

## **The Political Conditions During Bagan Period**

**Dr.Sandar Win \***

### **Abstract**

Bagan reached to the status of the “State” in the 11<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of King Anawrahta by passing through the status of the various levels of districts and taiks in the emergence of Bagan Empire. Bagan Empire was ruled by the successive Kings since the reign of Aniruddha (a) Anawrahta. In the relations with the neighbouring countries during Bagan period, there were relations also with India and Ceylon. In the diplomatic relations, the Chinese (Mongols) had launched three aggressive wars against Bagan during the reign of King Nara Thiha Pate. Shin Disapramok stone inscription was inscribed because he was sent an Envoy and could settle the matter successfully. In the inscription, it contained six methods of diplomacy. Although Bagan Kings were autocratic, they ruled in accordance with the ten precepts incumbent on a King. At the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the administrative power fell into the hand of the three Shan brothers and the Bagan Empire had collapsed.

**Keywords:** Bagan Empire, Anawrahta, autocratic

### **Introduction**

Bagan was the first empire of Myanmar. The culture and architecture of Bagan could be seen until nowadays. Furthermore, Bagan period was an important period according to political, economic, religion and culture. Pyus were strong in the central Myanmar prior to Myanmar. But the Pyus became weak because the Nan Chou destroyed the Pyu Capital in A.D.832. At the time when there was no strong and powerful people in Central Myanmar, Myanmar took position. Myanmar people expanded to invade from the district to the division and division to the State. As the areas expanded to the State, the rulers must stay at the central point so that Bagan which was situated in the middle of the region and convenience in communication was chosen as the capital. There were also diverse national races as the State had expanded and had to strive to live peacefully with the diverse cultures. The administrative machinery was also became complicated and widespread unlike the previous times. It was found that Bagan had relations with India, China, Srilanka, Cambodia and Thailand. The King was the sole of the sovereign power in the administrative machinery. The administrative power fell into the hand of three Shan brothers at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

### **The Political Conditions During Bagan Period**

Bagan is situated on the ground at the left bank of Ayeyarwaddy river. Before the Empire had been established, the socio-economic life of Bagan was the status of the more hunter and fisherman. Bagan became the political nucleus zone after starting to organize the political power with (19) villages. Therefore, it became the beginning of the nucleus of the State administration based on Bagan after organizing the (19) villages. It could also be said that the history of Myanmar started since that time. When Bagan became develop, it was not the status of the City State and it was accepted that Bagan reached the status the Kingdom or Empire, Especially, it was during the reign of Aniruddha. The time was in the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Traditionally, it was said that Bagan was established after the destruction of Sriksetra.

A village was the basic in the administration since the time of Bagan period. There were many villages similar to Bagan before the successive Kings of the Aniruddha dynasty established the state by entering on Bagan. The extended villages formed “Kha Yine” and “Taiks”. The centre that could control the “Kha Yine” and “TAik” was “Pyi”. The person

who ruled “Pyi” was called as “Min”. When the territories were expanded as the “State”, the fortresses were built for the security of the border areas.<sup>1</sup>

When the regions were occupied beyond “Taik” and could be organized, it was called as the “Naing Ngan” (or) “State”. The word “Naing Ngan” was found in A.D 1198 as the earliest. In establishing the “State” by centering “Bagan”, the person who started to become famous was King Aniruddha (1044-1077). He was the King who organized Myanmar people and occupied the territories beyond Myanmar in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It seemed that King Aniruddha became the leader of all the national races residing in the present day Myanmar from the first King of Bagan. Myanmar usually called the ruler as the King. So, there were plenty of Kings according to the regions and the strongest King among them became the Emperor.

In expanding the territories by King Aniruddha, the Kantus were won at the north and continued to attack and invade Nan Chou. In 1050 A.D, he attempted to invade the Lower part of Myanmar at the South. It was guessed that Aniruddha usually left the votive tablets containing the images of Buddha with his seals at the places he had invaded<sup>2</sup>. The votive tablets are found in and around Bagan, at Tagaung, Minbu and Pyay. The northernmost find spot is Nwatele Ywahaung on the Shweli and the Southernmost at Twante. The extent of the nation during the reign of King Aniruddha was Kaung Sin at the north, TAlaing, Tharay and Dawei at the south. Aniruddha had the chance to contact directly with Srilanka and India because of his victory to conquer the delta region<sup>3</sup>.

