order for his great progress. Fourteen thousand war elephants, fourteen thousand cavalry, four thousand chariots each bearing a flag of victory, and the sixty thousand nobles, formerly companions of the Prince and born at the same time as he, accompanied the King in his march into the Winga hills. All the uneven places were levelled along the road, and it was cleared of trees and shrubs to a width of 400 yards. All along the route to be traversed royal lattice-work screens were erected

## THE ROYAL PROGRESS

on either side and ornamented with plantain stems and white banners, while the roadway was strewn with sweet-scented flowers. At the gates of each town or village on the way stores of food and of toddy-palm wine were placed, and amusements of all kinds were provided for those who took part in the procession, which numbered more than any army that had ever existed on this earth. The trumpeting of the elephants, the neighing of the horses, and the sounds of the chariots and the beasts of burden re-echoed everywhere, while the sky was obscured by the clouds of dust which arose from the earth. But the glory of this immense procession was the great white elephant Pissaya, which had been returned to Saduttaya by the King of Kalaingka after abundant rain had fallen in due season on its arrival in that country. This marvellous sacred creature rejoiced exceedingly on the march to the Winga hills, trumpeting like a crane with delight at the prospect of soon again seeing its beloved master.

Surrounded by his troops, King Thainsi entered the groves of the Himawunta forest and at last came near the Winga hills where the Prince's hut was. The whole forest resounded with the mighty clamour arising from the host; and Wéthandayá heard the noise from afar off, and wondered greatly thereat. Fearful of impending misfortune, he called Madi; and they both ran to the top of a hill. From here they saw the assembled army, and the Prince's heart became filled with fear. But Madi comforted him, reminding him of the eight desires granted to him by the Thagyá before his return to spirit-land. In particular she reminded him that the first wish expressed and granted was that they should be recalled from exile; and she uttered the hope that this might be the meaning of the great tumult they now saw. On hearing these comforting words Wéthandayá descended from the hill with Madi; and they both sat peacefully at the doors of their huts, confident that no one would molest such simple, harmless recluses as they were.

Now King Thainsi feared that if all of them went forward at once, the Prince and Princess might receive

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

too great a surprise. So he proposed that he should advance first of all, and be gradually followed by Queen Pothadi, then by Zali, and last of all by Gahnazaing. Riding on Pissaya, the miraculous white elephant, and accompanied by the Prince's sixty thousand noble companions, he approached the huts of the exiles. Dismounting and going nearer alone, he was met by the Prince and Princess, who came forward making respectful obeisance. Unable to restrain his joy he clasped them to his heart, kissing their foreheads and rubbing their shoulders with his smooth, soft hands. Making the three customary inquiries as to their health, food-supplies, and freedom from annoyance by insects and wild animals, he bade them relate what had been their life in the forest. Thus he learned that though jungle roots and fruits had provided but scanty food, and though life in the forest had been hard and sorrowful, yet it was not till their children had been parted from them that they had been consumed with ever-increasing grief which had wasted their bodies and made them thin by pining. Relating how the two children had been given to an old Brahmin, the Payálaung implored the King to say if he had heard anything about them, and was greatly relieved on learning of their ransom. Then the Prince inquired after his mother, his friends the nobles, and the people of Saduttaya, and was pleased to learn of their health and prosperity.

While father and son were thus conversing, Queen Pothadi came near, walking barefoot and accompanied only by her female attendants. Rising to welcome her, and preparing a seat for her, Wéthandayá and Madi made obeisance reverently before her. Whilst they were thus employed Zali appeared, surrounded by a great retinue of young nobles, and Gahnazaing came attended by a large train of maidens and handmaids. Then Madi their mother, trembling as she gazed upon her loved ones, became filled with great fear and joy combined, while both children ran towards her like young calves parted from their dam. Overcome with the suddenness of their return, Madi fainted and fell to the ground, while both children swooned and dropped senseless beside

## MIRACULOUS SIGNS

her. Seeing his wife and children thus prostrate and helpless, the heart of the Payálaung likewise became melted as water, so that he also swooned and fell to the ground. And the same happened to King Thainsi, Queen Pothadi, and all the nobles, maidens, and hand-maidens who accompanied them, so that all fell to the ground as a grove of young pole-trees is laid prone by the fury of a strong wind. Then once again the earth turned round like a potter's wheel and was violently shaken, while the rocks resounded, the great waters of the deep were mightily agitated, Mount Myinmo again bent towards the Winga hills, and a rushing sound was heard throughout the six realms of spirit-land. Thus for the seventh time the earth shook in paying homage to the excellence of Prince Wéthan-dayá. Then the Thagyá, beholding the bodies all lying senseless on the ground so that none could arise and sprinkle water to restore the others, caused a gentle rain to descend, which fell on their faces like the pattering of raindrops on lotus-leaves floating on a pond; but the rain fell only on those who did not object to being wet. On beholding this marvellous rain, and on hearing the quaking of the earth, the people who were awakened thereby marvelled greatly, and clamoured pitifully to the King that he should take back the Prince and Princess to Saduttaya and restore them to their former high position and prosperous estate.

On hearing the outcry of the people, King Thainsi begged the Payálaung to forgive the decree of banishment and to cast aside his recluse garb and return to resume his former princely position as a ruler among his own people in the land of Thiwa. Then the Payálaung, inwardly filled with great joy but deeming it prudent to refrain from exhibiting delight, forgave his father, acknowledged himself satisfied, and promised to return again to his own country. Thereupon his sixty thousand noble companions begged him to bathe and wash the dust from his body. Retiring into his hut, he doffed the hermit's garb and put on a robe of pure white. Coming out thus arrayed, he walked three times round the hut in which he had so long practised



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

the austere duties of a celibate recluse, and prostrated himself before the place where he had accomplished the supreme charity of giving away his beloved children and his peerless wife.

When he had bathed and his beard had been shaved off, he was arrayed in princely garments and adorned with rich jewels, so that in glory he was like unto the Thagyá himself. Then he was invested with the white umbrella and the other signs of royalty, and water of consecration was poured over him, while the nobles raised a great shout and wished glory and happiness to the royal family.

Madi also cast aside her recluse dress, and donned queenly robes after bathing. When she appeared in royal raiment a great shout went up, and the people cried with one voice that she might be happy in the love of her husband and children till the end of her life. Thus Wéthandayá rejoiced that his trials of seven years' duration had ended by his regaining his princely state; while Madi, though also rejoicing greatly at this, had the additional happiness of enjoying the company of her beloved children, and of telling them that henceforth their parents' affection should protect them as an umbrella keeps off sun and rain.

At last Wéthandayá mounted his white elephant, and Madi rode beside him on a smaller elephant. And as they went through the forest all the birds and the beasts thereof mourned their departure, saying that while the Payálaung had lived among them they had known nothing but peace and concord, whereas now that he was leaving the great peaceful influence would also depart.

For a whole month festivities and great rejoicings were held in the forest. Then King Thainsi caused the gongs to be beaten for an assembly of all his soldiers and followers. Marching one *Yúzaná* (12 miles) each day, the great cavalcade reached Saduttaya in two months' time; and in honour of the auspicious return of his son the King ordered all prisoners to be released from confinement, and general rejoicings and festivals to be held everywhere throughout the land.

## A HAPPY ISSUE

No sooner had the Payálaung returned to his former abode than he bethought himself, on the very evening of the day of his arrival, as to what gifts he should be able to bestow upon any mendicants who might demand alms of him. Just then the throne of the Thagyá in spirit-land became hard and uncomfortable, as was always the case when something in the world of men required his personal attention. So, looking down earthwards, he saw the Prince's dilemma and caused the seven precious things to rain down so heavily at dawn next morning that all the King's palace was waist deep with jewels, while they lay knee-deep throughout the whole of the other parts of the city. The Payálaung allowed the citizens to collect for themselves whatever had fallen within the fences enclosing their houses ; but all the rest were gathered together and stored in the royal treasury. Thus the people of Saduttaya were greatly enriched, while Wéthandayá was able to the very end of his life to make great gifts daily at six places of offering within and around the city. And when at length his life ebbed away he ascended to abide with the spirits in Távadeingtha, the dwelling-place of those who perform acts of illustrious virtue.

\* \* \* \* \*

Having thus concluded his narrative, Gaudama further announced to his hearers that he who had then been Prince Wéthandayá, the Payálaung, had now become the Buddh, who had attained intuitive knowledge of, and perfect acquaintance with, the five great laws and principles of life, the summit of omniscience attainable only by a Buddh ; that he who was then his father, King Thainsi, had again become his father, Suddawdana ; that she who was then his mother, Queen Pothadi, had likewise, in accordance with her prayer made ninety-one cycles of years ago at the feet of the Buddh Wipathi, again become his mother, Mayá ; that Madi, who was then his consort, was now again his wife, Yasawdará, while Zali was their son Prince Rahulo, and Gahnazaing had become the daughter of Upaláwun, his most excellent disciple.

## Chapter XIV

### FOLKLORE

AS might be expected among so intensely superstitious and credulous a people, there is a wealth of Folklore, though no systematic attempt has yet been made to collect it for permanent record and arrangement. In addition to its *Thamaing*, or "historic record," every pagoda of any importance has also one or more legends attached to it. All the lakes, mountains, and streams have stories of some sort connected with them; while local natural phenomena are similarly explained. It will be a matter of extreme regret if these legendary tales fail to be soon incorporated in the new literature that has sprung up in Burma.

Some of the short minor folk-tales told in explanation of physical phenomena are extremely quaint. A typical specimen may be given in the legend of the Indawgyi, or "great lake," to the south-west of Mogaung in the Myitkyina district, within the wild Kachin country forming the northern portion of the province. There are numerous floating islets on the lake which drift about according to the state of the wind. One bears a tiny pagoda. Trees formerly grew on some of them, but now they consist only of weeds and grasses, like the islets which appear from time to time on Derwentwater, in Cumberland.

The legend of the Indawgyi relates that the guardian spirit of the Nantein river, which helps to feed the lake, every year renders obeisance to the spirit of the lake and makes an offering of timber and wood, while the latter recognizes this act of homage by sending a present of fish. A pretty little story is thus woven out of natural

## THE LEGEND OF MOULMEIN

circumstances. The Nantein river runs into the Indawgyi river about eight miles below the exit of the latter from the north end of the lake. As it makes its entry into the main stream at an obtuse angle, and as the Indawgyi river is very sluggish and nearly level, it happens that when the Nantein is in flood its muddy, whitish waters spread over the top of the water in the main stream and flow *up-stream* into the lake, bearing on their surface the tribute of drift logs and jungle refuse. There can be no doubt that this is so; because the black waters of the Indawgyi river, fresh from the lake, flow below the whitish waters of the Nantein, and come up to the surface again after the mouth of the Nantein is passed. But the limy waters of the Nantein poison the fish in the lake; and when the floods subside myriads of dead fish float down past the mouth of the Nantein, and are carried away on to the Mogaung river. Thus, each time the Nantein offers its tribute of timber, the lake responds with its present of fish.

Of legends connected with place-names Moulmein furnishes a good example. The modern Burmese name, *Maw-la-myaing*, is a corruption of the Môn *Môk-mwalum*, meaning "one eye destroyed." The story goes that in ancient time the king ruling there had a third eye, placed in the centre of his forehead, which enabled him to see what was going on in other countries. The King of Siam, who was at war with this king, found his plans always thwarted; so he suspected treachery in the camp, and called a council of war. In the discussion which ensued the King of Siam was told of his enemy's super-human gift, and was advised to give his daughter in marriage to his rival. Acting on this advice, the King of Siam sent his daughter, who soon gained the confidence of the Môn King, which she abused by destroying the sight of the third eye in the forehead. Hence the name of the city.

Of the longer legends the five now about to be given may be taken as fairly typical samples. The first is abbreviated from an Arakanese legend, the second is from the lower Irrawaddy, and the third from the upper Irrawaddy, while the fourth is the very popular myth



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relating to King Thado Naganaing, one of the legendary rulers of Tagaung in the sixth or seventh century B.C., and the fifth is the legend connected with the "spirit festival" annually held at Taungbyôn, a little to the north of Mandalay. The second and third legends are both incorporated in the Royal Chronicle.

### THE TREE-SNAKE PRINCE.

After living a thousand lives in the spirit-land of Tawadeingtha, a *Nat* called Sakaru had once more to be born as a man. As the omniscient Thagyá Min, King of spirit-land, knew that Sakaru was not yet free from the influence of past evil deeds, he arranged, with the aid of another spirit, that Sakaru should for the period of three months become a guardian spirit dwelling in a wild fig-tree. Near where Sakaru was thus temporarily incarnated as a tree-snake there dwelt a fisherman and his wife, who had two daughters called Shwe Kyin and Dwe Pyu.

One day the mother and her daughters went to wash clothes at the place where the wild fig-tree overhung a stream. When her work was finished, the mother, looking up into the tree, saw some ripe fruit and also the snake. Jestingly she said, "Oh! guardian spirit of the tree, throw me down three or four figs and I will give you my daughter Dwe Pyu if you want her!" Hereupon the snake shook its tail and about forty or fifty ripe figs fell to the ground.

"Oho," said the woman, "just see how pleased the snake is and how fond he must be of Dwe Pyu! I only asked for four or five figs, and he has knocked down ten times that number. As the sun is setting, let us pick up the figs and go home." Then, as they were about to start, she mocked the spirit saying, "Well, Mr. Snake, if you want Dwe Pyu you will just have to follow her home."

On the way back they rested for a moment near a broken tree-stump standing where the path divided into two tracks, and Dwe Pyu said, "Mother, it will be terrible if the snake really does follow us." Then the mother also began to get afraid, and said to the stump,

## THE TREE-SNAKE PRINCE

"If a big snake comes and asks which way we have gone, please say you have not seen us. Here's a fig for you."

Soon after, on reaching another fork of the path, the mother again gave a fig and similar instructions to an ant-hill standing close by.

But the tree-snake had at once fallen in love with Dwe Pyu the moment he saw her. Descending from the tree, he followed the mother and her daughters. On coming to the stump he asked which path they had taken, but the stump said it did not know. Becoming angry the snake hissed out, "If you dare to lie to me while you hold my own fig I'll split you into four." So the stump showed the way Dwe Pyu had gone.

And when the snake came to the ant-hill this also first denied all knowledge, but was soon frightened into pointing out the way that the mother and her daughters had taken.

It was night when the snake reached the washerman's house, so Sakaru entered the pot in which the cleaned rice was kept, and curled himself up in it.

Early next morning the mother went to get rice for the morning meal, but as soon as she thrust her hand into the pot the snake seized hold of it firmly in its coils.

At first the woman shrieked, but her hand remained held tightly as in a vice. Then she knew that it must be the tree-snake, and she said, "O great Snake, I promise you Dwe Pyu if you will only let me go." So the coils were loosened from around her arm, and she went and implored her daughter to live with the snake else the whole household would be killed.

But Dwe Pyu wept, and refused to live with the brute beast till her mother, who was in great fear of losing her life, coaxed her to do so. So Dwe Pyu lived with the tree-snake.

Shortly after this the Thagyá Min held a council in spirit-land. As Sakaru's presence was necessary at this council, he slipped quietly out of his skin and went to Tawadeingtha, leaving his snake's skin behind. But

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when day dawned the council was not yet ended, so Sakaru could not return and resume his snake-form again.

When Dwe Pyu awoke she found nothing but the empty skin that had been sloughed off. Weeping, she told her mother and sister that her husband was dead, and wanted to have proper obsequies performed over all that remained of him. From this, however, she was dissuaded, as the mother said it would be far better simply to burn the skin quietly, and thus avoid scandal and talking among the neighbours. So Dwe Pyu agreed to this, and they burned the skin.

When the skin was being burned, Sakaru, feeling unbearable heat, appeared in person by the fire. Not knowing him, Dwe Pyu asked who he was, and on being told how Sakaru felt intense heat, she recognized her husband and rejoiced greatly. But her sister, Shwe Kyin, at once fell in love with him, and became very jealous of her younger sister, saying to herself, "But for Dwe Pyu I should be able to get him for my husband."

After the darkness came on they all went to bed. At midnight the Samadeva spirit, sent by the Thagyá Min, came to Sakaru, and said, "Here is a magic wand so powerful that on striking anything with it you will at once obtain whatever you desire." Then the Samadeva went on to tell Sakaru that Dwe Pyu was about to bear a child to him, and warned him that if he let a drop of snake's blood touch him after the birth of this child, he would again turn into a snake as formerly. Before disappearing the Samadeva finally told him that now he had received the magic wand he could only return here after wandering in other countries.

Early next morning Sakaru told Dwe Pyu what the Samadeva had said. In spite of all she could say, Sakaru felt the Thagyá Min's order strong upon him. So he went and smote the sea with his magic wand. At once a ship appeared, fully rigged and manned. Going on board this he had to leave Dwe Pyu behind, she being heavy with child and therefore unable to cross the sea.

When Sakaru was gone, Shwe Kyin thought within

## THE TREE-SNAKE PRINCE

herself that if she could only get rid of Dwe Pyu she would obtain Sakaru as her husband. Coaxing her down to the bank of a stream, she told Dwe Pyu she meant to push her in and drown her. Dwe Pyu besought her not to do this, as this would destroy the two lives now within her, and said she would give up her husband to her sister on his return. But Shwe Kyin, knowing Sakaru would never be hers while Dwe Pyu lived, pushed her sister into the river and returned home.

As Dwe Pyu floated on the top of the stream and was borne seawards, a fish-eagle swooped down and carried her off to its nest in a lofty tree. When Dwe Pyu told the bird all that had happened to her, it tended her in its nest, and here she bore her son.

Whenever the child cried, Dwe Pyu soothed it by saying, "Sakaru, Sakaru." This made the eagle so angry that it threatened to peck the child to death. But when she said "Papa Eagle" to quiet the boy, it also grew angry, thinking this was meant as mockery.

One day when Dwe Pyu and the eagle were quarrelling over this, Sakaru's ship passed near the nesting tree, and he heard a voice like his wife's. So he called out, "Is that you, Dwe Pyu?" to which she answered, "Yes." Then he landed and climbed up to the nest.

When Sakaru wanted to take away his wife she said, "Don't you think it will be best to thank the eagle, and give him a present, and ask if I may leave?" So Sakaru said, "O eagle, you and I are brothers. I am very grateful to my elder brother, and will pile up fish for you from the ground right up to the highest branch of this tree if you will let me take away my wife and child." Agreeing to this, Sakaru smote the sea with his wand, and fish came out of the water and piled themselves up till the heap reached the top of the tree.

As Sakaru and Dwe Pyu were returning to their home she told him what Shwe Kyin had said and done, and he replied, "I will put her to shame if you and the child get into this box and hide there for a little." To this Dwe Pyu consented.

When Sakaru's ship arrived, Shwe Kyin dressed herself nicely and went to him pretending she was her sister.



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

But Sakaru said, "Dwe Pyu, you are not like what you used to be: you are so thin." "Alas! dear husband," she replied, "I am worn with yearning after you, and I have had a miscarriage in consequence." So he gave her the box, saying it contained beautiful clothes; and they went home. On arriving there he handed her the key, and told her to open the box and put on some of the pretty things it contained. On opening it she saw Dwe Pyu and her child, so was greatly ashamed, and ran away to the back of the house, while Sakaru and Dwe Pyu went and lived happily in their own room.

Now Shwe Kyin thought that as Dwe Pyu had been very happy with a tree-snake, she too might also thus be made happy. So she asked her father to catch one for her. He told her that the snake Dwe Pyu had lived with was a spirit-snake, the incarnation of a human being, and an embryo man. And he said that if he went and caught a tree-snake it would only be a common one, which would kill her. But she insisted on having a snake-husband. So her father went and caught a big tree-python measuring two spans in circumference, and brought it to Shwe Kyin, who took it to bed and slept beside it.

Early in the morning the snake, feeling hungry, began to gorge itself with Shwe Kyin. Beginning with her feet he sucked her down into his gullet as far as the knees, when she began to be greatly afraid. At first she merely cried out, but as her fear grew she shrieked for help.

