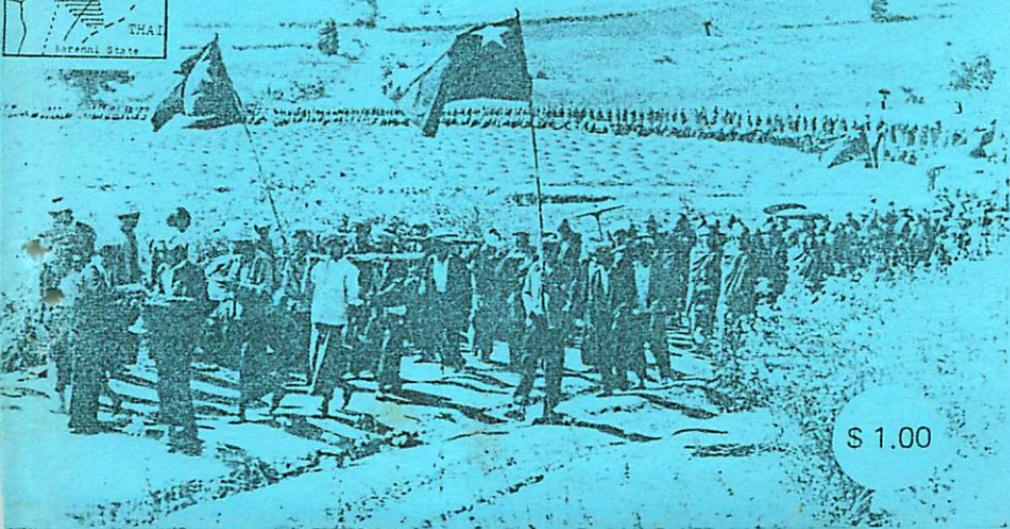


# PA-OH PEOPLE

by  
Mika Rolly



\$ 1.00



The first Pa-oh President  
The Late U Hla Pe (Pa-oh Hla Pe)

Mr. Dunkin

NDF, office.

