

The *Sittan* of Monè (Mäng Nai): Shan Principality and Nyaungyan Burma, 1633-1763

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Abstract

Conventional historiography of Burma (Myanmar) has it that Bayinnaung's laissez-faire policy towards the Shan States based on a tributary relationship continued to be maintained by succeeding Nyaungyan kings, and attempts at political integration of the Shan areas into the Burmese empire began in the early years of the subsequent Konbaung dynasty. However, an official Burmese document called *sittan*, submitted to the Konbaung court by the Shan principality of Monè (Mäng Nai) in 1763, reveals that it was actually early Nyaungyan monarchs who, while instituting broad and definitive changes in the provincial organization of the Burmese lowlands in the first half of the 17th century, introduced some administrative innovations to the Shan uplands, thereby transforming the Prince of Monè, locally known as the "Lord of Heaven," into a mere subject of the Avan monarch.¹

Introduction

"Considering the size of Burma and its pivotal importance within the interstate system of mainland Southeast Asia," argued Professor Victor Lieberman more than thirty years ago (1984: 8), "precolonial Burmese history as a whole suffered from scholarly neglect." He further emphasized that the period of Nyaungyan Burma "has been particularly ignored," and thus only a few Western-language articles on the era have appeared.² While this academic tendency, hopefully, may have changed favorably

¹ I agree with Christian Daniels (2012: 148n) on "calling ethnic groups by their own names," and "shun[ning] this exonym [Shan] in favor of their autonym, Tay." Nevertheless, I use "Shan" and "Monè," instead of "Tay" and "Mäng Nai," throughout this article, as it is based on the document written in the Burmese, not Tay, language. I therefore do not reconstruct original Tay words—official titles and ranks, personal names, and toponyms—from the Burmese equivalents in the *sittan*. For the Romanization of words of Tay origin, I basically (but not strictly) follow the suggestions of Shintani (2000).

² Not particularly, though. The post-Pagan period has been equally, if not more, neglected by scholars, and thus "represents a significant gap in Myanmar's history, yet to see a single book-

since then, one thing still remains the same: scholarly neglect of the administrative organization in the Shan States under Nyaungyan Burma.³ Than Tun, one of the most revered historians, native or foreign, of Burma, wrote one of the “few Western-language articles” on the era, titled “Administration under King Thalun 1629-48” (1987). As his focus is on describing various aspects of Burmese society *per se* under the rule of Thalun, the essay has no reference to native administration in the Shan Highlands. Meanwhile, Lieberman, in Chapter Two of his broad and in-depth study, undoubtedly the best English work on the period, spent only four out of seventy-five pages on the subject, although acknowledging that the Shan Hills and other highland regions constituted more than a half of the Nyaungyan realm (1984: 130-4).⁴ Political control over the vast area of the Shan world as a military recruitment ground and the source of forest luxuries must have been a wheel of pivotal importance in the “Burmese administrative cycles.”

The scholarly neglect is, however, due more to the scarcity of historical documents (in addition to the physical and psychological inaccessibility to the region under the military regime) than to lack of academic interest. Burmese and Shan (and other Tai) records, in the form of inscriptions, chronicles, or governmental documents, and European observations on Nyaungyan policy toward the Shan States are fairly limited in quantity as well as in quality,⁵ which has long deterred scholars from exploring the issue. Meanwhile, as few surviving records suggest that any remarkable reform of the political organization in the Shan Highlands was introduced by Nyaungyan leaders, it has been conventionally concluded that it was the succeeding Konbaung monarchs who embarked upon a major program of administrative integration of the Shan States into the Burmese empire.

However, at the same time, the administratively innovative character of the early Nyaungyan kings and the politically conservative nature of the first Konbaung dynasts have been also well known.⁶ The first half-century of the Nyaungyan period (neatly corresponding to the first half of the 17th century) was the turning point in the institutional history of monarchical Burma.⁷ It was a “highly important stage in Burmese political development,” during which the “final shape of the Burmese state and

length monograph in English” (Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin 2012: 107).

³ A recent work on Burmese history by the Aung-Thwins (2012) reserves a chapter for the Nyaungyan era. However, because of its nature, their study concentrates on describing a general, court-oriented history, rather than providing a detailed analysis of a particular administrative issue on the imperial periphery.

⁴ Furthermore, Lieberman does not distinguish Shan from Tai Yuan (called *Yun* in Burmese) of Lan Na, collectively labeling them “Tai.” Thus, strictly speaking, only three pages are spent on the Nyaungyan administrative policy toward the Shan States. Throughout monarchical Burma, the two were separately treated, in terms of administration, by each dynasty.

⁵ For example, to the best of my knowledge, virtually no Shan chronicles written before the 19th century survive to this day. Neither do lithic records in the Shan language.

⁶ Lieberman describes (1984: 110) Alaunghpaya’s administration as “highly conservative,” and concludes (264), “He left the structure of Restored Toungoo [i.e. Nyaungyan] administration basically intact.” This conservativeness is also referred to by Taylor (2009: 20).

⁷ Taylor remarks (19), “From the early seventeenth century onward the state in Burma changed its nature and structural relationships, as well as its bases of stability and power.”

administration was established" (BSTN: 19).⁸ Furthermore, a "long-term trend toward centralization" that would continue under the next dynasty truly began (Lieberman 1984: 14; Taylor 2009: 21).⁹ This inevitably makes one wonder if the "relationship between the center and the vassal principalities appears to have remained unchanged" in the Nyaungyan era;¹⁰ and the succeeding Konbaung monarchs, who would "follow Taung-ngu [i.e. Nyaungyan] political organization with only minor modifications until the mid-nineteenth century" (BSTN: 19), originally and successfully "translated their interest into systematic administrative reform" by their own initiatives. Apparently, herein lies a contradiction.

This article, largely drawing on the heretofore unstudied material, *sittan* written by courtiers of Monè (Mäng Nai), a Shan principality to the southeast of the Burmese capital, will attempt a preliminary and general observation on the administrative policy of Ava toward the Shan States, thereby unraveling the contradictory accounts prevalent in the conventional historiography of "early modern" Nyaungyan Burma.

The document: Burmese *sittans*

Literally meaning "a record of an inquiry," and essentially "a statement by the official in charge of a particular jurisdiction," *sittans* are valuable documents for the study of Burmese history, as they are a mine of information on the lineage of headmen, boundaries, customary taxes and services, administrative and social organizations of the jurisdiction, usually not featured in dynastic records and chronicles mostly centered on kingly events (BSTN: 5; cf. ROB I: 80). While *sittans* are a "longstanding feature of Burmese administration" (BSTN: 51), the oldest dating back to the late 14th century, and a number of the documents were probably produced by successive dynasties,¹¹ those *sittans* from the reign of Thalun, the third monarch of the Nyaungyan dynasty, became exemplary with their extensiveness and thoroughness. Consequently, Thalun's work would be used as a model by later Burmese monarchs, especially Hsinbyushin and Bodawhpaya of the succeeding Konbaung dynasty.¹² Bodawhpaya's inquest of 1802 was the last major program by a Burmese king, while his successors including Thibaw, the last king of Burma deposed by the British in 1885, continued to conduct surveys on a far smaller scale (55).

⁸ Abbreviations of frequently cited materials are shown at the end of the article.

⁹ Lieberman also argues (1984: 64), "The formal structures and associated ideologies of Thalun's reign continued throughout the Toungoo [i.e. Nyaungyan] period and into the early Konbaung era."

¹⁰ Taylor states (2009: 23), "When these tributaries [Shan and other hill peoples] posed no serious threat to the central state, [Nyaungyan] kings allowed them to conduct their affairs undisturbed." Meanwhile, Lieberman notes, "Royal interest [of Nyaungyan monarchs] was never translated into systematic administrative reform, and the structure of tributary relations remained basically unaltered from Bayinnaung's day" (1984: 131), thus concluding, "This region [the Shan Highlands and other hilly areas] saw very few administrative innovations [during the Nyaungyan period]" (65).

¹¹ The ZOK contains many *sittans* with various dates from the Nyaungyan era, while the ROB (II: 60) specifically refers to kingdom-wide surveys of 1637, 1649, and 1692.

¹² Most of their *sittans* are included in the BSTN.

The *sittan* of Monè (*List* 50, #2), though unsatisfactory without detailed accounts on the local history and society, and apparently fragmentary with the last pages missing, is nevertheless quantitatively and qualitatively rare, thus a very valuable and interesting source material for historical research. Compared to *sittans* from lowland Burmese districts, those from the Shan uplands during the Konbaung period are disproportionately scarce, only a few of them available in the BSTN.¹³ The BSTN supposes that the Shan were exempted from submitting the records by annually sending tribute to the Avan king and occasionally providing auxiliaries for the Burmese army, which accounts for the scarcity of Shan *sittans*.¹⁴

However, we know at least two kingdom-wide inquests including the Shan Highlands were conducted by Thalun in the 1630s and Minyè-kyawdin in the 1690s (ROB I: 79-80; II: 61-3).¹⁵ The former attempt, as an exemplar, was followed in the succeeding Konbaung period. Furthermore, several population summaries and lists of military servicemen in the Shan States were intermittently collected by Konbaung monarchs, in 1790, 1816, 1820, 1827, 1836, and 1855 (*List* 11, #16), which must have been, partially or entirely, based on *sittans* or other related documents prepared by the Shan leaders.¹⁶ It seems more likely that Konbaung *sittans* of the Shan States were lost, rather than never submitted, and, except for those few contained in the BSTN, the *sittan* of Monè is the only surviving one among them.