Hearing her cries Dwe Pyu told Sakaru he must go and help her, but he said, "Remember that if one drop of snake's blood touch me I must become a snake again. Your father can easily kill the snake. Are you tired of me that you should ask me to run this awful risk?" But Dwe Pyu said, "You don't run any risk of that now, and it is wrong to let my sister die like that." So Sakaru smote the python with his sword and killed it. But as he cut it in two a drop of the blood spurted out upon him, and he became a snake as before. And having also only a snake's mind, he went off into the jungle, no longer caring to live in a house.

## THE THREE-EYED KING

Weeping, Dwe Pyu slowly followed him, asking him to come back, but in vain. Sometimes he could think like a man, and would then speak to his wife and child ; but whenever the snake's mind came back he would hiss at them, and try to bite them. Then he told his wife that he would have to live away in the jungle far from human beings, else he would bite and kill them when in a snake's mood.

Dwe Pyu took back her child and left it with her parents, but she followed her snake-husband into the depths of the forest. In one of his human moments he told her that he was not as before, but could recognize nobody when filled with his snake's mind, and could only strike at them ; and he asked her to go home and take care of their child, while he went and lived in the darkest jungle. Dwe Pyu could only ask him to return with her, saying she would care for and feed him, as she could not live away from him. So she continued to follow him.

Coming near an ants' hill, the snake-mind came into him, and he was about to bite her. But restraining himself he entered into the ant-hill instead, while Dwe Pyu remained weeping and calling sadly to her husband.

Thus things went on for a long time. Whenever Sakaru felt himself becoming possessed by a snake's mind, he had to hide himself away in trees or in holes in the ground ; and it was only when his mind became human again that he could come to where Dwe Pyu waited for him.

But at last the merit he thus earned enabled him to become once more entirely human, with the aid of the Thagyá Min, when he went back with his wife to where their child was. And they all lived happily together, doing works of great merit.

### THE THREE-EYED KING.

During the fifth year of his Buddhahood Gaudama was presented by two brothers, Mahapunna and Chulapunna, with a sandal-wood monastery at Vanijagama in Sunaparanta,<sup>1</sup> and accepted the gift, occupying it for seven

<sup>1</sup> Lègaing, in the Minbu district : still a famous place of pilgrimage.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

days. At the end of this time he returned, walking along the hills to the west of the Irrawaddy. At the Pawúdaung, hill near Prome, a mole paid him homage by offering some of its burrowings, whereupon Gaudama smiled and said to his favourite disciple, Ananda, that after his attainment of Neikban and after his religion had flourished for 101 years the sea would dry up, the kingdom of Thare Kettara (Prome) would be founded, and the mole would be incarnated as Duttabaung, founder of that kingdom, from the date of whose reign Buddhism would flourish in Burma.

Now the mole had been asked by its wife to wake her up when Gaudama was approaching their nest, so that she might have some share in the merit of making an offering to him. But as the Buddha came very early in the morning, the mole thought it best not to disturb his wife's slumbers. When she awoke later and found that Gaudama had passed after receiving an offering of burrowings, she was very angry. Following the Buddha she entreated him to stop and receive an offering from her. He did so, and accepted the burrowings she made.

With the merit acquired by this act of homage, she desired, in revenge on her husband for his neglect of her spiritual welfare, that after her next birth she might be capable of inflicting some great injury on him in his next incarnation.

In due course of time the mole was incarnated in the womb of Bedayi, the Queen of Maha Thambawá, and became King Duttabaung of Thare Kettara (442-372 B.C.); while the she-mole again became his wife after being incarnated as the beautiful and clever princess Peikthanaw in the neighbouring country of Pandwa (Taungdwingyi).

Duttabaung was a wise and powerful ruler, whose influence was felt far beyond the boundaries of Burma, and even in spirit-land, where the Thagyá Min, lord of the thirty-three great ruling spirits in Tawadeingtha, had to assist him in the attainment of his desires. When Thare Kettara was founded both the Thagyá Min and the dragons helped in building it; and Duttabaung was led to the throne by the Thagyá Min, who presented him with two wonderful celestial weapons. One of these was

## THE THREE-EYED KING

a spear, which carried royal messages immediately to the king's tributaries; while the other was a drum, the beat of which, telling that the time for paying tribute had come, could be heard at the ends of the empire.

The secret of the king's wisdom and power lay in the fact of his having three eyes. Two of these were in the usual places, while the third was between the two, but higher up in the forehead.

Duttabaung ruled wisely and well, being beloved by his people and feared by his tributaries. He would have been perfectly happy but for one thing, and this was that his wife had no affection whatever for him, although he was extremely fond of her. She seemed to delight in thwarting him in every way, and to veil intense hatred under feigned obedience and respect. But her malevolent designs were of no avail so long as Duttabaung observed Gaudama's precepts, fed the monks, and supported the Buddhist religion; for the *Nat* in spirit-land were guarding him.

One day, however, without making proper investigation into all the circumstances connected with the case, King Duttabaung gave orders for the confiscation of about an acre of land which a widowed sweetmeat-seller had presented to a monk.

Owing to this sin against religion, Duttabaung's power waned. His tributaries revolted and withheld tribute, while the miraculous spear and drum lost their wonderful power.

Noting her opportunity, Queen Peikthanaw wove an unclean towel out of a skirt of hers, which she had first of all worn and then washed, and out of some rags picked up in a cemetery. Unsuspecting, Duttabaung used this unclean towel, and, being thus defiled, at once lost the sight of his middle eye. With its loss all his supernatural gifts were gone; even the celestial spear and drum disappeared.

Unable to believe that he had lost all his former prestige and power, Duttabaung set out on a progress through his dominions in order to replace his authority on its former basis. But while near Cape Negrans (lit. *Nagarit*, "dragon coil") he excited the wrath of the



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

dragons (*Nagá*) by spitting into the sea, so they dragged him and his boat down into their abode within the earth.

Thus perished Duttabaung, the powerful three-eyed King, according to the desire expressed by Peikthanaw, his Queen, while they were both in a previous state of existence as moles.

### THE TWO BLIND PRINCES.

When King Thado Naganaing ascended the throne of Tagaung in very ancient days, he was without issue. So he nominated as "lord of the eastern house," or heir-apparent, Prince Labaduha, brother of his Queen Kenári-devi.

One day news was brought that a huge wild boar, eighteen feet high, was laying waste the land, and the heir-apparent was sent to stop the ravage. He marched out at the head of an armed force, and the boar fled south-east into the Shan country at a place which is even to this day called Wetwin (lit. "boar's entry," a village about fifty miles east of Mandalay).

Routing it out of its lair, the prince continued the chase. The boar crossed the Irrawaddy at Wetmasut ("boar not wet"), but was killed at Wettógyun ("boar thrust island"), near Prome. In a lake to the south of this the prince cleansed his hunting-spear at a place called Wetthwese In ("boar's blood cleansing lake"), now a part of the town of Prome and corrupted into Wetché In ("boar's feet pond").

As the chase had lasted long and brought him far from home, Labaduha thought that if a son had meanwhile been born to King Thado Naganaing, his return to Tagaung might be undesirable, and might give rise to intrigues and plots; and, being old, he wished to end his days in peace rather than in a prison. So he preferred to remain near Prome and lead the austere religious life of a hermit in the jungle.

One day his meditations were disturbed by the cries of a child, and on going to see what caused them he was astonished to find a doe which had just given birth to a female child. Frightened, the doe ran away; so the

## THE LEGEND OF SAGAING

hermit took the infant to his lonely hut. Here he fed it with milk which miraculously flowed in abundance from the tips of his two forefingers. The child grew up into a beautiful damsel, and was named Bedayi. To keep her away from his hut, where her presence might have interrupted his religious duties, the hermit sent Bedayi daily to fetch water, ordering her not to return home till after sunset.

Now, it happened that Queen Kenáridevi gave birth to twin boys, who were born blind, during the year in which Prince Labaduha went forth to chase the wild boar that was laying waste the land.

Ashamed of having two blind children, King Thado Naganaing ordered them to be made away with. But the Queen hid them and saved their lives. When they had grown up to be nineteen years old, however, the King found out that his order had not been obeyed, and insisted that it should now be put into effect. Desirous of appearing to obey him, and yet anxious to save her children's lives, the Queen had a raft made and stored with food. Upon this her two sons were set afloat on the waters of the Irrawaddy, the good spirits being invoked by her to watch over and protect her offspring.

Floating down the Irrawaddy the raft caught in the branch of a *Sit* tree (*Albizia procera*), where the town of Sagaing now stands (i.e. *Sitkaing*, "the branch of a *Sit* tree"). In this a guardian spirit dwelt, named Sandamôkki. Unseen by the blind children, Sandamôkki daily provided them with food, till one day they caught hold of her and asked whose hand it was they held.

Just as they were about to kill her with their swords, she said that if they spared her life they should see how grateful she would be. On being asked how she would show this, she replied that she would undertake to cure their blindness. So her life was spared, and the raft, loosened from the branch of the *Sit* tree, floated down the river.

Sandamôkki was as good as her word. Where Sagu (lit. "begin cure") now stands, the cure for blindness was begun, and before they had reached Prome complete vision had been given to them. On receiving sight their

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first wonder was to find that the earth was surrounded by the sky, and they exclaimed "the sky above, the earth below."

Still drifting down the river, the raft was not moored till it reached the mouth of the Pagá stream (now silted up) below Prome. Here they saw Bedayi drawing water. To keep her employed all the day, the hermit Labaduha had only made a tiny hole in the joint of the bamboo to let in water. Seeing the delay this caused, the princes enlarged the aperture, thus enabling Bedayi to fill her bamboos quickly with water and return home much earlier than usual.

The hermit was angry, and asked why she had returned so soon. Bedayi told him about the two princes, and brought them to him. On hearing their story he knew they were his nephews, so he gave Bedayi in marriage to Maha Thambawá, the elder of the twins.

At that time the land in which the hermit dwelt was ruled by a Queen, from whom he obtained the grant of as much land as a hide could stretch over. Cutting a large hide into very thin strips the hermit encircled a huge tract upon which the city of Thare Kettara (lit. "fields obtained by the hide") was afterwards built.

When Maha Thambawá founded the kingdom of Thare Kettara (483 B.C.) he nominated his twin brother Sula Thambawá as heir apparent, and was succeeded by him six years later (477 B.C.). Sula Thambawá married Bedayi, his brother's widow, and reigned for thirty-five years, when he died at the age of sixty-one.

### THE DULL BOY WHO BECAME A KING.

In ancient days the sons of all the chief men in Sambadipa were sent to Tetkatho (in North-Western India) for their education. Among them was a lad named Maung Pauk Kyaing, who never seemed to learn much. He hated study, but he was strong and active: so his teachers thought he would be better fitted for a rough outdoor life than for any indoor occupation.

Before sending him away from school, his teacher

## THE DULL BOY

taught him the following three maxims, and bade him apply them whenever required :—

Keep going on, and you will travel far.  
Ask about things, and you will gain much knowledge.  
A watchful, wakeful man has a long life.

After reaching home Maung Pauk Kyaing grew tired of having nothing much to do, so he set out to another country to try and better things for himself.

Applying the first of his maxims, he went far through strange countries ; and applying the second, he gained much information by asking questions of the people he met. And so at last he came to Tagaung, the capital of the King of Burma, where he soon found out all that was going on.

The King having been dead for some time, the Queen, much against the wish of the people, had taken unto herself a huge dragon as a sweetheart. Her ministers and subjects wished a human being to rule over them, and the Queen had no objection to their electing one : but whenever any human being was thus appointed, he was killed by the dragon during the first night passed in the palace.

In spite of these rumours, Maung Pauk Kyaing went to the ministers and told them he wished to aspire to the hand of the Queen. Being ushered into the palace, he found the Queen very silent and depressed, so he tried to be jovial and to cheer her.

When night came on they went to bed. But as Maung Pauk Kyaing knew from the many questions he had asked that former aspirants to the throne had always been killed by the dragon, her sweetheart, he thought he would now apply the third maxim he had been taught. So he only pretended to fall asleep, and snored loudly.

When he found that the Queen had really fallen asleep, he got out of bed and put the stem of a plaintain tree where he had lain. Covering this up with his blanket, he hid behind a curtain to see what would happen.

Before he had been waiting long, a great dragon came,



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breathing fire, and made a bite at where the plantain stem lay covered.

While the dragon's teeth were fixed in this, Maung Pauk Kyaing rushed out and cut the monster in two with a sword.

Soon after this Maung Pauk Kyaing was crowned King amid the rejoicings of the people. But the Queen remained sullen and dejected.

When his parents heard the news, they were full of joy and went to see him. Before reaching Tagaung they rested under a tree, among the branches of which two crows were sitting. One bird said, "We shall have a rare feast to-morrow, for the King will be executed." "How is that?" asked the other. "Oh," said the first, "the King and the Queen have made a wager about a certain riddle. If he cannot read the riddle, he is to lose his life; and if he can explain it, the Queen is to die." "And what is the riddle?" asked the second crow. "It is this," said the first:—

"A thousand were given  
For it to be riven,  
While a full hundred more  
Were then sent to the sewer:  
And now the bones so dearly loved  
Into raven-black locks are shoved."

"Oho!" said the other, "that riddle is easily enough to read. It all refers, of course, to the Queen's sweet-heart, the dragon Didút. She paid a thousand coins for having its skin taken off, and another hundred for having this sewn into pillows and cushions; and aren't the hair-pins she now wears all made of the dragon's bones?"

Maung Pauk Kyaing's parents hastened on as fast as possible, and just arrived at Tagaung in time to save their son's life by telling him how the riddle should be read. He, with the generosity becoming a King, spared the Queen's life and assumed the title of Thado Naga-naing, "the conqueror of the dragon." The Queen became reconciled to her second husband, and they reigned happily together.

\* \* \* \* \*

Taungbyôn, eight miles north of Mandalay, has been

## THE TAUNGBYÔN NATS

a place of pilgrimage for over seven hundred years, and every year a great festival is held there during the month of July or August. Here stand two small pagodas called Sudaungbye and Sudaungbya. The first of these was built by King Anawratazaw<sup>1</sup> in the eleventh century, in honour of the twin brothers Shwepyingyi and Shwepyinngè, whose spirits dwell in two small brazen images housed in a *Natnan* or "spirits' palace." But, as all petitions offered at this pagoda are said to be certain of fulfilment sooner or later, King Mindôn in 1874 built the Sudaungbya pagoda specially for members of the royal family, who were prohibited from attendance at the other lest they might aspire to the throne and their evil desires should come to pass. This annual *Natpwè* or "spirit festival" is a strange practical example of the interweaving of Buddhism and of animistic worship which really forms a very noteworthy characteristic of Burmese Buddhism, as has been elsewhere remarked (vol. i., page 196; vol. ii., pages 107, 108). And this is the legend of

### THE TWIN SPIRITS (*Nat*) OF TAUNGBYÔN.

About a thousand years ago a monk, while bathing one day in the Irrawaddy river, saw a large wooden tray floating towards him with two little boys on it. Moved by pity, he rescued them and took them to his abode. Here they grew up and went about with him in the forest.

One day they found the dead body of a man covered with charms of the sort which render their possessor invisible at will so long as he lives. The monk told the boys to take the body to his hut, where he intended to roast and eat it so as to become possessed of the power given by the magic charms.

When he got back to his hut, however, he found that the lads had themselves roasted and eaten the body, thus acquiring the supernatural powers he had wished to attain.

Out of revenge the monk arranged for the lads to be killed; but this fate only overtook the elder, while the

<sup>1</sup> This was the very king who made war against Thatôn, and converted Pagán into the centre of the Buddhist religion throughout Burma.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

younger escaped to Pagán and took service under King Anawratazaw. Here his duty was to gather flowers for the royal household. In performance of this task he used daily to go up to the top of the Popá hill and back to Pagán, though for any ordinary man this was a whole week's journey.

Now, on the top of Popá there dwelt a giantess who had assumed the form of a young and beautiful girl. Falling in love with each other, she and the flower-gatherer were secretly married; and in due time twin boys were born to them. On the day of this happy occurrence the father was late in returning to the palace with his flowers. Wishing to be rid of a man possessed with such supernatural powers, the King seized on this pretext and ordered him to be killed. Before death he told the King of the twins and begged him to adopt them, telling him that they too would be possessed of wonderful magical powers which would be of great service to him. Aware of what had come to pass, the mother placed her twin children in two large jars and shoved these into the river so that they floated down to Pagán. Here they were found and taken charge of by the King, from whom they received the names of Shwepyingyi and Shwepyinggè (or "big" and "little" Shwepyin). They grew up much beloved in the palace, and proved themselves possessed of vast supernatural abilities.

Later on King Anawratazaw marched with a great army into China to obtain from the Emperor Udibwa the tooth of Gaudama. As the Emperor did not come forth to meet the King, the latter felt insulted and caused a sound thrashing to be given to the great image of the chief *Nat* or spirit worshipped by the Chinese.

When beaten, this spirit called out loudly for help from the Ministers of State, and it was only then that the Emperor of China knew of the coming of the Burmese King. Charmed swords and spears, and magic water and fire were placed all round the city walls in defence of the Chinese capital. Four men, sent by the Burmese King to call the Emperor to account, succeeded in passing the barriers of swords and spears, but failed to cross the charmed water and fire.

## THE TAUNGBYÔN NATS

Then the twin brothers Shwepyin were sent. Through their supernatural powers they were able to make their way into the Emperor's chamber while he still slept. After marking his face with lime and writing on the walls of his apartments, they plucked three hairs from his head and took them to King Anawratazaw.

When the Emperor awoke, he was greatly annoyed at the way he had been insulted. But, when he read what stood written on the walls of his chamber, he hastened to conciliate the King and to give him the great sacred relic, the tooth of Gaudama,<sup>1</sup> together with presents of gold and silver, and several virgin princesses to add to the number of his minor queens. Thus peace and concord were established between the two countries; and on his return to Burma, King Anawratazaw built the Sudaungbya pagoda at Taungbyôn to commemorate the happy event.

In consequence of their great services and abilities the brothers Shwepyin had many enemies, who soon found means of bringing them under the royal displeasure. While the memorial pagoda was being built each member of the King's household had to contribute bricks and labour. When the work seemed to be complete it was found that two bricks were wanting in part of the inner wall; and the enemies of the twins made out that this was solely due to the intentional neglect of the two brothers. The King at once, in anger, ordered their execution; but they became invisible, and only appeared now and again at intervals.

Being loyal, however, they eventually gave themselves up, trusting to the royal clemency. Though he would not forgive them the King could not entirely forget his former affection for them, so he ordered them to be killed at a great distance from his capital.

As they could not be killed by ordinary means they were taken far away to the north of Pagán, to a place where strangling with a rope of leather was tried (near

<sup>1</sup> This relic was always enshrined in a tower, opposite to the bell-tower, at the east gate of the capital of Burma. It now occupies this similar position in Mandalay city (Fort Dufferin) near the *Hlutdaw* or Great Council Hall.



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

where the village of *Lôndaung* or "rope hill" now stands); but in vain. Then they were taken to a different place where another vain attempt was made to kill them with a male bamboo (whence the name of the village *Wayindôk*). Finding that, notwithstanding the failure of these two attempts, the King would not forgive them but was bent on their destruction, they at last told their executioners they could only be killed if taken to a certain place and made to undergo torture on the rack (*Kutnyat*). So this was done, and the village which has sprung up there bears the name of *Kutywa* to this day.

Shortly after this, as the King was returning to Pagán from a royal progress up the river, his raft was stopped by some unknown agency at a place called Kyi In. On being consulted, the astrologers said the stoppage was caused by the twin brothers who had become transformed into spirits and intended to punish the King for his ingratitude after the services they had rendered to him in China.

The King ordered the two *Nat* to be summoned. When they appeared before him he demanded to know what they wanted with him, and with much grief they upbraided him for causing their death. Expressing great regret for his conduct, he asked pardon of them, and requested them, as a mark of forgiveness, to make Taungbyôn their abode. Here he built the "spirit palace" for them, and he placed there, as caretaker, one of the virgin princesses received from the Emperor of China.

