

Title	The Overview on the Appointing of <i>Myothugyi</i> (Town Headman) in Salin during Konbaung Period (1752-1885)
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The Overview on the Appointing of *Myothugyi* (Town Headman) In Salin during Konbaung Period (1752-1885)

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Abstract

Administration of Salin was hereditary and the eldest son of the family was succeeded in hereditary administration. This paper is an attempt to explain the facts on how *Myothugyis* (Town headman) who were fundamental officials in the study period were appointed in Salin during the Konbaung Period by using the *parabaik* documents collected from Salin region, royal orders and available secondary sources.

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Introduction

Salin is a town located in Magway Region on the west bank of the Irrawaddy River. The town founded in AD 1021 is known for its collection of Buddhist monasteries and pagodas, a legacy of its prominent residents. This paper is an attempt to present and explain the facts on how *Myothugyis* (Town headman) who were fundamental officials in the study period were appointed by using the *parabaik* documents collected from Salin region, royal orders and available secondary sources. Firstly, how Salin was established and the lineage of Salin *Thugyi* is presented.

Salin and the lineage of Salin *Thugyi*

Salin was established as a name of Mahaponkasa-lint in AD 1021. According to local folktale, the lineage of Salin *Thugyi* had begun since the descendants of a minister called Mahapon who accepted the title of Mahapon administered Salin Town. During the reign of King Alaung Sithu (r.1112-1167), three headmen from the villages of Kyettetmyaw, Yay-ngan and Letpweaing joined together with *Thugyi* Mahapon and extended the town of Salin. On that account the king conferred them the title of *Pyisoe* by raising the rank as noble. Since that time the lineages of *Thugaung* appeared and they administered Salin as *Myothugyis* up to the reign of King Thibaw (r. 1878-1885). We have found the list of the descendants of the four lines of *thugyi* from four *Pyisoes*. Salin *Myothugyi* Mahapon was conferred the title of *Pyisoe Aung Tha Mingalar* and he had to undertake the task concerning with the matter of irrigation, agricultural land and revenue. There were some *Thugyis* who assumed the title of *Maha Zayya Baddha Yaza* were descendants of *Pyisoe Aung Tha Mingalar*. They were (1) U Kaw U (2) U Toke Kyaw (3) U Pan Khaing (4) U Shwe Saing (5) U Taw (6) U Tha Dun Aung and (7) U Gyi.

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Thugyi of Kyettetmyaw administered Setoketara and mountain ranges of Chin hill and he was conferred the title of Pyisoe Thamandarit. *Thugyis* who got the titles of Min Sakkarit and Thamandarit were descended from PyisoeThamandarit. They were (1) U Hla Phyu (2) U San Phyaw (3) U Aung Tha and (4) U So.

Thugyi of Yay-ngan was conferred the title of Pyisoe Maha and ruled Pha-aing and the villages on the both sides of Mone Stream. *Thugyis* who accepted the titles of Maha-thaman were descended from Pyisoe Maha. They were (1) U Yi Hman (2) U Ohn (3) U Paw (4) U San Aung (5) U Tun (6) U Aye (7) U San Khaing (8) U Toe and (9) U Nyo.

Thugyi of Letpwesaing village was conferred the title of Pyisoe Dewuttana and administered Kyauk-sit Town and the villages throughout the Salin Stream. *Thugyis* who accepted the titles of Thiha Wat-hta-hna Yazathu were descended from him. They were (1) U Kar (2) U Shwe Khaing (3) U Aung Baw (4) U Myo Tun (5) U San Thar (6) U Shwe Baw (7) U Swe Aung (8) U Shwe Ohn (9) U Theik Tun (10) U Lu Toke and (11) U Lu Htwar.¹

Appointing the Headman of Salin

The historical documents concerning with the administration and appointing the headmen of Salin found in *Parabaik* and royal orders can be classified as follows:

1. Royal order
2. Instruction from the Interior Minister
3. A brief instructions on duty was given with the appointment order
4. Instruction from Privy Council
5. The Cancellation of 1783 *Sittan* of Salin Town submitted to Royal Treasury
6. The Change of 1783 *Sittan* of Salin Town submitted to Royal Treasury
7. The Cancellation of 1802 *Sittan* submitted to Royal Treasury
8. The Change of 1802 *Sittan* submitted to Royal Treasury
9. An Official Gazette
10. The Letter from Three monks Submitted to *Hluttaw*²
11. *Ta-gyaung Sarchun*³ (A Royal Order Written in One Line Only)
12. *Nha-gyaung Sarchun*⁴ (A Royal Order Written in Two Lines)
13. A letter submitted by the Supreme Council to the King¹
14. Instruction from *Hluttaw* and Royal Order to Whom it May Concerned²
15. Instruction from *Athi* Minister⁷

¹ Daw Ohn Kyi, Salin Thugaung Thamaing Akyin (A Brief history of Salin Thugaung), Bama Thamaing Hinlay, No. 2, Yangon, Khit Pya Taik Sarpay, 2014, pp. 59-61 (Henceforth: Ohn Kyi, 2014)

² Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.48, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

³ Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.43, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

⁴ Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.43, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

¹ Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.48, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

² Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.43, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

⁷ Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.48, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

16. Acceptance of Application by *Thugyi*⁸
 17. Appointment of *Se-ok* (overseer of dam)

It can be observed some facts on how Salin *Myothugyis* were appointed from above mentioned documents. A royal order issued by King Badon (r. 1782-1819) on 8 December 1802 says:

Salin shall have no separate town headman; Nga Taw, son of Nga Shwe Saing who assumed the title of Zayya Battaya Maha as Myay Daing Gyi (Senior chief of land tracts), who was also Po Za (one who holds Po in fief), and who had been given an appointment with the Hintha Seal in the time of King Alaungmintaya, shall take charge of Salin and he shall submit Sittan and Interrogation Report, on Salin.⁹

Similarly, the document written in a Parabaik states as follows:

Shall dismiss the Maha Thaman-kyaw from *Thugyi* of Salin. Shall appoint Nga Taw as *Thugyi* and *Myay-daing* of Salin. He shall submit 45 Sittan and Interrogation Report. Shall withdraw the royal seal given to Maha Thaman-kyaw.¹⁰

Above mentioned royal orders say that there were many *thugyis* who ruled Salin. The descendant of Maha-thaman (*Thugyi* of Yay-ngan) from former four lineages of *Thugyis* who took charge *Myothugyi* of Salin was dismissed and a descendant of Salin *Myothugyi* named Nga Taw who had a title of Zayya Battaya Maha was appointed as Salin *Myothugyi*. While changing Nga Taw as *Myothugyi*, he needed to retake the royal seal given to former *Myothugyi* and Nga Taw had to submit the sittan and interrogation report. When we study the *Instruction from the Interior Minister*, it is said that,

Shwe-taik-wun, *Shwe-taik-soe*, *Shwe-taik-kyat*, *Shwe-taik-sa-yay* shall take the year of 45 sittan¹¹, the year of 60 sittan¹² and the year of 64 sittan¹³ and Nga Taw shall submit on 5 waxing of Pyatho 1164. *Shwe-taik-wun*, *Shwe-taik-soe*, *Shwe-taik-kyat*, *Shwe-taik-sa-yay* shall supervise the preparation of sittan by Nga Taw¹⁴

As previously mentioned, the *sittan* of appointing new *thugyi* should be submitted after the withdrawal the *sittan* of former *thugyi*. According to the *Instruction from the Interior Minister*, the officials who had to take charge the case were *Shwe-taik-wun* (Chief Officer in charge of the Royal Treasury with the responsibility of the security of the treasury, preserving the treasures and supervising the *ShweTaik-soe*, *ShweTaik-kyat* and the clerks of the treasury in the issue and return of treasures from the treasury)¹⁵ *Shwe-*

