

A STUDY ON THE CAUSES OF THE DISINTEGRATION OF HANTHAWADDY KINGDOM

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Abstract

The Kingdom of Hanthawaddy was ruled from the 14th century by a dynasty of Mon Kings. Tabinshwehti occupied Hanthawaddy in 1539. He then attempted to create a united kingdom in which there was no discrimination. Although Tabinshwehti did not discriminate between Mon and Myanmar and gave favour and position equally to both, yet there were some Mons who remained dissatisfied and assassinated him on 1 May 1550. Following Tabinshwehti's death, the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy fell into disarray. Bayinnaung, after administering an oath of loyalty in the whole country, was able to unify the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy and extend it into the largest Kingdom in Southeast Asia. But the Kingdom came to a pitiful end. His son Nandabayin ascended the throne in 1581. The attempt of Bayinnaung and Nandabayin to maintain an extended empire, an area far more extensive than was needed for the stability of the Ayeyarwaddy Valley, was one of the causes of the collapse of the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy. In particular, there was no permanent army under the direct control of the King. What made it worse was that Nandabayin could not control his nucleus of manpower within the Mon region. He branded the Mons on the right hand with their name, rank and village; those who were too old for service were sent to Upper Myanmar, and sold in exchange for horses. He instituted a reign of terror among the Mons, executing them wholesale, and he horrified all by killing the pariah dogs in Bago. The final ruin of Hanthawaddy was brought about by the decline of agriculture and the disunity which developed in the reign of Nandabayin.

Key Words: discrimination, extensive, horrified and disunity

Introduction

This paper deals with the causes of the disintegration of Hanthawaddy Kingdom (1539-1599). During this period of about sixty years, Hanthawaddy was ruled by three successive Kings, Tabinshwehti, Bayinnaung and Nandabayin. The paper is organized under three parts. The first part deals with political causes of the Hanthawaddy Kingdom. After occupying Hanthawaddy in 1539, Tabinshwehti began to attempt to bring the whole of the territories of

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Hanthawaddy under his rule. Bayinnaung who succeeded Tabinshwehti was able to establish his rule over the territories formerly ruled by Tabinshwehti and to further extend the Kingdom. Nandabayin succeeded his father, Bayinnaung. But unlike his father Nandabayin could not control the nucleus of manpower within the Mon region, and this finally led to the collapse of the Kingdom.

The second part deals with government of the Hanthawaddy Kingdom. The Kings of Hanthawaddy divided the administration of the Kingdom into two parts: one was the central administration by the King himself and the other was the provincial administration under the chiefs of the regions or royal relatives in the zone of dependent provinces. The practice of having royal relatives rule as governors and to give them a great measure of independence helped to strengthen the military might of the Kingdom when they were in agreement with the King. However, if they became estranged, it could lead to a weakening and the destruction of the Kingdom.

The third part deals with economic causes. As the basic economy of the Kingdom was agriculture, the Kings of Hanthawaddy encouraged farmers in the growing of their crops. Despite the King's encouragement of the cultivation of rice, since the whole period of Hanthawaddy was full of wars, large numbers of cultivators were pressed into military and corvee service even during the growing season. With some agricultural districts practically deserted, the price of rice, already inflated, reached absurd levels. The final ruin of Hanthawaddy was brought about by the decline of agriculture and the disunity which developed in the reign of Nandabayin. The purpose of this paper is to take lesson in implementing peace and in building a democracy nation.

Political Causes

The Kingdom of Hanthawaddy was ruled from the 14th century by a dynasty of Mon Kings which was established by Banya U (1369- 1384) who moved his capital from Mottama to Hanthawaddy in 1369.¹ Made up of three regions, Hanthawaddy, Mottama and Patheingyi, Kingdom of Hanthawaddy was