## Chapter XV

### ARCHÆOLOGY

IN various parts of Burma there is a wealth of antiquities and of associations with religious and historical events upon which one can look back through a long vista of many centuries. But it is only in the dry central zone of the Irrawaddy valley that the ancient monuments have had any fair chance of preservation. Elsewhere, and especially in the moister portions of the province near the sea-board, the ravages committed by the excessive rainfall and the luxuriant vegetation prove rapidly destructive.

Favoured by the damp, warm climate the seeds of epiphytic *Ficus*, brought by birds which perch on the pinnacles of pagodas and other sacred edifices, soon develop into trees whose roots, insinuating themselves into crevices in the plasterwork and between the bricks, completely overgrow small pagodas or rend asunder large masses of brickwork. And with very few exceptions all the ancient monuments throughout Burma are built of brick, exceedingly few being of stone. The monasteries, being built of teakwood, fall to pieces and totally disappear within a comparatively short space of time.

The celebrated *Shwethayaung* is an example of how completely some of the antiquarian treasures of the province can very soon be hidden by jungle growth. This colossal recumbent image of Gaudama is 181 feet long and 46 feet high. After being so long hidden by rubbish and jungle as to have been forgotten even to tradition throughout the surrounding district, it was only discovered by chance in 1881 by men searching for laterite, to be used as metal on the new railway line then

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

being laid down close by. So entirely was all knowledge of it wiped out after the destruction of Pegu in 1757 that no history is attached to it, although the new town of Pegu, founded about 1777, stands within a mile's distance. It can only be estimated to be about 400 years old.

Despite these ravages of time, with teeth sharpened by luxuriant tropical vegetation, almost every part of the province offers a rich field for the work of the archæologist either in connection with the general religious history of the country, or else more especially with the royal dynasties which formerly held sway in the different kingdoms before all became welded into one empire by Alaung Payá early in the second half of the eighteenth century.

In Arakan, the western portion of the province bordering on the Bay of Bengal, Myohaung or Myauku, the ancient capital of the kings for several centuries, contains numerous pagodas exhibiting a curious mingling of Hindu and Burmese architecture and sculpture enclosed in an extensive network of stone walls, moats, and embankments still fairly well preserved. Being situated far inland upon a tidal creek forming one of the numerous branches of the Lemru river, it lies considerably out of the beaten track. But the Shitthaung, Dôkathain, and Lemyethna pagodas are structures worthy of examination on account of their unique design, being partly temples and partly fortifications formerly used as places of refuge in time of war. An intricate labyrinth of passages leads through the massive stonework to spacious galleries filled with marble images of the Buddha. Ancient Hindu temples and other structures still exist there, with an old Mohammedan mosque among the ruins. Most of the buildings are of massive stone blocks ornamented with designs of both Indian and Burmese origin, into which coloured tablets are set in the shape of banyan leaves or lotus rosettes. Rough ancient rock-cut sculptures are numerous along the base of the hills to the west and north.

Of the many shrines in Arakan the most famous is the Mahámuni pagoda on the Sirigutta hill, near Payágyi,

## THE MOULMEIN CAVES

which undoubtedly exhibits Indian characteristics. Probably it is connected with the northern Indian Buddhism which existed in the upper portion of Burma before the introduction of the southern Buddhist teachings now prevailing throughout the country.

Ramanadesa, the ancient Môn or Talaing kingdom now forming the central portion of the Tenasserim Commissionership and stretching thence westwards across the lower portions of the Sittang and Irrawaddy valleys to the Arakan mountains, is specially rich in ancient monuments.

Moulmein itself is quite a modern town, built after the British annexation in 1826 on what is said to have been the site of the ancient Ramapura, founded by Hindu colonists. The immediate vicinity of the town has little or nothing of antiquarian interest to offer, but numerous caves, formed naturally in the limestone rocks and situated (as noted below) within a radius of fifty miles to the north and east, are objects of great interest. There are large numbers of these caves, and all are filled with sacred images and manuscripts. The most celebrated and the best known of these are the "Farm" (P'harum) or Kayun caves on the Ataran river (ten miles), the Dammatha caves on the Gyaing river (eighteen miles), the Pagat caves on the Salween (twenty-six miles), the Kogun caves on the Kogun stream (twenty-eight miles), and the Binji caves on the Dômdami river (fifty-one miles). Their chief interest lies, perhaps, in the images which have for centuries back been deposited by successive generations of pilgrims, for they help to explain the forms of many of the old and small images deposited at pagodas and other sacred shrines throughout the country. Here, for example, are frequently to be found images with snake canopies over the head of the Buddha and snakes coiled round the pedestal, such as are rarely to be found in other parts of Burma.

These peculiarities are supposed to be of Cinghalese and Dravidian origin in the earliest times, but influenced later by Cambodian and Siamese art when Ramanya was under Cambodian rule from the sixth to the tenth



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

centuries and under Siamese domination in the fourteenth century. But it seems improbable that "*in this very rainy country of Ramanya*," as the Kalyani inscriptions at Pegu correctly describe it, many of the images or ornamentations can be anything like so old as any of these dated.

Many of the walls and roofs of the caves are ornamented with painted plasterwork and terra-cotta tablets embedded in cement, illustrative of episodes in the life of Gaudama. Even the stalactites and stalagmites in some of the caves, and especially in the large Dammatha cave were and still are partially ornamented in this quaint manner, though these structures often have stalactites formed over them.

A good many of these ancient limestone caves are infested with bats, and the removal of the guano is farmed out on payment of an annual revenue.

About sixty miles to the north of Moulmein lies Thatôn, the most ancient city of Lower Burma, the Suvarna Bhûmi of the Buddhist books, and the *Aurea Regio* or Golden Chersonese of Ptolemy and other writers. Talaing traditions vary as to the circumstances connected with its foundation. One tradition would have it founded by Siharaja, a contemporary of Gaudama, who was advised to select the site of his capital on a spot where gold was found, which would soon attract a large population. Close by, the sands of a small hill-stream are still washed for gold by those content thus to eke out a scanty livelihood. Another tradition ascribes its foundation to early Indian colonists coming from the coast-line near the mouths of the Kristna and Godavery rivers. Though now far removed from the sea, it was then, no doubt, on the sea coast; for at the base of the hills far to the north-west (near the village of Kinyua) the remains of ancient mooring-places are still traceable dating from the time when these hills formed part of the eastern shore at the estuary of the Sittang river.

Be this as it may, it was to Thatôn, as is conjectured on the evidence of Buddhist writings preserved in Ceylon, that southern Buddhism was introduced long before it made its way into Burma proper. It was to

## ANTIQUITIES OF THATÔN

Thatôn, as capital of the Suvarna Bhûmi or Ramanya (Ramanadesa), as it was subsequently called, that the two missionaries Thawna and Uttara were sent by the third great synod held at Pataliputra (Patna) about 241 B.C. to teach the doctrines of Buddhism to the Môn race.

It was not, however, until about seven hundred years later, about the middle of the fifth century A.D., that the Buddhist scriptures were supposed to have been brought by Buddha Ghosa, "the voice of Buddha," from Ceylon. Thenceforth, for the next six centuries, Thatôn remained the great religious centre of Burmese Buddhism, the seat of religious learning and the storehouse of sacred relics and precious manuscripts, till it was conquered, sacked, and destroyed by fire in 1058 A.D. by Anawratazaw, the Burmese King of Pagán, who carried off to his own capital many elephant loads of sacred writings and the most learned of the priesthood (see page 112).

At Thatón, therefore, it might be expected that some of the earliest archæological remains in Burma should be found, together with the remains of sacred edifices forming the prototypes of those at Pagán. But the ravages of the damp tropical climate and of centuries of entire neglect have obliterated almost every trace of ancient buildings. Bounded on the east by a low range of hills running north and south, the land to the west forms a vast paddy plain, covered deeply with flood-water during the rainy season. These conditions, and the tropic heat with its wealth of luxuriant vegetation, are a sufficient explanation for the total disappearance of even the very foundations of ancient structures.

Of all the early works only five Môn inscriptions have been found at Thatôn, the palæography of which indicates an age of about four hundred years, and some terracotta tablets exhibiting undoubtedly Brahminical or Hindu characteristics, such as Siva with his trident, though the features of the persons represented are distinctly Mongolian in type.

Pegu, lying to the west of the Sittang, and situated on the Pegu river about forty miles north-east of

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

Rangoon, is archæologically perhaps now the most interesting place in Lower Burma. The modern town is built upon the site of Hanthawaddi (Hamsavati), said by tradition to have been founded in 573 A.D. by princes from Thatôn; and it was the later and the last capital of the Môn kingdom.

In Pegu town itself is the golden Shwemawdaw pagoda, ranking next in sanctity to the Shwe Dagôn in Rangoon. It is said to have been erected originally as a small pagoda, having only about one-fourth of its present height, to enshrine two hairs of Gaudama; but successive kings of Pegu and of Burma enlarged it to its ultimate dimensions of 288 feet in height and 1,350 feet in basal circumference.

The extent of the ancient city may still be traced by the ruins of the wall and the moat which surrounded it, each side of the quadrangle measuring about a mile and a half. When Alaung Payá took Pegu in 1757 A.D., he razed to the ground every building save the sacred structures, and dispersed or carried into captivity all its inhabitants in order to root out every trace of the Môn capital. Of the numerous pagodas only the Shwemawdaw has been revered and kept in repair.

But the most interesting remains are those to be found close by, in the Zaingganaing quarter to the west of the town, near where the colossal recumbent figure of Gaudama, the *Shwethayang* already referred to, was discovered in 1881. And of these the most important is the Kalyani Sima or *Thein*, the ancient "hall of ordination," founded by Dammazedi (Dammacheti), King of Pegu, in 1476 A.D. Thither, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, flocked Buddhist monks from all parts of Burma, and even from Siam and Ceylon, to receive their *Upasampadá* or monastic ordination. It received its name from the fact of its having been consecrated by two Môn priests who had received afresh their *Upasampadá* ordination at the hands of the Mahavihára fraternity, the spiritual successors of Mahinda, on the Kalyani river in Ceylon. Even at the present day monks whose ordination is of doubtful validity often desire re-ordination in this *Thein*.

## ANTIQUITIES OF PEGU

As the Buddhist religion had originally no organized ecclesiastical hierarchy it was ordained by Gaudama that, in order to provide some check in the way of discipline, harmony, and moral control, *Upawsatha* meetings should be held at each new moon and each full moon, and also a *Pavarana*, or general assembly, once a year at the end of the rainy season, where the assembled priests should be asked if they had committed any of the offences enumerated in the *Patimauk*, or if they knew of or suspected such offences in other monks. It was the duty of all priests to attend these assemblies, and the place consecrated for the purpose of such meetings was a *Sima*, or *Thein* in modern Burmese. These *Pavarana* have now degenerated into the modern *Parwáyaná* or nominal confession of monks (see page 132).

When King Dammazedi, in 1476, founded the Kalyani Sima, he, partly from religious impulse due to the fact of his having been a monk himself, and partly in emulation of King Asoka's creation of the celebrated inscribed monoliths throughout India, erected close by the *Thein* ten stone slabs bearing inscriptions on both sides. On the first three stones the inscriptions are in the Pali language, while those on the remaining seven stones are in Môn and form a translation of the Pali text. The main object in founding the Kalyani Sima was doubtless to provide for Ramanadesa a consecrated place for the due performance of religious ceremonies as prescribed in the *Wini*. But indirectly it also secured some sort of continuity in priestly succession from Mahinda, who introduced Buddhism into Ceylon, because it was held that the direct succession from Thawna and Uttara, the first teachers of Buddhism in Suvarna Bhûmi, had been interrupted because of the incursion of the Burmese from Pagán in the eleventh century and of the Shan invasion of Pagán, then the centre of Burmese Buddhism, during the thirteenth century. The erection of the stones bearing the Kalyani inscriptions was therefore probably for the express purpose of maintaining the purity of Buddhism by thus indelibly recording the manner in which *Thein* should be consecrated in order to secure their validity.



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

In addition to this, the great value of the Kalyani inscriptions lies in the detailed information they give as to religious intercourse between Pegu and Burma with Ceylon and Southern India during the fifteenth century, and as to the Burmese view of the apostolic succession of the Buddhist priesthood.

Until a few years ago these stones were lying scattered and broken in fragments. They may have been smashed through the vandalism of the notorious Philip de Brito y Nicote of Syriam, who held Pegu for ten years at the beginning of the seventeenth century. But in that case they would probably have been restored or replaced by some later Môn sovereign. It is hardly likely that sacred objects of this nature would have been destroyed by Alaung Payá's troops; for the Burmese soldiery are not sacrilegious, and these stones would be objects of extreme veneration among them. It therefore seems far more likely that the work of destruction was carried out by British Indian troops during the second Burmese War in 1852, when there was much stubborn fighting in and around Pegu. Such iconoclasm is essentially characteristic of Mohammedan soldiery.

The fragments have now been restored, and the stones are about 12 feet high, 4 feet 2 inches wide, and 1 foot 3 inches thick. Although the text is not completely legible, translations of the inscriptions have been obtained from well authenticated palm-leaf manuscripts of the Pali text.

These Kalyani inscriptions make no mention whatever of the tradition about Buddha Ghosa having brought a complete set of the Buddhist scriptures from Ceylon to Thatôn in the fifth century A.D. In view of the record of religious intercourse between Ceylon and Burma which these stones detail—a record compiled by a king called from a monastery to the throne—this looks almost as if Dammazedi considered that the Suvarna Bhûmi of the ancients must have been either the Malay Peninsula or Cambodia rather than his own kingdom of Ramanadesa; for gold is to be found in all the three countries.

The chief of the other objects of interest near Zainganaing are the base of the Mahasedi or "great

## ANTIQUITIES OF SYRIAM

pagoda," built by Hanthawadi Sinpyuyin about the middle of the sixteenth century, and the Shwegugale or "little golden cave" pagoda, built by Varadhammaraja in 1588 A.D., as recorded on twenty-two stone slabs. The latter is in a perfect state of preservation. There is also an immense brick tower, locally called the Kyaikpôn, but mentioned in the Kalyani inscriptions as the Maha Buddha Rupa, in which colossal statues of the four Buddhas who have appeared during this cycle, each of about ninety feet in height, face the cardinal points.

A few miles to the south-east of Rangoon lies the ancient town of Thanlyin, corrupted by us into Syriam. Following the old Môn custom it also has a Pali name, Khodadippa. Once the chief port of Pegu, it was utterly destroyed by the conquering Alaung Payá in 1756 A.D., when he founded Rangoon. Tradition dates the foundation of Syriam back to the sixth century B.C.; but it was not till the end of the sixteenth century that it became noted in history, when it was seized in the name of the Portuguese by the adventurer Philip de Brito y Nicote. Retaken by the Burmese in 1613, it became the centre of European energy in Burma, where Dutch, French, and English traders were allowed to establish their factories until the final downfall and destruction of the town. But of these European settlements nothing now remains except the ruins of a church, some nameless tombs, and traces of walls. The Kyaikkauk or Syriam pagoda is essentially modern in type, though it is probably (like all the other large pagodas) merely a shell built over a very ancient stupa or brick trunnulus. It is said to have been, like the Shwemawdaw at Pegu, built over sacred hair-relics of Gaudama.

Rangoon, founded by Alaungpayá in 1756 A.D. to record for ever "the termination of war" (*Yangun*) between the Burmese and the Môn nations, was previously known in Môn history as Dagôn. Its name was taken from the great Shwe Dagôn pagoda, whose lofty golden spire, built on the low Singuttara hill, towers gracefully upwards far above the sky-line to the north of the city.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

The Maha Yazawin, or "great royal chronicle" of Burma, makes mention of a legendary town called Tikumba Nagara, in the country of Arramana, on the site now occupied by Rangoon. It further mythically narrates that in 588 B.C., or still during the lifetime of Gaudama, the Kesadhátuchetiya or Tikumba Sedi, the classical name of what is now known as the Shwe Dagôn Payá or Dagôn Sandawshin Sedi, was founded by two merchants' sons, Taphussa and Bhallika. During a visit to India they were said to have obtained from Gaudama himself several of the hairs of his head, and these they enshrined with great ceremony under a small pagoda twenty-seven feet in height.

The popular Môn name *Dagôn* is thus a mere corruption of *Tikumba*, and only came into general use about the beginning of the sixteenth century. *Kumba*, meaning the frontal bone of an elephant, was figuratively applied to small rounded knolls or hill tops, and *Tikumba* denoted three such knolls. Gradually this became corrupted into *Tisónba*, "the three bowls for food alms," and gave rise to one of the legends that Gaudama and his two chief disciples had buried their priestly alms-bowls on the spot where the pagoda now stands.

The word "Pagoda," rendered in Burmese by the term *Payá*, "lord, master," is supposed to be a corruption of the Cinghalese *Dagaba*, derived from the Sanscrit words *Dhátu*, a "relic," and "*Garbha*," a "womb" or "shrine." The Burmese term *Payá* is, however, much more comprehensive than the Indian tope or stupa, for it includes not only relic shrines and solid erections raised over sacred relics, but also temples containing images of Gaudama, e.g. the Arakan pagoda (Mahamyatmuni Payá) in Mandalay.

The popular modern belief among the Burmese is that the Shwe Dagôn pagoda, the most revered of all the Buddhist shrines throughout Further India, contains relics of all the four Buddhas who have appeared on earth during the present *Kalpa* or cycle. These include the water-strainer of Kaukasan, the bathing robe of Gawna-gun, the staff of Kathaba, and eight hairs from the head of Gaudama.

## ANTIQUITIES OF RANGOON

The first historically reliable statements concerning the Shwe Dagôn, however, are those relating to repairs and additions by the Môn Queen Shinsawbu of Pegu between 1459 and 1469 A.D., when the height of the pagoda was raised to 129 feet, the hill upon which it stands was terraced, and the top terrace was paved with stone flags, while land and hereditary slaves were assigned *in perpetuo* for the maintenance of the sacred shrine. These facts are recorded on three large slabs erected by King Dammazedi in 1485 A.D. in the middle of the stone steps leading up to the eastern face of the pagoda, and about fifty feet below the present platform. This was, as usual, the chief approach, but now the southern staircase, lying towards Rangoon, has become the main entrance. The hideous travesty of Lower Burmese art occupying the place of an entrance porch has only been erected within the last twenty-five years.

Later Môn kings of Pegu made further additions, while the earliest Burmese kings of the Alaung Payá dynasty increased the splendour and the size of the pagoda in order that it might eclipse in every way the Shwe-mawdaw at Pegu, the great shrine venerated for centuries by the Môn, and in which centred all their recollections of national independence. In 1768 it reached its present height of 321 feet from the platform. In 1774 King Sinpyuyin, second son of Alaung Payá, replaced the Môn *Ti*, or "umbrella," crowning the pinnacle of its spire,<sup>1</sup> which had been thrown down by an earthquake in 1769, by a new *Ti* of Burmese shape, and regilded the pagoda from pinnacle to base. The ceremony of placing this *Ti* was witnessed by the king in person. The event was intended to symbolize the complete Burmanizing of the Môn country, and to celebrate the successes which had recently attended the Burmese arms in the wars against Siam, China, and Manipur. To crush once for all attempts such as had then recently been made in Martaban for the restoration of a Môn monarchy, Sinpyuyin ordered the execution of Byinya Dala, the aged

<sup>1</sup> Every pagoda *must* be surmounted by a *Ti*. The only exception known to me is referred to on page 403.



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

ex-king of Pegu, who had been kept in captivity ever since he surrendered to Alaung Payá.

But 1769 was neither the first nor the last time that earthquakes have damaged the lofty pagoda. The *Ti* is said to have fallen in 1426, and it is known to have fallen in 1508; while the pagoda itself was damaged in 1508, 1526, 1564, 1769, and 1888 by earthquakes.