The royal inquest that produced the *sittan* of Monè was conducted in 1763, during the last months of the three and a half-year reign of Naungdawgyi, the second king of the Konbaung dynasty. His short reign has been customarily thought administratively and militarily far less productive than those of his father and predecessor, Alaung-hpaya, the founder of the dynasty, and of his successor, Hsinbyushin, the conqueror of Ayutthaya,¹⁷ as the young king was largely occupied with internal battles with other crown contenders (Koenig 1990: 192-9; Yi Yi 1979: 114). No records, royal edicts, dynastic chronicles, or accounts of European observers, indicate that the impaired monarch ever followed the precedent of Thalun to set on an extensive inquest of his realm. However, the *sittan* of Monè, surviving from the reign of Naungdawgyi, at least attests he actually attempted to conduct land surveys, though on an unknown scale, the result of which has yet to be

¹³ Only three *sittans*, all from the “western Shan” domains of Wuntho and Tein-ngyin, can be found in the BSTN (363-70; 379-80).

¹⁴ Shan areas were probably excluded from the royal inquests by Hsinbyushin and Bodawhpaya, as the edict of 1785 (ROB IV: 110), concerning the correction of mistakes in the *sittans* of 1764, 1765, and 1783, has no reference to Shan rulers as the recipient of the royal order that included officers and leaders of many crown service groups and organizations, as well as headmen of various towns and villages.

¹⁵ Monè was included in both inquests. ROB (II: 60) also refers to another inquiry made by King Pindale in 1649. ZOK contains several *sittans*, mainly collected during the first three Nyaungyan reigns, from the Shan realm, although the historical accuracy of the ZOK “was impaired by the circumstances of its compilation” (Lieberman 1984: 294).

¹⁶ Indeed, Bodawhpaya ordered Momeik (Mäng Mit) to submit a list of the population in 1810 (ROB VI: 206).

¹⁷ Therefore the Aung-Thwings in their general history of Burma spend only a half line to describe Naungdawgyi, “Alaunghpaya’s son and crown prince who died peacefully” (2012: 160).

found unlike those made by his younger brothers, Hsinbyushin and Bodawhpaya.

If the Monè *sittan* was collected exclusively and independently, it might have had something to do with the Burmese expedition against the then autonomous polity of Lan Na, which had successfully ended nine days before the Monè officials made the statement (KBZ I: 337, 343).¹⁸ As the end of Lan Na pacification came in sight, the Konbaung monarch found it imperative to secure administrative control over the Shan dependency, a major forward base for military operation against the trans-Salween Tai world and, with a logical southward sequence, Ayutthaya. In the reverse direction, Monè was the first major stockade from Lan Na. If the trans-Salween region had fallen to Ayutthaya, then, Monè could have become a frontier town, through which the Siamese troops advancing on the Burmese heartland would surely march.

Meanwhile there is also some possibility that the *sittan* of Monè was produced by a larger inquiring project, to which the *sittan* of Wuntho contained in the BSTN may also belong.¹⁹ The statement in the *sittan* of Wuntho (BSTN: 363) was made on 11 January 1764, a little more than a month after the ascension of Hsinbyushin to the throne. The new king might have taken over, with the throne, the administrative endeavor that had been suspended by the death of his brother. Alternately, as there seems to have been no pressing need for the new crown to rush into collecting *sittans* from the countryside, the royal agents who made the inquiries in Wuntho might have been dispatched from the capital while Naungdawgyi was still on the throne, and the *sittan* of Wuntho was the result of a larger census operation, to which the *sittan* of Monè also belonged.

Although the short-lived king was busy suppressing rebellions, first by his younger brother, the future King Hsinbyushin, then by the able general of Alaung-hpaya, and lastly by his uncle, the latter half of his three and a half-year reign was peaceful and thus uneventful.²⁰ Having established himself at the capital with much leisure time and human as well as material resources at his disposal, and well aware of his lack of the military prowess possessed by his illustrious father and support from his ministers and generals (Koenig 1990: 194-8),²¹ Naungdawgyi had to prove himself an able leader. He thus launched a military expedition against Lan Na, probably as part of preparations for a far larger campaign to Ayutthaya, which even his charismatic father had not managed to achieve.²² It would be a logical choice for Naungdawgyi, so young and willing, to embark upon an administrative mission modeled on that of another cerebrated Burmese king, Thalun. However, his untimely, sudden death denied him the credit he would have

¹⁸ As Monè had already accepted Burmese vassalage in 1755, the royal inquiry of 1763 was not aimed at procuring necessary statistics of a newly acquired territory.

¹⁹ Wuntho (Wen-sä in Shan; lit. City of Tiger), a Shan domain of *sawbwa*-ship at that time, lay within easy reach from Shwebo, the homeland of the Konbaung Dynasty.

²⁰ KBZ spends less than two pages (I: 337-9) on the period, merely referring to Naungdawgyi's lavish donations to Buddhist institutions and dispatch of the military campaign across the Salween.

²¹ He managed though to defeat the challenges of all the crown contenders.

²² It is not clear why Alaunghpaya so hastily engaged in his campaign to Ayutthaya, rather than pacifying Lan Na first and then resorting to a "classic north-south pincer operation," already tested and proved so successful by Bayinnaung two hundred years earlier.

deserved, and left his attempts abortive, making his reign one of the shortest and most insignificant among the Konbaung monarchs.²³

In addition to the rarity value of the *sittan* itself, its contents are also fairly valuable, for the document belongs to the category of primary source. It is based on the statement presented by the Shan themselves, whose own historical observations cannot be found in any other records, with old Shan chronicles virtually all lost now. Covering the lineage of hereditary rulers of Monè from the Nyaungyan to the early Konbaung periods, with some references to a set of Burmese appointive officials deployed at the Shan principality, whose appointment and function are not recorded in dynastic sources, this *sittan* surely casts new light on the administrative measures taken by the successive Burmese dynasties toward the Shan periphery. This shall be discussed in due course.

Monè (Mäng Nai)

Monè was a Shan principality governed by the hereditary ruler called *sawbwa* (*caopha* in Shan; lit. Lord of Heaven), who was one of the “*ko-sawbwa*” (*nine-sawbwas*), a customary Nyaungyan term reserved for the lords of nine major Shan domains (LBHK: *passim*; cf. HMN III: 152; ROB III: 89).²⁴ Located in the middle of the main route connecting the heartland of Burma to the trans-Salween Tai world, including the kingdom of Lan Na, then under Burmese suzerainty, the highland *sawbwa*-ship was strategically highly important to Nyaungyan monarchs. According to the chronicle account, Monè took Burmese vassalage for the first time in 1557 when King Bayinnaung, the “Victor of the Ten Directions,” on his way to Lan Na arrived at the city (UK II: 307-12; Ann-CMC: 261). The tributary relationship probably ceased in the 1590s, during the reign of Nandabayin, the son and successor to Bayinnaung, when the inorganically extended empire was rapidly disintegrating with one prince (or *bayin*) after another declaring his independence from and going into rebellion against the center, Pegu.

While Lower Burma was in turmoil with Toungoo, Prome, Arakan and even Ayutthaya under King Naresuan challenging Peguan supremacy, a ruler of Nyaungyan (a middle-sized domain on the southern fringe of the Central Plain), another son of Bayinnaung by an inferior queen, pacified the rice-growing Burmese heartland of Upper Burma and secured demographic resources relatively unaffected by the recent social disturbances of the waning dynasty. Consequently he established a royal line of his own

²³ According to Koenig (1990: 198), “There is no evidence to suggest ill health and some to indicate physical vigor [of Naungdawgyi],” thus “there is at least some possibility that he was poisoned by his brother [Hsinbyushin].”

²⁴ A royal order of 1605 (ROB I: 181) relates that Nyaungyan Min, the founder of the dynasty, appointed the *nine-sawbwas*, although the reliability of this order is rather low. Meanwhile, Alaung-hpaya, in an official letter to the British authority in India, claimed his suzerainty over the *ko-sawbwa* (ROB III: 92). The other eight *sawbwas* were those of: Kale in the Upper Chindwin; Mohnyin (Mäng Yang), Mogaung (Mäng König), Bhamo (Man Mö) in the Upper Irrawaddy; Momeik (Mäng Mit) in the Shweli valley; Hsenwi (Sænwi), Hsipaw (Sipö) in the highlands to the east of Ava; Yawngwe (Yönghui), western neighbor of Monè, in the highlands to the southeast of Ava.

at Ava in 1600.²⁵ Nyaungyan Min's first act as a champion of Upper Burma was to launch a series of military campaigns to the Shan Highlands, as part of a further manpower search for upcoming expeditions against Lower Burma.²⁶ First Mohnyin and Mogaung to the north in the Upper Irrawaddy; next Yawng'hwe in the southeastern Highlands; then Bhamo in the Upper Irrawaddy; followed by Monè and surrounding domains in the southeastern Highlands; then Mogaung again; and finally Hsenwi with Hsipaw and Momeik in the eastern Highlands, all fell to the Avan forces that, with each victory, were augmented with fresh Shan auxiliaries (UK III: 118-35). However, immediately after the death of Nyaungyan Min in early 1606 on his way back from the Hsenwi campaign, Monè, perhaps allied to King Naresuan of Ayutthaya, showed its restiveness, attempting to invade Ava, though unsuccessfully (Ann-CMC: 267n).