⁸ Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.48, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

⁹ (a) Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.40, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

(b) *The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598-1885*, Part. V (1788-1806), Edited, compiled, translated and annotated with long preface by Dr. Than Tun, Kyoto, The Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1986, p.185 (Henceforth: ROB, V, 1986)

¹⁰ Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.48, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

¹¹ Sittan collected in 1783

¹² Sittan collected in 1798

¹³ Sittan collected in 1802

¹⁴ Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.40, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

¹⁵ U Thein Hlaing, *Myanmar-English Dictionary of Ancient Myanmar Historical Terms*, Yangon, Department of Historical Research and National Library, Zabutalu Press, 2016, p. 169 (Henceforth: Thein Hlaing, 2016)

taik-soe (Royal Treasurer with the responsibility of preserving the treasures, making ornaments and raiment for the king and queens, and issuing articles for use in the seasonal royal ceremonies as asked for by the Supreme Council and the Privy Council¹⁶ *Shwe-taik-kyat* (Person in charge of the royal treasury under the orders of *ShweTaik-soe* and *Shwe-taik-wun*)¹⁷ and *Shwe-taik-sa-yay* (the clerk of royal treasury). King Badon (r. 1782-1819) collected *sittans* in ME 1145 (AD 1783), ME 1160 (AD 1798) and ME 1164 (AD 1802). Here present 1783 *sittan* and 1802 *sittan* as examples. In 1802 *sittan*, it was stated as follows:

On 5 waning of Nayon, ME 1164, Nga Taw who was born in Monday, age 53 stated that, "The lineage of Salin *Myay-daing Thugyi* was administered by my Great great-grandfather Nga Kaw Oo during the King Sane (r.1698-1714). After he passed away my great grandfather Nga Toke Kyaw ruled until the reign of King Tanningwe (r.1714-1733) and when he passed away my grandfather Nga Pan Khaing ruled till the time of King Maha Dhamma Raza Dipadi (r.1733-52). When my grandfather died, my father Nga Shwe who possessed the title Zayya Battaya Maha was in charge up to the time of King Badon. When he expired I had organized and ruled upto now from the time of Badon.¹⁸

Above mentioned *sittan* was collected in the reign of King Badon (r. 1782-1819) for succession of lineage by *Myothugyi* Nga Taw. His ancestors had ruled as *Myothugyis* up to the time of King Badon from the time of King Sane. Besides, the *sittan* kept in *Shwe-taik* in which Maha-thaman Kyaw was removed from the post of *Myothugyi* and cancellation list was written as follows:

Table 1. List of 1783 Cancellation Kept in Shwe-taik

Name	Born Day	Age
Nga Yee Hman who assumed MahaThaman	-	-
Son Nga Bone who assumed MahaThaman	-	-
Son Nga Paw who assumed MahaThaman	-	-
Young brother NgaTun who assumed MahaThaman	-	-
Son Nga Aye who assumed MahaThaman	6	57
Wife MiThaKaung	4	70
Wife Ma Ban Zar	3	38
Son NgaOoKa San	2	19
Sister Mi Yin	1	15

¹⁶ Thein Hlaing, 2016, 169

¹⁷ Thein Hlaing, 2016, 169

¹⁸ Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.40, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

Young SisterMiHnin	5	12
Young brother Nga San Win	4	9
Young brother Nga Yan Kin	5	5
Young Sister Mi Min Ya	1	2

Source: SalinThugaung, Parabaik No.40, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collections

As he ordered not to have separate lineages of four *Myothugyis*, King Badon issued an order in which it was said that four hereditary families of Salin *Thugyis* should rule and organize the administration of the town unanimously. It is stated in the royal order issued on 7 December 1783 as follows:

Salin has four hereditary families of chiefs, viz. Mahathamman, Po Za, KhineZa and Taungzin Za and the records in the archives maintain that each had an equal right and equal responsibility and therefore all four chiefs shall meet together in an office to carry out any administrative affair or to try any case of dispute.¹⁹

King Badon was a visionary leader and he did not delay to redress if what he did was not effected or not accepted by people. Therefore, he tried to amend his royal order issued on 8 December 1802 in which it was stated that Salin shall have no separate town headman and in new order he ordered the lineages of four *Thugyis* that they should rule together and carry out the administrative affair. In other words, it can be assumed that the king would like to keep the traditional *thugyi's* lineages.