The whole of the Shwe Dagôn was regilded again in 1871, from funds subscribed by pilgrims and rents accruing from the toddy-palms on the terraces and slopes of the pagoda hill. On the completion of the regilding King Mindôn was permitted to send down from Mandalay a new *Ti* of iron, covered with gold-plating and thickly studded with jewels, which was put in its place with great state and ceremony. Measuring 47 feet in height and  $13\frac{1}{2}$  feet in diameter at the base, and weighing a ton and a quarter, this present *Ti* is valued at over £40,000.

The upper terrace forming the platform of the pagoda, at a height of 165 feet above the roadway at the base of the hill, is about 300 yards long and nearly 230 yards wide. The western staircase being closed for military purposes, the platform may be reached from any of the other three cardinal points. The best approach is from the east or the north, thus avoiding the swarm of beggars and loathsome lepers who congregate on the long stairs leading up from the south side, now forming the main entrance to the pagoda.

From the platform the richly gilt solid brick pagoda rises, in gradually diminishing spheroidal outline, from an octagonal base having a perimeter of 445 yards, to a height of 321 feet, exclusive of the conical *Ti*, so that its total height as seen from a distance is no less than 368 feet.

Immediately around the base of the pagoda a broad clear space is reserved for those who come to make obeisance, to venerate the Buddha, and to repeat the religious formulæ. But all round the outer edge of the paved court there are many small pagodas, images and shrines, *Ti*, rest-houses, masts and prayer flags (*Tagôn-daing*), effigies of spirits, demons, sacred birds, etc., as

## ANTIQUITIES OF TOUNGOO

well as the two large bells which have already been referred to (pages 302, 303).

The only other ancient monument known to exist in Rangoon is that which forms the core of the Sulé pagoda, though the outer work is new, as in the case of the Shwe Dagôn. Its present name is merely a corruption of *Chula Sedi* or "small pagoda," in contradistinction to the *Maha Sedi* or "great pagoda," the Shwe Dagôn. Originally a small stupa, it was enlarged and encased by Queen Shinsawbu, and was further increased to its present size and shape only about seventy-five years ago.

The upper portion of the Sittang valley was known in later Môn times as the kingdom of Toungoo, the capital of which ultimately bore the same name.

In olden times the Toungoo district was called Jeyyavaddanadesa, or "land of increasing victory." The royal city itself was founded by King Maha Sirijeyyasura, and was situated five miles to the west of the present town. It successively bore the names of Ketumatta Nagara, Myawaddi (Mravati Nagara), and Dwayawaddi (Dváravati), and now forms the Myogyi or "great city" suburb, traces of which are still visible about three miles to the south-west of the town. But in 1510 he abandoned this new capital and founded the present town of Toungoo. Of the pagodas which marked the four corners of the original city, and of the five gates and the five image-houses which were built at regular intervals on each side of the city wall, but few traces are now left; while nothing save a heap of bricks remains to mark the site of the once celebrated Myazigôn pagoda, erected by King Thado Thinghathu in 1538, or of the Nandawú pagoda (1584) to the east of the old palace. The lake to the west of the town is a tank dug in 1586.

Near Toungoo there are four ancient pagodas, said to contain relics given to the Burmese rulers by the Indian King Asoka. These are the Myatsaw Sedi, known as the "seven pagodas," about six miles to the south-east of the present town of Toungoo, fabled to have been built in 240 B.C., and still held in great repute as a place of pilgrimage; the Kyauksaukmadaw, fourteen miles to the

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

south of Toungoo; the Gaudapalin to the north-west; and the Shwelethla to the north of the town. These are all built of brick, have been frequently repaired, and now form terraced conical spires of the usual modern Burmese shape.

Above the Môn country in the Irrawaddy drainage the first of the ancient Burmese territories entered is the kingdom of Pyi or Pri, the name of the modern chief town of which, Pyimyo, has been corrupted into Prome by the British. It is referred to in the Burmese royal chronicles as Siri-Khetra or Thare Khettara, the capital of a great country; but this ancient city seems to have been situated five or six miles to the east of the Irrawaddy, where the modern Rathemyó or "hermits' town" has risen up from among its ruins. Here the remains of massive walls, large tanks, and pagodas indicate that a great city once flourished until after the middle of the seventeenth century.

According to the tradition recorded in detail in the Burmese royal chronicles Gaudama was presented, in the fifth year of his Buddhahood, with a monastery built of sandalwood at Vanijagama in Sunaparanta — now the village of Lêgaing in the Minbu district. Accepting the gift, Gaudama occupied the monastery for seven days. During his visit he left the impression of his feet at two places for the veneration of men and spirits. One of these holy spots is on the left bank of the Man (Namanta) stream, while the other is on the summit of the Pawúdaung or Pawáúdaung, "the footprint hill," about seven miles above Prome.

The Pawúdaung is crowned with a massive boulder, called the "Hermit's Cap," and shaped like a priests' alms-bowl, which is surmounted by a pagoda about 30 feet high, but of modern appearance.

On returning from the Pawúdaung, where he turned the soles of his feet, Gaudama saw a piece of cowdung floating in the sea, which then stretched eastwards from the hills immediately to the west of Prome across to the Pegu Yoma. At the same time a mole offered him some of its burrowings as an act of homage. Hereupon Gaudama prophesied that, after his religion had flourished

## ANTIQUITIES OF PROME

for one hundred and one years, the following five great events would happen—a great earthquake should occur ; a great lake would appear at the end of the “footprint hill” ; a river called the Samônssa Myit would appear ; the Popá hill would arise from out of the earth ; and the sea would recede from the land upon which Thare Khettara would later on be built. And as a reward for its act of homage, the mole was to become incarnated as Dut-tabaung, King of Thare Khettara, from whose reign should date the establishment of Buddhism in the country of the *Myamma* or *Bamá*, the Burmese.

Two great geological and geographical facts are thus satisfactorily accounted for, namely, the appearance of the extinct volcano, Popá, in the southern portion of the great central plain lying to the north of the Prome district, and the recedence of the sea from the hills near and below Prome. About thirty miles to the south of Prome, where the hills terminate abruptly on the right bank of the Irrawaddy and stretch westwards to the main chain of the Arakan Yoma there is the Akauktaung or “Customs’ hill,” which was no doubt a seaport when the waves of the estuary of the Irrawaddy surged at its base and the tidal waters stretched uninterruptedly across the mouth of the Sittang river to the city of Thatôn in Ramanadesa.

The Akauktaung is now a place of pilgrimage profusely ornamented with shrines, pagodas, rock-sculptures, and other images of Gaudama. And the prophecy of Gaudama had the additional value, flattering to Burmese national vanity, of furnishing a belief in the direct introduction of Buddhism into the country by its founder in place of showing that their national religion reached them from the great rival Môn country, which it certainly did as a matter of fact.

In 1774 King Sinpyuyin placed the old Môn *Ti* of the Shwe Dagôn pagoda here (thrown down by the earthquake of 1769), and set up an inscribed stone slab recording this fact and narrating the progress of his journey from Ava to Rangoon and the ceremonies connected with the erection thereon of the new Burmese *Ti*.



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

In the eastern portion of the town of Prome stands the chief pagoda, Shwesandaw Payá, on a low hill overlooking the river. The pagoda is itself about 180 feet high, and is solid throughout and gilded all over. A legend of course exists that it was built by Duttabaung, first King of Thare Khettara; but three large slabs, partly effaced, lying at the foot of the pagoda hill record its erection by King Minbin between the years 1535 and 1539 A.D.

Two very much smaller pagodas, respectively only 85 and 40 feet high, situated in the town itself are of far older date than the Shwesandaw. These are the Shwepôngan, a circular brick pyramidal pagoda, built by King Kyansittha in 1078, and the Shwemôkdaw pagoda erected by King Narathihapate of Pagán in 1240 A.D. according to the inscription on a slab in the courtyard. As usual, successive layers of brickwork have been superimposed above the original shrine so as to obliterate all traces of its primitive shape.

About fourteen miles to the south of Prome a commanding position is occupied by the Shwenattaung pagoda, about 120 feet in height. It is, however, of no great antiquity, as an inscribed stone in the courtyard records that it was built in 1570 by Tabinzedi, King of Toungoo, to commemorate his conquest of Prome.

About a hundred and fifty miles to the north of Prome, on the left bank of the Irrawaddy and in the Myingyan district, lie the ruins of Pagán or Pugáma, the once famous Arimaddanapura which flourished as the Burmese capital from the middle of the seventh to near the close of the thirteenth century.

Pagán is rich in archæological remains. There is hardly any object of archæological and religious historical interest which cannot be found in greater variety and perfection in Pagán than at any other place in Burma. It is commonly called "the city of ten thousand pagodas"; and the phrase "in number like the pagodas at Pagán" is current to express any enormous number. The ruins there extend over an area about eight miles in length, following the river, and about two miles in breadth. But the remains are all of a purely religious

## ANTIQUITIES OF PAGÁN

character, with the sole exception of the palace of Manuha, the last Môn King of Thatôn, who was led into captivity by King Anawratazaw in 1057 A.D. This palace, and portions of the Bidagattaik, or "library" erected to contain the many elephant loads of palm-leaf manuscripts brought from Thatôn, and of the Kyaukku Onhmin or temple are the only buildings in which stone masonry, with a greenish sandstone, is to be found. All the other buildings, both of earlier and of later date than these, are constructed entirely of brickwork. It is supposed that this oldest basal portion of the Kyaukku Onhmin was originally erected as a temple by the Indian masons who built the Ananda and other contemporaneous shrines, the Bidagattaik and the palace of Manuha, with the minute carvings upon which the stone carvings in the Kyaukku are quite in keeping. But more recent research seems to fix the date of the upper portion of the Kyaukku at any rate as belonging to the reign of King Kyawswa, which terminated in 1279 A.D.

Pagán was long the centre of the most powerful Buddhist hierarchy that has anywhere existed since the time of King Asoka in Northern India. It received hospitably the fugitive Buddhists from all parts of India; and from the middle of the eleventh till near the close of the thirteenth century it was the great centre of Buddhistic religion and learning in Indo-China. Thither came priestly bodies from all the lands of southern Buddhism, from Ceylon, Pegu, Siam, and the Shan States, while sojourners came even from China, and from Nipál, the home of northern Buddhism; and to each fraternity or nationality separate quarters were set apart for their residence.

Judging from clues furnished by the Kalyani inscriptions found near Pegu, and from the Burmese histories, it was conjectured that the most ancient remains of Pagán would probably be met with in the hills to the east of the Shwezigôn and Ananda pagodas, built in imitation of the more ancient Nagayôn and Lawkananda shrines that once stood in the ancient town of Saraváti (Tharrawaddy), but later on formed the southern portion of Anawratazaw's capital.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

The Pagán of the hills, as distinguished from the town close to the left bank of the Irrawaddy, consists of a number of curiously constructed shrines built against the steep sides of ravines, and of an almost interminable labyrinth of artificial caves, once the abode of Buddhist monks, perforating the low hills in all directions and even extending to the banks of the river. Many of these contain images of the Buddha, inscriptions, and mural paintings. These caves and cave-temples are older, and in many cases more interesting from an architectural point of view, than the shrines erected by Anawratazaw, Kyansittha, and Narabadisithu.

In imitation of the original cave labyrinths in the hills to the east, subterranean monasteries were made by digging a hole in the ground forty to sixty feet long and thirty to forty feet deep. The sides were walled with bricks, and entrance was obtained through a hole on the level of the ground. From the bottom, passages led to intricate galleries and caves. At a later date square, clumsy, top-heavy monasteries were built above ground, with a central chamber for the *Póngyi* or Prior, which was surrounded by a spacious gallery. The monastery was usually one-storied, but passages ran, one over the other, through the thick exterior walls with perforated stone slabs as windows.

What were considered the most important inscriptions on stones were removed about a century ago from Pagán to Amárapura by King Bodaw Payá, yet many of great value still remain. Among the most interesting discoveries are two red sandstone slabs with Sanskrit inscriptions lying in the courtyard of the ancient Kuzeik pagoda. The oldest, dated 481 A.D., records the erection of a temple of Sugata by Rudrasena, King of Arimaddanapura; while the second, dated 610 A.D., inscribed in the characters of the alphabet of Northern India, records the presentation of an image of Sakyamuni by two Sakya mendicants from Hastinapura (Tagaung) to the Asokarámá at Arimaddanapura, during the reign of King Adityasena. This is supposed to afford something like substantial proof that, although Thatôn received Southern Buddhism from Ceylon, Upper Burma independently

## ANTIQUITIES OF PAGAN

received Northern Buddhism from the Ganges whilst Buddhism flourished in Northern India.

With the exception of square stone pillars in the Myaseti pagoda having on one side a Pali inscription, on another a Burmese, on the third a Môn, and on the fourth a legend in an unrecorded alphabet and language, the vast majority of the inscriptions at Pagan are in the square Pali alphabet, and vary in date from about 1059 A.D. up to the close of last century. The stone pillars standing near the entrance to the Shwezigôn pagoda are no doubt older, as they are said to have been brought from Thatôn in 1057. Here also were recently found a number of ancient clay tablets or bricks bearing legends of unknown date recorded in Nagari, Môn, Cambodian and Burmese characters. Inscribed slabs abound in large numbers, offering a vast and most interesting field for careful epigraphical research.

The oldest buildings at Pagan, and consequently those of greatest archæological interest, are the following :—

Name.	Dating from about	Built by
Nagayôn Payá . . . .	1050 A.D.	King Anawratazaw.
Ananda . . . . .	1057 "	" "
Manuha's Palace . . .	1057 "	" "
Kyaukku Onhmin . . .	1057 "	The Hindus who constructed the last two edifices.
Shinbinthayaung Payá .	1060 "	King Anawratazaw.
Kuzeik Payá . . . . .	1069 "	King Kyansittha.
Thitsawadi Payá . . .	1084 "	Queen Pwasaw.
Shwezigôn Payá . . .	1094 "	King Kyansittha. <sup>1</sup>
Thatpyinnyu or Thatpinya Payá . . . . .	1134 "	King Alônsthithu.
Damayangyi Payá . . .	1168 "	King Narabadisisthithu.
Sulamani Payá . . . .	1183 "	" "
Kyidawmu Payá . . . .	1187 "	" "
Gawdaw Palin Payá . .	1188 "	King Nandaungnya. <sup>1</sup>
Bawdi Palin Payá . . .	1218 "	King Zeyatheinga.

<sup>1</sup> An inscribed stone standing in the courtyard of the pagoda gives these dates. But according to the royal chronicles King Kyansittha ceased to reign in 1085 A.D., while Narabadisisthithu reigned from 1167 to 1204 (*vide* Phayre's *History of Burma*, 1883, Appendix, page 281).



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

The Shinbinthayaung Payá is also said to have been built in 1039 A.D. by King Manuha of Thatôn. It seems, however, wildly improbable that the Môn King ruling in the great centre of southern Buddhism would build a pagoda in a rival capital about five hundred miles distant. And it is equally improbable that a King who was carried into captivity after his capital was sacked and despoiled of all its sacred treasures would ever have funds to lavish in this way. It is therefore much more likely that this, along with other pagodas, was erected by King Anawratazaw.

Deeply imbued with a religious feeling, and detesting the superstitious practices of snake and spirit worship then largely prevailing, King Anawratazaw appears to have resolved to effect a religious revival. It is probable that he built the Nagayôn<sup>1</sup> Payá before his war against Thatôn; and the latter was most likely waged for the express purpose of obtaining possession of all the sacred works and firmly establishing Pagán as the centre of Buddhist light and learning. The Nagayôn Payá may therefore be regarded as not only the oldest of the pagodas, but the most ancient among the buildings in Pagán; while the Kyaukku Onhmin, the "rock cave temple" or "stone temple" of Hindu masons who built Manuha's palace and the Ananda pagoda, is the oldest of the true temples, and is in certain respects one of the most interesting of all the ancient buildings there.

The Kyaukku temple, at the northern limit of historical Pagán, is in a ravine about a mile and a half to the north-east of the present town of Nyaungú. It consists of three storeys and lateral terraces built against the southern side of the gorge. The lowest storey is of fine green sandstone, while the upper storeys are of

<sup>1</sup> The etymology of Burmese words and names offers a perilously seductive fascination. The Nagayôn Payá may possibly have been built in honour of the prospective advent, about 2,500 years hence, of the fifth and last Buddha of the present *Kalpa* or cycle, Arimatéya, who is at present passing his existence in the shape of a hare; for *Nagá* means "a dragon or demi-god," and *Yôn* a hare. The Burmese see in the moon a hare, and in the sun a peacock, the royal emblem of Burma. Otherwise, Nagayôn may indicate "trust in the dragon."

## ANTIQUITIES OF PAGÁN

brickwork, added probably towards the close of the twelfth century. It is often mentioned in Pagán history, and it formed a place of refuge for fugitive priests, kings, and nobles until long after the conquest of Pagán by the Chinese and Shans in the thirteenth century. It contains an interesting collection of carved wooden images representative of the kings of Pagán.

Opposite to it is the Kyidawmu Payá or "royal view pagoda," built in 1187 A.D. by King Narabadisithu for the convenience of his Queen, who might from this behold the temples during the King's visits to the shrine and the priests there ; for the monastic rules forbade her accompanying him.

Most of the ancient monuments in Pagán differ from the bell-shaped pagodas of Lower Burma in being of square brickwork carried up in diminishing terraces to very near the top and then finishing off abruptly in a curvilinear spire. They are distinctly Indian in fundamental design. The majority of these ancient shrines and pagodas are not solid at the base, but consist of arched domes or domed chambers containing images of Gaudama. These chambers are called *Ku*, from the word originally meaning "a cave."

The most remarkable of all these hollow pagodas or shrines, and at the same time one of the oldest, is the Ananda Payá, built by Indian workmen about 1057 A.D. It was probably intended to commemorate the victory over the Peguans and the transfer of the sacred books from Thatôn. It is built in a square of about 200 feet, but with projecting porticoes on all four faces, so that it measures 280 feet each way, in the shape of a perfect Greek cross. Rising in ever diminishing terraces, it ascends to a height of 183 feet. Internally the building is very massive, though intersected with narrow corridors ; but behind each of the four projecting porticoes is a niche or chapel containing a colossal figure of a Buddha, about forty feet high. Each of the four images, thickly covered with gold leaf, represents one of the four Buddhs who have visited the earth during the present *Kalpa* or cycle. On the east Kaukasan, on the south Gawnagun, on the west Kathaba, and on the north Gaudama, they

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

are placed in the proper order in which they are believed to have appeared (see page 92).

In the narrow corridors, which are left between the solid brickwork of the basement, are about a thousand niches containing small stone sculptures representing various phases in the life of Gaudama, and many of these are apparently of Indian workmanship.

The Shinbinthayaung, which some regard as older than the Ananda, resembles it both in design and in plan. It contains four chambers, three of them having cross-legged sitting images of Gaudama, and the fourth his recumbent figure about ninety feet long; while in front of the building stands an enormous stone alms-bowl about nine feet in height.

The Kuzeik Payá, erected in 1069 A.D., contains a central image chamber about twenty feet high, the walls of which, together with those of the antechamber and corridors, are painted with Buddhas, scrolls, animals, and episodes from the birth-stories of Gaudama.

The Thitsawadi Payá, built by Queen Pwasaw in 1084 A.D., has four chambers in the basement connected by corridors, and each contains an image of Gaudama. On the second of the three storeys of which the building consists, there are four colossal figures of the Buddha sitting back to back, facing the cardinal points; while a chamber on the third storey is now empty. Five inscribed stone slabs near the pagoda bear dates ranging from 1081 to 1442 A.D. The latest of these records an interesting list of works belonging to the Buddhist canon, which were translated from the Sanscrit and Pali into Burmese by a learned monk named Dammapála.