# PA-OH PEOPLE

by

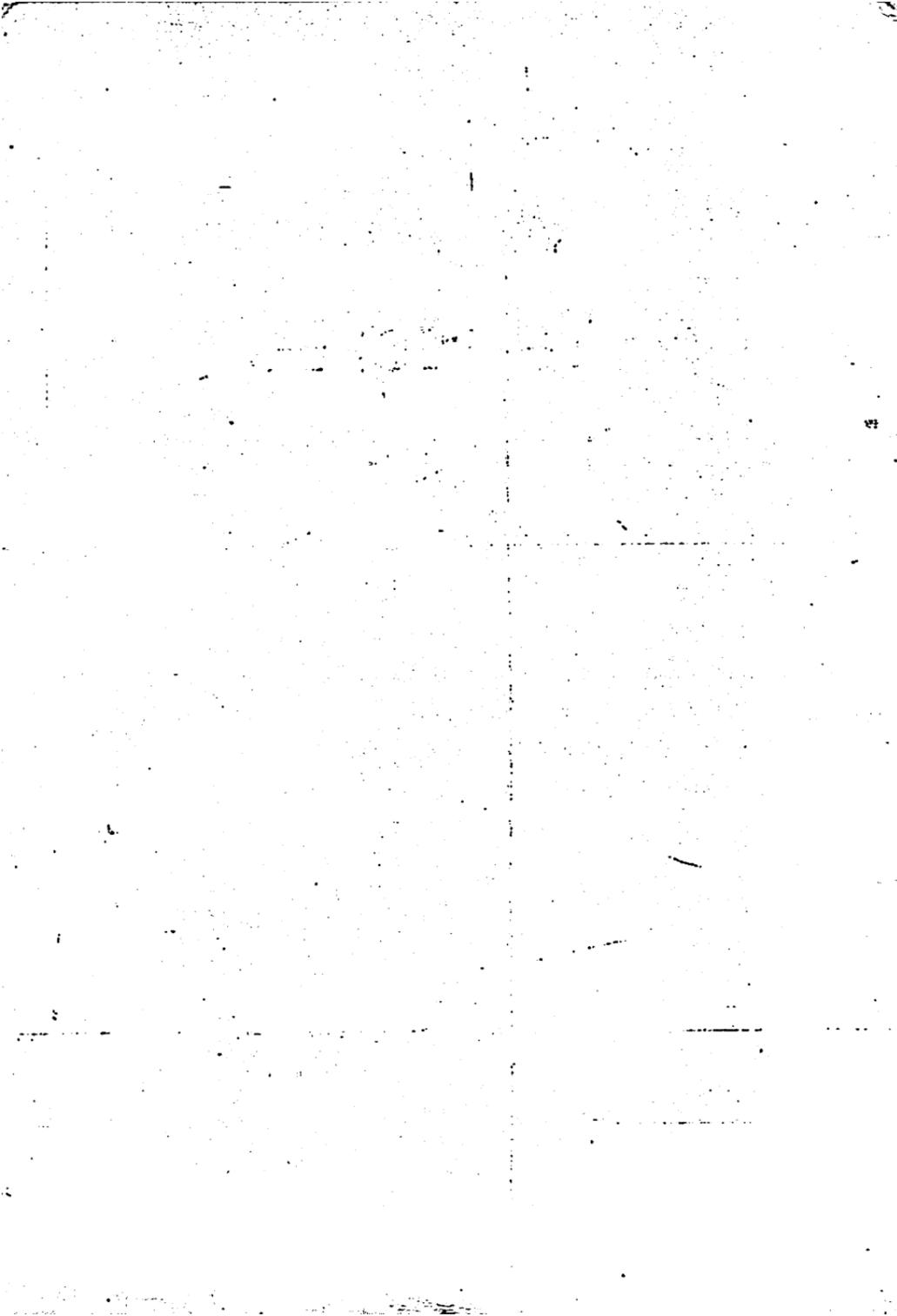
Mika Rolly

from

*Okley*  
25/07/97.

President

P.P.L.O.



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## INTRODUCTION

*The story of a people is essential, in that, the past not only makes the present more easily understandable, but it enables readers to surmise what the future may hold in store.*

*History is, in fact, a store of information which tells the stories of a people's past; it describes the adventures of the forefathers, their kings and kingdoms, their victories and defeats, their travels and settlements, and their progress and tribulations. But most of all, it portrays their belief and faith in life, which are essentially the virtues of a people. The present holds the immediate information about the Pa-oh struggle for political rights and free, their struggle for economical well-being and stability, as well as for their social security.*

*In the even of one people being absorbed by another, the importance and values of the conquered people are played down and eventually sink into oblivion. History is re-written by the conquerors to suit themselves regardless of the historical truth. The foremost settlers in "Burma" were once known as the Pyu (Pwoh and Pa-oh), Kanyan (Ka Ya) , Set or Thet (Sgaoh). Burmese history writers were obliged to gloss over the question: "Why and how such people as the Karen tribes exist with no written history?)"*

*"History of Burma" is not constructed from the roots which, in fact, contributed to the growth of the country. Instead, as is their irresponsible nature, the Burmese historians claimed that they were the originators of the civilization, thus sowing the seeds of hatred and distrust among the original indigenous races. Today the perverse Burmans have the audacity to claim that the original peoples dwell too much on the past.*

*According to Pe Maung Tin, millennial history of the Burman begins with the creation of the universe and the subsequent evolution of mankind. The heavenly*

beings, known as Brahmah, in the course of time descended to earth. The "illuminated beings" gradually lost their illumination as they put on the form of human being, known as Set Kyar. Through the ages, they developed their society to become the first political association which instituted a government of law and order, under the rule of a nominated king. The first king, known as Maha Tamada, ruled for a thousand years. He was the forebear of Gautama Siddhata who, after many years of extreme devotion, received the Enlightenment in 443 B.C. Thus Buddhism was conceived and disseminated through out Asia, including "Burma", then known as "P'iaoland" by the Chinese people.

The Burman claimed themselves to be the descendants of the Brahmahs and they entered 'Burma' in about 860 B.C., designating themselves as 'Brahmah'. When the British occupied the country known to the early Indians as, 'Sunparata' (Upper Burma) and 'Ramanya-desa' (Lower Burma), they coined the phrase 'Burma' for the name of the country and 'Burman' for those they conquered. Thus the term 'Burman' came into usage from the year 1886 A.D. It is, however, questionable whether there were any 'Tibeto-Burman' before the year 1886 A.D.

According to 'The Karens of the Golden Chersonese',<sup>2</sup> Lt. Col. McMahon elaborated in a short statement that the 'Maha Yazawin' was cleverly constructed. But when it comes to 'how and why' and 'when and where' did they come from, and the omission of any statement about the foremost settlers, the 'Maha Yazawin' completely misleads readers and is therefore a work of no value historically.

Mr. G.E. Harvey described the Burmese people as Indians in his 'History of Burma'. All the Burmese historical fables are of Indian origin; the names of the kings, towns, and countries being composed of two languages, Indian and vernacular.

Mr. S.W. Cocks made a very pertinent statement in his book, 'History of Burma'<sup>4</sup> He correctly mentioned the original root of the Burmese people, and the foremost settlers of the country to be the Pyu, Kanyan and Thet.

The land presently known as 'Burma' was developed by several indigenous races, mainly from two separate and distinct root origins. One from the Indus civilization and the other from the Chinese civilization. 'Burma' is fortunate to have passed through and been influenced by three major religious cultures. First came Buddhism in the Fifth century B.C., the Pa-oh people receiving the teachings of Gautama Buddha. Next came the Islamic faith brought in by the Persian merchants, and the introduction of cultivation and the well being of the 7th century A.D. Lastly came Christianity in the nineteenth century A.D., teaching the people modern education and instilling the broader outlook in life and democracy.