Anyway, King Sagaing (r. 1819-1837) issued a royal order concerning with Salin *Myothugyiship* which says there shall have no separate town headman. See the following order.

Salin shall have no four separate lineages of *Myothugyis*. It shall have only the lineage of *Myay-daing Thugyi*. Shall remove Nga Khaing who is the son of Nga Win from *Myay-daing Thugyi Ngaof* Salin. Shall appoint Zayya Battaya Maha as *Myay-daing Thugyi* of Salin as previously appointed. Shall submit the change of sattan and withdraw the royal seal given to Nga Khaing who is the son of Nga Win.²⁰

It can be considered that the king wished to give a priority to the lineage of Mahapon (the founder of Salin) in appointing the town headman (*Myothugyi*) of Salin. The order passed on 11 waxing of Nayon 1215 and proclaimed by Min Htin Raza Thiha Thu, liaison official stated as follows:

Nga Tha Tun Aung said that his grandfather Nga Shwe Saing who received Hintha Seal in the reign of King Alaungpaya ruled and organized Salin Town. Salin shall have no four separate lineages of *Thugyis*. It shall have only the lineage of *Myay-daing Thugyi*. As ordered in royal edict, Nga Taw (Nga Tha Tun Aung's father) ruled as *Myay-daing Thugyi*. After Nga Taw died, his son

¹⁹ *The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598-1885, Part IV (1782-1787)*, Edited, compiled, translated and annotated with long preface by Dr. Than Tun, Kyoto, The Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1986, p. 37 (Henceforth: ROB,IV,1986)

²⁰ *Ameintdaw* (Royal Order) Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.48, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collections

Nga Tha Tun Aung was appointed as Salin Myothugyi and ruled Salin. Shall Nga Taw continue to rule Salin as *Myay-daing Thugyi*.²¹

As seen in above order, it can be assumed that the lineage of Salin ruled continuously Salin until the time of Nga Tha Tun Aung. Similarly, an order of *Ta-gyaung Sarchun* (A Royal Order Written in One Line Only) read as follows:

*Ta-gyaung Sar*²²

To our majesty who possessed white elephant and Lord of all land and lives as well as universal monarch, according to the documents of Shall Nga Tha Tun Aung continue to rule Salin as *Myay-daing Thugyi*.²³

As stated in above document, Nga Tha Tun Aung ruled Salin as Salin *Myothugyi* in the reign of King Mindon (r. 1852-1878). It is mentioned in a *parabaik* that Salin *Myothugyi* had to take responsibility on the restoration of peace and order as well as to take the duty of *Se-ok*.

Salin *Myothugyi* Nga Toe presented in the presence of village headman, headman, Se-gyi, Myaung-saw, *Athi* (commoner), *Win-ne* and *Kappa* who served revenue under Salin jurisdiction, "My great grandfather Nga Aye had ruled Salin Town as stated in 1783 and 1802 *sittans*. When Nga Aye died, his son Nga San Win succeeded him and ruled Salin. After that, his son Nga San Khaing ruled. He is son of Nga Kyaw San Hla who is young brother of Nga San Khaing and right descendant. The present town headman Nga Kyi could not serve and made less benefit in the interest of the King. Thus, I (Nga Toe) may serve as chief. Then he may carry out the fief of irrigated paddy lands and offers 10,000 coins including 7,000 baskets of paddy annually as royal benefit." When it was stated, it was asked to present headman and the headman said he could not serve 10,000 coins plus 7,000 baskets of paddy in the interest of the King.²⁴