The Thatpyinnyu or Thapinya Payá, "the omniscient," built in 1134 A.D., is somewhat similar to the Ananda in dimensions and general plan; but it does not, like the latter, form a symmetrical Greek cross, as the eastern or main porch projects from the wall considerably more than the other three, and it contains only one great colossal image instead of four. It is the highest monument in Pagán, being 201 feet in height; but the base of the body of the building is only 180 feet square, or 20 feet less each way than the base of the Ananda Payá.

## ANTIQUITIES OF PAGAN

In this, and in the later buildings, the delicate details of ornamentation and architecture noticeable in the older structures have to a great extent disappeared, while massiveness of brickwork seems to have been one of the main objects of royal ambition.

The Damayangyi, built in 1168 A.D., is quite equal to the Ananda in dimensions, but differs in plan and design. It contains two central chambers or chapels one above the other, while each of the four faces has a smaller apartment; and all these six chambers contain images of Gaudama.

The Sulamani or Chulamani Payá, dating from 1183 A.D., has likewise lofty parallel corridors on each storey, and is profusely ornamented with allegorical paintings.

The Gawdaw Palin Payá, built in 1188 A.D., has three chambers on the ground floor and one central chamber on the upper storey, which are all surrounded by lofty arched corridors.

The Bawdi Palin Payá, erected in 1218 A.D., is constructed on a similar plan to, though it is smaller than, the celebrated Bodi temple at Buddha Gaya. For more than a century previous to its erection there had been considerable intercourse between Pagán and Magada, the centre of northern Buddhism; because a Burmese stone inscription at Buddha Gaya itself records that the temple there, supposed to have been erected about 500 A.D., was repaired about 1100 A.D. at the instance of Alónsithu, King of Pagán.

The Shwezigôn Payá, the oldest of the pagodas proper, dating from 1094, is in no way comparable to the great pagodas at Rangoon or Pegu, being only 150 feet in height. But round the square base there are glazed terra cotta panels or tiles illustrative of the birth-stories and bearing inscriptions that may prove of considerable archæological value. The pantheon of the thirty-seven Nats of the pre-Buddhistic period represented on the Shwezigôn pagoda is the only thing of its kind to be found in the whole country.

Like all the other highly venerated pagodas in Burma, the present form of the Shwezigôn Payá is essentially



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

modern. The original pagoda was built over and increased in dimensions in 1164 A.D., and numerous successive incrustations or fresh layers of brickwork have resulted in its present form, which must be entirely different from its original contour. Some of the small old brick pagodas in immediate proximity to the Shwezigôn Payá are far more interesting than it from an archæological and architectural point of view, as they exhibit in original purity the square cap, characteristic of the most ancient Buddhist *Chaitya* in India, over the solid dome or the vaulted chamber forming the main portion of the monument,—the bell-shaped, inverted “almsbowl” of the modern pagodas,—above which rises the spire, either in the form of the bulging *Sikra*, characteristic of all the older Hindu and Jain temples throughout Hindostan from Orissa to the Indus, or else tapering upwards to the pinnacle more or less gracefully or abruptly, as in the manner of the Cinghalese dagabas.

In their modern shape the great pagodas of Burma have entirely lost all prominent traces of this ancient square cap, and have gradually evolved themselves into slender conical piles having on both sides an inward curvature of the contour. This gives to them an exceedingly graceful appearance and a refined charm, the appreciation of which is certainly in no way diminished by the thought that this inward curvature is not in accordance with the laws of Greek architecture or with the ordinarily accepted principles of European æsthetics. Architecturally they are very weak; æsthetically they are very charming. And most of all are they so when seen standing boldly out, in the sunshine, against a clear, pure, blue sky during a crisp, cool morning in the month of December or January.

Pagán, with its thousand pagodas and temples, and its lithic inscriptions forming a vista down which one can look back to a complete chain of monumental records dating from before the conquest of England by the Normans, is perhaps the most suitable place at which the characteristic types of early and later Burmese religious architecture may be considered; for the religious buildings have alone been thought worthy of repairs and

## REMARKS CONCERNING PAGODAS

maintenance in a climate where the tooth of time, sharper or more venomous than elsewhere, has destroyed almost completely the whole of the ancient secular buildings. A few of the principal temples and pagodas at Pagán are still looked after by the people in their neighbourhood, but many hundreds of them are completely neglected and are all in a more or less ruinous state. No priests are ever in attendance on a pagoda. The people generally, and the elders in particular, assume indefinite charge of them in a casual manner; and if these do not interest themselves in their maintenance, the monuments gradually fall into disrepair. No Burman will voluntarily become a servant at a pagoda; for under Burmese rule menial duties of this sort were discharged either by hereditary pagoda slaves, condemned for their crimes, or else by captives of war, who formed one of the lowest social classes.

Apart from the sacred caves, the rock cave temples, and the *Thein* or halls of ordination, all the great sacred buildings which are of archæological interest are comprehensively classifiable either as pagodas or as temples. Both categories form places of veneration of the Buddha, but neither a pagoda nor a temple is in any way connected with actual worship, as of a divinity.

The only difference which can be recognized between these two classes of buildings,—and it is a purely arbitrary and artificial distinction, hardly recognized by the Burmese, to whom all the ancient and modern monuments are alike *Sedi* or *Payá*,—is that the pagoda is a solid or at any rate a closed construction of brickwork,<sup>1</sup> while the temples contain one or more chambers in their basement. It is true that in contradistinction to the solid pagoda of brick the Burmese distinguish the *Pudó* or hollow pagoda; but the use of this term is comparatively rare. Less rare, however, is the term *Sedi-Pudó*, implying pagodas collectively.

<sup>1</sup> The only stone-built pagoda known to me in Burma is the famous miniature one built on a rocky island at Thingadaw, about six miles below Malé, in the third or lowest defile of the Irrawaddy. It forms the subject of many local legends.

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

In nearly every one of the wilder portions of the country there are still often to be found cairns of small stones to which each passer-by adds a pebble. In the heart of the forest one also sometimes comes across great numbers of bamboos, or their remains in various stages of decomposition, piled against large trees, said to be the abode of a *Yukasó* or guardian spirit; and as each of the hill men passes, he cuts a bamboo and adds it to the store. There are *Natsingôn* or rude shrines where votive offerings are made to the local spirits; and there seems little doubt that, when the original animistic worship began to be ousted by Buddhism, these stone cairns gradually became transformed into pagodas. There is nothing improbable in this: for the vast majority of Burmese have a belief in spirits that is more deeply seated than their trust in Buddhism alone.

Apart from such as probably had this animistic origin the *Sedi* or *Payá* were, and are still, erected primarily as depositories of sacred relics. Pagodas of this sort are of four kinds, namely, *Dattaw Sedi* containing relics of a Buddha or a monk of saintly life, *Damma Sedi* containing sacred writings, *Paribawga Sedi* containing the eight sacred utensils requisite for a priest, and *Udeiksa Sedi*, the depository of things made in the semblance of sacred objects, like images of the Buddha, etc. These last are by far the most numerous, though they are generally small and of no importance from any point of view except that personal to the *Payátagá* or founder, who thus earns the highest degree of religious merit attainable by a mere layman.

Classifying, for convenience, all the solid or closed monuments only as pagodas, those found in Burma form a fairly complete continuation of the series of Buddhist topes and dagabas dating from about the third century B.C. till the rise of Buddhism in Indo-China. They form valuable links in the chain of evolution of the pagoda throughout the long period of over two thousand years.

The older forms are massive and simple in outline. The later development consists of a spire, solid throughout, rising from a circular, square, or octagonal base or sole (*Panát*) in a succession of tiers, belts, or circles

## PAGODAS AND TEMPLES

(*Letyit*), each upper stage of which is narrower than the one immediately beneath it; and the whole tapers off to a pinnacle or point at a height usually one and a half or two times the diameter of the base. The pinnacle is surmounted by an iron crown or *Ti*, generally richly gilded, consisting of a number of concentric rings or bands rising in diminishing circles and ending in a long iron rod usually capped by a vane (*Seinbu*) in the shape of a glass ball (*Ywèlôn*) or an inverted soda-water bottle intended to act as a non-conductor of electricity. Between the main, bell-shaped portion of the body of the pagoda (*Thabeikhmauk* or "inverted almsbowl") and the lower masonry terrace there is frequently a high plinth of elaborate polygonal form, suggestive of the outlines of Hindu temples. Some portion of the main body or the spire is usually ornamented with a lotus-leaf design. Lateral flights of stairs (*Saungdan*) often ascend to the bell portion corresponding to the *Garbha* of the Indian stupas.

The large square brick temples typical of Pagán, constructed as shrines for images of the Buddha,—as exemplified in the Ananda, Thapinya, and Gawdaw Palin Payá,—rise in gradually diminishing terraces, finished off with a bulging spire exactly like the *Sikra* of Hindu and Jain temples in Northern India. Though differing from each other both in interior plan and in outward detail, these shrines have but little to show in the way of evolution. Both their shape and their dimensions precluded the possibility of their design being altered by any superposition of additional brickwork. They became more or less exactly reproduced at Ava and Amárapura, the later capitals of the Burmese kings; and it was not till Italian influence became very marked at the time of the foundation of Mandalay that any great departure was made from the main features of the religious architecture of the Pagán period.

The images enshrined within these temples are usually of Gaudama, the fourth and last Buddha; and they are of three kinds. They may represent him seated (*Tinbingwè*) with his left hand open on his lap and the right hand partially resting on his knee and pointing



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

downwards, or standing in erect posture (*Yatdaw*) with right hand raised in the attitude of enunciating the law, or else recumbent (*Nyaungdaw*) as when resting under the shade of the sacred *Ficus* tree when about to attain Neikban. The images in the sitting posture far outnumber those that are erect or recumbent.

The conventional attitude of these images never varies. The facial expression is uniformly calm and dignified, though in modern images there is often an unfortunate tendency to a sort of simpering smugness quite out of keeping with the serenity inculcated by the Buddhist religious philosophy.

The images at Pagán are for the most part representations of the Buddha, although altars of Vishnu and Shiva are to be met with not only in the Indian rock temple but also on the Buddhist Nagayôn, Shwezigôn, and the smaller shrines of Kyaukpala. Many curious signs are sculptured on the fingers and palm of Gaudama's hand in the old Peguan images, the interpretation of which must remain for some antiquary learned in ancient Indian cheiromancy.

On the removal by Thado Minbya, in 1364 A.D., of the Burmese capital to Ava (*Awa*—a corruption of *Inwa*, "the entrance to the lake") which remained the seat of government for about four centuries, the religious buildings of Pagán were to a certain extent reproduced there, although on nothing like the same scale as regards either size or splendour. The classical name of Ava is Yadanapura, "the city of precious gems."

Traces of the great council chamber and various portions of the royal palace are still visible, but otherwise the secular buildings are completely destroyed; and most of the religious edifices are also dilapidated. Within the old palace grounds the Shwegugyi or "great golden hollow pagoda," built in 1510 A.D., and also known as the Thissataik, is still revered above any of the others; but this is perhaps because it was there that the great officers of State made their solemn vows of allegiance (*Thissa*), any breach of which was punishable with the severest tortures. The pagoda itself is in no way distinguished architecturally. To the west of the

## PAGODAS AT SAGAING

ancient city stands the Lawka-Tharapyu, dating from 1392 A.D., containing a marble image of Gaudama, twenty-four feet high, which must have been introduced into the image chamber before the building was completed. Close by is a lofty brick monastery built in 1723 A.D., which is remarkable chiefly on account of being a rare example of the construction of a *Kyaung* in more durable materials than teak timber. Near the Lawka-Tharapyu is the Sakyamin shrine, surrounded by twenty-two small pagodas and ten stone inscriptions. In the north-west of the old town, beyond the city moat, is the foreign burial ground containing many inscribed monuments of interest. The Pensamilinda pagoda is interesting on account of the twenty-seven images of Buddhas enshrined there.

Almost opposite to Ava, on the western side of the Irrawaddy, lies Sagaing or Jeyapura, the capital of Nandawgyi Payá from 1760 to 1764 A.D. About the end of last century it became famous from the number of pagodas which crown its bare hillsides, and from being the chief place of production of the thousands of alabaster images distributed to all parts of Burma. Many of the religious remains, however, date back far beyond this time.

The Sinpyuyin pagoda, built in 1359 A.D., is still in good repair. But more interesting is the ruined Shwezigôn pagoda, of 1366 A.D., consisting of three concentric terraces or processional paths surmounted by a dome. The lowest of these contains a series of glazed tablets illustrative of the birth-stories.

About five miles to the north-west of Sagaing stands the Kaunghmudaw pagoda, or "work of royal merit," built by King Thado Damma Raja in 1636 A.D., and said to contain in its image chamber an effigy of the Buddha in pure gold equal in weight to the royal merit-maker. Erected on an eminence it stands out, like a fully developed female breast, a conspicuous object throughout all the country round about the confluence of the Chindwin river with the Irrawaddy. Standing on a base of about 1,050 feet in circumference, attaining a height of about 300 feet, and unadorned by the usual *Ti*, this massive

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

monument is the clumsiest and ugliest of all the pagodas in Burma. It was, however, once so celebrated throughout the whole of Indo-China, that there is a myth ascribing its miraculous rise out of the earth, despite the inconsistency of this legend with the inscribed slab enshrined near its base. Even now it enjoys a considerable degree of reverence.

There are numerous lithic inscriptions of more or less historical interest in and around Sagaing, though none of them can be termed ancient.

About five miles to the north-east of Ava a new capital, Amárapura, was founded by Bodaw Payá in 1782 A.D. Deserted in favour of Ava by King Bagyidaw in 1823, it again became the capital on his deposition by King Tharawaddi in 1837, but was finally abandoned in 1860, when King Mindôn occupied the last capital of the Kingdom of Ava at Mandalay about five to six miles further north.

Amárapura was laid out much on the same plan as Ava. The ruins of the city wall, now overgrown with jungle, show it to have been a square with a side of about three-quarters of a mile in length. At each corner stood a solid brick pagoda about 100 feet high. Although none of them are ancient, some of the religious buildings are noteworthy as specimens of later Burmese design. The principal of these are the Shinbinkugyi pagoda built in 1794 A.D. by the eldest of Bodaw Payá's three sons, and the Patawdawgyi, the largest and handsomest of all the modern pagodas in Burma, erected by King Bagyidaw in 1819 on his accession to the throne. To the south of the Taungthaman lake, on the northern bank of which the city was built, is a colossal brick image of Gaudama in sitting posture, erected in 1849 by King Pagán, and known as the Maha Sakyamuni.

About three miles north of Amárapura, in what is now the southern suburb of Mandalay, stands the renowned shrine Myatsaw-Nyenaung or Mahámyatmuni Payá, known as "the Arakan pagoda." It contains the famous Mahámuni brass statue of Gaudama, the national image of Arakan, about twelve feet high, which was carried off

## “THE ARAKAN PAGODA,” MANDALAY

by Bodaw Payá on the conquest of Arakan in 1784. It was brought in three pieces across the hills by the Taunggôp pass, accompanied by the captive King, his Queens and family, the royal Punna or astrologers and soothsayers, and numerous prisoners of various degrees; while other spoils of war, including the great gun in Mandalay, measuring thirty feet in length, and two and a half feet in diameter at the mouth, were sent round by sea. The image is so thickly encrusted with gold leaf that no traces of the joints are now visible.

The Mahámyatmuni image is second only to the Shwe Dagôn pagoda as an object of veneration throughout Indo-China. The legend connected with it narrates that it was cast on the Sirigutta hill (where the Mahá-muni pagoda stands) by King Chandrasuriya of Dhanyawaddi in northern Arakan, and that it was the original resemblance or “excellent younger brother” of Gaudama, taken from life (whence probably the name *Myatswa Nyenaung*).

For centuries it was an object of adoration to pilgrims from all Buddhist lands, and many wars were waged against Arakan for the main purpose of securing possession of this sacred image. From the earliest times kings of Pagán, Prome, and Pegu had tried to obtain it. In the beginning of the eleventh century King Anawratazaw of Pagán invaded Arakan for this purpose and conquered the country; but fortunately, becoming inspired with religious veneration for what was considered the protector of the kingdom, he retired without carrying it away.

To the south of the Arakan pagoda are the great Bodawgyi inscription and the large Bodawgyi bell, each in a separate shrine, together with a most valuable collection of inscriptions. Running in seven rows from east to west there are 468 stone slabs with inscriptions still well preserved, while another group of 109 inscribed stones is to be found on the western side of the pagoda. Altogether the lithic monuments here number about 750. During the reign of Sinpyuyin (1763-1775) stone inscriptions were collected from all parts of the kingdom and deposited here. This work of merit in adoration of the



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

Mahámuni image was largely continued by Bodaw Payá (1781–1819), and again during the reign of the Mindôn Min (1852–1878). As it now stands the collection is of great historical interest, for the inscriptions range over a period exceeding a thousand years, from 746 to 1839 A.D. Most of them are in Burmese, though many are in Pali, and some in the Môn or Peguan language.

Mandalay is entirely a modern city. It was generally spoken of in Burmese times as Shwemyo, "the golden city," but also bears the classical name of *Yadanabôn*, or "cluster of gems." Founded in 1857, on a part of the plain lying to the south-west of Mandalay hill indicated to King Mindôn in a dream, it was occupied in 1860 as his capital. Here, as customary, the city and the palace buildings were planned more or less closely on the usual lines of a royal capital, particularly with regard to the relative positions of the various buildings and their relation as to the cardinal points of the compass (see plan in chapter viii. of vol. i.).

With the exception of a few solid brick pagodas in the south-west corner of the palace enclosure, and others on Mandalay hill and on Yankintaung, a hill a few miles to the east, all the buildings, whether sacred or secular, have been erected during the last forty-four years.

During the reign of King Mindôn, a monarch deeply imbued with Buddhist religious feelings, his capital of course maintained the traditions of the Court of Burma as the centre of Buddhist light and learning. Both within the capital, and all around it to the north, east, and south, large monasteries were erected of teak timber and richly adorned with wood carvings. These were purely Burmese in design, and formed the finest specimens of modern Burmese art uncontaminated by European influences. Those more particularly favoured by the King and his Queens were thickly covered with gold leaf outside and inside; but the plain teakwood carving, darkened with coatings of crude earth-oil for protection against sun and rain, are unquestionably more artistic. Many of these, now abandoned, are gradually falling into disrepair and ruin, and some were destroyed completely during the incendiary fires in the spring of 1892 and of

## MONASTERIES NEAR MANDALAY

1893. But others still fortunately remain as the last existing specimens of art work carried out under Burmese rule. Of these the *Hman Kyaung*, or "looking-glass monastery," built to the east of the *Atúmashi* by King Thibaw in 1882, and Queen Supayalat's *Shwe Kyaung*, or "golden monastery" (*Myadaung Kyaung*), built in 1883 in what is now a road to the south-west of the city, are the most beautiful examples in Burma of profusely gilded carving. The small monastery built for Prince Thibaw's priesthood, near the south-east corner of the Hludaw in the palace enclosure, is a gem of looking-glass mosaic. And many of the royal monasteries to the east and south of the city wall are splendid specimens of pure Burmese carving in teak wood.

Built with the mere idea of impermanence, these still remain, though little or nothing is done to keep them in proper repair and they have lost much of their original grandeur; while the *Atúmashi Kyaung*, or "monastery without its like" (wrongly called in English "the Incomparable Pagoda"), built to the north-east of the city in brickwork to secure for it something like permanence, was destroyed by fire in 1892. Of this monument, which took twenty years (1857-1877) to build, and was at the same time a monastery built by Mindôn in memory of his father and a shrine containing the latter's chief throne as well as a colossal bronze image of Gaudama, nothing now remains save the ruins of its basement. And in the following spring was destroyed the *Shweyátdaw* or *Seindayarwgyi*, the great gilded wooden image of Gaudama, about thirty-five feet high, which stood on the southern spur of Mandalay hill with the right arm extended and the forefinger pointing to the spot indicated in King Mindôn's dream as the auspicious site for his new capital.