¹ Aung Thaw, *Historical Sites in Burma*, Yangon, Sarpay Beikman Press, 1972, p.104

able to profit from the maritime trade of the Indian Ocean because of its location in Lower Myanmar. A new threat to the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy developed in the early part of the 16th century during the reign of Thushin Takayutpi. The Kingdom of Inwa had declined and had fallen under the influence of Shan Sawbwas of the east and the north. With the decline of Inwa, Taungoo which had been subject to it, asserted its independence and became powerful under Mingyi Nyo (1485-1530) who conquered some of the neighbouring territories and established the new city of Taungoo in 1510. Tabinshwehti succeeded his father Mingyi Nyo as King of Taungoo in 1530. Young, energetic and courageous, Tabinshwehti showed his interest in Hanthawaddy soon after his accession. In several campaigns, Tabinshwehti had failed to conquer Hanthawaddy. With Hanthawaddy putting up a strong defence, Tabinshwehti decided to use political guile in addition to military force.² Thus, Tabinshwehti occupied Hanthawaddy in 1539 without much difficulty.³ After Thushin Takayutpi's death, the Mon chiefs who had owed allegiance to him shifted their allegiance to Tabinshwehti. Tabinshwehti welcomed them and strengthened their allegiance to him by showing respect for Mon culture, and traditional institutions and providing equal treatment with his own men from Taungoo. He thus attempted to create a united kingdom in which there was no discrimination.

Although Tabinshwehti did not discriminate between Mon and Myanmar and gave favour and position equally to both, yet there were some Mons who remained dissatisfied. In 1549, Thamein Htawyama, son of Banya Yan, former Mon King of Hanthawaddy, started an uprising, met with defeat near Makaw and retreated to Thanlyin. Bayinnaung was then ordered to march and end the insurrection. During the absence of Bayinnaung, Thamein Saw

² Nai Pan Hla, [HomOwDacwf&mZm"d&mZfESifhbk&ifahemif (Yazadarit and Bayinnaung in Hanthawaddy period), [HomOwDacwf armfuGef;wifpmwrf;rsm; (Recorded Essays of Hanthawaddy period), Yangon, Hna Lone Hla Press, 1976, p.151

³ G.E. Harvey, *History of Burma from the Earliest Times to 10 March 1824 The Beginning of the English Conquest*, London, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1967, p.127 (Hereafter cited as Harvey, History of Burma)

Htut, who was close to Tabinshwehti and had been appointed Governor of Sittaung, assassinated Tabinshwehti on 1 May 1550.⁴

Following Tabinshwehti's death, the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy fell into disarray. On hearing the news of Tabinshwehti's death Thihathu the younger brother of Bayinnaung and governor of Taungoo, who had been assigned to safeguard Hanthawaddy returned to Taungoo and enthroned himself there as King Mingaung. Thamein Saw Htut, who had assassinated Tabinshwehti, came to Hanthawaddy and enthroned himself as King ThameinSekkawaw. But the ministers at Hanthawaddy would not accept him and instead enthroned Thamein Htawyama as King. At Pyay, the Governor, Thado Dhamma Raja assumed the title of Thadothu raised an uprising. Thus the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy disintegrated with several pretenders claiming the succession.⁵

Bayinnaung, after administering an oath of loyalty in the whole country, was able to unify the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy and extend it into the largest Kingdom in Southeast Asia. During the reign of Bayinnaung, the Hanthawaddy Kingdom extended in the east to Vietnam, in the southeast to the whole of Ayutthaya up to the boundary of Malaya, in the west Assam and Manipur with Rakhine excluded, in the north and northeast the nine Shan States including part of Yunnan.

In 1580, Min Phalaung, King of Rakhine, who had established cordial relations with Hanthawaddy in previous years, attacked some territories of Hanthawaddy. Hence, Bayinnaung decided on a campaign against Rakhine. The forces of Hanthawaddy going by land and sea rendezvoused at Thandwe, then the combined forces attacked Mrauk-U, the capital of Rakhine. But the Rakhine campaign was suddenly abandoned in October 1581 because of the death of Bayinnaung.⁶

⁴ U Kala, *U Kala*; (*The Great Chronicle*), Vol. II, Yangon, Yapye Press, 2006, p.196 (Hereafter cited as Kala, *The Great Chronicle*, Vol. II)

⁵ *U Kala*; (*The Glass Palace Chronicle*), Vol. II, Yangon, Myanmar Alin and Guardian Press, June, 1993, pp.258-259 (Hereafter cited as *The Glass Palace Chronicle*, Vol. II)

⁶ *U Kala*; (*The Glass Palace Chronicle*), Vol. III, Yangon, Myanmar Alin and Guardian Press, 1993, pp. 60-61