Probably soon after the failed attempt, Monè accepted Avan suzerainty again, as a contingent from the Shan domain was enlisted in a Nyaungyan expedition against Toungoo, the rival center of Ava, in 1609 (UK III: 148).²⁷ Yet again, Monè defied the Nyaungyan monarch when the *sawbwa* with his men deserted from the Burmese army on campaign to Lan Na in 1614, fleeing to the Upper Mekong region where they were stationed with a force of Lao aid (174).²⁸ Never forgetting his grudge against the Monè *sawbwa*, Anauk-hpetlun ordered in 1622 his younger brother and generals to capture the fugitive lord still stationed along the Mekong, as a result of which the restive *sawbwa* was finally taken down to the palace of Anauk-hpetlun in Pegu (184-5).²⁹ This is the necessary historical background of Monè, with which the following shall be read.

The content of the *sittan* and analysis

Introductory statement

1) On 11 waxing Tawthalin of the year 1125 (2 September 1763), Monè *sawbwa-amat* [chief councilor of the *sawbwa*], Saing Hèlon, born 5, age 60, and *sa-yei* [secretary], Saing Tamaing, born 4, age 30, being examined concerning the boundaries, lists, the lineage of the hereditary rulers, the new year and end of Lent homage presents to the king, and the customary procedure of the obsequies for the *sawbwa* and of the succession to office, stated:

²⁵ While the Aung-Thwans (2012: 143) call this dynasty the “Second Ava (Inwa)” and Lieberman (1984: 48) the “Restored Toungoo,” I choose the “Nyaungyan,” the term also common in traditional historiography of Burma, for it is less lengthy than the former two. Than Tun, a renowned Burmese historian, also prefers “Nyaungyan,” though spelling it “Nyaung Yan” (ROB I: ix).

²⁶ In addition, he was in search of luxurious trade items, such as amber and rubies, on which he would declare a monopoly (ROB I: 9).

²⁷ Note that the HMN (III: 152) lists no Monè contingent, although it refers to the *ko-sawbwa* (*nine-sawbwas*) in the expedition, while the YT (III: 31) mentions the Monè *sawbwa* enlisted in the campaign.

²⁸ The *sawbwa* first returned home, where he rounded up people, treasure, horses and elephants, then crossed the Salween again to the east.

²⁹ The chronicle furnishes no information on his fate. Given the depth and length of the grudge born by Anauk-hpetlun, it is very unlikely that the *sawbwa* was ever pardoned to return home alive.

As explained above, the statement was made during the reign of Naungdawgyi, whose administrative endeavor to carry out a kingdom-wide survey has so far been unknown, thereby making it unclear whether the Monè *sittan* was collected as part of a larger census operation or taken independently. In either case, it must have been closely associated with the Burmese expedition against Lan Na, which had just been successfully completed nine days before the statement was made. Administrative control over Monè, with its strategic and logistic significance, was now far more crucial than in the previous reign.

Accounts on the Lineage of Rulers

2) In the year 995 (1633/34) La Hkan was appointed *sawbwa* of Monè [by the king]. In the year 998 (1636/37) La Hkan came to take charge of Monè. *Sikès* were appointed and dispatched from the capital. [They were:] Let Ywei; *Hkaing Hmu*; and Nga Kyawsan of the Shan Cavalry Bloodbond Brotherhood.³⁰

The appointment of La Hkan as *sawbwa* was definitely made by King Thalun, who had just successfully completed his military campaign in and around Lan Na in February 1633 (UK III: 209; Ann-CMC: 272-3). With his control over the trans-Salween region secured, and his plan to transfer the capital from Pegu to Ava,³¹ the third Nyaungyan monarch then established a new *sawbwa*-ship at Monè, the gateway to Lan Na, because the local ruling house had been evacuated and dissolved due to the battle with the Burmese in the previous decade, as seen above.

As the statement begins with the appointment of La Hkan, he was probably the founder of a new line of the hereditary ruler in Monè.³² Another *sittan* of Monè dated 1692 testifies, “The foundation of the present city [of Monè] was established by La Hkan” (ROB II: 286). He was the founding father of both the new local dynasty and the city itself. Despite his founding effort, however, La Hkan’s profile before (actually even after) taking over the *sawbwa*-ship, including his connection with the previous ruling house and his qualities that made Thalun nominate him as a new ruler, is unknown.³³ A three-year interregnum between 1633 and 1636, when La Hkan was appointed *sawbwa* and when he actually came to Monè to take over the office, indicates that before deployed to the highland principality, he first had to serve at the Avan court to be acquainted with

³⁰ Although Let Ywei and *Hkaing Hmu* do not sound like complete Burmese names (actually the latter is merely an official rank rather than a proper name), my translation strictly follows the original text.

³¹ Thalun “had made clear his determination to dwell at Ava as early as November 1629” (Lieberman 1984: 58). The transfer of the Nyaungyan capital by Thalun in 1635 also enhanced the strategic importance of Monè as a staging point for the trans-Salween campaigns from the new capital in Upper Burma. From Pegu in the Delta, eastern expeditions to Lan Na would have taken a more southern route through the Karen Hills, entirely bypassing Monè.

³² *Sittans*, including those from the Shan areas, usually bear information on the lineage of the hereditary ruler, from the founder to the present one who was making the statement. See the Shan *sittans* of Wuntho and Tein-ngyin in the BSTN (367, 379).

³³ He might have been recruited from another Shan domain to be installed on the throne of Monè, not an uncommon political measure taken, though not freely and widely practiced, by Burmese monarchs.

Burmese political protocol and the Nyaungyan monarch himself, who sought to forge a personal bond with the future ruler of a remote dependency.³⁴

The appointment of the *sitkè* in the text is of much historiographic interest and importance, as few records from the Nyaungyan era, none on Monè, refer to the Burmese official deployed to the Shan areas.³⁵ Consequently, it has been customarily assumed that assignment of the *sitkè* to the Shan States was initiated by the Konbaung monarchs (cf. Taylor 2009: 35). The *sittan* of Monè thus reveals that the early Nyaungyan leaders had already instituted the practice a century and a half before the conventional dating. Before discussing the Monè *sitkè*, we shall first look at normal functions of the *sitkè* in general.

Literally meaning “military leader,” before the 17th century the title was conferred upon high-ranking military officers.³⁶ The early Nyaungyan leaders bestowed new tasks on the *sitkè*, when they introduced a series of innovative administrative measures to the lowlands of Burma. The *sitkè* of the Nyaungyan period became a deputy to the *myowun* (a centrally-appointed governor of the provincial center of Burma proper), and came to take charge of police and military affairs. Besides the *sitkè*, also serving under a *myowun* were *sayeis* (secretaries), *nahkans* (royal spies), and other minor functionaries (Lieberman 1984: 116; BSTN: 38; Taylor 2009: 34-5).³⁷

Domains of *myowun*-ship had formerly been held as appanages by *bayins*, sub-kings, who were sons and brothers of Bayinnaung and Nandabayin, the High Kings, and who would eventually challenge central authority, ultimately leading to the demise of the Toungoo Empire. The first Nyaungyan kings, having learned crucial lessons from the previous dynasty, replaced these *bayins* with *myowuns*, thereby transforming restive sub-kings into mere governors (Lieberman 1984: 114n). The systematic deployment of a set of crown officials to major lowland cities thus brought a “profound effect on the nature of royal politics” and constituted a “highly important stage in Burmese political development” (BSTN: 19). It was the turning point in the institutional history of the state in Burma.³⁸

³⁴ This practice seems to have originated in Bayinnaung’s conquest of the entire Shan realm in the late 1550s, when he sent scions of the subjugated *sawbwas* to Pegu (UK II: 303, 317). The LBHK explains the procedure of inheritance when a *sawbwa* died in his own country while his son or younger brother, an heir-presumptive, stayed under the “royal golden sole” in Ava. The custom would last until the very end of the Burmese monarchy itself.

³⁵ The *sitkè* of Hsenwi is frequently mentioned in the LBHK (11, 89, 90, 104, 268). Unsatisfactorily, in each case, the *sitkè*, along with the *sawbwa*, is mentioned merely as a recipient of royal orders and ministerial correspondence, without any description of his identity, function, or any other details.

