

The Descendants of Foreigners in Myanmar And Human Rights

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Abstract

Myanmar Kings want to organize the tribes to be united country or to become a durable country. Not only Myanmar conquered the enemies, but also the enemies won Myanmar. Myanmar Kings gave the chances to the prisoners according to the principal law for prisoners in war; *Thontpan* who received the chance of settlements, earning money, worshipping their belief and religion, accepting official position which was accorded by King as technician, serving as fighters in battalion and as horsemen in cavalry corps and marrying with the other generations. *Let Ya* who oppose and attack the army could not get the chance like *Thontpan* they would be employed in service under a master. They must work in *Lamine* fields for Kings. They were not allowed to serve in army master. This paper presented about the foreigners and descendants of foreigners who arrived at Myanmar by various ways and their human rights.

Key words: *Thontpan*, *Let Ya*, *Lamine* field, *Yodhaya* tunes, Portuguese Thontpan, Catholic, Anglican, Baptists, Methodists,

Introduction

The figures of foreigners can be often seen on the wall paintings. They reached Myanmar as technicians of weapons and other machines, some arrived at Myanmar as propagators and teachers, and some arrived at Myanmar as fighters. But some were the prisoners in war and they were brought to Myanmar. It is the nature of war. But they were put in the proper place in Myanmar and Myanmar King founded the villages for them. Besides those prisoners in war, could build their religious monuments and celebrate their festivals in Myanmar. They can participate in Myanmar traditional festivals and Myanmar people also take part in their festivals till now.

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According to the historical records, the foreigners arrived at Myanmar by the various ways. Some came as the technicians, some reached Myanmar as traders, some came to Myanmar as propagators or teachers, some came as fighters, some arrived at Myanmar as prisoners in wars and some are King's government officials. In ancient periods, the countries all over the world wage the wars with other countries. On the 11th November 1563 King Bayint Naung marched to Yodaya and apprehended the military of Lonkati and in the reign of King Shinphyushin (Myae Du Min, Konbaung dynasty), King's

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arm forces marched and occupied the city of Ayutthia because 57 districts of Thailand rebelled against established authority of Myanmar King. [Reff: (*Chronology of Myanmar History*), Vol.I, Naypyitaw, Department of Historical Research, 2009, p. 91] Myanmar King arrested and took the Thai King, queens and attendants to Myanmar and they were put in proper places of Myanmar.

Yodaya Thontpan (Thai prisoners in war)

Thirty two Thai princes were put in proper place of Mandalay. So this place is called Min Thar Su quarter. But in the reign of King Mindon, King moved his town to Mandalay. So Min Thar Su quarter was situated at the center of Mandalay. Thai descent woman Daw Kyin Kyin, 85 years old, a descendant of Thai prince can be seen in Min Thar Su quarter. It is situated between 44th and 45th street, near 84th main road. She is fourth generation of the eldest prince of Thai. But other Thai descendants have moved to other places in Myanmar. On eve day of Thingyan festival, old stupa was discarded and collects the sands. On the first day of Thingyan, Ah Kya Nei, Thai descendants build new sand stupa with seven tiered – level [See Fig. 1]. At that day, they offer the meals and light meals to monks from Myin Wun monastery. They invite thirty two monks by dedicating the thirty two princes from old periods. The guests of Thai descendants and Myanmar come to this celebration and Thai people treat with “*Yodaya Monti*” food to the guests. So not only Thai descendants but also Myanmar and other tribes altogether participates this sand stupa festival happily.

The persons in the Thai Kings’ service were placed at Monti Su quarter in Mandalay by King of Myanmar. Other Thai slaves and attendants were put in Palinn Win by the King. The sand stupa in Monti Su is always celebrated on the full moon day of Kasone. The artisans of fire cracker and sparklers were settled in the proper site of Suegar village, Madaya, at the north part of Mandalay. In the reign of Bodaw Phaya, after digging the Shwe Tachaung creek, the descendants of Thai from Mandalay and Madayar can contact by water way. In the reign of King Tharyarwaddy, Pyin Si Minthargyi (Prince Pyinsi) composed classical songs with Myanmar literature like the rhythm and melody of Thai music. The dramas of Ramayana and Inao were performed in Myanmar palace and it was popular in the whole Myanmar. Yama Nat shrines of Thai are seen in War Khin Kon pagoda compound and at the back side of Paya Thon Su (three pagodas) in Mandalay. And next shrine was situated near Pahtoe Taw Gyi Pagoda, Amarapura.