Today, these three religions have little impact on the ruling Military Dictators. 'The Burmese Way of Socialism' is a particular creed and promoted by a breed of mankind to rule by domination. They impose seemingly police restriction on all religious administration, and in the form of subtle harassment they contrive to hamper religious activity in the land.

This brief outline of the Pa-oh history is not based on mythical folk lores, fables or legends; the findings are based on consultation with learned monks and elderly scholars who during the Japanese occupation hid a large collection of documents consisted of ivory tablets, gold and silver leaves, brass gongs and papyrus including palm leaves. All were inscribed in ancient Pa-oh language generally known as Pyu letters' Unfortunately, the Japanese Kempetai, learned of the collection, looted and destroyed this national treasure which had been preserved from the days when Anawrahta destroyed the Pa-oh kingdom. However there are still a few brass gongs, over a thousand years old, existing in Pa-oh monasteries. These thousand year old gongs are gilded in gold and inscribed with past history.

*The Pa-oh learned the hard way that the life of a free-society, self-determination and will to resist aggression are attained only by the painful and long process of learning and discipline in time of war. The Pa-oh realized that their national existence depends upon their own efforts and not upon any resolution or guarantee of an alien government. A people fighting for self-determination will never be satisfied until the aim is achieved. The Pa-oh fight to preserve a land where they may live in peace.*

**Notes:-**

1. *The Glass Palace Chronicles of the Kings of Burma, by Pe Maung Tin 1923*
2. *The Karens of the Golden Chersonese by Lt. Col. McMahon, p 29*

*(The more so, when we look upon the face of the typical Burman, which has his tartar genealogy marked upon it in character that cannot be mistaken.*

*The Karens, it is true, cannot boast of historical records, but their real traditions, which points to Central Asia as their ancient home, and which also indicate the route by which they came therefrom, are far more trustworthy, and consequently of much more ethnological value than the pretentious productions of the more civilized races that surround them.....*

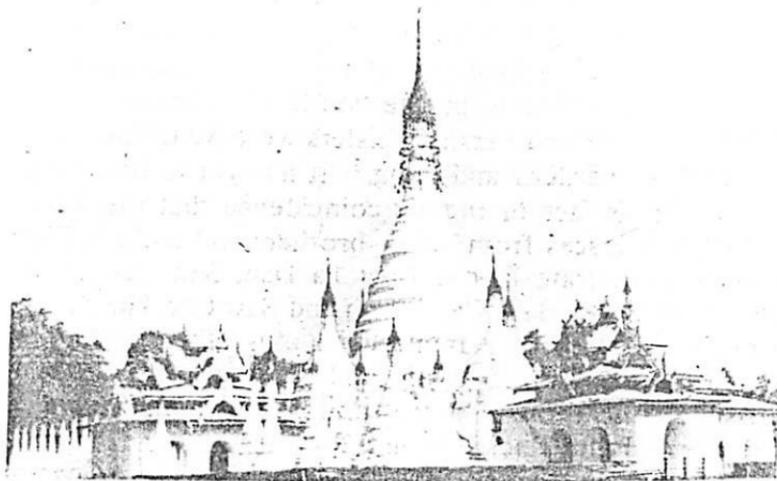
*Burma history does not assist us in our investigations in regard to the Karen. The meek and lowly inhabitants of the plains were treated with contempt by their former masters, and little or no information could be procured about them. The same may be said in reference to the more independent tribes in the north, for, with that arrogance which is characteristic on the Burman, they estimated.....)*

3. *History of Burma by Mr. G.E. Harvey, p 6 and 7 (The Burmese are a Mongolian race, yet their traditions, instead of harking back to China, refer to India. Their chronicles read as if they were descended from Buddha's clansmen and lived in Upper India. Even*

their folk lore is largely Hindu. Most of their towns have two names, one vernacular, the other classical India.

The name of the Irrawaddy (Sanak Irawati 'giver of refresh men') happens to be also the ancient name of the river Ravi in the Punjab. The surviving traditions of the Burmese are Indian because their own Mongolian traditions died out (they are not of pure Mongoloid stock). The only classes who can read, write and keep traditions alive were ruling class, the Indian immigrants.)

4. History of Burma by Mr. S.W. Cocks P 9. (In very early time a king from Kapilavastu in Oude; the home of Buddha, was forced by dissension with neighbouring chiefs to leave the country and came with his army into Burma. Then he established a kingdom and built Tagaung on the Upper Irrawady for his capital.)



One of the many pagodas in Pa-oh land.

PART ONE  
Chapter 1  
The living Earth

The evolution of life took place and as the last stage, mankind was created to live, toil and consume the resources of the Mother Earth. From savaghood, man learned to make use of his environment, to develop it for his own well being. Thus the first civilization took root on the fertile river basins. There were three known civilizations in Asia which appeared at approximately the same time; those of the Nile, the Euphrates and the Indus river basins. From these three regions spread three main groups of human stocks-the white skinned Caucasian, the yellow skinned Mongoloid and the black skinned Negroid.