³⁶ The royal order of 1638 (ROB I: 107) defines *sitkè* as a chief of 100 soldiers. However, this definition seems an exception to the Burmese military tradition, as records from both before and after the 17th century suggest that the *sitkè* held a much higher position. Thus, for example, a main Burmese force of 10,000 on an expedition (with another four forces consisting of 320,000 troops) against Monè in 1557 was led by Bayinnaung, under whom a *sitkè* and a *tat-hmu* (lit. military chief) were serving (UK II: 306). In any case, *sitkè* is usually defined, “the deputy commander on an expedition” (BSTN: xvi), or “second-in-command of a military unit” (Myanmar 1998: 118).

³⁷ Under the Konbaung administration, two *sitkès* were deployed at major cities of Burma proper, one at middle-sized ones, and none at minor ones (MMOK IV: 104).

³⁸ BSTN aptly concludes, “The final shape of the Burmese state and administration was established

Now back to the Monè *sitkè* of the 1630s. Given the above-mentioned administratively innovative character of the early Nyaungyan monarchs, it is hard to regard the deployment of the *sitkè* to the highland principality as a separate practice from that applied to the provincial capitals of lowland Burma. It will make more sense to consider them a parallel phenomenon. If we could generalize from the Konbaung source (MMOK IV: 113), the Monè *sitkè* of the 17th century was, besides the traditional function of a garrison leader,³⁹ also assigned an advisory, if not supervisory, role in the *sawbwa*'s council.

As crown agents in the highland administration outside the zone of direct Burmese control, a *sitkè*'s function was also comparable to that of *nahkans*, "royal ears," who were posted at lowland gubernatorial centers, and "bore primary responsibility for monitoring the loyalty of the governor and for warning Ava of official abuses that were likely to cause unrest" (Lieberman 1984: 116). Monitored by the *sitkè* in the Shan principality was, of course, not a *myowun* but a *sawbwa*, whose dubious allegiance always annoyed the Avan monarch. The simultaneous appointment of the *sawbwa* and *sitkè* to Monè suggests strong royal intention of establishing close, if not amicable, administrative association between them.⁴⁰

With the case of Monè told, then arises another question: Were *sitkès* posted to other Shan States under Nyaungyan Burma?⁴¹ As stated above, the LBHK, written by Thiri Uzana, a minister who served the last three Nyaungyan monarchs, frequently mentions the *sitkè* of Hsenwi, along with the *sawbwa*, as a recipient of royal orders and ministerial notifications (LBHK: 11, 89, 90, 104, 268).⁴² Since the official documents from Ava to Hsenwi exemplify those addressed to other Shan domains, the LBHK does not bother to reproduce and amplify each of them, thus leaving it unclear whether *sitkès* were also included as the addressee in the documents destined for other Shan domains. However, now we know for certain that *sitkès* were actually posted to Hsenwi and Monè, and the LBHK always states that the official document to other Shan domains, including the *ko-sawbwa-ship*, is written likewise (as the one addressed to Hsenwi).⁴³ Therefore it

in this period [during the reigns of the first three Nyaungyan kings]."

³⁹ A royal edict issued by Bayinnaung in 1573 refers to a Monè *sitkè* called Nat-kyaw-bala who was ordered to command a contingent of 700 to suppress a Karen rebellion (ROB II: 102).

⁴⁰ There still remains a question over the length of a *sitkè*'s tenure, on which the *sittan*, only mentioning the appointment of *sitkès* each time the *sawbwa* was appointed, bears no information.

⁴¹ In the trans-Salween Tai-speaking realm, Chiang Mai and Chiang Sæn, two *myowun*-ships of Lan Na, maintained the office of *sitkè*, while a Burmese document from the late 1720s (*List* 80, #4: *gè r*) refers to *sitkè*(s) in the Khœn dominant principality of Cheng Tung (Keng Tung). The deployment of the *sitkè* to the Khœn domain was most likely made after the rebellion of its lord, Sampi, in 1708, as a result of which Cheng Tung was directly ruled by a Burmese noble, the *myoza* of Singu (LBHK: 12; Ann-CMC: 281).

⁴² The edicts concerned: the establishment of the heir apparent in Ava; the ascension of the heir apparent to the Avan throne; swearing an oath of allegiance to the new Avan king; presenting gifts to the new Avan king; and keeping law and order in Hsenwi after the death of the *sawbwa*.

⁴³ Like Monè, the other *ko-sawbwa*-ships with their location on the periphery of Upper Burma were also strategically important for the defense of the capital zone: Kale against Manipuri raids; Mogaung, Mohnyin, Bhamo, Momeik, Hsenwi, and Hsipaw against Chinese invasions; and Yawnghwe against Ayutthaya marches. Of these, Chinese invasions were a real threat to the

is likely that the appointment of *sitkès* to other Shan States, especially to those of the *ko-sawbwa*-ship, was made during the Nyaungyan period, although how extensive and systematic it was, and when it began, are unknown.⁴⁴

Furthermore, we know from Konbaung sources that Alaunghpaya, the founder of the dynasty, appointed *sitkès* to Momeik (Mäng Mit), Hsenwi, and Monè, together with lowland provincial centers such as Prome, Toungoo, and Rangoon (ROB III: 211).⁴⁵ In addition, Hsinbyushin, soon after his ascension to the throne, systematically dispatched a pair of *sitkès* to major Shan domains,⁴⁶ including the former *nine-sawbwa*-ships (Monè, Yawng'hwe, Momeik, Hsipaw, Bhamo, Mohnyin, Mogaung, and Kale), along with other lesser domains of *myoza*- and *tatpaung-za*-ships (KBZ I: 347).⁴⁷ Because of

Burmese capital, as it almost fell to the forces of Ming remnants expelled from Yunnan by the Qing in the late 1650s (Ann-CMC: 275). Previously in the late 1630s, Thalun ordered a northern expedition to the Sino-Shan borderlands to “stop the Chinese who came beyond the point where they were allowed to come for trade” (ROB I: 76; cf. Hkemeindha 1948: 159). Meanwhile, the first Manipuri raid on the upper Chindwin region, i.e., the Shan domain, was recorded in 1648 (UK III: 248). Thalun immediately sent an army to repel the Manipuri force. It is unlikely that even after this military campaign Ava still entrusted the defense of the vulnerable peripheral region to the charge of the native leaders.

⁴⁴ GUBSS (pt. 2, vol. III: 360) mentions that Burmese *sitkès* ruled Wuntho in the years 1697-1714. Bhamo in the years 1668-74 might as well have been governed by *sitkès*, although GUBSS (pt. 2, vol. I: 59) refers to the ruler from Ava merely as “Burmese General.” In any case, it is not clear whether these *sitkès* were only temporarily assigned in the absence of ruling *sawbwas* in Wuntho and Bhamo, or a regular feature in the local administration. Meanwhile, Avan administrators were probably deployed to Kale too, as the western Shan domain was, as just mentioned, of strategic importance to the defense of the upper Chindwin region against the Manipuri raids, and thus territorially more integrated into the Nyaungyan state than the other *sawbwa*-ships. In the Burmese inscription of 1590, Kale was part of *Sein Taing* (*Sein* country) that also included Bhamo, thus denoting the country of the Shan, while in the 1649 inscription Kale was regarded as a part of *Sunarparanta Taing* that consisted of the Burmese towns of Sagu, Salin, and other districts along the Irrawaddy and Chindwin (MMOK II: 80; SMK V: 148). *Sunarparanta Taing*, together with *Tampadipa Taing*, constituted the “nucleus of the Burmese polity” (Aung-Thwin 1998: 57). BSTN (357) describes the western Shan domains as “quite Burmanized,” meaning the upper Chindwin Shan society was more exposed to Burmese political and cultural influence than the northern and eastern Shan areas. The geopolitically conceptualized transfer of Kale from *Sein Taing* to *Sunarparanta* shows that the “Burmanization” of the western Shan domains was already in progress during the Nyaungyan era.

⁴⁵ Not only the *sitkès*, a standard set of Burmese administrators, *myowuns* and *nahkans*, were also appointed to the upland principalities on this occasion.

⁴⁶ This was also confirmed by Dr Richardson, who visited various Shan domains, including Monè, in 1837. He noted, “There are at the court of each of the other tsoboas [*sawbwas*] two tsetkays [*sitkès*], also appointed from Ava” (*Journal*: 487).

⁴⁷ Two principal trans-Salween Tai states, Cheng Hung and Cheng Tung (Keng Tung) are also included in the list, while for some reason Hsenwi is missing. *Sawbwa* (or *caopha* in this context) was a self-claimed title even held by the chief of a petty domain who was usually classified as *myoza* by the Burmese monarch. Meanwhile *sawbwa*-ship was conferred upon the lord of an influential and substantial principality, to whom a *tatpaung-za*, taking control over a circle of towns and villages, and obliged to supply a force for the *sawbwa*’s army, was subordinate (MMOK IV: 111). According to the Monè *sittan*, Maing Pun, Maing Pan, and Kyaing Hkan were the *tatpaung-za*-ships under Monè.

their rural origins, Alaunghpaya and his sons were unfamiliar with court punctilio and statecraft, and thus had to rely on the treatise submitted by Thiri Uzana as a valuable guide to conduct royal ceremonies and governmental business. It is hardly possible that the early Konbaung leaders created anew the systematic appointment of *sitkès* to the Shan Highlands.⁴⁸ They followed the precedent set up by the early Nyaungyan leaders.