It was mentioned in the history of Ceylon named Sula. Wun ta that the Ceylon King Thiri Theinga Bawdi requested the reinforcement from Aniruddha to suppress the rising of Saw La (Kyay Kalar (a) Tamil) in A.D. 1006. Furthermore, in A.D 1071, the King of Ceylo again had to request help from Aniruddha to send the Myanmar monks to Ceylon to reestablish the Sasana that had been fainter due to the instability of the Sanghas after he had suppressed the hostilities. It was sopecially noteworthy that Myanmar had to give assistance firstly for the perpetuation of the Sasana in Ceylon in the relationship between Myanmar and Ceylon.<sup>4</sup>

According to Myanmar history, it was said that Bagan was built by King Pyinpya in A.D 894. Bagan was started to find in the stone inscription dated 8 September 1198. Bagan was not Myanmar name. According to the traditional saying, it was a Pyu village.”Arimandapura” was the name of Bagan in Pali which meant the town that annihilated all the hostilities. Mons called Bagan as Pokam, PuKam and Bukam.<sup>1</sup> There was no firm and concrete evidences regarding with the Kings that ruled Bagan before Aniruddha. The Bagan dynasty starting from Aniruddha was shown according to the concrete stone inscription evidences.

---

1. Than Tun, Dr. Athitmyin, Myanmar Thamine, Mandalay, Myakan Press, 1975. P-47 (Hereafter this work will be referred to as ‘Myanmar Thamine’)

2. Than Tun, Dr. “Khithaung Myanmar Yazawinn”, Yangon, Mohadagon Press, 1964. P-118-119. (Hereafter this, work will be regarded to as ‘Khithaung’)

3. Than Tun, Dr. ‘Myanmar Thamine, P-48.

4. Than Tun, Dr. ‘Khithaung’, P-120,

### Bagan Dynasty

(1) Aniruddha (Anawrahta)	A.D 1044-1077
(2) Wazar Barana (Saw Lu Min)	A.D 1077-1084
(3) Hti Hlaing Min (Kyansittha)	A.D 1084-1113
(4) Sithu(1) (Alaungsithu)	A.D 1113-1163
(5) Nara Thu (Kalakya Min)	A.D 1163-1165

#### Period without King for 9 years

(6) Sithu(2) (Narapatisithu)	A.D 1174-1211
(7) Na Taung Mya	A.D 1211-1231
(8) Nara Theing Uzana	A.D 1231-1235
(9) Kya Swa	A.D 1235-1249
(10) Sithu (3) (Uanar)	A.D 1249-1256
(11) Min Yan	A.D 1256
(12)Sithu(4) (Tayoke Pyay -Nara Thiha Pate Min)	A.D 1256-1287 <sub>1</sub>
(13) Shwe Nan Shin (Kyaw Swa)	A.D 1288-1297
(14) Min Lu Lin (Saw nit)	A.D 1297-1334 <sup>2</sup>

Bagan Empire became wide to a large extent during the reign of King Anawrahta. The votive tablets with the seal of Anawrahta were found at the places inscribed and outside of Bagan, Tagaung, Meikhtila and Pyay. The power and influence of Anawrahta spread to Momeik in the north and Myeik in the South. It was found in Kalayani Stone Inscription inscribed in 1480 that Anawrahta occupied Thaton in 1057. King Anawrahta obtained Pitakats regarding with Buddhism and cultures from Thaton. After had invaded Thaton, Bago, Rakhine and north Myanmar, he organized the whole country and ruled it. (43) fortresses were established to defend Nan Chou and other dangers and forces were stationed at the fortresses. Anawrahta implemented the perpetuation of Theravada Buddhism with the help of Shin Arahan. Furthermore, he destroyed the faith in Ayeeyar Gyi who were worshipped by the successive kings of Bagan and made the whole country to worship Buddhism which was the right faith. He built and donated Shwesigone, Myinkaba, Lawka Nanda and Shwe San Daw Pagodas.

Anawrahta was succeeded By Min Lu Lin (a) Saw Lu Min in A.D.1077. During the reign of King Saw Lu, the Mons rose up against him and instability prevailed in the country and Saw Lu was captured as a war prisoner while fighting with the forces of Ngayaman Kan, Kyansittha gathered forces and suppressed the revolt of Ngayaman Kan and succeeded the Bagan throne in A.D.1084.<sup>1</sup>

Kyansittha reconsolidated the Bagan Empire that had been weakened to the incapability of Saw Lu. He implemented the digging of lakes for cultivation by the Royal Order. He made to copy the pidakat (Sanskrit) after scrutinization. He sent envoys to renovate the damage buildings at Bodhi Gaya