Myanmar King allowed them to practice their burial custom as their tradition. We can see the cemeteries of Thai at the north part of Sagaing Kaung Hutaw and Lizinkon, Amarapura. The style of lotus bud pillar which is built on the tomb is the Thai burial custom. In Amarapura, there is a grand royal tomb with lotus bud pillar which is said

traditionally that it was the tomb of a Thai King who was arrested and taken to Myanmar. At the surrounding of that tomb, other small tombs are situated in this compound [See Fig. 2]. Myanmar King, royal relatives and public felt and cherished of Thai music, dance and drama. So we can decide that the prisoners of Thai had the human rights in Myanmar.

Manipura Kathae *Thontpan* (prisoner in war)

In the reign of Bayint Naung (1551– 81), Manipura Kathae was under the control of Myanmar. On the 11th December 1738, Kathae fought and set fire to Sayae village at the north part of Kaung Hmutaw pagoda, Sagaing region and they revolted in the surrounding of Sagaing. On 12^{ve} January 1759, the armies of King Alaungmintaya occupied Manipura [Reff; (*Chronology of Myanmar History*), p. 163]. Kathae prisoners in war were arrested and taken to Sagaing Region. They were put in proper places of Sagaing, Amarapura town and Shwe Kyet Yet. In the reign of King Sin Phyu Shin, in 1765, Myanmar arm forces marched and attacked to Manipura. King Bodaw Phaya also occupied Manipura and they are taken to Myanmar. On 1st January 1823, Commander in chief Maha Bandula succeeded Arthan and returned back to Yadanapura with the presents of gold, silver, princess from Arthan chieftains [Reff; (*Chronology of Myanmar History*), p.187]. In Daw Na Phwar quarter, eastern part of Mandalay palace, traditional Kathae Nat shrine of Kathae Ahphaygyi Nat Don Pop Nin (Kathae grandfather Nat) and Kathae Ahmaygyi (Kathae grandmother Nat) can be seen. The spirit Panthoibi shrine for Kathae Maedawgyi Ema Lai Mere Shbabi is located near the Daw Wet Ma central gate of Sagaing Myoma market [See Fig. 3]. In Daw Na Phwa, Maha Nwe Sin and Sakkyā Nwe Sin quarter in Mandalay and Sagaing, the Manipura Kathae Byamana descendants had been settled and they built the traditional religious monuments [See Fig. 4].

In the reign of Myanmar Kings, Kathae *Thontpan* served in Kathae cavalry of Myanmar King. In Kyauk Taw Gyi pagoda near the Mandalay hill a painting shows about the King Mindon's Hwet Taw Mu Khan (going around the town) ceremony. In this painting, among the King's government employees, the scene of Kathae horse men soldiers of cavalry marching with Portuguese cannon soldiers of artillery can be seen. By these evidences, we can decide that *Thontpan* who were arrested and taken to Myanmar can have the chance as Myanmar civilian till now. They could worship their religion without disturbance. They could serve in King's horse cavalry. So the prisoners in war from Manipura had the human rights.

Portuguese *Thontpan* and propagation of Catholic Christian gang

Since 15th and 16th century, Portuguese and Italian travellers and traders had arrived at Myanmar land. Felipe De Brito, a Portuguese mercenary was an expansionist of colony not only in economy but also in religion. He looted the relic chambers of the pagodas and removed precious jewels from Buddha images. Therefore King Anauk Phet Lon marched on Thanlyin by water and land way on 15th Dec 1612 with a formidable force. [Reff; *(Chronology of Myanmar History)*, p. 115] The war prisoners of Portuguese were settled in Inwa for some years. In the reign of King Tharlun, King had moved them to the villages between Mu and Chindwin rivers and King allowed them to worship their religion. Some prisoners could continue to serve in palace as soldiers and their commanders. The famous and big Feringhi villages are Chang Yoe, Mon Hla, Chan Thar Ywar, Chaung Oo and Nwar Phat Kyi villages among 9 villages [Sayar Aung Nyunt, *(Mandalay Catholic and Big Feringhi villages)*, 2012, pp. 317–318].