3) In the year 1037 (1675/76) La Hkan, *sawbwa*, was no more, and Shin Hnin-shwei, *myosi-za*, was appointed *wun* [by the king]. *Kaunghan-hmu* and Nga Chitsan of the Shan cavalry [were] the *myosi-sitkès*. In the year 1038 (1676/77) San Hkan, son of La Hkan, was appointed *sawbwa*.

La Hkan, according to the text, was on the throne of Monè from the year 995 (1633/34) to 1037 (1675/76), enjoying a long reign of forty-two years.⁴⁹ However, another *sittan* of Monè dated 1668 (ROB I: 326) was submitted by a *sawbwa* named Hkun Kyaw, whose name is apparently missing in the list of hereditary rulers in the 1763 *sittan*. The omission has probably something to do with the pacification of Monè by the Burmese in the early 1670s, which must have ousted Hkun Kyaw from the throne (UK III: 289-90).⁵⁰ He was a disgrace to his descendants of the 1760s who were thus unwilling to record his name in the *sittan* to be kept at the official document repository in the Burmese capital.

Although the post of *myosi-za* is unfamiliar and the profile of Shin Hnin-shwei is obscure,⁵¹ this unknown figure was promoted (or demoted) from *myosi-za* to *wun*. As *wun* simply means “minister” or “officer,” there were numerous *wuns* in governmental services under the Burmese monarchy. In this highland context the title should connote “officer in charge of a town,” i.e. *myowun*, because Shin Hnin-shwei came to the post of *wun* with *sitkès*, who mainly functioned as a deputy to the *myowun* in lowland provincial centers, and he replaced the deceased *sawbwa* whose main task had been, as that of the *myowun*, to rule a domain.⁵²

⁴⁸ They probably increased the number of the Shan domains to which *sitkès* were assigned, though.

⁴⁹ Just to note, the longest reign of the Nyaungyan monarchs, that of Minyè-kyawdin, only lasted about twenty-five years.

⁵⁰ The cause of the Burmese expedition is unknown. It may have been associated with the Chinese invasion of the Burmese capital area in the late 1650s and early 1660s, during which a group of Chinese marauders retreated to and hid in Monè (UK III: 265-6; Ann-CMC: 275-6).

⁵¹ “*Myosi-za*” should consist of three words, *myo*, *si*, and *za*. Without a *si*, *myoza*, literally an “eater of the town,” commonly denotes either a Burmese appanage holder whose residence was not in the appanage itself but in the capital, or a hereditary chief of the lesser Shan domain, “little *sawbwa*,” so to speak. *Si* in the context may mean, among some possibilities, “prosperous,” which makes the meaning of *myosi* a “prosperous town.” The *myosi* of the text then points to a prosperous town in Monè. Meanwhile, although Shin Hnin-shwei’s ethnic origin is unknown, his name indicates his Burman descent. Does this suggest that he was not a Shan chief of the *myosi* but a Burmese noble or royal member, who was granted the *myosi*, a prosperous district of Monè, as his appanage by the Avan monarch? If this is actually the case, Burmese kings could claim authority over some parts of the Shan domain, thereby eroding the *sawbwa*’s hereditary right over the territory and its people.

⁵² Note that, according to the GUBSS (pt. 2, vol. I: 336), a Burmese governor of Mogaung in the 1830s was called not *myowun* but “Mogaung *Woon* [*wun*].” The Monè *sittan* never calls the

Not only to Monè, also to Hsenwi was a *myowun* appointed in 1688 upon the death of a *sawbwa* to fill the interregnum (UK III: 315; cf. LBHK: 425). Years later this *myowun* was nominated *sawbwa* by the Avan monarch. Shin Hnin Shwei, the *wun* of Monè, would not become *sawbwa* himself, as he was apparently not of Shan royalty, and a new *sawbwa* was appointed the next year. Hereafter, all Burmese *wuns* deployed to Monè were appointed alternately with *sawbwas*. Then arises a question: Were Burmese *wuns* as rulers of the Shan domain recalled to Ava each time new *sawbwas* were appointed; or did they jointly take charge of local administration with the *sawbwa*? Later cases in the text indicate that the latter is more likely (see no. 7 below).

In any case, unlike lowland provincial centers where princely *bayins*, or local sovereigns, had been altogether replaced with centrally appointed governors, the deployment of the *myowun* to Monè did not lead to a total abolition of the *sawbwa*-ship, as a son of the late *sawbwa* would be installed on the throne the next year. However, the Nyaungyan dynasts at least succeeded in exercising direct administration in the highland principality through the royal agent, though temporarily (only for the interregnum), and also probably in jointly ruling the domain by the crown representative and the local prince. Furthermore, by interfering in the right of hereditary succession possessed by the native ruling house, and institutionalizing the alternate appointment of and diarchy by the *sawbwa* and *myowun* in Monè, they were able to rank and link the local sovereign with a political hierarchy centered at the Avan court. The appointment of the *wun* to the highland principality was another crucial move taken by the Nyaungyan monarch for the transformation of a restive polity on the imperial periphery into a tame, if not very loyal, dependency, a corresponding and concomitant effort with the deployment of the *sitkè* seen above.

*Sitkè*s were appointed again, although the difference, if any, between *myosi-sitkè* and mere *sitkè* is unclear.⁵³ Concerning the installation of San Hkan on the local throne, a one-year interregnum between La Hkan's death and San Hkan's enthronement, during which Shin Hnin-shwei, a Burmese *wun*, came to take care of local affairs, implies that San Hkan was, as his father in the 1630s, rendering crown service at the Burmese capital when his father died. This obligatory practice was not limited to the ruling house of Monè. Elsewhere in Hsenwi, when the late *sawbwa*'s son and son-in-law were contending for the *sawbwa*-ship in 1688, the Nyaungyan king favored the latter who had years of experience in court service, and ordered the real son to first serve under the "royal golden sole" before pleading for the local throne (UK III: 315, 328).⁵⁴ When the

Nyaungyan official *myowun*; he is always referred to as *wun*, although his Konbaung counterparts are referred to as *myowun*, as shown below. Meanwhile, the LBHK (268) refers to customary dispatch of royal agents to Shan domains upon the death of *sawbwas* to take charge of their obsequies. It further explains that if the successor to the deceased *sawbwa* was at home, governance of the domain was entrusted to him; but if absent for serving at the Nyaungyan court, Burmese agents sent from Ava would take care of the local affairs. "Wun" in the text might be a local term for these Burmese agents, whose official title is unknown, not mentioned by the LBHK.

⁵³ *Kaunghan-hmu*, one of the *myosi-sitkè*s, was a Burmese title, a chief of the "Burman descendants of Chiang Mai organized into armed forces by King Thalun" (ROB X: 103).

⁵⁴ This is another instance of Burmese intervention in local succession disputes and manipulation of the nominee.

son refused to accept the royal decision, he was promptly and fatally punished by Avan troops, and several years later his entire family perished in a battle with the Burmese forces that included a contingent of Monè led by the *sawbwa* (San Hkan?) and other Shan auxiliaries.⁵⁵

As the consequence of disobedience to royal orders was directly and mercilessly exposed to and deeply understood by the Shan princes, apprenticeship at the Burmese court became a regular custom for a native adolescent from the imperial periphery and a required qualification for the *sawbwa*-ship in the Highlands.⁵⁶ This compulsory measure succeeded in domesticating autonomous native sovereigns, as lords of Shan domains now owed their princely status to the Burmese king, whose personal favor they had to earn, and whose personal anger they had to avoid, by rendering service at the Avan court. They needed a Burmese endorsement to be nominated as a new ruler to take charge of their own domain now under the temporally rule of the Burmese *wun*.

4) In the year 1056 (1694/95) San Hkan was no more, and Deiwa-lek-ya and Tuyinkathu were appointed *wuns* [by the king]. As [they were] oppressive, [the native officials went to the capital and] made a plea under the royal golden sole, and [the king] recalled them. Subsequently Myat-no, son of the younger brother of the late *sawbwa*, and Thiri-kan-kaung were appointed *wuns*. Nga Neisan [was appointed] *myosi-sitkè*. In the year 1068 (1706/07) Myat-no was appointed *sawbwa*.

The two *wuns* who had been ordered to succeed the late *sawbwa* and to take charge of the local administration were summoned back to Ava due to their exploitative rule.⁵⁷ What is noteworthy here is that the Burmese administrators, not vainly sitting in office, actually ruled, though in a malevolent way, wielding arbitrary power in the remote highland domain. Furthermore, the local dignitaries, rather than resorting to force, their traditional way of expressing frustration and anger at the Burmese court, chose to comply with a politically more appropriate and civil procedure, begging the Avan monarch to recall the oppressive rulers. The lower degree of the principality's restiveness and the greater degree of embedment of Burmese directorial routine among the Monè gentry indicate that the more than sixty-year Nyaungyan effort to strengthen central supervision over the governance of the peripheral domain had grown effective by the end of the 17th century. Correspondingly, the waning power, political as well as physical, of the native royalty became apparent.