---

1. Than Tun, Dr. Myanmar Thamine, P - 46

2. Than Tun, Dr. 'Khithaung', P-120

He could establish the Mon-Myanmar in the palace. He encouraged Mon literature and inscribed the stone inscriptions in Mon language. In Shwesigone Stone Inscription inscribed in A.D.1090, he mentioned that he would rule for the welfare and benefit of the people.<sup>1</sup> Shwe Ein Si was arranged to get married to Mon Prince Nagthaman by her father Kyansittha for aiming at Mon Mjyanmar friendship. He made Alaungsithu, son of Shwe Ein Si and Nagathaman as the heir to the throne by appointing him as the Crown Prince.<sup>2</sup>

During the reign of Kyansittha, the country became peaceful and the economy had developed “Mya Kan” was dug at the foot of Tuyin mountain. The religious bulidings such as Ape Yadanar, Arnanda and Guni Pagodas were built. In A.D.1112, King Kyansittha felt ill and the royal son Yarzakumar made merits for Kyansittha and inscribed the stone inscription. The stone inscription was inscribed at (4) faces in Myanmar, Mon, Pyu and Pali languages.<sup>3</sup>

Grandson the first Sithu succeeded Kyansittha. The first Sithu was famous as Alaungsithu. The first Sithu was born in A.D.1089 and came to the throne in A.D.1113.He inscribed the stone inscription that was buried in the inner wall of Bagan Shwegu Pagoda in Pali and Sanskrit. He reestablished the Bagan Empire.He again developed Kyaukse and built(3) dams at Meikhtila region. Lakes and drains were dug at Sailn and also large and small lakes were dug at the environs of Bagan. Taxes were systematically collected. He also equalized the weighs and scales. He also built Sulamani and Gawtaw palin pagodas. According to Thet Soe Taung Inscription, it was known that the first Sithu was succeded by Shwe Nan Shin. During his reing, the state was not peaceful. Shwe Nan Shin was assassinated by padeikkaya (Kala) and died in 1165 so that he was called as Kalakya Min.<sup>4</sup> Conflicts had occurred with the traditional ally Ceylon and finally a war was fought due to his cruelty and lack of far sightedness.

While King parekkama Bahu (1) was ruling in Ceylon, both Ceylon and Myanmar were lived by the people who worshipped the true faith so that there was no disagreement occurred between the two countries. They were the countries that exchanged the sentimental and valuable gifts. The relationship had been established in this manner for a long time.<sup>3</sup> But parekkama Bahu (1) prepared war by forfeiting the principles that should be politically observed. ceylon came to attack Bagan and Bagan had to face without King for (9)years.

After that period, the reconsolidation and rehabilitation works were implemented in a new form during the reign of Sithu (2). During Sithu (2)’s reign, the extent of Myanmar was thanlwin in the east, Missagiri in the west, Nga Saung Chan in the north and Taline Thray and Dawei in the South.

---

1 .Than Tun, Dr. Myanmar Thamine, P-50.

2.Than Tun, Dr. Myanmar Thamine, P-52.

3.Than Tun, Dr. Khithaung, P-124.

4.I b I d, P – 123

Sithu (2) was succeeded by Na Taung Mya on 28 August 1211. Theinga Pi Si and pyan Chi who were half-brothers of Na Taung Mya revolted against him at the beginning of his reign. He had to rely on the five ministers in suppressing the rebellion. They were Athinkhayar, Anandathu, Athawut, Yarzathingyan and Saturinga. Na Taung Mya continued to build the Gaw Taw Palin Pagoda built since the reign of his father to be completed and also built the Maha Bodhi, Ti Law Ka and Mingalar Pagodas.<sup>1</sup>

In A.D 1230, Nara Theinkha Uzana succeeded the throne from A.D 1231 – 1235. he ruled until A.D 1235 and he was succeeded by his brother Kya Swa. Kya swa strived to implement for the development of the country after he had possessed the throne. During the reign of Kya Swa, the religious lands had increased and faced with the loss in taxation so that he strived to confiscate the religious lands. When the law Kyaung Monks from Tapayin objected, the Enquiry Commission was formed and examined the case. It was reported that the Sayadaws were right and returned the law Kyaung Lands to the Sayadaws. Also administration was implemented to be developed during his rule. Kya Swa issued the Royal Orders dated 22 April, 1 May and 6 May 1249 with the aim to suppress the lawless persons and thieves. He died not long after the royal Orders were issued.<sup>2</sup> He was succeeded by his nephew Uzana in 1249. It seemed that he was assassinated in Dala together with his entourage in 1256. That was why, he was also called as King.