Their religion is called Feringhi because the people who believe in Christian were called Feringhi by Muslim people. France, English and Dutch were captured and they were placed in the Feringhi villages, after King Tharlun had attacked Thai. Their Christian Fathers led their socio-economic condition, religion, education and health. But, the residents and Buddhist monks from those villages helped them to build the Church, to earn money for their living because the prisoners did not have any properties. There is no problem between Feringhi villages and Myanmar villages till now. In the photographs, the Cathedrals can be seen from Nwar Phat Kyi and Mon Hla village [See Fig. 5]. In 1719, during the reign of King Ta Ningyanwe, Pope Clement 11 sent Fr. Calchi to Pegu and Inwa, to propagate the religion with propagator Joseph Vitton. In 1864, King Mindon allowed Feringhi Bill Cantet and Willian to visit Bamaw, Kachin mountain [Reff; *(Parliament Parabaik Short Note)*, Yangon, Yar Pyae press, 2011, pp.105–138]. Roman Catholic monks, who appealed to King Mindon to give them the fallow lands (without planting fields) at Nwar Phat village, eastern Shwe Bo on 14 March 1865, for their livelihood. [Reff; *Parliament Short Note*, pp. 105–138]

At first, although the Portuguese prisoners faced the poverty and enervated condition, in later period they could stand by the helps of Kings and public. They could earn their money for living, they could worship their Roman Catholic religion and they were allowed to build the Gothic style of Catholic churches. The numbers of 3265 Christian churches had been built in the whole Myanmar. [Reff; Lieutenant Colonel Win Mg, *(To be brilliant Aureole of Religious Dispensation)*, Yangon, Ministry of Deference service press, 1997, p.62, Hereafter cited as, *Religious Dispensation*] The foreigner figures can be seen on the wall paintings of Bagan period, Inwa period, Konbaung period and Yadanabon period. For example, in a scene of Monywa 1 temple, Salingyi, the door keeper is illustrated as a foreigner and described with ink inscription that, the door

keeper, Tony is talking to Indian Berni [See Fig. 8]. So, we can decide that foreigner prisoners and other foreigner had served in Royal court.

Anglican gang, Baptists and Methodists of foreigners in Myanmar

In 1825, during the English – Myanmar first war, the religious gang of Anglican arrived at Myanmar [Reff; *Religious Dispensation*, p.60]. In 1844, Shin Mar Ku church was built in Sittwe town. In 1854, Anglican gang settled down in Mawlamyine [*Religious Dispensation*, p. 60]. Dr: G E L; Corton opened the Saint Methrew school, at Mg Ngan quarter, in 1861 and they taught academic education in that school. [See Fig 6] Although its education standard is lower than the school in Bengal, even the Buddhist monks enrolled their pupils at that school. From 1861 to 1863, Anglican dispensation of religion started in Yangon. In 1864, they founded and began Saint John school in Yangon. On 31st July 1868, King Mindon built a Than Tae (government rest – house of diplomats) school for Dr: Mark to teach lessons and built and offered a Cathedral church to propagate the Anglican religion. [Reff; John Ebenezer Marks, Forty years in Myanmar, Yangon, 1962, p. 34, See Fig.7] Than Tae school was famous because the princes learned the lessons of Science, Maths, English and other subjects at that school in Mandalay. The main success of Anglican was teaching the higher level of education. Myanmar Kings let them build churches and propagate the religion in whole Myanmar foresightedly and generously.

Baptism Christian teaching arrived at Myanmar in 1813 and Dr: Judson and his wife started this religion. [*Religious Dispensation*, p. 59] In 1824, they propagated in Inwa capital. The Bible was translated into Myanmar language and English dictionary was translated into Myanmar royal literature by Dr: Judson. In lower Myanmar, Methodist propagation was started by American, Rev: Jane Millis Thobuan. In 1887, Wesleyan Methodists Fathers reached Mandalay to look after the soldiers who are Methodists. Although Methodists propagation arrived at Myanmar later than other propagation, they could open the schools and try propagation. They succeeded only between hill people and Chin tribe. Many kinds of propagation, like the gangs of Anglican, Catholic, Baptist and Methodists were allowed to propagate in Myanmar by Myanmar Kings and they are allowed to buy the plots of land for propagating. So they have opened the 3265 Churches in the whole Myanmar since 1996, by the permission of Myanmar Kings and leader.[Reff; *Religious Dispensation*, p. 62] We can know that the foreigners' in Myanmar have human rights in religion and other concerning matters.

The descendants of foreigners who worship Islam

The words of 'Pathe', 'Panthae' are seen on the stone inscription of Ananda Thu, at the southern page of Nyaugyan gyi's daughter's stone inscription and at Su Taug Pyae

pagoda stone inscription in Bagan period .[Reff; Professor E. Maung, (*Selection from the inscriptions of Bagan*),Yangon, Pyin nya Nanda press, 1958, pp.70 -139] So we can guess that the people who worship Islam religion had related and arrived at Myanmar since about 1000 years ago by the various ways as trader, mercenary soldier, prisoners in war, King's government employees and the people who entered to Myanmar from neighbouring countries. When King Anaukhetlun succeeded and occupied Thanlyin and Debrito, not only Portuguese but also the Muslim soldiers from Goa were arrested by Myanmar King. They were placed at north part of Inwa and the village of Chaung Yoe, dividing with Portuguese. In 1756, when King Alaung Min Taya, reoccupied Thanlyin, Muslim sailors, Khalar Thi from *Thontpan* groups were arrested. But King had selected them as the blood – brothers and among them 2 Muslim men were chosen as commander of a fifty men troop when the King reached Yangon. They served their duty faithfully for King and Myanmar country.