Four days after the death of Bayinnaung, his son Nandabayin, the Crown Prince, who became known as Ngasudayaka ascended the throne on 14 October 1581. Prince Naresuan of Ayutthaya who continuously kept watchful eyes on developments in Hanthawaddy came as representative of his father Maha Tammaraja in May 1582, to renew homage to the new King as well as to assess the situation.⁷ Following Nandabayin's accession, rebellions broke out testing his strength and capability. The Sawbwa of Sanda was the first one who took up arms and revolted against the new King. However, Nandabayin subdued the rebellion. Although in 1583, Min Phalaung dispatched a delegation with valuable gifts to establish cordial relations between Rakhine and Hanthawaddy, a serious challenge to Nandabayin's authority came when his uncle Thado Minsaw, Governor of Inwa, took up arms against him because his daughter, married to the Crown Prince, had not been treated well. Nandabayin marched to Inwa to subdue the rebellion. The uncle and nephew fought on elephants in single combat. Nandabayin won, and Thado Minsaw fled to Kanti, where he died while trying to gain local support.⁸

For support against Inwa Nandabayin summoned Naresuan of Ayutthaya. Naresuan purposely delayed his arrival and came to Hanthawaddy only after Nandabayin had marched to Inwa. Naresuan instead of following Nandabayin to Inwa he marched to attack Hanthawaddy hoping to capture it in Nandabayin's absence. But hearing the news of Nandabayin's triumph, he withdrew to Mottama captured some captives, elephants and horses and returned to Ayutthaya.⁹ In 1584, Naresuan proclaimed the independence of Ayutthaya. Nandabayin dispatched an army led by the Crown Prince to reconquer Ayutthaya but it was defeated and had to withdraw to Hanthawaddy.

In April 1585 the Crown Prince advanced against Ayutthaya for the second time, but was forced to retire to Hanthawaddy in July, 1586. Subsequently Nandabayin himself advanced against Ayutthaya by the

⁷ Rong Syamananda, *A History of Thailand*, Bangkok, Thai Watana Panich Co., Ltd, 8th ed. 1993, p.55 (Hereafter cited as Rong Syamananda, *A History of Thailand*)

⁸ Harvey, *History of Burma*. p.180

⁹ U TunNyo, *U TunNyo's History of Burma* (awmifilacwf) (The New Chronicle, Taungoo Period), Yangon, AhmanThit Press, August 2007, p.202

Melamao-Kamphaengphet route in November 1586 and laid siege to Ayutthaya. But he was unable to capture the city and returned to Hanthawaddy.¹⁰ Nandabayin dispatched the Crown Prince to subdue Ayutthaya for the fourth time. But the Hanthawaddy forces fell into an ambush and were forced to withdraw.¹¹

Naresuan now took the initiative and advanced to attack Hanthawaddy, but he was defeated by the Governor of Mottama and withdrew to Ayutthaya. In 1592, Hanthawaddy launched a campaign against Ayutthaya for the fifth time. In this time, the Crown Prince of Hanthawaddy was killed in a duel on elephants.¹² After his death in 1593 Hanthawaddy made no more attempts to re-conquer Ayutthaya.¹³ After his victory in the battle against the Crown Prince of Hanthawaddy, Naresuan fought Chiang Mai, Lanchang, Kengtung, Chiang Saen, Lakhon, Chaiya, Songkhla and Thani.¹⁴

Nandabayin was unreasonable in many of his actions. He put many of his most loyal officers to death and suppressed the Mons. When Hmawbi raised insurrection in 1593, he crushed the insurrection. With the failure of the Hmawbi rebellion, some of the Mons ran away to Rakhine, Pyay and Taungoo while other Mon captives were all executed. Nandabayin even slew many Mon Buddhist monks. Thousands of people abandoned their country and fled, and the delta became depopulated from war, famine and migration. In 1594, the Governor of Mawlamyine sided with Naresuan and revolted against Hanthawaddy. Nandabayin was unable to subdue the rebellion and the southern half of Hanthawaddy Kingdom including Mottama fell under the influence of Ayutthaya.¹⁵

¹⁰ Rong Syamananda, *A History of Thailand*, pp.57-58

¹¹ U Kaka, *ကျောက်စာများ (The Great Chronicle)*, Vol. III, Yangon, Yapye Press, 2006, pp. 90-91 (Hereafter cited as Kala, *The Great Chronicle*, Vol. III)

¹² There is another version stating that the Crown Prince was killed by being shot from a swivel gun