The new *wuns* who replaced the oppressive predecessors were Myat-no, belonging to the local ruling house, and Thiri-kan-kaung, seemingly of Burman nobility. The appointment of a nephew of the late *sawbwa* as *wun*,⁵⁸ a Burmese administrative post,

⁵⁵ The chronicle of Hsenwi, however, has a completely different account for the corresponding period, with a peaceful transfer of power from Cao Sähompha via Cao Hanpha, his wife, to Cao Khun Khamsöngpha, their son, in the years 1684/85-1694/95 (Renoo 2007: 395).

⁵⁶ Most of the *sawbwases* listed in the Monè *sittan* had experience in serving at the Burmese court.

⁵⁷ Deployment of two *wuns* was rather irregular to usual Burmese practice of appointing one *myowun* to each lowland provincial center.

⁵⁸ As shown above, in Hsenwi a son-in-law of the late *sawbwa* was also appointed *myowun* in 1688,

along with a Burmese official surely led to a diminution in the prerogative and prestige of the native prince, formerly a supreme lord, who was now marginally ranked in a status hierarchy extended from and centered on the Irrawaddy Basin. The promotion of Myat-no years later to the rank of *sawbwa* further highlighted, in the eyes of the local populace, the political emasculation and subordination of the native prince vis-à-vis the Burmese monarch, as he had to largely rely on the favor and confirmation of the High King of Ava for his post.⁵⁹ *Sawbwa*-ship thus became something to be authorized by the Burmese monarch, while the aura of the “Lord of Heaven” diminished correspondingly and considerably.

5) In the year 1078 (1716/7) *Sawbwa* Myat-no was no more, and Nga Waluthuman and Gasa-pyinnya were appointed *wuns* [by the king]. *Myo-sitkès* [were] Nga Hkan-nyo and Nga Shwei-kyaw. In the year 1081 (1719/20) Thuwa, son of Myat-no, was appointed *sawbwa*. *Myosi-sitkès* [were] *Tu-byè-hmu* and *Thwei-htauk-kyi*. In the year 1097 (1735/36) Thuwa was no more, and Tuyin-zeita and Satthwa-chaung-za were appointed *wuns*. *Sitkès* [were] *Kaunghan-hmu*, Nga Sanmya, and Nga Chit-hpyu. In the year 1098 (1736/7) Kyawswa, son of Thuwa, was appointed *sawbwa*. *Sitkès* [were] Nga Shwei-san of the *nan-twin-myin* [palace cavalry?] and Nga Shwei-u of the *tapet-swè-shi-myin*.

This twenty-year period saw a smooth, steady transition of power from Burmese agents to local rulers, and vice-versa, without a sign of irregular appointment.⁶⁰ This is notable as the imperial structure of Nyaungyan Burma during the period was rapidly dissolving, due to rebellions on the periphery, a series of Manipuri raids on the Burmese heartland, and ministerial struggles and related corruption within the court. Even the rebellion of Chiang Mai in the late 1720s, and the subsequent astonishing and humiliating triple defeat of the Nyaungyan punitive forces to the neighboring rebels, which must have revealed the rapidly declining military strength of Ava, did not ignite any local uprising in Monè. Again, this corroborates that Burmese political procedure had been largely standardized and deeply entrenched in the court of a highland dependency, which is also attested by the fact that now the *sawbwa* obtained a name of apparent Burmese origin, Kyawswa.⁶¹

6) In the year 1106 (1744/5) *Sawbwa* Kyawswa was no more and Keik-ti-ok-tama-kyawdin, Yè-weilu, Nara-kyawthu, and Sanda-kyawthu were appointed *wuns* [by the king]. *Myosi-sitkès* [were] Nga Bè and *Myin-gaung* [captain of horse] Nga Kyaw. In the year 1107 (1745/6) while Sanda, younger brother of Kyawswa, was

to be promoted to *sawbwa* in 1691 (UK III: 315, 328).

⁵⁹ The UK (III: 380) records that in 1706 the Monè *sawbwa* presented his daughter to the Avan king. This *sawbwa* was definitely Myat-no. It is unclear whether the present of a bride resulted in the promotion of Myat-no to *sawbwa*, or was made as a token of his gratitude for the appointment.

⁶⁰ Note, however, that not only *myosi-sitkès* and *myo-sitkès*, but plain *sitkès* also begin to figure in the text. Meanwhile, the difference in their rank and function is unclear.

⁶¹ Actually, the name “Myat-no” might as well have been of Burmese origin.

staying at Monè, a pair of local dignitaries made a plea under the royal golden sole, and [the king] appointed Nga Zaw, royal envoy, and other high-ranking officials with the *amein-daw* [royal order] to enthrone Sanda at the *myo* [i.e. Monè]. *Myositsikè* [was] Sanda-nantathu. *Shan-myin* [Shan cavalry] [was] Nga Neisan.

The generous, unprecedented appointment of four *wuns* in the text was probably ascribed to the difficult circumstances under which Ava had endured for years: on the eastern periphery of the empire, the *myowun*-ship of Chiang Mai fell to local rebels in the late 1720s; from the west, a series of annual Manipuri raids devastated the nuclear zone and almost took the capital in the late 1730s; in the south, a major revolt broke out in Pegu in 1740, eventually leading to the founding of an independent Lower Burma kingdom that would sack the Burmese capital in 1752.⁶² Thus Ava in dire straits must have taken a precautionary action, preventing Monè from conspiring with either Chiang Mai or Pegu against itself.⁶³ This would have caused a domino effect among the neighboring Shan domains, thereby leading to a total upheaval throughout the Highlands, and further jeopardizing the capital area already devastated for years.

The appointment of Nanda as *sawbwa* was rather irregular in two ways. First, unlike previous cases, it was made not by royal will but by local request. This was Monè's first attempt in more than a century to request Ava to appoint a new *sawbwa*, although the Shan principality had once asked for a royal recall of oppressive *wuns*.⁶⁴ This daring act by the Shan was based on a near-equal footing between Monè and Ava, which was made possible by the rapid diminution in the latter's prestige and military strength during its final years.

Next, distinct from his predecessors who were sons of, or a generation younger than, the deceased *sawbwa*, Nanada was the late *sawbwa*'s younger brother, who, upon the appointment, was at around the age of sixteen.⁶⁵ The young prince seems to have never been trained at the Avan court, as the *sittan* emphasizes the irregularity in crowning a new lord of Monè in his own local estate by the Burmese agents sent from Ava (this is also the first case in the *sittan*). The new *sawbwa* was thus an exception to the century-old Burmese custom of choosing a nominee who had spent years in Ava under royal tutorage. These irregularities notwithstanding, this appointment was allowed as an exception, because the Shan side took the upper hand over the Burmese in the negotiation of appointment, due to the imminent danger surrounding the Nyaungyan court. Ava, no longer able to exercise superior military influence over its vassal on the periphery, had no choice but to make a concession.

Yet, it is still remarkable that Monè did not follow Chiang Mai which had already rebelled against Ava more than a decade earlier and become an autonomous kingdom; and the Shan principality still accepted Avan vassalage as late as the mid-1740s, during the turbulent final years of the dynasty itself. This is especially so as social conditions of

⁶² For the gradual downfall of Ava, see Lieberman, *Administrative Cycles*, Chapter 4.

⁶³ Actually, a marriage alliance was established between Chiang Mai and Pegu at the time (HMN III: 373).

⁶⁴ See no. 4 above.

⁶⁵ When the *sittan* was submitted in 1763, he was 34.

the Central Plain were much worse than in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, when Monè repeatedly attempted to sever its relations with the Burmese kings and to regain its sovereign power. With bureaucratic tendencies embedded in the local administration and the aura of the “Lord of Heaven” gone, Burmese authorization had become an important, indispensable source of legitimacy of the *sawbwa* who had been politically and militarily emasculated.

7) In the year 1121 (1759/60) during the reign of the royal father [Alaung-hpaya], [the king] appointed Minyè-aung-hnaing as *myo-wun*; Kyawdin-nga-shwei-taung and Sit-tagaung-thiri-kyaw as *sitkè*; Setka-dawaya and Tuyin-zeiya-kyaw as *nahkan*; Deiwa-kyaw-hla and Setka-thatti as *myo-saye*.

During the blank period in the text of fourteen years from 1745/6 to 1759/60, Ava, the capital of the Nyaungyan dynasty, fell to the army of Lower Burma, and the king with his family and courtiers were transported to Pegu where many of them perished. Then arose a new Burmese power based at Mok-hso-bo (Shwebo), a township in the Mu River valley, which, under the leadership of U Aung-zeiya, later known as Alaung-hpaya, eventually reunified the country. The rapid resurgence of an Upper Burma-based polity and its reunification of Burma suddenly changed the political prospect of the Shan Highlands that had been more or less independent for a decade or so, but now had to accept Burmese suzerainty as well as its administrators again. According to Burmese records (KBZ I: 106, 149; ROB III: 211), Monè, with other neighboring Shan States, had already taken an oath of allegiance to the Konbaung monarch in 1755, and a group of Burmese officials consisting of *myowun*, *sitkè*, and *nahkan* (*sayei* not mentioned) were deployed to the Shan principality by 1758 at the latest.⁶⁶ Therefore the *sittan* either omitted the previous appointment of Konbaung agents recorded by the ROB, or misdated the year of the appointment.