In 1782, in the reign of King Bodaw Phaya when Shan rebels entered and attacked into the palace, the Kalar Pyo military unit which were taking duty for security, defended and attacked the enemies bravely. In 1858, at the ceremony of “Htwet Taw Mu Gyi of King Mindon” (going around in the city and other town) for enshrining Buddha's relics in Kaung Hmu Taw pagoda, gun fighters of Muslim group (Kalar pyo Gun fighters) took the duties. King Mindon allowed the Muslims soldiers to build mosque for worshipping at the inner part of palace city wall. After founding Mandalay city, King Mindon put the Panthae (Chinese Muslim) people in proper place of east part of Hamarzala quarter and King allowed to build Panthae mosque building (Mohan median place of worship).[See Fig. 9] Although Teak was royal monopoly good, they were allowed to buy the teaks for construction of the mosque by the King. That mosque was opened in 1868. In the reign of King Mindon, Panthae people who absconded from China were rescued from danger and they are settled in suitable place in Mandalay by King Mindon. Now the number of 2266 mosques and 759 Islam seminaries were constructed in the whole Myanmar [Reff; *Religious Dispensation*, p.73]. Although those events were happened in many years ago, Myanmar people and Muslim people live together by helping each other in Myanmar. We can say that the descendants of Muslim people could have human rights in Myanmar.

Religious custom, Law and burial custom of descendants of Foreigners

In 1773, Quan Yin Si temple, Shwe Gon Htoke quarter, Tayoke Tan was built, in the reign of King Sin Phyu Shin by good will and friend ship between Myanmar and China. In the reign of Bodaw Phaya it was reconstructed and Chinese sisters (Shew Gu Thar Temple) was built. Quan Yin Si temple was repaired again in the reign of King Ba Gyi Taw

and King Tharyar Waddy. At the corner of 81th street and 27th road, we can see the Sid temple and Hindi temple on 27th road and Gorakha temple in Mandalay. The cemeteries of Christian people, Armanium, Myanmar, Thai, Laos, Linzin and Muslim are located at the east part of Daragataw in Meik Su quarter, Amarapura [See Fig.10]. Daragataw Arbyidshardi Ho Saini's tomb is at Ohtaw quarter. He is a head of a religious order of Islam in Bodaw Phaya period.

Conclusion

This paper presents about the culture, religion, settlements, building the religious monuments, religious festival, earning money for living, burial practice, half – blooded, serving in King's palace, travelling from here to there in Myanmar like descendants of Thai, Kathae, Muslim, Portuguese, Chinese, Panthae, Sid, Gorakha, Indian, foreigners in Myanmar with photographs. The Sand stupas of Thai, Mosque of Muslim, temples of Hindu, Nat shrines of Kathae, Churches of Christian people, mural paintings of temples, Buddhist's rest – house (Zayat) of Kathae and pagodas are the remembrance symbols of foreigners and *Thontpan* foreigners. Some *Thontpans* had good chance to earn living and they were rich. So, they could offer and built the pagodas and Zayap. (For example, Daw Khin Ma Gyi, descendant of Kathae) For all these evidences we can decide that the descendants of foreigners could have human rights in Myanmar.

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Fig.1 Sand Stupa of Thai,
Mandalay