In the years of development, from family units to communities of clans, man struggled to dominate one another. The strong became rulers and the weak the serfs. When the population increased, expansion took place. Clans and tribes migrated from one end to another, from continent to continent, to find more suitable place to live and settle. From Central Mongolia (or Russia in Asia), legend has it that there was a family of seven brothers and sisters, known as the Turanian family, living in Ugro Altia region which is in the south of Mongolia. The names of these brothers and sisters were Ngu, Tok, Jang, Miao, Paungher, Kisi and King.<sup>5</sup> It has yet to be proved whether it is fact or merely coincidence that the Karen legend too traces from seven brothers and sisters - Naw Baw Klawh, Naw Pa-oh, Naw Pa Dae, Saw Paku, Saw Maw Ney Bwah, Saw Way Wawh and Saw Che. The family kinship as stated in Karen legend plus the physical feature of the Turanian family and Mongolian, add to one possible conclusion. On the support to this conclusion<sup>6</sup>, the Rev. John Hackney and Professor De Lacuoperie stated that the Turanian family once lived in Central Asia<sup>7</sup>.

Mr. Porter Smith and the Rev. John Smith both concluded that the Karen tribes once migrated from Tibet to "Kweh-chaw" and Sichuan<sup>8</sup> which are now part of Yunan province<sup>9</sup>. All the findings of these old scholars point to the migration of the Karens from Central Asia to south west China. Besides the Karens, many other waves migrated across Tibet into China - the Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Thai and Mon-Khmer.

The first migration of the Karens tribes took place between the years 1123 B.C. to 1134 B.C. during the rule of the tyrant Chinese king Ghau Hsin<sup>10</sup>. All kinds of restrictions were imposed on the neighbouring races and he introduced cinocization on all aliens under his rule. Many races, including the Karen tribes, thus left their permanent settlements and migrated to new territories stretching from Tonkin, Thailand and Burma. The migration of the Karen tribes was organised in three major waves and took three years (1128-1125 B.C.) to complete evacuating their homes, villages and towns where they had dwelt for several hundred years and where their population had expanded causing worry to the Chinese community.

The first Karen migration followed the river valley of Mekaung, reaching the delta where they intended to build a new settlement. But after a few years, a very large migration of Thais move into this same area, forcing the Karens to seek new pastures further south, But when they reached the sea, they were forced to turn west, travelling along the Mi-nam river to the Nam Ping river. Finally they chose the Upper River valley of Nam Ping for their new settlement. Here for several hundred years they settled, until finally the Thais drove them out of Chiang Mai.

The second Karen migration followed the Shweli river in a south westernly direction, reaching where they had sent out an exploratory team to find out new location which would prove suitable to settle. However,

when they arrived, they found that the Tai (Shan) had preceeded them and already built their settlements in the areas the Karens had intended to be theirs. Being peace loving people and not wanting to war with the Tais, the Karens moved further south entering the Ce-wah river (Irawaddy) basin. They chose a place further south and named it Ce-wah Way (Ce-wah town), which in later years the Shan called it "Ta-Gong" meaning a ferry place for the Karen drums, being the place the Shans traded the brass drum with Karens.

Here the Karen and the Tai lived side by side in harmony for 172 years until a new migration of Negroids, the Brahmah from India, entered the land in vast numbers. The king of these invaders was Abi-Yaza (Abi Raza) and with them they brought the Indus civilization, alien to the Karens who had been accustomed to the the Chinese civilization.

The new invaders were boisterous, aggressive, arrogant and bullying; their dealing with the former settlers, such as, the Karens being intolerable. The Karens, who were by nature, tolerant and peace loving could not stand the over-bearing character of the new neighbours from India; and decided to keep their distance, moving south, step by step, finally reaching the mouth of the Ce-wah (Irawaddy) where they built their first principality, known to the Indians as There-Kitara. There-Kitara was the ancient Karen kingdom which they themselves called "Pwoh Way". The Karen dynasty lasted from 443 B.C. to 95 A.D.<sup>12</sup> Its decay being not caused by external forces but by internal dissension. The last king was weak and irresponsible. The Karens fought among themselves and broke into groups, separating from one another and settling in different places. The Pa-oh tribe which was the third largest in number, crossed the Pegu Yoma range and entered the Sittang valley, building their new principality at a place called and still known as Pyu, situated some 40 miles south of Toungoo on the Rangoon-Mandalay trunk road. The first migration of the Karen tribe

into "Burma" comprised of 99 clans, 33 clans remaining in Yunnan where they continued to live for many more hundred years multiplying to a large number. This was during the Chaw dynasty (1122-225 B.C.). During the reign of king Ping Wang<sup>13</sup>, general strife occurred throughout the country and once more migration took place. The Karen tribes, comprised of Pwoh, Pa-oh, Sgaoh, Paku, Mawney Bwah, Bwe and others, moved south, but took a different route to that of the first migration, in 741 to 739 B.C. From the Upper Salween river valley, they moved down south step by step till they reached the Shweli river. This last migration of the Karen tribes entered the Kutkai Highland Plateau at a place known to this day as Chu-koke pass. They moved southwards and crossed the Lashio mountain range after which they traversed the central Shan Highland Plateau, until they reached the Loi Sang mountain where they set up a temporary camp. From here they spread across the southern Highland Plateau and claimed possession of the land.