The text refers to *myowun*, which is the first reference to the title, while under Nyaungyan Burma *wun* is exclusively used. It is also the first instance of appointing the *myowun* to Monè while the *sawbwa* was still alive on the throne, which indicates that a diarchy by the crown representative and the native prince was a norm practiced from the Nyaungyan era (see no. 3 above). Furthermore, a standard set of Burmese officers, a *myo-wun*, two *sitkè*s, two *nahkans*, and two *myo-sayeis*, was for the first time introduced to Monè. Alaung-hpaya, though known for his politically conservative character, attempted administrative adjustment in the Shan Highlands with an extension of a standard set of Burmese officers from provincial centers of Burma proper to the Shan areas, which, for some reason, had been only partially accomplished under the previous dynasty.

8) In the year 1123 (1761/62) in the reign of the royal elder brother [Naungdawgyi],

⁶⁶ The ROB does not specify how many *myowuns*, *sitkè*s, and *nahkans* were assigned to Monè. Hsenwi and Momeik (Mäng Mit) as well as Prome, Toungoo, Rangoon, and other lowland towns are also mentioned by the ROB as the places to which Burmese officials were sent.

[the king] appointed Min-thinhkaya, Punya-pyatin, and Yanaung-dukyaw as *sitkès*; Letwè-thiri and Yan-hnok-set as *nahkan*; Nanda-thuriya and Bayathaman as *myosayeis*.

Two years after the appointment of Burmese officials by Alaung-hpaya, rearrangement of personnel was made by Naungdawgyi, and new *sitkès*, *nahkans*, and *sayeis* were assigned to Monè. If this account can be taken straightforwardly, Burmese administrators were rotated in two years.⁶⁷ A two-year cycle seems a reasonable span for the tenure of the officers serving in the remote highlands, given that a three-year rotation was followed by Burmese garrisons at Chiang Mai (MMOK IV: 110). Meanwhile, there is another possibility that the appointment was connected to the Burmese regnal change. It could be part of the administrative custom a new king was expected to conduct soon after his enthronement, as the KBZ (I: 347; II: 228) records that both Hsinbyushin and Bagyidaw, immediately after their ascension to the throne, systematically dispatched a pair of *sitkès* to the Shan States.⁶⁸

The text does not mention appointment of a new *myowun*, and it is therefore entirely unclear when and how Minyè-aung-hnaing, the *myowun* appointed by Alaung-hpaya, ended his term of office in Monè.⁶⁹ He might have been recalled to the capital when *sitkès* and other officers were newly assigned to Monè. In any case, the office of Monè *myowun* seems to have been abolished by 1786 at the latest, when the official correspondence to the Konbaung monarch from Monè was prepared by the *sawbwa*, *sitkès*, and local dignitaries, with no *myowun* included (ROB IV: 535). The changing geopolitical environment surrounding Monè required the Konbaung state to review its policy toward dependency in the highland periphery.

The end of Burmese rule over Chiang Mai in 1774 and subsequent battles with the rejuvenated eastern neighbor under King Taksin enhanced the strategic importance of Monè as a frontier base where a large Burmese garrison was stationed in anticipation of prolonged warfare with the allied forces of Siam and Lan Na. Eventually, not *myowun*, governor, but *bo-hmu*, commander, was to take charge of the principality.⁷⁰ Monè became the “seat of the presidency of the Burmese over the Shan principalities” (Yule 1968: 298), and “the head quarters of the force,” whence the *sitkè-daw-gyi* “lords it over the tsoboas [*sawbwases*]” (*Journal*: 487).⁷¹ Consequently, in Monè during the 1830s, the

⁶⁷ The *sittan* refers to the reshuffle of Nyaungyan officers only subsequent to the death or enthronement of *sawbwases*, while these Konbaung administrators were appointed or recalled regardless of the circumstances under which the *sawbwa* was placed. This is understandable as the number of appointments during the Nyaungyan period that lasted about 150 years should be too numerous to record each time.

⁶⁸ These were part of “nationwide” deployment of Burmese administrators to the provincial centers of Upper and Lower Burma, and the Shan Highlands.

⁶⁹ According to the KBZ (I: 347), only two *sitkès* were assigned to the Shan States, while a *myowun* was sent by Hsinbyushin to each of the lowland provincial capitals of Burma proper. The appointment of *myowuns* to the Highlands might have been abolished, or at least not practiced, during his reign.

⁷⁰ The first *bo-hmu* was assigned to Monè by 1802 at the latest (GUBSS pt 2, vol. II: 424).

⁷¹ According to the MMOK (IV: 111), *sitkè-daw-gyi* (great *sitkè*) ranked above ordinary *sitkès*.

sawbwa “was a subject of Ava and subordinate to the [Burmese] military chiefs” (497), while “the members of the tsoboa’s [*sawbwa*’s] family are frequently insulted in the streets [by the Burmese]” (500).

*Miscellaneous accounts*⁷²

The *sittan* then begins to dwell at length on the territorial extent of the principality and the name of districts and townships under its jurisdiction.⁷³ What is interesting here is that Kyaing Taung (Keng Töng) is mentioned among the domains under the rule of Monè.⁷⁴ According to the ROB (VII: 58), Kyaing Taung, a dependency of Monè in the early 1760s, became an autonomous *myoza*-ship and then was promoted to *sawbwa*-ship sometime before or during the reign of Bodawhpaya (1782-1819); and further raised to senior *sawbwa*-ship in 1812 by that king as a reward for the service rendered by the Shan prince.⁷⁵ Konbaung Burma attempted to dissect the territory of major Shan principalities to set up new *myoza*- or *sawbwa*-ships, thereby reducing the military power of each domain and the solidarity of the entire Shan area now under many petty rulers whose status was solely dependent on the favor of the Konbaung monarch. As had been true of the other cases discussed above, however, this “divide and rule” policy too had its origin not in the Konbaung but in the Nyaungyan dynasty. This will be shown in due course.

Next the *sittan* tells of tributary gifts to the Avan monarch, ministers and other officials at the court, which were sent twice a year, on the New Year and End-of-Lent ceremonies, and additionally upon the ascension of a new *sawbwa* to the throne of Monè.⁷⁶ Far more generous presents that were in return conferred upon the *sawbwa* by the king on these occasions are also itemized.

The *sittan* then shows a list of the royal members and ministers of Monè, with their name, age, and the day of the week on which they were born.⁷⁷ According to the list, the *sawbwa*, Thohunbwa, was at the age of thirty-four, and Maha Midwei, his wife (only one is mentioned), was twenty-eight, blessed with a thirteen-year old son and a one-year old daughter. The ministers, four in total, were all aged men of sixty, fifty, sixty-five and fifty-four. Also mentioned is the “*sawbwa*’s *sayei*,” secretary, aged thirty-seven.

Next comes a fragmentary list of some interest and puzzlement, titled “*Monè-myo ein athi sayin* [List of household and non-service commoners in the town of Monè].”

⁷² While some of the following accounts are crucial for the study of Burmese administration in the Shan States, others are not very relevant. In any case, I introduce the entire text as it may be of some interest to certain readers willing to venture upon a further exploration of this *sittan*.

⁷³ The *sittan* of 1668 (ROB I: 325) also includes a similar list, which I have compared with that of 1763. Many toponyms, for some reason, do not correspond to each other.

⁷⁴ Not to be confused with Keng Tung, a major Tai principality in the trans-Salween region.

⁷⁵ Kyaing Taung in the 1890s was recorded again as a dependency of Monè (GUBSS pt. II, vol. II: 368). Another promotion of a Shan domain to *sawbwa*-ship by the Burmese monarch is also observable in the case of Lègya (Laikha) (*Journal*: 505).

⁷⁶ The gifts to the king were more or less the same on each occasion, consisting of horse(s), a golden bowl and a roll of satin. LBHK (438, 470) also has detailed lists of the gifts, which are somewhat different from those in the *sittan*.

⁷⁷ The last information was, and is, important to the Burmese.

The number of households in the town of Monè in 1763 was 443.⁷⁸ Dr Richardson wrote in 1837 (*Journal*: 505) that Monè “may contain 1,600 houses, 300 or 320 of which are said to be inhabited by Burmans,”⁷⁹ while “in 1898 there were not less than eight hundred houses” (GUBSS pt. II, vol. II: 425).⁸⁰ What attributed to the variability in the figures is unknown.

The List then mentions Maing Pun (Mäng Pön), Maing Pan (Mäng Pan), and Kyaing Hkan (Keng Kham) as *tatpaungs* of Monè.⁸¹ The *sittan* of 1668 (ROB I: 325-6) also has a reference to the three *tatpaungs*, and additionally Naungmun (Nöngmön), which is omitted in the *sittan* of 1763.⁸² This indicates that Naungmun, the former *tatpaung* of Monè, became an independent charge sometime after 1668, most likely in the early 1670s, when Ava pacified Monè (see no. 3 above). Therefore, in the LBHK (61, 64, 92, 184), written by a minister who served at the Avan court in the first half of the 18th century, Naungmun is treated as a *myoza*-ship of its own.⁸³ Nyaungyan Burma attempted “divide and rule” in the Shan States to curb the power of major *sawbwa*-ships. As seen above, Konbaung successors adopted and applied this policy more widely to the Shan realm.