Fig.2 Thai cemeteries in Lizinkon,
Amarapura



Fig.3 spirit Panthoibi shrine for Kathae
Maedawgyi Ema Lai Mere Shbabi,

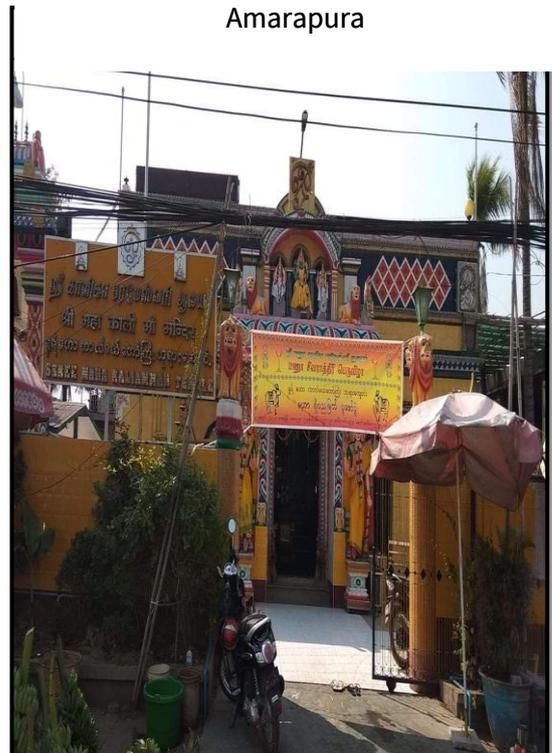


Fig.4 Hindu Nat shrine,
Mandalay



Fig.5 Catholic Cathedrals, Nwar Phat Kyi village

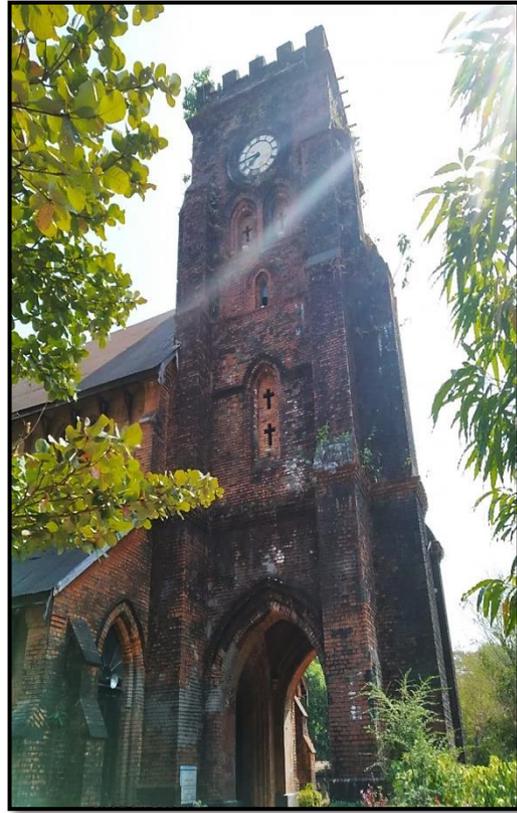


Fig.6 Saint Methrew, Mg Ngan quarter, Mawlamyine

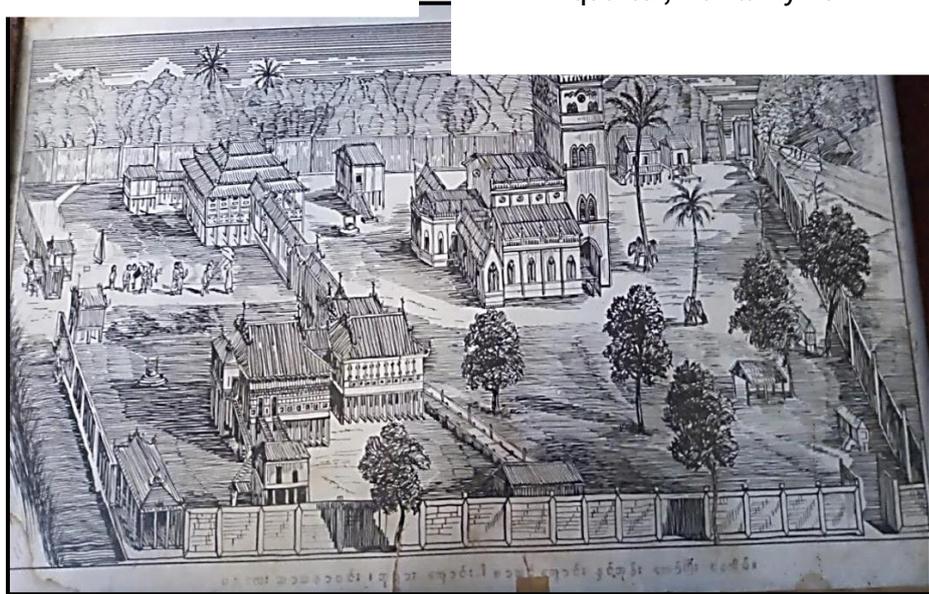


Fig.7 Than Tae School and Dr, Mark's Cathedral church, Anglican (donated by King Mindon)



Fig.8 Monywa (1) temple, Salingyi



Fig.9 Panthae mosque, Mandalay



Fig.10) Daragataw in Meik Su quarter,
Amarapura