Close by this, a little to the north of the *Atúmashi*, is the *Kuthodaw* or "great work of royal merit," also called the *Lawkamayasin*, but better known to the English as "the thousand and one pagodas." Here, around a central pagoda, the ornamentation of which was damaged by the sacrilegious hands of our Mohammedan soldiery after the third Burmese war, are grouped 733 upright

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

marble slabs. Each is enshrined within a miniature pagoda; and upon these slabs is engraved the Pali text of the Bidagát or Buddhist scriptures, written in Burmese characters. Within the inner enclosure stand twenty-four stones with the texts of the Beikku Patimauk, Beikku, Beikku Nipacitti, and the Paraziga (Párájiká). Along the outside of the inner wall are sixty-eight stones upon which are inscribed the remaining three books of the Vinayapitakam, namely, the Mahavagga, Cúlavagga, and Parivárapatho. The second or middle enclosure has 100 stone slabs on the inner side and 109 on the outer, which contain the text of the seven books of the Abidamma Bidagát (Abhidhammapitakady). Along the third or outermost wall 432 stones are arranged in three rows, containing inscriptions of the five Nikáya of the Thutta Bidagát (Suttapitakady) and the Milindapanha. This monumental version of the Burmese Bidagát therefore forms a complete copy of the whole Tripitaka or "three baskets,"—the Sutta, the Vinaya, and the Abhidhammapitaka. The central or chief pagoda, within which is enshrined the Pali commentary written upon leaves of gold and silver, was built by King Mindôn; while the smaller pagodas surrounding it and containing the engraved slabs were erected by his brother, the War Prince, and his Ministers of State between 1857 and 1864.

On the western side of the Irrawaddy, distant about six or seven miles from Mandalay, stand the ruins of the basement of the Mingun pagoda, one of the largest masses of brickwork known to exist. Begun by Bodaw Payá in 1790 or 1791, it was abandoned, after years of work, when it had been carried up to only about one-third of its intended height, 500 feet. So keen was the king on erecting this, that he had a temporary palace built in the vicinity, from which he personally supervised the work. Near it stands the bell cast at the same time.<sup>1</sup>

Bodaw Payá had a passion for great works of religious merit, for he apparently recognized that he had a fearful debit balance to his life's account. He repaired the embankment of the *Aungpinlè* or "pent up sea," an

<sup>1</sup> See page 302, where "in 1771" should read "about 1791."

## TAGAUNG OR OLD PAGAN

ancient tank with a superficies of about twenty square miles, to the south-west of Mandalay, where water could be stored in sufficient quantity for the irrigation of several thousand acres of rice lands. He also repaired the embankment of the lake at Meiktila, which must be of very ancient date, as it is known to have been previously repaired by Alónsithu during the twelfth century. Bodaw Payá went there with his whole Court and spent three months superintending his royal work of merit, carried out of course by *corvée* or forced labour.

About a hundred miles to the north of Mandalay lie the remains of the ancient city of Tagaung or old Pagán, also called Hastinapura in Pali, for centuries the seat of a long list of legendary kings belonging to a dynasty that came from India. It is believed to be the oldest Indian settlement in Burma. The royal chronicles relate that about the middle of the sixth century B.C. a king called Dhajaraja, of the Sakya race, settled at Kathé (Manipur) and conquered Tagaung or old Pagán. In 1891 terra cotta tablets were found there bearing Sanskrit legends in Gupta characters, and also a large stone slab in similar characters dating from early in the fifth century A.D. This latter bears out the legendary statements of the chronicles that successive waves of immigration from Northern India had brought letters and the Buddhist religion to Upper Burma long before Anawratzaw's conquest of Thatôn in the eleventh century.

The inscription records that Maharaja Dhiraja Jayapala of Hastinapura in Bramadesa (Burma) on the Erávati (Irrawaddy) granted an allotment of land and money to the Áryasamgha or "community of the faithful" at the great monastery of Mahakasyapa (Kathaba) for the feeding of mendicants and the maintenance of lamps at the pagoda near by. Dense jungle now covers the ruins that remain of this ancient capital, and no doubt hides many an ancient record of vast antiquarian interest.

To the south, east, and west of old Tagaung the Shwezigôn, Shwezedi, and Paungdawkyia pagodas are held in much reverence and are probably very ancient. Alaung Payá, the founder of the last of the dynasties



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

that ruled in Burma, repaired them, as the marble slabs near them record.

At Bhamo, classically called Chinaráttha, the only building of antiquarian interest is the Theindawgyi pagoda, which an inscribed stone there states to have been built in 1387 A.D.

Celts of basalt or some schistose rock have been found in Northern Burma, where they are believed to be stones produced by thunderbolts (*Mogyo*), while copper celts have not infrequently been found in the Toungoo district. Comparatively little is known, however, about this minor branch of Burmese archæology. No detailed archæological survey of the province has yet been undertaken. But what is already known about the antiquities shows that it presents a fine field for research. And the recent appointment of a very well qualified archæologist should soon bring to light many of the hidden treasures.

## Chapter XVI

### THE HILL TRIBES

THE Peguans and the Burmese, now much inter-mixed, who form the great bulk of the population, occupy the valleys and the uplands in the vast riverine tracts which are flanked in every direction, save seawards, by hills inhabited by jungle tribes, and for the most part densely wooded. Except the great Shan race (so called from the Chinese word *Shan*, meaning "mountains"),—which pressed forward from the east right to the edge of the plateau within about thirty miles of Ava, Amárapura, and Mandalay, and overran Northern Burma and Assam, formerly separate States in many places,—all of these hillmen belong to wild tribes. These hill tribes, the denizens of the thickly forested mountain ranges, were probably partly the aborigines of the country, and partly the earliest immigrants, both of whom were gradually driven out of the lower tracts by the incursions of stronger races which asserted their sway along the main rivers.

The distribution of the population under such circumstances regulated itself mainly in accordance with physical features and conditions. To the west, the ancient kingdom of Arakan, lying beyond the western watershed of the Irrawaddy river and its great affluents, was founded by the Arakanese. These, occupying the fertile portions of the Kaladán and Lémru rivers, drove into the hills the primitive races which now exist as separate tribes called Chaungtha, Kwemi or Kami, Chaw, Shindu, Mro and the like.

In the central portion of the country the great river Irrawaddy forms the main axis around which

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

have ever revolved the wheels of political, commercial and social activity. During the flood season, lasting from June till October, it is a noble highway fed by the copious rainfall deposited by the south-west monsoon air currents; but during the winter solstice it sinks to so low a level that shallow-draft, flat-bottomed steamers have to crawl tortuously through buoyed-out passages between sandy shoals. Sometimes they ground so heavily, especially in going down stream, as to become firmly fixed in the sand. Here they have occasionally to remain till the river begins to rise gradually in March and April, owing to the melting of the snows in the far-distant mountains, within which the still unknown sources of this mighty river are cradled.

In the lower portion of the Irrawaddy valley the Môn or Peguan race asserted their supremacy at a very early date and spread eastwards across the valleys of the Sittang and the Salween rivers, making their capital at Thatôn, then on the eastern shore of the Gulf of Martaban. The races displaced by the Peguans and driven into the hills probably consisted chiefly of the Karen now inhabiting the central Pegu Yoma range, forming the watershed between the Sittang and the Irrawaddy, the Paunglaung range, between the Sittang and the Salween, and the eastern slopes of the Arakan Yoma to the west of the Irrawaddy delta. This race, also, however, included the wild, lawless Karenni or "red Karen" living in the hills between the headwaters of the Sittang river and the Salween, and the Taungthu or "hill men," the first known occupants of Thatôn, who on being driven forth by the Môn, spread over the hills to the south and east, and wandered northwards into the Shan hills, where they founded the State of Thatôn. Confined to the islands of the Mergui Archipelago, at the extreme south of Tenasserim, are to be found the Salôn (or Selung), a timid, nomadic race, consisting of several tribes who subsist by fishing. They are perhaps one of the most primitive of all the tribes in Burma, having no religion other than animistic superstition, no holy men or holy days, no conventional rules as to domestic habits, and no domestic animals except dogs.

## THE VARIOUS HILL RACES

The whole of the tracts under Peguan occupation were those having a heavy annual rainfall varying from about 100 to over 200 inches during the south-west monsoon season. Higher up the Irrawaddy valley, where the gradually lessening rainfall gave rise to the central dry zone, the true Burmese race settled and thrived, ultimately acquiring supremacy over the whole of the country from Assam to Mergui, and from Chittagong to Siam and China. Though far from being the most fertile part of Burma, this heart of the country is the best portion to live in. From March till October the heat is greater than further south or further north, but the air is dry and the *feeling* of heat consequently less; while the climate from November to February is genial and pleasant.

The original immigrants from India, from whom sprang the Burmese race in the upper portion of the Irrawaddy valley, gradually found their way down to the advantageous position for a capital offered by the vicinity of the confluence of the Chindwin river with the main waterway. During the course of their advance they ousted older settlers, now represented by the various Chin tribes on the mountains to the west of the Chindwin river, and the Kachin inhabiting all the hills to the east, north, and west of the upper Irrawaddy itself.

To deal with these hill races in anything like detail would require a volume for itself; and a very interesting volume it might be made. But within the limits of one chapter the most that can be done is to make brief allusion to the four most important hill races, namely, the Shan, Karen, Chin, and Kachin, leaving out of consideration all the minor hill races and the tribes partly of Burmese origin, like the Kadu and the Yaw in central Burma, or the Yabein, an outcast race living by silk culture, in Lower Burma. The Shan, however, are really far more than mere hill tribes. They are virtually but one portion of a nation once great but now scattered throughout Burma, Siam, and China, the Siamese being the only branch of this old stock which has retained its independence.

These various hardy hill races, with which the hills and mountains flanking the plains of Burma are sparsely peopled, have always been treated with the greatest



## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

harshness and oppression by the Burmese; and in retaliation they have always been accustomed to raid down upon the plains for the purpose of stealing, kidnapping, and burning.

The distribution of these tribes throughout the last century can easily be briefly noted. On the hill range forming the watershed between the Sittang river and the lower Irrawaddy, and on the low hills to the east and west of this, were located the Karen, who since coming under British rule after the second Burmese war have become a loyal and peaceful body of subjects. To the north-east of this, on the hills between the upper Sittang and the Salween, the red Karen were a standing terror both to the Shan States marching with them to the north and east, and to the Burmese living on the plains of the Sittang. Further to the north and east, on the lofty plateau and among the valleys extending far away to Yunnan and Siam, were the Shan forming many States under chiefs of their own. Above the Mandalay district the savage Kachin tribes dominated all the hills north of the Shan States, from the Chinese frontier on the east, across Bhamo and Mogaung, and northwards to Assam. Besides raiding down on the plains from time to time, they also invariably levied toll on all traffic passing through their wild jungle tracts. To the west, on the hills beyond the Chindwin river, the Chin swept down from mountain fastnesses, harrying and terrorizing the valleys of the Myittha and the Manipur rivers. The wild red Karen were quieted once and for all by the British military expedition undertaken against them in 1888-89, but various expeditions had to be made against the Kachin and the Chin; and the latter are not yet so pacific as to render occasional military coercion unnecessary.

The Shan race, or *Tai*, "free men," as they call themselves, consists of three main groups exhibiting well marked linguistic differences coincident with definite political divisions. Originally coming from south-western China, and most likely the race which pressed the older Karens southwards towards Thatôn and the Irrawaddy delta, their earliest migration southwards is supposed to have taken place about a hundred years before the

## THE SHAN OR *TAI*

Christian era. The three political divisions in which the free men of the hills are now classifiable consist of the Chinese Shan (*Shan Tarôk*) in the north, the Siamese (*Shan Yodayá*) in the south,—our word “Siam” being only a corruption of the French “*Sciam*,” intended as the transliteration of *Shan*,—and the central Shan States which were tributary to the kingdom of Burma and now form part of the British Empire. The Tai or Shan race is thus the most widely spread of any throughout the Indo-Chinese peninsula.

In language and in physical characteristics the Shan have strong racial affinities with the Chinese. The Mongolian type of features is perhaps more marked among them than among the Laos and Siamese, the complexion being light and the eyes almond-shaped. The elaborate tonal system of the Shan language and its abundance of homonyms are very similar to the Chinese, while the grammatical structure of sentences is much the same in both languages.

Concerning their early history traditions exist that in very ancient times the Shan were closely connected with the Chinese before settling in Szechuan and the country lying south of the Yangtse river. After Chinese rule began about 250 B.C. to extend itself to this latter region, many of the tribal headmen were officially recognized by the suzerain as tributary chiefs. These heads of clans have the Tai title of *Chow* or *Sow*, which still forms the title of the hereditary princes of the Burmese (*Sawbwa*) and the Siamese Shan States (*Chawpya*).

For centuries portions of Yunnan held out against Chinese rule. Even down to the beginning of the seventh century A.D. the Tai State of Nanchao flourished in western Yunnan, and maintained itself as the kingdom of Tali until it was conquered by Kublai Khan in the thirteenth century. Long previous to this, about the beginning of the Christian era and again about 240 A.D., these Shan Tarôk were strong enough to make military incursions into Burma, overrunning the whole of the upper Irrawaddy and overthrowing the Burmese kingdom of Tagaung. All that is known about the early history of the Tai points to the fact that the race was united and

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essentially homogeneous, with powerful political organizations which had grown out of the necessity for resisting the pressure of the Chinese from the north.

It seems probable that the first Tai immigrations into Burma took place about 2,000 years ago; though their traditions assign to these a date several centuries earlier. The main migrations, however, probably occurred during the sixth and the fourteenth centuries consequent on Chinese invasion and conquest of the Tai tracts.

According to one of their legends, two brothers descended from heaven about the middle of the sixth century A.D. and found in the valley of the Shweli river, which joins the Irrawaddy not far from the ancient capital of Tagaung, a race which welcomed them as their rulers. This is probably but a mythical way of recording the historical fact that about this time a great wave of immigration rolled down from the mountains of southern Yunnan, flooding the Shweli valley and the surrounding tracts. The Shweli river was of course the natural outlet from Yunnan into the Irrawaddy valley. No doubt it had long before that formed the path followed by earlier Tai colonists, but they had never previously come in sufficiently large numbers to attain political importance. Now, however, from the Shweli valley the immigrants spread south-east over the fertile valleys and the hills forming the Shan plateau, northwards into the present Khamti region and Assam, and westwards across the Irrawaddy right on as far as the Chindwin river.

The Burmese Shan appear to be, as regards purity of blood, the main branch of the Tai race. They are the *Tai Long*, or "great free men"; while the other two branches call themselves *Tai Noi*, or "little free men." Confusion may perhaps arise on this point from the fact that the Siamese call themselves *Htai (Tai) Noi*; while they refer to the Laos, from whom they are directly descended, as *Htai Nyai*, the equivalent of *Tai Long*; but then the Laos call themselves *Tai Noi*, and refer to the Burmese Shans as *Tai Long*. All of these facts go to show that the immigrants into Burma formed the main branch in which the earliest and strongest political organization centred.

## ANCIENT SHAN POWER

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as the result of Kublai Khan's conquest of Western China and its subsequent effects, the southern branch pressed southwards down the valley of the Mènam to its delta and formed the kingdom of Siam.

The great Royal Chronicles of Burma are strangely silent as to the powerful Shan kingdom of Mōng Maw which grew up contiguous to it on the north, and had its capital, Mōng Maw Long, on the Shweli river, although they are careful to enumerate ninety-nine *Sawbwa* as having been tributary to the Kings of Burma. For four centuries the Shan kingdom maintained itself, now prosperous, now struggling under hard pressure, until it was reduced to vassalage by King Anawratazaw of Pagán in the eleventh century. By the thirteenth century it had again acquired complete freedom and considerable influence, for the Shan power was made to be severely felt eastwards to Kenghung, southwards as far as Moulmein, westwards throughout Arakan and Manipur, and northwards to Assam. The Shan destroyed the capital of Arakan, and established a dynasty in Assam, where they were henceforth known as Ahom. When the Burmese monarchy at Pagán was overthrown by a Chinese army in 1284 A.D., the Shan power did not suffer, though the almost simultaneous transfer of the capital to a new Mōng Maw, near the present town of Bhamo, may perhaps have had some connexion with this Mongol incursion. But, in any case, the downfall of the dynasty at Pagán gave opportunity to the Shans who had already acquired considerable power at the Burmese Court, for they seized the government and established a Shan dynasty.

The over-expansion of the Maw kingdom proved its ruin. Soon after this attained its widest limits, the period of decadence, decentralization, and dismemberment set in, which proceeded throughout the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. The Laos and the Siamese dependencies shook off their allegiance and formed themselves into the independent kingdom of Siam. Wars with Burma were frequent, and loss after loss was caused by Mongol incursions made with the determination of



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asserting the right of Chinese suzerainty. This constant warfare weakened the central Maw power so much that the various chiefs (*Sawbwa*) gained positions of semi-independence. The Shan kingdom in Burma ended in 1604 with the death of San Hum Hpa, the last Maw king. After that date the record of the Shan States in Burma is merged in Burmese history, although the State of Mogaung, comprising wild malarious tracts between the Irrawaddy and the Chindwin, maintained a sort of semi-independence till it was overrun and subjugated by Alaung Paya's troops a century and a half later. Although always restive under Burmese rule, and prone to revolt against their suzerain, the Shan States never succeeded in again freeing themselves from the Burmese yoke. Any well organized attempt at this ought often to have proved successful; but they continued to be so habitually engaged in internecine warfare that combination for this purpose never took place. So when King Thibaw's dominions passed under British rule all the Burmese Shan States became incorporated in the British Empire. They must have been pleased to find that the British did not insist upon the annual presentation of gold flowers (*Shwebanset*) in open Durbar, as had been customary under Burmese rule.

Thus the Shan no longer occupy the position they once held, either as to extent of territory, population, or political power. From many of their possessions in Northern Burma they have been forced south-east and southwards by the Kachin hill tribes who now people the hilly tracts between Burma proper and China, and who command all the trade routes into Yunnan. Many of the once great States spread over the plateaux and valleys forming the Shan country were reduced to insignificance under constant internecine warfare and Burmese oppression and rapacity; but now, under British administration, they are exhibiting a marvellous recuperative power giving promise of a great and prosperous future.

The Shan are endowed with many of the natural qualities which are bound to make for success when allowed to develop under stable government affording protection against oppression and robbery, and giving

## THE SHAN STATES

encouragement to agriculture, trade, and commerce. They have artistic instincts, and some of their silver work is very fine. As there was no coined money in the States even within the last twelve or thirteen years Shan travellers used to bring down finely wrought and richly chased silver bowls which they exchanged for their weight in rupees in order to make purchases in the bazaars. They are a thrifty people, and they have keen commercial instincts. Sprung from a race of mountaineers, and themselves occupying lofty tracts, they share the natural inheritance of qualities characteristic of the races which have to struggle with nature for the necessaries of life. The same natural causes which created differences of this sort between those living north of the Humber and the Mersey and those living in the more genial southern portion of England,—between North Germans and South Germans; between Norwegians or Swedes and Italians or Spaniards,—have been in operation to make the Shan of the Burmese-Shan plateau an entirely different man from the Burmese of the Irrawaddy valley or the Siamese of the Mènam valley. Consequently they have greater independence of character, are better agriculturists, are keener traders, and have a much better knowledge of the value of money than either the Burmese or the Siamese. But the political and social strife and the constant internecine warfare of the last two centuries have made them prone to intense jealousy and personal dislikes, and have rendered them apt to be cruel and vindictive, defects which may probably soon become obliterated under peaceful, good government.

