

HISTORY OF HANTHAWADDY KINGDOM (1539-1599)

Ph.D. (DISSERTATION)

TIN TIN WIN

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

UNIVERSITY OF YANGON

MYANMAR

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the history of the Hanthawaddy Kingdom from 1539 to 1599. The study begins with Tabinshwehti shifting the capital from Taungoo to Hanthawaddy and ends with the disintegration of the Kingdom because of the combined attack of Taungoo and Rakhine during Nandabayin's reign. 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. In 1550, Tabinshwehti was assassinated by Thamein Saw Htut, a governor of Sittaung and close to Tabinshwehti. 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. After the death of Bayinnaung, his son Nandabayin ascended the throne in AD 1581. Nandabayin was unreasonable in many of his actions. Thus the vast territories that Bayinnaung conquered and kept under his control through personal relationships and loyalty to his charismatic character all broke apart. Although Myanmar kings were absolute monarchs, their rule was generally humane and just because their personal action and behaviour was curbed by customs, precedents and religion. During the Hanthawaddy period, there were two classes of peoples, i.e. the rulers and the ruled. However the people were not rigidly divided into different castes as in India. The basic economy of the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy was agriculture. Local trade and 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. Myanmar literature in the form of poetry, prose works and various kinds of verses flourished during the Hanthawaddy period. These various forms of Myanmar literature which flourished in the Hanthawaddy period also reflected the political and social conditions of the time.

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