¹³ San Nyein, "Trans Peninsular Trade and Cross Regional Warfare between the Maritime Kingdoms of Ayudhaya and Pegu in mid-16th century- mid 17th century", *Port Cities and Trade in Western Southeast Asia*, Bangkok, Chulalongkorn University, 1998, p. 62

¹⁴ Tun Aung Chain, *Chronicle of Ayutthaya*, A translation of the Yodaya Yazawin, Yangon, Myanmar Historical Commission, 2005, p. 42

¹⁵ Rong Syamananda, *A History of Thailand*, p.60

In 1596, Naresuan joined the Governor of Mawlamyine and advanced on Hanthawaddy. He besieged Hanthawaddy for three months but had to withdraw because reinforcements arrived from Chiang Mai, Inwa and Taungoo to the assistance of Hanthawaddy.¹⁶

While Naresuan was attacking Hanthawaddy, Thado Dhammayaza, Nandabayin's son who was the Governor of Pyay, instead of marching to the assistance of Hanthawaddy, rebelled against his father and attempted to capture Taungoo during the absence of his brother, who had gone to defend Hanthawaddy. But with Naresuan's withdrawal and return of the Governor of Taungoo, Thado Dhammayaza had to withdraw to Pyay.¹⁷

Nadabayin tried to repopulate the country around the capital which had suffered from Naresuan's attack. He also made demands on his Governors to send men, elephants and their sons to Hanthawaddy. The Governor of Taungoo defied Nandabayin's order and refused to send Natshinnaung, his eldest son, to Hanthawaddy. The Governor of Nyaungyan also fortified his town and stayed aloof. Nandabayin was abandoned by all who might have supported him. The Governor of Taungoo wrote to the King of Rakhine proposing a joint attack on Hanthawaddy and a division of the spoils. Min Khamaung, the son of Rakhine King, came with a large force and took possession of Thanlyin. Nandabayin had no means of resisting this aggression.¹⁸

The Governor of Taungoo sent an army under his son Natshinnaung, and together with the Rakhine forces, invested Hanthawaddy. With a shortage of food in the city, the people in the city took refuge with the enemy troops outside. Even the Crown Prince, Minyekyawswa, submitted to the Governor of Taungoo, requesting that he be allowed to live peacefully. He was sent to Taungoo but was secretly executed there on the order of Natshinnaung. When Nandabayin was informed that his son had joined Taungoo, he yielded. The

¹⁶ *The Glass Palace Chronicle*, Vol. III ,p. 97

¹⁷ Kala, *The Great Chronicle*, Vol. III, p. 96

^{18(a)} U Panni ၵဝၢ်မိၵ်းဝိၵ်း (The New Chronicle of Danyawaddy), Yangon, Pyigyimantaing Pitaka Press, 1910, pp. 207-208

^(b) Arthur P. Phayre, *History of Burma*, London, Susil Gupta, 1967, p.112

Governor of Taungoo, after the capture of Hanthawaddy took Nandabayin to Taungoo. Thus the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy established by Bayinnaung disintegrated in December, 1599¹⁹ into petty kingdoms as Pyay, Taungoo, Inwa, etc. The vast territories that Bayinnaung conquered and kept under his control through personal relationships and loyalty to his charismatic character all broke apart.²⁰

The attempt of Bayinnaung and Nadabayin to maintain an extended empire, ranging from Manipur to Laos, an area far more extensive than was needed for the stability of the Ayeyarwaddy Valley, was one of the causes of the collapse of the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy. What made it worse was that Nandabayin could not control his nucleus of manpower within the Mon region, thus bringing about the collapse of the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy.²¹

Administrative Causes

As the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy was one of the largest in Southeast Asia of that time, the Kings of Hanthawaddy divided the administration of the Kingdom in two parts: one was the central administration by the King himself in the nuclear zone and the other was the provincial administration under the chiefs of the regions in the zone of dependent provinces. Ayeyarwaddy delta region, Sittaung delta region and the lower part of the river Sittaung basin were under central administration. Mons, Myanmars, Rakhines and Shans who were experienced and skillful in military, political and administrative affairs were appointed as ministers without any discrimination of race.²²

Together with the system of central administration, there was a system of provincial administration which was arranged in a hierarchy, with the King