In those days, land was plentiful. A family would work a piece of land for one year then abandon it and take a fresh piece of land of virgin soil the next. As yet there was no such thing as "squatter system", so people were always on the move. In this way, tribes such as the Paku, Maw Ney Bwah and Bwe finally reached the Sittang river valley where they established their permanent homes. The Karenni (Kayah) made their homes where they live to this day.

The three major Karen tribes, Naw Baw Klawh, Naw Pa-oh and Saw Way Wawh continued to move further south until they reached the sea at the estuaries of the Salween, Bilin and Sittang rivers. Only a few clans of Naw Pa-oh remained in the southern Highland Plateau where they are still to be found to this day, having developed and land to such good effect that it is the richest and most productive region in "Burma". When Lt. Col. A.R. McMahan wrote "The Karens of the Golden Chersonese", he made it clear the Karens were the foremost

settlers who had developed the country. He studied the characteristic traits, the habits and custom of a people who were to become an oppressed people in later years. Along the Golden Chersonese, there were many principalities erected by the three Karen tribes. Of these three, the Pa-ohs were the most industrious and had an infinity to learn the martial arts of self-defence. Besides this, they were excellent horsemen and made a study of horse breeding and animal husbandry. Together they built the main principality and named it "Tsai Htomg": the Pa-oh chief was nominated to rule while the two tribes were quite happy to be relieved of the burden of state responsibility. After more than a thousand years, "Tsai Htomg" developed into the most important factor in the history of Buddhism. The Golden Chersonese was known in ancient time by the Indians as Ramanya-desa, and when "Tsai Htomg" developed into an elegant citystate of splendour and riches, it was designated as "Suvuna Bummi"<sup>14</sup> the golden land.

Notes :

5. The Karens by Rev. John Hackney.

(The original habitation of the Karens was in Central Asia, which was Ugro Altia Region situated in the southwest of Mongolia known as well as Russia in Asia. The Karens are related to the Turanian family and the Persian call the Turkistanis as Turanian. It is true when the Karens claim they crossed the sand flowing river (Hti-Set-Mae-Ywah) in their travel across the Gobi Desert. The Ugro Altia family was already located all over China when the Chinese first entered their country.)

6. Karens of the Golden Chersonese, by Lt. Col. McMahan, p 94

(From Mr. Logan we learn that the personal ornamentation of the Karen "Follows the ordinary Himalaic and Indonesian fashions, in which heavy tiers of rings on the arms and legs and sometimes on waist, with enormously distended earperforations

are conspicuous. The long house to which the whole community dwells is decidedly Himalaic.... the Karens, where least modified by the Indian and modern Chinese influences, preserve all the traits of the ancient race and civilization of the Upper and Eastern Asia.

Therefore they are Turanian and Mongolic in person only. Their native usages are of Archaic Mid-Asian origin, like those of the Tartar hordes and of the Chinese themselves... It is said the Tartars "eschew drinking plain waters" and as for the Red Karens, water rarely touches the surface of their bodies by their own voluntary intention, and as rarely, in its pure state passes into them.

7. The Karen People of Burma by Dr.H.I. Marshall, p.14.

(Dr. Mason in the Journal, Asiatic society of Bengal Vol. XVII, p 162, 1868, says that the first historical notice of the Karen is in Marco Polo's Travels in the 13th Century.... "The country of Caride is the out eastern point of Tibet, and perhaps the country of the nation of the Carianines, which is spread over Ava."

The Archaeological Survey of Burma has linked the Karen with the ancient Kanran (which in Kanchanaburi, Thailand is known as Sgaoh Karen)... In so far as we may venture a conclusion, it is that the Karen migrated into Burma, coming from the ancient home of the early tribes inhabiting the country of China, with whom they are related by tribal, linguistic, and possibly religious ties, the full significance of which are yet to be determined.

8. History of China by professor W.E. Soothill, p.5 and 6.

(The Dawn of History before BC 1122)...Once upon a time nobody knows when-on the banks of Yellow river, a tribe rose as above its fellow-tribes men..... China was then an empty land. Numbers of tribes

were already settled there as well as in the prairies of Mongolia and Manchuria, in Korea and Tibet. Let it be not thought that the superior tribe killed off all those wild tribes, who hunted and fished and cultivated their land in simple fashion. The superior tribe did destroy many of them, as it has been done to destroy them down to our own day, but its accretion seems to have been due more to the absorption of other tribes than to destroy.....