There can be seen the same fact in *Nha-gyaung Sar*.²⁵ Nga Kyi was dismissed from the post of town head man because he could not undertake well the task of irrigation and royal paddy land located in Salin. And then, Nga Toe who was the right descendant of ancestors Nga Aye, his son Nga San Win, Nga Kyaw San Hla who were lineage of Maha Thaman should be appointed as town head man after he addressed to *Hluttaw*. According to the submission, it was stated that Nga Kyi was dismissed from town head man and Nga Toe was appointed as *Myothugyi* and *Se-ok*.²⁶ Similar statement was written in *Hluttaw Hmar Sar* as well as²⁷ in *Ta-gyaung Sarchun* as follows:

Your Majesty who possessed white elephant and Lord of all land and lives as well as universal monarch appoints Nga Toe as Town headman of Salin on 11

²¹ *Ameintdaw* (Royal Order) Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.48, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collections

²² One line royal order in complete orthographic style on a long toddy palm leaf pointed at both ends (Thein Hlaing, 2016, 64)

²³ *Ta-gyaung-sar*, Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.48, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collections

²⁴ Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.71, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

²⁵ A Ministerial letter of two lines on a long, pointed palm leaf. Thein Hlaing, 2016, 97

²⁶ Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.71, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

²⁷ Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.71, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

waning of Tabodwe 1232. Shall administer the subordinates and serve for the interest of the King.²⁸

It can be observed that withdrawal of the appointment which had been given to Salin Town Headman cum *Se-ok* should be done because town headman was one of the fundamental officials in administration and he had to be removed if he could not carry out the development of socio-economic life of people. Headman who could undertake the benefit of people should only be appointed. Economy of Salin during Konbaung Period was based on agriculture. Therefore, in order to improve the agriculture, *Myothugyi*, *Se-ok*, and many officials concerning with irrigation task, were appointed to take charge of irrigation and agriculture.

After the rule of Nga Kyi who was the 8th hereditary in the line of Zayya Battaya Maha, the line of Zayya Battaya Maha was cut off and Nga Toe and Maung Nyo who were from the line of Maha Thaman succeeded Myothugyiship. Nga Kyi's son U Bo Saing addressed to the King that Myothugyiship was usurped by descendants of the line of Maha Thaman.²⁹ But according to *Nha-kyauing Sar-chun*, it was noted that U Bo Saing did not succeed his father in line of succession. According to Ohn Kyi, it had to be given 5,000 coins to authorized person for obtaining the post of Town Headman.

Administration of Salin was hereditary. As previously mentioned royal orders and sittings, the eldest son of the family was succeeded in hereditary administration.³⁰ If there was no child in family, one of the close relatives would be chosen to appoint. King Badon and King Sagaing issued royal orders concerning not to have any separated lineage of *thugyi* to avoid the disputes and problems of separate lineages.

Conclusion

To sum up, Salin was ruled by four lines of hereditary thugyis from old times. During the reign of King Badon, the King ordered not to have separate town headman as well as the lineages of four *Thugyis* should rule together and carry out the administrative affair. Based on the situation the King undertook to rectify. In the same way, King Sagaing ordered not to have separate hereditary headman in Salin. The kings tried to avoid the consequent problems of separate line of headmanship in administration. Until the time of King Thibaw, the line of Maha Thaman ruled Salin. Not like other towns, Salin *Myothugyi* had to carry out the duty of a headman as well as the duty of a *Se-ok*.

Acknowledgement

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²⁸ Salin Thugaung, Parabaik No.71, Daw Ohn Kyi's Collection

²⁹ Ohn Kyi, 2014, 64

³⁰ Dr Toe Hla, *Chauk-khayaing Se-myaung Thamaing* (History of Six Khayaing Dam), Yangon, Sein-yaung-so Sarpay, 2016, p.65 (Henceforth: Toe Hla, 2016)

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