¹⁹ Kala, *The Great Chronicle*, Vol. III, p.100

²⁰ U Thaw Kaung, "Accounts of King Bayinnaung's Life and Hanthawaddy Sinbyushin Ayedawbon, a Record of his campaigns", *Aspect of Myanmar History and Culture*, Yangon, Loka Ahlin Publishing House, 2010, p.118

²¹ Pamaree Surakiat, "Siamese- Myanmar Warfare during the sixteenth century and its connection to the growth and development of the First Taungoo Empire", *Myanmar Historical Commission Conference Proceedings*, Yangon, Myanmar Historical Commission, 2005, p.77 (Hereafter cited as Pamaree Surakiat, "Siamese- Myanmar Warfare")

²² Harvey, *History of Burma*, p.178

appointing his brothers, sons and trusted persons as governors of the provinces according to their seniority. In local administration, headmen were appointed to administer villages. After the annexation of regions away from the capital, the regional lords were allowed to administer their respective regions as Governors. When Tabinshwehti conquered Hanthawaddy, the Mon ministers and officials who submitted to him were not condemned or punished but were granted insignias of rank and fiefs by the King.²³

After the successful war against Ayutthaya, Tabinshwehti made the King of Ayutthaya present the yearly customs revenue of the port of Taninthayi. In the same manner, Bayinnaung, after his victory against Ayutthaya in 1564, ordered the King of Ayutthaya to send to his court yearly thirty war elephants, 300 viss of silver and particularly the customs revenues of Taninthayi. Thus the Kings of Hanthawaddy did not directly administer the regions which they annexed into their political domain but instead had local rulers and chiefs continued their rule under the authority of the King of Hanthawaddy.²⁴ Bayinnaung in 1557 boasted that he controlled the states of Taungoo, Bago, Pyay, Bagan, Inwa and the Shans. Nonetheless, these states continued to exist as separate polities. Annexation simply meant placing on the throne either the former rulers or new nominees who were tributary to Hanthawaddy.²⁵

The subordinate rulers also had the obligation of providing soldiers to be used in war in numbers fixed by the King. The King of Hanthawaddy appointed governors of vassal states from the chief families of the respective states, and thus exerted indirect control over the manpower in distant areas. The governors who came from local ruling families would already have ties of

²³ Kala, *the Great Chronicle*, Vol.II, p.148

²⁴ Dr.Sunait Chutintaranond, "Mergui and Tenasserim as Leading Port Cities in the Context of Autonomous History", *Port Cities and Trade in Western Southeast Asia*, Bangkok, Chulalongkorn University, 1998, p.12 (Hereafter cited as Sunait Chutintaranond, Mergui and Tenasserian)

²⁵ Victor B. Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles. Anarchy and Conquest, c.1580-1760*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984, p.33 (Hereafter cited as Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*)

widespread patronage and manpower networks in their states, and this enabled them to raise men at the King's request in time of war.²⁶

Through the period of the rule of Myanmar Kings, the relations between central government and local government were cemented by consecrated water ceremoniously drunk as a symbol of loyalty (thitsayay). This was the most binding tie in the relationship between the central government and the provincial government. Beyond these ties of loyalty, sons of rulers of distant provinces were made to live in the capital to deter rebellion on the part of these rulers. There were also marriage ties between Governors and daughters of the King.²⁷ At the capital the sons of the provincial rulers were taught the art of administration. They were appointed as rulers of their respective provinces on the death of their father. However, poor internal communication and the task of subordinating so many formerly independent principalities to a single centre created difficulties in maintaining a lasting relationship between the centre and the peripheral provinces.

During the reign of Nandabayin, royal relatives continued to administer the chief provinces as governors as in the reign of Bayinnaung. Thus Thadominsaw, son-in-law of Bayinnaung and governor of Inwa, Thado Dhammayaza, brother of Bayinnaung and governor of Pyay, Mingaung, brother of Bayinnaung and governor of Taungoo, Minye Nandameik, son of Bayinnaung and governor of Nyaungyan, Thrithudhammayaza, son of Bayinnaung and governor of Mottama, Nawrahtaminsaw, son of Bayinnaung and governor of Chiang Mai continued to administer their territories as before. Nandabayin also appointed his sons and brothers to the administration of the provinces. The practice of having royal relatives as governors in the chief provinces and to give them a great measure of independence helped to strengthen the military might of the Kingdom when the rulers of these provinces were in agreement with the King. However, if they became estranged, it could lead to a weakening and the destruction of the Kingdom. Since Nandabayin was not able to maintain cordial relations with his uncles and brothers who were powerful militarily, the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy disintegrated.