9. History of China by Professor W.E. Soothill, 1923, p. 8 and 9.
10. A sketch of China History – Ancient and Modern, etc. Vol. 1, by Rev. Charles Gutzlaff, p. 162-166.
11. History of Burma by Lt. Col. Phayre, p. 6 and 7 (The principal tribes now bordering on the southeast of Tibet who may be considered the nearest akin to the Burmese are the Mishmi and the Abor.... Professor has classed the languages of the Mishmi, Abor, Burmese, Singpho and a few others tribes to be a Lihitic sub-division of Bhotiya, now generally called Tibeto-Burman.... The Maha Rajaweng, or history of Burmese kings, knows not his kinship..... The near kinship of the Burmese people with the tribes designated lohitic is deduced from the physical likeness which exists among them all. Their languages still show a common source..... The Maha Rajaweng opens with an account of the first formation of the earth according to Buddhist cosmogony and the appearance thereon of the progenators of the human race. It then describes the small states of Sakya Rajas in northern India..... in consequence of wars among the Sakya clans, and between them and their neighbours, a chief to whom tradition gives the name of Abbi Raja, left Kapilavastu and came with an army to the country of the middle Irawaddy. There he established himself and built the city of Tagaung.
12. *ibid*, p. 19 and History of Burma by G.E. Harvey, Ancient Sites p. 309.

The elimination of Prome as the Pyu capital in A.D. 95 is inconsistent with the existence thereof Pyu rulers' inscriptions dating from apparently from seventh and eighth centuries. The records of the Chinese Tang Dynasty 618-905, The Chinese travellers L-ching 671-95, and Hsaung Chuang 629-45, and the Chinese geographer Chia-tan 785-805, point to Prome as the Pyu capital. They do not mention Pagan, and it was not of sufficient importance to be founded as a town till 849.

13. A sketch of Chinese History, Ancient and Modern, Vol. 1 edition 1838 by Rev. Charles Gulzalff, p. 184-186.
14. History of Burma by Lt. Col Phayre p. 16 and 17.

At the same time of the third great Bhuddhist Synod at Pataliputra, about B.C. 241, when missions were sent to foreign countries to propagate and extirpate heresy, Sono and Uttaro were despatched to the goldenland, according to the Talaing chronicles, they were at first violently opposed but gradually they acquired influence; their preaching converted the people and religion was revived. This reference in authentic Buddhist records to the religious condition of the people of Suvarna Bhumi in the third century B.C. show the deep interest taken in India at the time on affairs of the country.

## Chapter II

## Suvarna Bhumi- Pa-oh Kingdom

As we saw in the previous Chapter, "Tsai Htomg" became a city-state which in the course of time became the capital of Suvarna Bhumi, the Pa-oh kingdom. "Tsai Htomg" in the Pa-oh language means "picking of gold" which came from the silt washed down by the Salween, Bilin and Sittang rivers and deposited in their estuaries. It is fitting therefore, that Lt. Col. A.R. McMahan should have designated the area as "The Golden Chersonese".

When in later years the Bhamah min Anawratha captured "Tsai Htomg", he erased the name and renamed it "Thaton" in order to bury its historical importance. While the Pa-oh kings ruled in the east, the Pwaoh kings had set up seven principalities at the estuaries of the Irrawaddy river, where (as we saw earlier) they were the original settlers

Suvarna Bhumi was to become important historically on account of a rare event which occurred co-incidentally at the time of the birth of Thuriya Sanda. The birth took place at exactly the same time when the sun and the moon were both shining on the horizon.- one setting and the other rising. In Pa-oh, the king who was to rule "Tsai Htomg" was name "Hkum-mu-lah". It means the appointment of the sun and the moon on the horizon. The birth took place on the full moon day of Dein-thi-lah, the lunar month of Pa-oh which corresponds to March.

According to the chronicles of the kings of Burma, Suvarna Bhumi was founded by the king father of Thuriya Sanda and said to be two years after the end of Inzana Raza era, to correspond to 680 B.C. Inzana Raza was the descendent, 28th in line, of the Second Maha Tham-mada Raza in the Brahman history and said to be the forefather of Gautama Siddhahta (568-480 B.C.).

The most important event which occurred during

the reign of Thuriya Sanda was the personal contact made with Gautama Buddha. In the year after Gautama Siddhahta attained Enlightenment and Perfection, though intense meditation, he paid visit to Suvama Bhumi. Thuriya Sanda was over a hundred years old at that time during his visit. Three visits he made altogether, and during each visit, he expounded his principles of life and the philosophy of Buddhism to the animist Pa-oh. But at the end of each visit, before Gautama Buddha departed, Thuriya Sanda pleaded with him not to leave him and his people. But Gautama told him that his mission was to spread Buddhism to all mankind and he could not stay with them forever.