Lastly, the list features “*Athi ywa sayin* [List of non-service commoners’ villages],” which, due to the fragmentation, names only two villages. Both villages, named Kahi *ywa* and Lwele *ywa*, contain fourteen houses each. What is interesting and puzzling here is the use of the Burmese term “*athi*,” non-service commoners. According to Lieberman (1984: 106):

Unlike *ahmu-dans*, *athis* were rarely, if ever, exempt from agricultural produce taxes. Furthermore all *athis* were obliged to pay substantial household taxes. These could be in kind . . . or more commonly, in fixed cash amounts surrendered on a yearly or monthly basis to the Ministry of *Athi*.

Thus arises the question: Was the term *athi* in the text simply applied to a similar category of people in the Shan domain; or were the *athis* of Monè subjects of the Burmese monarch,⁸⁴ and obliged to pay their taxes to the Ministry of *Athi* in Ava, rather than to

⁷⁸ In monarchical Burma, an average house “was considered to contain between five and seven individuals” (BSTM: 400). Then, the population of the town in 1763 was between 2,200 and 3,100.

⁷⁹ He also states (499), “[Monè] may contain about 8,000 or 10,000 inhabitants; about 2,000 of these are Burmans.”

⁸⁰ GUBSS also remarks (425): “[Monè] town had suffered so much from the constant intestinal warfare of the Shan States and its constant violent change of rulers that . . . in May 1887 there were no more than seventeen houses.”

⁸¹ A chief of the *tatpaung* was obliged to supply a force of a few hundred on request by the *sawbwa* (who was in turn ordered to provide a force by the Burmese monarch), to whom they were subordinate (MMOK IV: 111).

⁸² The ROB spells Maing “Hun,” which must be a misprint for “Pun.”

⁸³ Later in the Konbaung period, the rest of the *tatpaungs*, Maing Pun, Maing Pan and Kyaing Hkan, seem to have become an autonomous *myoza*-ship (GUBB pt. II, vol. I: 357; vol. II: 456-7; List 11, #16: 8).

⁸⁴ There is another possibility that these *athis* were Burmese migrants or colonists, which, however,

the coffers of their lord? If the latter is the case, Nyaungyan Burma partially succeeded in directly administering and collecting tax from a group of settlements in the Shan territory, whose inhabitants were designated as *athi* by the Burmese monarch. A similar example can be found in the ROB (II: 32). The royal order of 1679 refers to the list of *athi taing* (district of *athis*) of Kale and other Shan domains in the upper Chindwin valley that were kept in the “Royal Archives.”⁸⁵ Nyaungyan monarchs might as well have retained *athi* estates in some of the Shan States and claimed authority over them, thereby encroaching upon the bases of the *sawbwas*’ human and economic resources.

Conclusion

Surrounding the Dry Zone of Upper Burma in the northwest, north and east, the Shan Highlands always posed a grave threat to Burmese dynasties centered at the Irrawaddy Basin since the late 13th century. Twice, in 1364 and 1527, the Burmese capitals, Pinya/ Sagaing and Ava respectively, fell to the northern Shan forces. As a result of the latter attack, a Shan power dominated, though temporarily, the political scene of Upper Burma. Finally and suddenly in the mid-16th century when Bayinnaung, the “Victor of the Ten Directions,” subdued the Highlands, was the entire Shan world reduced to a Burmese vassalage. The Burmese monarch did not interfere in the local affairs of each Shan domain as long as they were militarily nonthreatening, and tribute, with the occasional offering of a daughter to the king’s harem, was sent on a regular basis. This laissez-faire policy was also maintained by the succeeding Nyaungyan dynasty, founded by a son of Bayinnaung, and the political structure in the Highlands was left intact throughout the period. It was the next Konbaung dynasts who for the first time attempted administrative reorganization of the Shan States, as a result of which Burmese control over them was tightened and some of the major Shan principalities that lay closer to the dynastic center were “Burmanized,” directly administered by centrally-appointed governors.⁸⁶ This is a short summary of the conventional historiography of Burma-Shan relations.

The essential issue this article has addressed is that in this traditional historiography lies a crucial contradiction: the early Nyaungyan monarchs, while introducing various innovative administrative means to the lowland provincial centers of Burma proper, basically left intact their Toungoo predecessors’ laissez-faire policy toward the Shan Highlands; the Konbaung successors, though known for their politically conservative nature, implemented new patterns of control and achieved greater central supervision

is less likely.

⁸⁵ Actually, according to the original Burmese version of the order (ROB II: 199), while there was no (?) *athi taing*, some *kyeik-su taings* existed in Kale. *Kyeik-su* were “quasi-*athis*,” outsiders to the community who “agreed to share the tax and corvee burdens,” and who “were often allowed access to *athi* land” (Lieberman 1984: 105n). In any case, these *kyeik-su taings* apparently paid tax to the Nyaungyan monarch who ordered their list kept at the “Royal Archives.” As stated above (fn. 44), territorial integration of the upper Chindwin Shan domains including Kale into the Burmese state was already in progress in the 1640s. In the Konbaung *sittan*, the number of *athi* (not *kyeik-su*) households in Kale increased to 315 (BSTN: 402, 412).

⁸⁶ In Mogaung, Mohnyin, and Bhamo, *sawbwas* were replaced with *myowuns* in the early Konbaung period (cf. Leach 1997: 34; ROB IV: 170; VI: 60).

over the Shan States. The study of the Monè *sittan* has revealed that it was actually during the Nyaungyan period when the upland Shan domains underwent a significant administrative change and increasingly came under the authority of the Avan monarch, though not on a scale comparable to the lowland provincial capitals.

Having learnt crucial lessons from the collapse of the previous dynasty, which was mainly caused by a series of rebellions by *bayins*, quasi-sovereign sub-kings of provincial centers, the early Nyaungyan leaders replaced *bayins* with *myowuns*, court-appointed governors supported and monitored by other appointive personnel. Consequently, revolts by royal contenders to the throne were substantially reduced and the state became politically more integrated and thus stable. Parallel to this administrative development in the gubernatorial centers of the lowlands, also was the deployment of *wuns* and *sitkès* with other officials to Monè (and other Shan domains) initiated by Thalun in the 1630s. The appointment of a set of Burmese officials was the first major administrative step taken by the Burmese monarchy to integrate quasi-sovereign Shan vassals into the political orbit centered at the Dry Zone of Upper Burma. This represents the major change of Burmese policy from merely demanding annual tribute to closely monitoring the native administration through royal agents; it is a remarkable shift from the personalized to formalized and institutionalized nature of central control over its dependency on the periphery.

Combined with personal and ceremonial obligations—apprenticeship at the Avan court, rendering of regular homage, forwarding tribute, and gifts of women—Nyaungyan arrangements of the administrative structure of Shan principalities diminished the aura as well as prestige of *sawbwas*, and militarily and politically emasculated them. Once styled “Lord of Heaven,” *sawbwas* were now ordered in a status hierarchy, on the top of which stood the High King of Ava. A long-term trend toward political integration of the Shan world into the Burmese state was already under way in the first half of the 17th century.⁸⁷

Abbreviations

Ann-CMC	Ken Kirigaya. “Some Annotations to <i>The Chiang Mai Chronicle</i> .”
BSTN	Frank N. Trager and William J. Koenig. <i>Burmese Sit-tans 1764-1826: Records of Rural Life and Administration</i> .
GUBSS	J. George Scott and J.P. Hardiman. <i>Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States</i> .
HMN	<i>Hmannan Mahayazawindawgyi</i> .
Journal	Volker Grabowsky and Andrew Turton. <i>The Gold and Silver Road of Trade and Friendship: The McLeod and Richardson Diplomatic Missions to Tai States in 1837</i> .
KBZ	U Tin. <i>Konbaung-zet Mahayazawindawgyi</i> .
LBHK	Thiri Uzana. <i>Lawkabyahakyan</i> .

⁸⁷ As stated above, in addition to the administrative innovations, also were the creation of *athi* estates in the Shan realm and cannibalization of major Shan domains introduced by Nyaungyan monarchs, whereby the bases of the *sawbwas*’ human as well as economic resources were eroded.

<i>List</i>	<i>List of Microfilms Deposited in the Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies. Part 8. Burma.</i>
<i>List 11, #16</i>	<i>Thanlwin Ashei-anauk Myo-saung Sa-yin.</i>
<i>List 50, #2</i>	<i>Monè-myo Kawza 1125 hku Sittan.</i>
<i>List 80, #4</i>	<i>Thalun Min-taya Amein-daw.</i>
MMOS	U Tin. <i>Myanma-min ok-chok-pon sa-dan.</i>
ROB	Than Tun. <i>The Royal Orders of Burma.</i>
UK	U Kala. <i>Mahayazawingyi.</i>
YT	Twinthintaikwun Mahasitu. <i>Mahayazawinthit.</i>
ZOK	J. S. Furnivall and Pe Maung Tin. <i>Zambudipa ok-hsanug kyan.</i>

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