²⁶ Sunait Chutintaranond, *Mergui and Tenasserim*, p-12

²⁷ Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, p-34

The Kingdom of Hanthawaddy lasted sixty years from Tabinshwehti's capture of it until Nandabayin's deposition. Each reign ended with major revolts and disturbances.²⁸ It was because of the wide extent of the Kingdom, the inclusion of many nationalities and the presence of many different traditional customs and religious beliefs. Moreover, the rulers of the provinces were independent and powerful and drinking the water allegiance did not provide a strong enough bond binding them to the King.

Because the three successive Kings of Hanthawaddy, Tabinshwehti, Bayinnaung and Nandabayin built up the Kingdom mainly on the basis of military power, they gave priority to the development of military power. To fight many wars in which the Kingdom was involved, they organized the army systematically by recruiting many new soldiers. But the army was not a standing army. It was made up of troops contributed by governors when the need for military action arose. When there was such a need, governors recruited and mobilized ordinary farmers (who were acquainted with art of war) as soldiers to fight in the campaigns.

The Kings of Hanthawaddy maintained a strict military discipline and honoured those who successfully accomplished their military tasks while punishing those who failed to do so. For example, in the Ayuttha campaign of 1568, Bayinnaung executed his loyal commanders Banyasat and Sawtainghan for failing to carry out their military assignments.²⁹ Though the Kings of Hanthawaddy severely punished those who failed in their military assignments, they pardoned those enemies who had exceptional abilities. After the annexation of Mottama, Tabinshwehti pardoned Saw Banya, the Governor of Mottama, and giving him insignia of office, reappointed him Governor of Mottama. Bayinnaung also granted a pardon to the Mon minister Banya Dala who had a strong Mon nationalist sentiment and made several attempts on his life because Banya Dala was a minister of great ability.³⁰

²⁸ Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, p-66

²⁹ Kala, the Great Chronicle, Vol.II, p.314

³⁰ U Tin, *Uawmfwrw;ESifh jrefrmrif;tkyfcSKyfyHkpmwrf;ESifh bdk;awmfbk&m;BuD;\ &mZowfac:aom trdefUawmfwrw;BuD;* (Treatise on Administrative Pattern of Myanmar King and King Bodawphaya's Royal Order Known as Yazathat), Vol.III, Yangon, Baho Press 1970, p.34

The military operations conducted by the Kings of Hanthawaddy were without compare in that period. The Kings of Hanthawaddy spent most of their time in the battlefield waging war to expand their Kingdom or suppressing the rebellion of vassal states. Despite the great territorial expansion of the Kingdom, the Kings were not able to develop an effective administrative system to control and hold together their vast empire. In particular, there was no permanent army under the direct control of the King; the troops were recruited and mobilized by provincial governors. Since these provincial governors remained powerful and were only bound to the King by their oath of loyalty, there was not much stability within the Kingdom and there were opportunities for rebellion. For these reasons the Hanthawaddy Kingdom was short-lived and lasted only three generations.

Economic Causes

The basic economy of the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy was agriculture and there was enough fertile land for the cultivation of crops in the whole country, especially in the capital city, in Taungoo and in Inwa. The Hanthawaddy Kingdom included a delta region which had many creeks and streams, received a lot of rainfall; the soil was fertile and the cultivation of paddy was very good.

Though the people of Hanthawaddy were normally quite well off, benefiting from the cultivation of their fields, they sometimes had to face such natural disasters as drought, flood or heavy rainfall. Sometimes, due to torrential rains, flood destroyed the fields.³¹ Sometimes, due to drought, farmers could not plant a crop. As the basic economy of the Kingdom was agriculture, the Kings of Hanthawaddy encouraged farmers in the growing of their crops. Bayinnaung issued an order that for six months of the year, from Nayon to Tazaungmon (lunar months of Myanmar) there was to be no crime and that officers were not to summon farmers for judgement of their crimes. This order, mounted on the head of a royal elephant, was proclaimed with the beating of drums.³²

³¹ Nawaday, *ဝေဝေဝေဝေဝေဝေဝေဝေဝေ* (Anthology of Nawaday Yada Poetry), Yangon, Hanthawaddy Press, 1964, p.141