Instead, he plucked a lock out of his hair at the end of each visit and entrusted them to Thuriya Sanda, telling the king to keep the locks and consecrate them as symbols of Buddha. Thus Thuriya Sanda and the Pa-oh people were converted as the first Buddhists in the land. They followed and practiced the teachings of Gautama Buddha. For the Pa-oh, it was the beginning of a new era of culture and behaviour which preconditioned them to become ardent and humble followers of Buddha. As a true disciple of Buddha, Thuriya Sanda built a sedi called Shwe-Za Yan where he enshrined one lock of hair. The second lock was sent to Siam where it was enshrined at a Sedi in Nakkon Patton. The remaining lock was entrusted to the eldest of Thuriya's twin sons, who had already renounced the throne and devoted themselves to meditation. When Thuriya Sanda died, his brother succeeded him and continued to rule the Pa-oh kingdom in peace and tranquility. When the eldest of the twin brothers was dying, he entrusted the lock of hair to his younger brother. But the brother decided that he too was getting old and would soon die. So he searched for a place where he would enshrine the third lock. He chose a cave under a huge rock and on top of the rock, he built a sedi which today is known as the famous Kyaik-Hti-Yo paya (in Pa-oh Phara-dung-lone) in Thaton district.

The Pa-oh people continued to live in harmony with many principalities of the Pwaoh and Sgaoh protecting Suvarna Bhumi from external incursion. In the near west, Sgaoh kingdom was established later to be known as Ussa by the Indian, and in modern time Pegu, while Pwaoh-way better known as There-Kitara flourished at the mouth of Ce-wah river, the Irrawaddy. Today it is known as Prome. All these Karen principalities were located at the estuaries in lower Burma.

After king Thuriya Sanda, there followed many less important kings until the reign of Dhama Pala. It was this period when King Asoka (274-136 B.C.) from India revived Buddhism and expanded it across Asia. Asoka played down the Hindu caste system and tried to end the expensive sacrificial rites. During his rule, Buddhism revived and produced refined architecture - Stupa, Shrine and sculpture. Buddhism made a tremendous impact on the Pa-oh people of Suvarna Bhumi and with it the Indus civilization expanded to the east. Animism brought down from China dissipated soon as Buddhism took root among the Pa-oh. Trade relationship improved with foreign states as king Dhama Pala established cultural mission with India and Ceylon in the west and neighbouring states in the east. From the contact with India and Ceylon, the Pa-oh learned and advanced in literature, art and culture. Pilgrimage to Ceylon became frequent, for this was considered to be religious atonement for sin. Pilgrims from China passed through Suvarna Bhumi, and from these pilgrims and traders, Suvarna Bhumi became to be known as Piao land<sup>15</sup> in Chinese history during the T'ang dynasty. (618-907 A.D.). During this period, in China, written language was standardized; so were the laws, weight and measures, water clocks and sundials were perfected and paper invented. Thus the two civilizations from India and China, enhanced the Pa-oh culture leading into a new era. Suvarna Bhumi became the centre where Indian and Chinese merchants exchanged their

merchandise. King Dhama Pala had one son, Dhama Kawtha, who was a genius. He was sent to Ceylon to study Buddhism under the chief abbot. There he was fortunate to be selected to attend the third Buddhist Synod in B.C. 261, which was compiling the Buddhist scriptures, the Tripitaka, the 36 volumes of Buddha teachings. The script used was sanskrit and the brilliant Dhama Kawtha was found to be clever and could master both the written and spoken language. As the Tripitaka was compiled, Dhama Kawtha was the only novice who could re-write from memory what had been composed the previous day. When the Tripitaka was completed, he asked for and was given the privilege of taking back a complete set of the work to Suvarna Bhumi. There he built a temple and commenced to translate the entire work from the sanskrit to the Pa-oh written language, generally known as "Pyu letter"<sup>16</sup>—a script the Karen describe as being "half round like an egg".

Shang Dhama Kawtha took great pains into the translation of the Tripitaka into "Pyu letter" and it was then taught to the novices in the monasteries. This Renaissance brought foreign relationship on equal footing and trade with India expanded. Suvarna Bhumi flourished into a city kingdom of splendour. The city had brick walls and the houses were built of hardwood called *kyet mauk*. From India, sculptors, architects masons and painters were hired to teach the arts to the Pa-oh, and so they helped themselves to become self-sufficient and independent.

The parallel kingdoms of the Sgaoh and Pwaoh-Ussa and There-Kitara on the other hand decayed. Then a new society emerged as a result of trading Indians from Talingana and Orissa. The new society increased in number and intermarried the locals as they came prosperous and in affluence. Gradually they built their institution and settlements along the coastal tracts then known as Ramanyadesa. The two main principalities were Prome and Pegu, later to develop as the Talaing

kingdom<sup>17</sup>. Since the Talaing control a much larger area in the west, the Pa-oh were sensible enough to realise that peaceful co-existence was essential. So there began inter-communication in both trade and religious activity. The Shwezayan in Suvarna Bhumi and Shwe Maw Daw in Ussa-Pegu became the two centres for religious activity for festival, celebrated yearly and where the two peoples, Talaing and Pa-oh, came into social contact with one another.