The country forming the Shan States tributary to Burma presents a remarkable variety of features. The States lying to the west of the Salween river comprise elevated plateaux, broad deep valleys, and grassy rolling downs once covered with pine forests now nearly all cleared away except patches here and there on rocky land or around monasteries, like the sacred Deodar groves around Himalayan temples. The river courses and their watersheds run from north to south, often in a very direct line. As is general throughout Yunnan, so too in some of the Shan States, the clearance of the primeval

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pine forest for purposes of shifting temporary cultivation, and more especially the permitting the fires thus lighted to spread unchecked as great conflagrations, has destroyed tree growth on many of the hills. Once killed and prevented from bearing seed, the pines have no reproductive power of throwing out shoots from the dead stools. Fortunately, however, many of the hills are still well wooded, and capable of water storage for the benefit of agriculture besides satisfying other important economic requirements. The plateaux range from about 3,000 to 5,000 feet in elevation, while the peaks of the hill ranges rise to close upon 9,000 feet. In the valleys the rivers are swift in current, now rushing through dark, narrow-walled gorges cut through high rocky cliffs, and again flowing through alluvial lands terraced for rice cultivation. The houses forming the villages dotted about the valleys and the hill sides are mostly hidden from view behind clumps of dark foliaged trees or of bamboos planted in and around the hamlets. There are few fairer landscapes to be seen than present themselves to view in the Shan country. The silvery gleam of the rivers, the fields and lands now bright in summer verdure or yellow in winter and early spring, the villages and hamlets scattered over the valleys and the uplands, the background of lofty hills with more or less of forest covering, all contribute the essential requisites towards a picturesqueness of landscape that can more than hold its own with the best scenery of most countries.

To the east of the Salween the country becomes more rugged. The direction of the mountain ranges and the trend of the river valleys are less clear. The scene presented to the eye is a labyrinth of forest-clad hills intersected by narrow valleys, with only patches of level land dotted here and there like oases in a rocky desert. The largest of these is the plain of Kengtung, beyond which again the hills stretch, towering range upon range, in tangled confusion towards the Mekong. Further eastwards, beyond the Mekong, the labyrinthine masses of hills on nearer approach disclose here and there between them flat fertile valleys and uplands carefully terraced for cultivation. It is only when heavy fogs

## THE SALWEEN RIVER

hang over the valleys in the early morning that some idea can be formed of the tracery of the river beds and the ramification of their tributary streams.

None of the rivers in the Shan States, whether draining into the Irrawaddy, Salween, or Mekong, are navigable for any considerable distance. The Shweli river, the largest of the tributaries flowing into the Irrawaddy, is blocked, even for traffic in small boats, about eighty miles from its mouth at a village bearing the suggestive name of Myitsôn, "the end of the river"; while the Myitngè, or "little river," draining Theinni and the rich State of Thibaw is also blocked to traffic by obstructions in its lower course.

Nor are any of the affluents of the Salween navigable throughout their length, rapids being of common occurrence, and waterfalls not infrequent. The banks of the main river itself do not hospitably invite to trade. Transit is effected by boats at regular ferries, the more important of which are far apart. Of these the most northerly is the Kunlôn ferry in the north-east corner of Theinni, which has recently become so well known in connexion with railway extension for tapping the trade of south-western China. A really more important one, however, is the Takaw ferry at Kengkham on the main road to Kengtung, our extreme eastern military outpost. Between the various ferries the Salween, dark, swift, and broken by many rapids, runs between precipitous rocks and wooded hillsides, with here and there a sand-bank, while in places narrow footpaths follow the banks for short distances only. Its breadth, between the actual banks, varies from about seventy yards in rocky gorges to over a quarter of a mile in more open parts where the width of water in the dry season averages from 150 to 200 yards. In the flood season the water level rises about fifty feet.

In its upper valley the Mekong river possesses much the same characteristics as the Salween, but on a somewhat larger scale. Lofty, wooded hillsides slope steeply down to the water's edge, and in the river-bed great masses of rock crop up round which the waters break into eddies and strong currents. Swift rapids alternate



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with stretches of sandbanks liable to change both their shape and their position; and altogether the Mekong is still less suitable than the Salween to form a highway for internal communication, trade, and commerce, even although it is navigable for country boats from Luang Prabang to Tangaw. Its current is stronger than that of the Salween, and at most of the ferries there is always a danger of losing some of the pack-bullocks when swimming them across. At the Kengkong ferry its breadth between banks is about 700 yards, with a dry season width of about a quarter of a mile; while the rainy season brings a rise of from forty to fifty feet in the water level. At the Ban Law ferry the river bed is narrower; from bank to bank it is about a quarter of a mile, with about 160 yards of water in the dry season. Further north the hills and gorges become more tangled, and offer much greater obstructions to trade and traffic.

The religion of the Shan is Buddhism. It was evidently received from Burma, though the actual date of its introduction is uncertain. It may, no doubt, have found its way into the Shan communities at a much earlier date, but most probably a decided advance in a religious direction was made when King Anawratazaw, the great religious reformer of Pagán, overthrew the Mōng Maw kingdom in the eleventh century. But, during the next four centuries of greatest national glory, Buddhism became inert and corrupt among the Shan, and it was not till the second half of the sixteenth century that King Bayin Naung introduced extensive religious reforms into his northern conquests. Wherever Burmese influence was strongest, Buddhism had greatest hold on the Shan; and this naturally explains the fact that, even till now, the priests and monks throughout the States lying to the east of the Salween perform their religious duties with a laxity of practice much at variance with the manner in which these are performed in the western States.

Many of the Shan customs are curious. Among some of the tribes in the Southern States it is the fashion for girls to have brass bands welded round their throats. The number of these rings is increased periodically in

## THE KAREN TRIBES

order to produce a neck like that of a champagne bottle, this being considered an enhancement of female beauty.

The Karen race, consisting of the three divisions, Sgaw, Pwo, and Bghai or Bwè, is supposed to be the descendants of Chinese tribes driven southwards by pressure (probably of the Shan race) before they were again made to retire to the hills by the expansion of Môn power. Their own traditions describe their original home as having been to the west of the sandy desert of Gobi stretching between China and Thibet; and this lifeless "river of sand" was crossed on their migration south-eastwards. The derivation of the name Karen is unknown. Under Môn and Burmese oppression there was a constant tendency to disintegration; but now, under British protection and administration, this has been replaced by a steady process of assimilation among the Sgaw or Burmese and the Pwo or Môn tribes inhabiting Lower Burma. Already the Pwo Karen are commencing to disappear as a distinct tribe. Many are becoming merged in the Sgaw, and others are gradually becoming Burmanized. Having no religion, except spirit worship, but only ancient traditions strangely like those of the Jews as recorded in the Old Testament, and a legend that their lost sacred books would come to them again from the west, the Sgaw and Pwo Karen have become willing converts to Christianity, and are now in part rapidly settling down to permanent cultivation on the plains. They are much looked down upon by the Burmese, and are always made to appear as figures of fun in theatrical representations; but now, with the formation of national character under British rule and Christian teaching, the Karen is in his turn commencing to look down upon the Burman.

The tribal divisions of Sgaw, "male," and Pwo, "female," are accounted for by a legendary quarrel which led to the prohibition of social intercourse and intermarriage; while the Bghai, who probably never penetrated further south than their present mountain fastnesses, are said to have arrived at a much later date than the other two branches of the Karen stock. Each of these three main divisions has its own sub-tribes and

## BURMA UNDER BRITISH RULE

septs, and their language, apart from the mere dialectic differences thus arising, is also divisible into similar groups. It is clearly allied to Chinese, resembling it in possessing six tones besides the simple monosyllabic root.

The Karen is of a squarer build than the Burman; his skin is fairer, and he has more of the Mongolian obliquity of the eyes. Except as regards the converts to Christianity their religion is spirit worship pure and simple, though they have traditions of a lost religion and a God. Their superstitious belief in good and bad spirits, auspices, omens, and the like is unbounded. To propitiate the former and influence the manifestation of the latter, sacrifices of pigs, dogs, and fowls are made. It is in the bones of a sacrificial fowl that auspicious or ominous foreshadowings may best be obtained concerning important matters of all sorts. The method varies according to the occasion, but the thigh bones are those always used in ceremonies of this sort. Sometimes the results are made to depend on resemblances or differences fixed on beforehand, and according as examination shows the two bones to correspond or differ, as previously arranged, so are the spirits favourable or unfavourable to the enterprise under consideration. The particular manner in which this oracle is consulted with regard to the selection of sites for their shifting cultivation in the forest has already been elsewhere described (vol. i., page 323). Oracular consultations by the tribal elders are always made the occasion of feasting on the sacrifices offered to the spirits (*Natsa*) and of the consumption of large quantities of spirituous rice beer (*Kaung*) after once a small oblation has been poured out.

Betrothal of infants is common among the Sgaw and Pwo, but not among the Red Karen. Later in life, if a young man wishes to marry a girl, he chooses for himself, asks her parents' consent, and then seeks a go-between to arrange matters. The latter first of all consults the oracle of the chicken bones. If this be favourable, he proceeds with the business, otherwise it is deferred or abandoned as of ill omen. Next a family feast is held, at which the young man's relatives assemble, and here

## THE KAREN TRIBES

again another sacrifice is made to disclose the auspices or omens of the matrimonial enterprise. Upon the firmness or flaccidity of the gall of the sacrificial fowl depends the happiness or misery of the intended union, and the arranged match is often broken off if this second oracle ominously contradicts the previously auspicious thigh-bone oracle. When an infant betrothal is not subsequently followed by marriage the jilted bride is entitled to compensation of one drum-gong for her head, another for her body, and a flat gong to hide her face from the shame of the indignity thrust upon her.

A few days after this feast the bride is escorted with music to the house of the bridegroom's parents, and as she ascends the bamboo ladders leading to it she is drenched with water. Two elders, representing the contracting parties, and each holding some rice beer in a bamboo cup, respectively repeat and acknowledge the duties incumbent on husband and wife, and then, exhorting obedience thereto on both sides, pledge the faith of the young couple by exchanging drinks. This ends the ceremony. No tribal sanction is given to polygamy, though it is not infrequent where the Karens come in close contact with the Burmese.

Children receive all sorts of promiscuous names, such as words meaning "Joy," "Hope," "Black," "Brown," "Tiger," "Cricket," etc. These are either retained later on, or others denoting personal characteristics are substituted for them, such as "Father of Cunning," "Mother of Prudence." It is not uncommon for a young couple to change their names when a child is born to them.

Like all the wild hill tribes throughout the forests of Burma, and throughout all India in fact, they lead unsettled lives. Their cultivation consists in annually clearing fresh patches (*Taungya*) in the dense tree or bamboo jungle, burning it when dry enough, sowing rice on it, and then moving elsewhere to make fresh clearances whenever the land available for this wasteful method of cultivation has become temporarily exhausted. These annual clearances are usually only cultivated for one year at a time, as immediately after the rice crop is cleared in autumn they soon become overgrown with a



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dense growth of weeds of all sorts from about three to five feet in height, which could only be cleared with great trouble. Hence it is simpler to make fresh clearances in the tall forest, where accumulations of good soil also yield a better harvest than would be obtainable from areas already exposed for one season to torrential rains that scour away the surface soil. As the different communities tacitly recognize tribal proprietorship over definite tracts, each community moves off to great distances when once the cultivable jungle in their vicinity becomes exhausted for the time being.

Their villages are thus situated in the midst of dense woods, remote from any frequented track. Each village is one large family, for all are closely connected by blood and marriage. The houses are of rather a mean description.

The larger villages contain several houses, but the hamlets usually consist of only one long building about seventy to ninety or a hundred feet in length and twenty or thirty feet broad. This is subdivided into compartments for the different families. The girls sleep in one large apartment, while the young men occupy another. Below the house the pigs are penned. The whole is built entirely of bamboo,—posts, flooring, walls, and roof,—the village site being changed every two or three years, and sometimes annually, to suit their nomad habits and their wasteful system of shifting cultivation.

Among the Karen a kind of brotherhood (*Do*) exists, like the *Dutz-Bruderschaft* among the Germans. When two Karen wish to become brothers in this manner, a fowl is killed and its beak chopped off. With this the one smears blood on the legs of the other, below the knees, and plasters this patch with small feathers. The thigh-bone oracle being then consulted and found auspicious, the same procedure is gone through by the other party, and if the bones of this second fowl likewise show favourable signs the two men are henceforth "*Do*" to each other. They address each other by this term, and not by their actual names; and they are bound to stick to each other through thick and thin, even to protecting the *Do* against one's own kith and kin. A some-

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what similar custom has been introduced here and there among the Burmese in their *Thwethauk* or "blood drinking." A small quantity of blood being let from the arms of two friends, each tastes a little of it, and the two men are sworn to stand by each other in future.

The national dress of the men consists of a sleeveless white tunic (*Thindaing*), which soon gets grey and dark with dirt. It reaches down below the knee and is just like a large cotton sack worn end up, with a hole cut in the top for letting the head through and holes at the top corners for letting the arms through. The hem at the base is ornamented with distinctive tribal embroidery, this being in parallel stripes of red among the Sgaw but variegated among the Pwo. The women wear similar though much shorter tunics of dark blue cotton, and a small striped and embroidered skirt or waistcloth, open in front, reaching from the loins to the knees. Many of these short skirts are further adorned with designs worked in the lustrous white beads of Job's tears millet (*Coix lachryma*). As ornaments they wear huge silver bracelets and bangles of hollow silver work filled with resin.

Like the Chinese, the Karen venerate the spirits of their ancestors. At the cremation of any deceased relative a "bone-picking festival" (*Yokaukpwè*) is held, when the charred bones are collected previous to being deposited in the "Hill of Bones" (*Ayotauing*) forming the tribal place of rest. Once a year a grand tribal festival is held, when these last remains of those who have died during the past twelvemonth are borne in solemn procession and with much secrecy to their final resting place on some distant hill.

When a general seeding of the bamboo takes place in the Karen tracts, jungle fowls and rats at once become abnormally prolific by reason of the extraordinary food-supplies thus provided for them. This plague of rats results in scarcity of food, for all the rice crops are devastated by them. Disease consequently results among the Karen tribes, and cholera or smallpox breaks out in epidemic form. The last great Karen scarcity of this sort occurring on a large scale was about 1853, when

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the Kyathaungwa (*Bambusa polymorpha*) flowered, seeded, and died all over the hills between the Sittang and the lower Irrawaddy.

Even when minor infectious diseases break out in anything like an epidemic form, as for instance attacks of measles occasionally, the Karens abandon their hamlets, leaving the sick behind to die of starvation if unable to help themselves.

Some of the Karen folklore is very interesting, and particularly such as refers to their forgotten religion and the long lost sacred writings. Except in tradition, they had no written language till characters were invented for them by the missionaries.

In one of these legends it is related that there were three brothers, the sons of God (*Ywá*—Jehovah?) The eldest of these was the Karen, the second the Burman, and the youngest the *Kalá* or non-Mongolian foreigner. The Karen was the biggest and strongest, but very lazy. He bullied his younger brethren and made them do all the work. The younger brothers stood this treatment for some time, but at last they had to go away, each departing in a different direction.


Another legend explains that long ago God gave to the Karen certain writing on a piece of leather, to the Burmese a writing on a palm leaf, and to the *Kalá* other writing on a piece of cloth. Afterwards God said to the *Kalá*, "My son, you have tried best to do what I wished, so I have given you the writing upon cloth, which you must study and learn carefully." And the *Kalá* did as he was commanded. Now, the country in which the Karen lived was fair and pleasant, and the Karen had an easy life: so he soon multiplied and became numerous. But the Karen race paid no attention to the writing which God had given them upon a piece of leather. It had merely been put on a tree stump, while the Karen went on weeding the rice crop on his hill clearing. It got soaked with wet when the rain came on; but he brought it home with him when he returned in the evening, and hung it up over the fire within his house. Here it fell down while rice was being pounded for cooking; and when the fowls came and scratched there, the leathern scroll

## THE RED KAREN

fell down between the bamboos of the floor into the pigs' pen under the house. As the Karen attached no value to the scroll, he forgot all about it and never looked to see what had become of it. He thought that it would only be a useless bother to study hard and learn the writing, as he could always get rice, and chillies, and rice beer if he worked; while he would have to work all the same for these even if he learned to write. So an old sow penned up under the hut ate the leathern scroll, and the Karen never again saw the writing that God had given him.

This tradition of the lost writing and the legend that letters would again be restored to them by the *Kalá* have been potent factors in the conversion of the Sgaw and Pwo Karen to Christianity.

The Bghai, Bwè, or Red Karen, who call themselves *Kayá* or "men," are the wildest and most lawless of the Karen tribes. Broken up into many clans and septs they are true mountaineers, intensely jealous of each other, and continuously at war.

The men are small and wizen, but athletic, and have broad, reddish-brown faces. Their dress consists of a short pair of breeches, usually of a reddish colour, with black and white stripes interwoven perpendicularly or like a tartan; and a handkerchief is tied round the head. During the cold season, when the mountain air is damp and raw, a turban is worn, while a coarse cotton sheet serves as a mantle. Every male belonging to any sept or clan of this tribe has the rising sun  tattooed in bright vermillion on his back, stretching from side to side across the shoulders. Hence the name "Red Karen."

Their weapons are crossbows and arrows poisoned with the gum of the *Hmyáseik* or "arrow-poison" tree (*Antiaris toxicaria*, the Úpas tree of Java) and other vegetable poisons, spears, javelins, swords, matchlocks, and old muskets; while shields and breastplates made of hide form their weapons of defence. They never declare war, but base operations upon surprise attacks. The chieftainship of the Red Karen is generally hereditary. Their religion is spirit worship, and they have the same



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traditions as the less savage Sgaw and Pwo Karen ; but as yet Christianity has made little or no impression on the clans inhabiting the semi-independent territory of Karenni.

Their customs are much the same as those of the Sgaw and Pwo tribes. Marriages, however, are only thought of by youths and girls of suitable age. The mutual consent of the parents being obtained, the bride and her friends are entertained at a feast in the house of the bridegroom, and next day a similar feast is held in the house of the bride ; and thereafter the young couple are man and wife.

Under the comprehensive name of Chin (*Khyin*) the Burmese included the whole of the wild tribes inhabiting the hills forming the western watershed of the Irrawaddy valley ; but the Chin hills proper are those lying to the west of the Chindwin river, and between that and the Myittha and Manipur rivers. Of the Chin there are again many tribes, all talking various dialects of the same Thibeto-Burmese language. The chief of these are the Tashôn dwelling in the country drained by the Manipur river, the Kanhow living immediately to the south of Manipur, the Siyin and Sagyilaing to the south and south-east of the Kanhow tract, and the Baungshè situated to the south of the Tashôn country. The villages are usually located at an elevation of from 4,000 to 5,000 feet, but some of the hills reach a height of over 8,000 feet.

The Chin are well built, strong-limbed men about five feet six inches in height, though many of them are taller. They are extremely dirty in their persons, and stupid in appearance. Their besetting sin is drunkenness. No occasion of joy, sorrow, or solemnity is allowed to pass without an orgie at which large quantities of beer and strong spirits, both made from millet, are consumed. The Chin beer (*Yu, Zu*) is made by the fermentation of crushed millet, which is placed at the bottom of an earthen jar. When a brew is wanted the jar is filled with water, shaken up well, and allowed to stand for about half an hour, when it is sucked through long straws.

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There is no great variety of dress among the Chin, and no particular tartan or colour distinguishes one tribe from another. A cloth is worn turban-like round the head, and a short dark cloth round the loins, while a coarse white, black, or dark blue sheet edged with a band of different colour is thrown over the shoulders. The chiefs affect brighter colours, and decorate their heads with plumes of feathers.

Among the southern Chin tribes the women's faces used to be tattooed in a continuous spiral commencing from the tip of the nose. This old custom (*Payèto*) was supposed to hide their beauty and make them less likely to be carried off into slavery and concubinage, while it also enabled them to be easily recognized if recovered after having been kidnapped. This habit is now gradually dying out under the conditions of greater safety guaranteed by British rule.

Almost every freeman has a gun. All the guns are old Tower-stamped flintlocks, many of them bearing makers' names and dates about 1775 to 1799. Each village makes its own gunpowder, the saltpetre being obtained from dung and the refuse collecting under their houses. The other weapons are spears, bills (*Da*), and bows and arrows; while shields are carried for defence. Ambushes and surprises are the principles of Chin warfare, but shouting and beating drums from a distance are used to try and intimidate an enemy when fighting is not intended. Prisoners captured in raids are well treated, and are considered as adding prestige to the tribe.