³² Maung Ba Kya, "Life of Bayinnaung", *JBR*, Vol. X, Part III, p.118

Despite the King's encouragement of the cultivation of rice, since the whole period of Hanthawaddy was full of wars, large numbers of cultivators were pressed into military and corvee service even during the growing season. Rice could not be grown in the fertile delta without men to plant it. Yet, despite the reduced labour available in the delta, the government refused to reduce its demand for rice, or for corvee labour and military service. There were increased demands for rice and various services during times of war, so the burden on the remaining cultivators increased.³³

In 1566 and the next two to four years, Bayinnaung concentrated labour in the capital for elaborate building projects and rice shortages in Hanthawaddy pushed prices to exceptionally high levels. Famines occurred because too many people were concentrated in Hanthawaddy. Later in 1593, after the Crown Prince's forces were defeated in the Ayutthaya campaign, Nandabayin sought to prepare fresh invasions, but many men fled into the jungle or to neighbouring provinces and other youths entered monkhood to avoid royal demands. Soon the country districts were thick with vagabonds. With some agricultural districts practically deserted, the price of rice, already inflated, reached absurd levels. In 1595 the new Crown Prince, Minyekyawswa, had men work two or three thousand yokes buffalos to produce rice for his private granaries. He stored the crop, and made the people buy from him alone. Moreover, in 1596 a plague of field rats swarmed on to the royal granaries destroying much of the remaining food stocks. The royal retainers, armed with swords and spears failed to stop the rats and starvation threatened even the King's servicemen at Thanlyin and Bago. One basket of rice came to cost one viss of copper.³⁴The price going up nearly six times. Monks and nuns throughout the whole Kingdom had to live on just a bowl of thin rice gruel a day.

Because Bayinnaung expanded the Kingdom and brought many war captives to Hanthawaddy, the capital was crowded with people of diverse nations and abounding with everything necessary for human life, pomp, festivity, gold, silver, perfumes and wealth of precious stones, especially

³³ Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, p.39

³⁴ Kala, *the Great Chronicle*, Vol.III, p.96

rubies.³⁵ The majority of the people lived by farming and the cultivation of crops. Some artisans and other craftsmen contributed to the development of the Kingdom with their skills and talent. Foreign trade flourished and the King obtained increased revenue from trade in addition to that from agriculture. The Kings of Hanthawaddy were therefore wealthy while the citizens also lived comfortable lives when there were no wars.³⁶ The country lay open to every stranger, Moor, Turk, European to make themselves master of its fertile fields and the rich commerce. But the Kingdom came to a pitiful end. During Nandabayin's reign, he dragged people from all over the country to populate Hanthawaddy. He also branded the Mons on the right hand with their name, rank and villages; those who were too old for service were sent to Upper Myanmar, and sold in exchange for horses. He instituted a reign of terror among the Mons, executing them wholesale, and he horrified all by killing the pariah dogs in Bago.³⁷ Mons in large numbers fled to Rakhine and Thailand. The final ruin of Hanthawaddy was brought about by the decline of agriculture and the disunity which developed in the reign of Nandabayin.³⁸

Conclusion

In conclusion, Tabinshwehti occupied Hanthawaddy in 1539. He attempted to create a united kingdom in which there was no discrimination. Following Tabinshwehti's death, the Kingdom fell into disarray. Bayinnaung was able to unify the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy and extend it into the largest Kingdom in Southeast Asia at that time. But Nandabayin could not control his nucleus of manpower. Despite the great territorial expansion of the Kingdom, the Kings were not able to develop an effective administrative system to control and hold together their vast empire. In particular, there was no permanent army under the direct control of the King. The final ruin of

³⁵ A. Macgregor, "A Brief Account of the Kingdom of Pegu", *JBR*, Vol.XVI, Part II, 1926, p.1

³⁶ U Toe Hla, [Hom0wDqifjzL½Sif ta&awmfyHkarmfuGef;O'gef; (The Recorded utterance of the campaigns of HanthawaddyHsinbyushin), Yangon, Myanmar Historical Commission, 2006, p.si()

³⁷ Harvey, *History of Burma*, p.180

³⁸ *Ibid*, p183

Hanthawaddy was brought about by the decline of agriculture and the disunity which developed in the reign of Nandabayin.

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