After the death of Uzana, Min Yan succeeded him. the duration of Min Yan's reign was also very short. He was also assassinated. Min Yan was succeeded by Sithu (4) (a) Nara Thiha Patey who was commonly called as Tayoke Pyay Min in 1256. Nara thiha Patey was called as Tayoke Pyay in because he could not resist the invasion of the Mongols and fled in 1283. He fled to Pyay due to the attack by the Mongols. He was assassinated by poisoning by his son on his return to the Nay Pyi Taw from Pyay.<sup>3</sup>

Tayoke Pyay Min was succeeded by his younger brother Kyaw Swa, ruler of Dala in 1287. When Kyaw Swa (AD.1287-1289) came to the throne, the three Shan brother namely Yarzathingyan, Athinkhayar and Thihathu were powerful at Kyaukse region. The three brother attacked Bagan and took Kyaw swa kto Myin Saing. In 1297, Saw Hnit, son of Kyaw Swa was elected as the King of Bagan. But the Kings of Bagan did not have powers and influences.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, the administration of Bagan period was found to be formed systematically. It was systematic and firm because it was administered in various stages by Myothougyi, Taik Thugyi, Kalan, Than Byin and Amat. In the judiciary, the tradition of taking on oath was introduced. The significance of the judiciary of Bagan period was found that it used the trial by four ordeals in the difficult cases.

---

1.Than Tun, Dr. Myanmar Thamine, P-58

2.Than Tun, Dr. Myanmar Thamine, P-60

3.Than Tun, Dr. Khithaung, P – 134.

4. Than Tun, Dr. Khithaung, P – 135.

The strong Bagan Empire which was established by King Anawrahta had been collapsed and destroyed due to the repeated invasions of the Mongols during the reign of King Nara Thiha Pate and the increase in strength of the three Shan brothers who took foothold at Kyaukse district (Kha Yine) within the country starting from the assassination of King Nara Thiha Pate, the administration machinery of Bagan Capital had ended. Myanmar Kings who ruled after Nara Thihapate could not come and rule Bagan.

### Conclusion

Bagan had (1261) years of Sasana Era (651) to (1921). During the reign of King Thamoderitz, (19) Villages were governed collectively but during reign of King Anawrahta, it became one of the largest nation. It was because of the martial powers, wisdom and intellectual qualification of the successive Kings starting from King Anawrahta. The religious faith of “Ayeeyi” which was taken by the whole of Bagan from the reign of King Thamoderitz to King Anawrahta was destroyed and made the whole country to worship the true faith of Buddhism. The existence of Buddhism at Upper Myanmar firmly was due to the gratitude of Bagan Kings and the people. Unlike other countries, the buildings used by the people were not found and only the religious buildings such as stupas, caves and monasteries were found so it could be said that the people of Bagan enjoyed only in doing merits than the worldly pleasures. Bagan period was classified as early Bagan from the time of literary evidences to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, middle Bagan from the 11<sup>th</sup> century to 12<sup>th</sup> century and late Bagan to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The cause of the destruction of Bagan that had been developed on a grand scale was that in Myanmar’s system, the King was the main in the administration of the country so that the development and decrease only depended on the King. Anawrahta could extend and establish the Empire because of being a brilliant King who possessed martial powers and wisdom. Afterwards, Kyansittha, Alaungsithu and Narapati Sithu were also capable Kings who possessed power and martial powers. The Kings who succeeded them were not capable and efficient so that they could not rule the country firmly. The Bagan Kings ruled in accordance with autocratic system. The stability of the country based on the economy. The development of economy grows the power of country. In the late of Bagan period, the decline in economy and foreign invasion caused the instability of the country. In conclusion, it could be said that the economic structure had been destroyed due to the instability in the country as well as foreign invasion.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank to our pro-rectors, Dr. Pyone Pyone Aung and Dr. Kay Thwe Hlaning for their kind permission to carry out my research. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge Dr. U Phyu, Dr. Khin Yi, our professors and Head of History Department for their kind support for this research.

### References

- Aung Thuwin            Bagan The Origins of Modern Burma, Honolulu, University press, 1985.
- Luce, G.H                Old Burma Early Bagan, New York: Artibus Asia and the Institute of fine Arts, 1969.
- Than Tun, Dr.           Khithaung Myanmar Yazawinn, Yangon, Mahadagon Press, 1964.
- Than Tun, Dr.           Athitmyin Myanmar Thamine, Mandalay, Yyakan Press, 1975.