The villages are as a rule built on terraces cut out of the hillside and fenced with *chevaux de frise* of bamboo or a tangled hedge of thorns, and the approaches to it are spiked with bamboos. The houses are built of planks made from the pine trees (*Pinus Khasyia*) covering the lofty hills, and are roofed with thatch. They consist of three rooms, the principal of which is a half closed verandah adorned with skulls of wild beasts killed in the chase or domestic animals slaughtered as sacrifices. Water is brought into the villages in conduits of logs or bamboos from the source higher up the hill.

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The Chin are spirit worshippers, who trust in omens and always consult the stars before undertaking anything of importance. They believe in a form of transmigration, but have no regular religious tenets or observances. At Haka, an important stronghold to the south of the Tashôn tract, there is a *Tlang Bwe*, a sort of high priest or great magician, whose office is hereditary, and who officiates at all important sacrifices; but otherwise there is no order of priesthood or of soothsayers among them.

If a man dies in his own house, he is buried in the ground within its fence. A chief is kept above ground for nine or ten days, but the ordinary Chin villager is buried in a plank coffin within two or three days of his decease. In either case a great feast is made. A chief is entombed in a sitting posture, decked out in his best array and with a feather in his hair. A carved memorial post is then erected in his honour. If a man be killed outside the village, he is buried there, and the heads of cattle slain at his funeral are set on posts over his grave.

Marriages are usually arranged by parents, who select a sturdy, hardworking girl. But in some tribes the eldest brother is the guardian of his sisters, and with him the bargain as to price must be settled. When, after preliminary orgies, the dowry is finally settled, the contracting parties meet with their friends. A cock is then produced by the girl's parents, and some liquor poured over its head. Its throat being cut, bridegroom and bride are then declared to be husband and wife if the signs shown by the liver are auspicious. Oaths are common on making agreements of all sorts. The most common form is for each party to kill an animal and paint the other with its blood.

The houses are all separated from one another. Each stands in its own ground, marked off by a fence from the adjoining holdings. The fence in front of the houses of the leading villagers is made of high oak posts or thick planks rudely carved. Only the comparatively well-to-do can afford this luxury, as a feast has to be given to the whole village when any one erects such a palisade before his dwelling. The one-storied houses are built of coarse pine planking, and thickly roofed with thatch-

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grass. Well raised from the ground to accommodate the pigs and cattle below them, they are nearly twenty feet high and vary from about fifty to two hundred feet in length according to the means and status of the owner. The accommodation consists of a front verandah, a sitting-room, a large and a small sleeping-room, and a back verandah. There are no windows or chimneys, and the smoke from the fires has to find its way out as best it can through the front and back doorways and the chinks in the thatch roof. Outside the house a raised platform extends, on the downhill side, from the house to the outer fence. During the dry season of the year it is here, and in the open yard in front of it, that the men, women, and children spend most of the daytime. Here the women do their weaving, their bodies forming part of the loom, as also among the Kachin tribes, while the men engage in the *dolce far niente* that occupies them sedulously throughout most days of the year. All the work and the millet cultivation is performed by the women, for it is an adage among each of the tribes that "men shall hunt, fight, and drink, while women and slaves shall work." This platform is railed along the outer edge to prevent children falling down the hillside into the next holding, and to protect their elders during drinking bouts. On a large screen placed in the front verandah are hung as trophies the skulls and horns of big game killed by the owner, or by his father or grandfather, as well as the heads of Gayal cattle (*Mithun, Gavæus frontalis*) slaughtered at feasts. These latter are often made to ornament the graves of the house-owners who spent them in village festivities. Among some of the tribes, and particularly further west in the Arakan hill ranges, a model of the house he lived in is erected over the grave of each man, and offerings of food are placed in it from time to time.

Caution is required in approaching villages even during the day time, while any request for admittance after dark may as likely as not be answered with a bullet. While examining the forests of Northern Arakan during 1880-81 I had often to put up in Kwemi or Mro hamlets, or else camp in the forest. From the moment of entering the



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stockade till leaving the village for good I was practically a prisoner. In each hamlet there seemed to be a house specially reserved as a guesthouse. To this my party was invariably conducted, and two young men were attached to me, who were probably responsible both for my acts and my safety. Wherever I went in the hamlet or in the surrounding forest, these two men accompanied me till I had finally passed into the jungles recognized as the land of another tribe. The houses were built entirely of bamboos, each post being supported by three struts, so that the flooring of the huts seemed to rest on innumerable bamboo supports. In most houses there was an inner walling of bamboo mat about three feet behind the outer wall, forming no doubt a protection against both the raw fogs of the cold season and the heat of spring, but it also formed the receptacle for all forms of implements and rubbish. In these hill tracts the whole world known to many of the tribesmen was ten or twelve miles up the stream near which their village was, and a similar distance down stream. They had neither idea nor wish to know what lay beyond the hills to the east or west of them. Except an occasional raiding track, following the crest of the hills and well cleared for beating a hasty retreat at night time, there were few paths through the forest. The streams were the only highways along which one marched now up to the ankles, now up to the waist, in water. When hill ranges had to be crossed some track was sought where wild elephants had come to the bank to drink; and from this starting point an opening large enough to allow a man bearing a basket-load on his back had to be cleared through the otherwise impenetrably dense jungle of the single-stemmed bamboo (Kayin Wa, *Melocanna baccifera*). It was weary work, for progress was usually only at the rate of about half a mile an hour, and I used to think with envy of Stanley's comparative comfort in marching "*Through the Dark Continent*" with a regiment of armed followers and coolies, and apparently with villages every few miles. Shortly after my exploration of the forests began I had to abandon my two baggage elephants and the bulk of my camp equipment, and confine everything to a few

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cooly-loads. For part of the time all that could be taken, in the way of camp furniture, into the wilder parts was a folding long-armchair, made in the Moulmein jail, with a small panel behind which could be detached and fitted in between the legs to form a table. During these periods the only book I had with me was Kurz's *Forest Flora of British Burma*, in which the various entries are brief and exact. The frequent appeals made to this were full of interest, though hardly of amusement. But as the party consisting of myself, an interpreter, servants, and coolies, marched from dawn till late afternoon or even until darkness overtook us, halting only for about an hour to have a midday meal, we hardly required amusement in the evening. Sleep was looked forward to; and we were very glad when we had the hospitable shelter of a Kwemi or Mro hamlet to save us from the necessity of sleeping in the open under the cold shelter of the forest trees. And very much the same sort of rough work is being done every year by officers of different departments all along the frontiers and among the forest tribes of Burma, though usually under more favourable conditions.

The number of hill clearances for the rice cultivation among these Arakan tribes of Chin origin corresponds with the number of wives of each man, as every patch of shifting hill-cultivation means one wife. In taking the census of 1881, as I did in many of the remote hamlets, it was only with the assistance of their friends that the men could count their plots of *Taungya* on the different hillsides in order to fix the number of wives they had; and even with the aid of friends it was exceedingly difficult for them to tell the number of their children. It would be almost impossible to exaggerate the difficulty they had to overcome in giving this detailed information of a nature never previously demanded of them.

The Kachin (*Kakhyin*) inhabit the hills between  $23^{\circ}$  and  $28^{\circ}$  N. latitude and  $95^{\circ}$  to  $99^{\circ}$  E. longitude. The *Kaku Kachin*, or "Kachin of the river sources," are the original stock from which all the Kachin or Singpho tribes of Burma and Assam have sprung. The name they apply to themselves is *Singpho* or *Chingpaw*, meaning "man." They are short in stature, averaging only about five

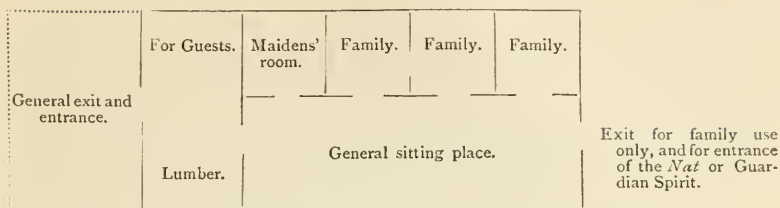
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feet four inches, while the women are about three or four inches less. Their skin varies much in colour, from light brown almost to black. They differ greatly in type. Oblique eyes and high cheek bones prevail, but the nose varies from aquiline to a broad, weak-bridged, mean feature. Their traditions as to an ancient home point to the south of the desert of Gobi, and there is much in their appearance suggestive of Tartar origin.

There are many Kachin tribes, the largest being the Lapei, Marán or Makan, Lataung or Lataw, and Marip. The most warlike and those which have given most trouble are the Lapei, Lataung, Makan, and Ithi or Szi tribes. The Lapei inhabit the dense moist jungles to the north and north-east of Mogaung, in which the India-rubber tree (*Ficus elastica*) is abundant, and where the jade and amber mines are situated; but they also spread eastwards across the Irrawaddy and dominate the hills through which the trade routes into China and the Northern Shan States pass. They are the most warlike and lawless of the Kachin tribes, and it has probably been owing to these qualities rather than to other more fortuitous circumstances that they originally seized and long held the lines of communication between Burma and China, levying blackmail on all traders. The Makan tribe dwells in the jungles around Sinbo and the first defile of the Irrawaddy. The Ithi tribe is located to the south and south-west of Mogaung, on the hills drained by the Mohnyin and Namyin streams. The Lataung tribe lives to the west of the Irrawaddy, north of the Makan. Some of the Kachin tribes have recognized *Sawbwa* or chieftains, but most of the villages are independent units under a *Paw-maing* or "father of the village," who attacks his neighbours whenever he has any grievance or when he thinks he can do so with success.

Their houses are substantially built with teak posts, bamboo-mat walls, and thatch roof. Usually they are from about 100 to 150 feet in length, and often contain the twenty people or more forming three generations of the family. The interior arrangement is generally as follows :—

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The roof at the general entrance extends over an open porch or enclosure, in which the pigs are penned at night. On the teakwood skirting boards of the flooring facing this enclosure *mammæ* are carved with a view to making the pigs prolific.

The Kachin dress varies greatly in different localities. Some wear short dark blue drawers or trousers, and others a narrow dark blue or green check waistcloth reaching barely to the knees and often checked like a tartan with various colours. The hair is tied up into a knot on the top of the head, round which a narrow check scarf of thin material, in which reds and yellows predominate, is wound several times with a couple of loops hanging lower down at the back to keep the hair off the neck. Instead of tying the hair into a knot, the younger men sometimes let it grow down just clear of their eyes and the nape of the neck. In the hot spring season short coats of coarse blue or white linen are worn, which are replaced in the cold season by coats made of bear skin or leopard hide. Slung over the left shoulder, so as to hang under the arm, is a small bag of dark blue or red cloth embroidered with red, green, and yellow.

The women wear a skirt reaching to the calf or ankle, and formed of broad alternate bands of dark blue and red with narrow white stripes between, while the fringe of the garment is prettily embroidered in various colours. The hair is tied in a knot behind, a wooden comb is stuck in, and a white or coloured cloth is wrapped over so as to cover the hair except just above the forehead.

Large ear-cylinders are worn, of amber or silver from four to five inches in length.

The Kachin are occasionally armed with guns, but the tribal weapons are crossbows and arrows, also flat-bladed spears with black wooden handles six to seven feet long,



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and often ornamented with a coarse bristly velvet dyed a deep red. Each man carries the tribal *Da* or bill (*Linkin*) squared off at the end, where it is three to four inches broad, thence narrowing towards the handle, and resting on a flat sheath upon which it is kept in place by rings of cane. It is worn at the left side, suspended from a cane ring passing from the right shoulder across the chest and back. It is a very formidable weapon, which can be flashed forth from its sheath in a moment.

Their villages are not as a rule stockaded, although some of the larger strongholds are thus defended. The usual mode of attack is to surround a village at night, and throw lighted brands on the thatch roofs, then fire from the cover of the surrounding jungle upon the inhabitants as they issue from the burning houses. Though hospitable, the Kachin are treacherous and unreliable. They hate the Burmese, and have a contempt for them; and they are of an uncontrollably passionate nature.

The Kachin are extremely superstitious, and their only religion consists in the propitiation of evil spirits. They believe in witchcraft and the evil eye; and whole families are sometimes butchered by the rest of the villagers when bad luck is supposed to have been brought upon the village by them. They have religious men called *Dumsa*, who claim to speak the language of the *Nat* or spirits, and to have supernatural powers. Once a year the villagers turn out for one whole day and clear the jungle for the headman, and whenever buffaloes or goats are sacrificed or a deer shot he gets a hind quarter as his share.

Children are invariably named according to the order in which they are born, the names for males being *Kam*, *Nawng*, *La*, *Tu*, *Tan*, *Yaw*, *Hka*, etc., and for girls *Kaw*, *Lu*, *Roi*, *Htu*, *Kai*, *Kha*, *Pri*, etc., preceded by the prefix '*N* or *Má* for girls, and '*N*, *Má* or *Lá* for boys. As regards the children of the chief these names are displaced by others of a honorific nature, but always varying according to the order of birth. The above names are prefixed, like Christian names among us, to the family surnames common among the different tribes.

A man may not marry a woman having the same surname as himself, but as a general rule he is expected

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to marry one of the daughters of an uncle on the mother's side. Marriage of a cousin borne by his father's sister is prohibited, as consanguinity is supposed to be greater in this case. For a marriage the consent of the parents of both parties is required. Without this, the union is not valid, even though a young man and a young woman may live together for a long time and have a number of children. A woman with such a family is much sought after as a wife, if her paramour marries someone else ; for her value is enhanced in the eyes of an intending husband by the number of children who may soon be able to work for his support. As may thus easily be understood, infanticide is not practised. But large families are rare, owing to high infant mortality under savage surroundings. Polyandry does not exist, though polygamy is permissible. It is rare for a man to have more than two wives ; but at times he cannot help himself, as brothers are expected to take unto themselves in succession the widows of deceased elder brothers. To prevent this being too much of a burden, the brother next in succession may arrange, if he can, for a younger brother or even a stranger to take the widow or widows off his hand. Otherwise, if a widow return to her own original household, a debt to her family becomes payable in money or in blood. When the parents belong to different tribes or septs the children, whether born in wedlock or not, take the surname of the father's tribe. Slavery is prevalent, and even refractory children are sold into slavery. But, of course, most of the slaves were in past times obtained in raids made on the plains.

The marriage ceremony combines the idea of purchase from the parents along with forcible abduction. In the case of the chiefs the abduction of the bride is only so formal as to be hardly recognizable, but among the common clansmen it is more than half real. In the latter case, when the *Dumsa* of the village in which the intending bridegroom resides gives an auspicious opinion regarding the proposed match, communications are entered into with one of the elders of the hamlet in which the bride-elect lives. This go-between is called the *Chang Tung*. The presents sent are displayed before the latter,

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and when they are on a scale acknowledged by him to be adequate to the social status of the girl, the plan of action is fixed on. The damsel is decoyed after dark to the house of the *Chang Tung*, and is seized and carried off. Next morning the *Chang Tung* breaks the news to the girl's parents, and shows the presents received. These are usually accepted, though sometimes the parents, not being satisfied, start in pursuit of their daughter. Should they reach her before the ritual ceremony has been performed, they can take her back with them, but otherwise the marriage is binding and they have to give their consent to it.

Among the chiefs and the more influential of the tribesmen a wooer sends two friends with beer and a piece of cloth to a *Chang Tung* of the village where his beloved lives. These messengers are then taken to the parents for discussion of the amount to be paid for the girl. This being fixed, it is the equivalent of a betrothal. Later on the friends again appear before the *Chang Tung* with the stipulated presents, which are then taken to the girl's parents' house. Here the bride is dressed in fine attire and loaded with silver ornaments, while the village *Dumsa* divines which two women are best suited to accompany her as bridesmaids. On selection being made each carries on her back a basket containing clothes, spears, bills (*Da*), and such things, as a dowry on starting a separate household. Accompanied by her two bridesmaids, but not by her parents, the bride is conducted by the bridegroom's friends to the house of one of the original messengers of the bridegroom; and when the *Dumsa* indicates that an auspicious moment has arrived, she is made to sit near the bridegroom's house. Here the household spirits are invoked, and a libation is poured into a bamboo cup and placed before their shrine. Fowls and pigs are then sacrificed, their blood being sprinkled on the bride and on the path trodden by her and her bridesmaids. These three only pass the threshold into the bridegroom's house, where they make offerings of boiled eggs, ginger, and dried fish to the tutelary spirits. This concludes the marriage ritual, in which the bridegroom takes no personal part. He does

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not even speak to the bride. She is conducted to the room of her parents-in-law till the time of the evening meal, when she is brought out again, and then she and the bridegroom are made to feed each other with a few mouthfuls of food before the assembled friends. The marriage feast then begins, which always ends in a drunken orgy, and often in a free fight.

The tribal *Sawbwa* (*Duwa*) have all their several recognized hill tracts, within which each is regarded as chief. The *Sawbwa*-ship is hereditary, and descends to the youngest son. The elder sons can stay on in the village if they like, though they usually prefer moving off with a small personal following to found a hamlet and a chiefship of their own. Unless the *Sawbwa* has a ready tongue and a shrewd wit he is often overruled by the elders of the village (*Pawmaing*, *Salang*), of whom every *Sawbwa* is bound to appoint two or three to form a council under his presidency. Except in the case of a *Sawbwa* of great personal influence, the virtual authority in the village consequently rests with the *Pawmaing* possessing most power in the tribal council. They, and not the *Sawbwa*, are usually the judges in village disputes; and they are often called upon to arbitrate concerning the quarrels in other hamlets. But when quarrels against other communities or tribes have to be settled by reprisals, the *Sawbwa* of course takes the lead in exacting vengeance. He also acts as the representative of the whole community in offering sacrifices at the annual feast of the "earth spirit," each member assisting him with a contribution to this great festival. The spirit being propitiated, the rest of the ceremonies consist chiefly of dancing and drunkenness.

Although the *Pawmaing* are appealed to as judges and arbitrators, each tribesman is ultimately the avenger of his own quarrel. Compensation for injuries is allowed on a customary scale of blood money. The murder of a *Sawbwa* can only be condoned by cession of half the village lands of the murderer, together with many slaves and guns; while for less influential men it may perhaps amount to one slave, eight or ten bullocks, and some gongs and clothes, the number varying according to the



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social position of the victim. If ample satisfaction be not thus given, a "debt" is formed, which is sure to be wiped out in violence later on.

Two curious instances of thus paying off old debts on a large scale occurred in 1890, when a party of peaceful Chinese traders returning from Bhamo to Yunnan was suddenly attacked and two of them were killed by the *Sawbwa* of Kasankôn, a village to the east of Bhamo. Twenty-two years previously, in 1868, when the mission under Captain (afterwards Sir Edward) Sladen went to Momein, the father of the attacking *Sawbwa* had been of use to the party. In returning Captain Sladen invited him to accompany the mission to Bhamo, intending probably to make presents to him there. Unfortunately the *Sawbwa* died there, apparently from some natural cause. This loss was, however, earmarked as a debt against Bhamo, though it was not till 1890 that it occurred to the then *Sawbwa* to wipe off the score. And when the time of desiring revenge came, any one (even, as in this present instance only indirectly), in touch with Bhamo, became liable for payment of the blood debt. Again, about that same time, an inter-village skirmish, resulting in the burning of the hamlet of Naungino and the shooting of villagers, took place because a Kachin who had visited that village six years before had then lost a cookingpot which he had failed to recover.

Such are the wild Kachin tribes through whose country pass the existing trade routes from Bhamo and Myitkyina into Yunnan. It is easy to understand how expansion of trade from Bhamo eastwards was thus paralysed under the impotence of Burmese rule. But now, under British administration, good caravan tracks have been cleared to the frontier and are controlled by military police under European officers, while much has been done to subdue and pacify the wild, lawless spirit of the several Kachin clansmen.

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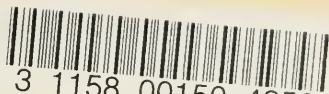




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