During the reign of the last Pa-oh king, Suvarna Bhumi reached the zenith of importance. However, the people became greedy and lost much of their religious puritanism becoming quasi-Buddhists and dabbling in the arts of black magic and alchemy in a desire to "get rich quick". These black magic practices and alchemy were introduced by merchants from Egypt and Persia. Monastic life corrupt and drinking liquor and gambling became a common vice.

The sad state of affairs was brought about as the bad example set by the last Pa-oh king, Manuha. Against the advice of his counsellors, he took to wife a Peguan princess of bad repute and under her influence engaged in revelries and orgies which undermined the morality of the whole country.

There was dissension through out the land, vice and lust thrived, the people forgot their religion, and morality collapsed. One holy man, Shang Araham, tried to warn the king, the monks and the people of the impending danger, unless they mend their ways. His warning fell on deaf ears and Shang Araham, in despair and frustration, journeyed to Pagan. His intention was to instil the correct teachings of Gautama Buddha to people who were the victims of the Ari Doctrine<sup>18</sup>.

In Pagan, Shang Araham tried to keep his mission a secret. But the long training in Buddhist rites and the practice under rigid discipline gave him away. He was noticed in early morning, walking barefoot and carrying

his alms bowl down the street. The strange sight of a monk, in yellow robe, head shaven, collecting alms, soon attracted attention. The news soon reached Anawrahtah, the king of new Pagan, who summoned him to the throne. There he told the king about the philosophy of Buddhism and monastic rites. When Anawrahtah heard from Shang Arahān about the Tripitaka and how the monks and the Pa-oh people had the advantage of their written language-Pyu Script, he became envious and anxious to obtain for himself such an important treasure.

The Burmese king had by this time designated his people as "Bamah". He had no official relation with Suvarna Bhumi and lower Burma where Theravada Buddhism was well established. Whereas, in Pagan, the people were poor and loosely organised and in the grip of the Ari priesthood. He was anxious to unshackle his people from the religious illusion of the Ari priesthood who for years had humiliated his Bamah people. He had no sacred books to set up a school of thought: as it was done in Suvarna Bhumi which was then a refined and religious centre. He therefore sent an envoy to Suvarna Bhumi with a request to the king of Suvarna Bhumi, Manuha, that he would share the text of the Tripitaka. Manuha under the bad influence of his queen, made a fatal decision and insulted the envoy with a slanderous outburst. He told the envoy that the "Bamah" were ignorant people who would be unable to read the Pitaka. The arrogance of Manuha, lacking a decorum befitting a king inflamed the savage rage of Anawrahtah who immediately raised a formidable army to destroy Suvarna Bhumi.

In 1057 A.D. Suvarna Bhumi was laid waste, every artifice, stupa and idols was destroyed. Total devastation took place which left not a trace of the ancient Pa-oh culture. The proud but foolish Manuha was given no second chance. The whole kingdom was looted, the people robbed of their gold and silver. The king and queen, their palace retainers, together with scholars, script writers, sculptors, painters, masons and musicians were rounded

up and treated as slaves. They were marched to Pagan, being towed by a rope which passed through the palms of their hands, holes having pierced through them. The monks, with all the complete text of the Tripitaka, in Sanskrit and Pyu letter were force marched to Pagan where they were instructed to start a new era of Buddhist civilization among the "Burmah". Altogether 30,000 Pa-oh were taken as slaves to construct the splendour of Pagan.

In Pagan, Anawrahtah announced to his people that the captives came from the south. In Burmese, their language is "Taung thu- Taung Tha" and from then onwards the Pa-oh people were referred to as Taungthu. Further insult was added to injury when, during the British occupation, the word "Taungthu" was said to mean "Peasant". So the once cultured and refined Pa-oh were classified simply as lowly "Peasant".

#### *Notes*

15. Burma by Sir K.G. Scott, pp. 21-22

(Mr. Parker makes a great point of the circumstance that the Chinese only recognised the Burmese as 'myen' about A.D. 2,000 which time when Burmese history begins, and they did not give the country the name Mein which they now know it, until the year 1427.)

The reasonable conclusion seems to be that when they call themselves Brahmas, it is not mere "empty, bombastic pride" but a proof that, from the beginning, they had quite as good an opinion of themselves as they have at the present day.

16. In the days of T'ang dynasty (A.D. 618-907) Burma, so far as known at all to the Chinese, was called P'iao. This was in the days of the Pyu, the Kanran and the Sak. In the days when spelling was matter of fancy. P'iao might well be (Pa-oh or Pwoh Karen) Pyu
17. History of Burma by Harvey, pp. 6 and 7, Burma

before 1044 A.D. After the decay of Karen dynasty known as Orissa in the early 7 century A.D. ..Ussa. the old name for Pegu, is the same word as Orissa, and Pegu was colonised by India from Orissa..... in Upper Burma, these immigrants came overland through Assam, in Lower Burma they came by sea from Madras. In some localities such as, Thaton, Prome, Pegu and Rangoon, and in many town in Arakan. Indian immigrants doubtless formed a large proportion of the population, indeed the name Talaing is probably derived from Telingana, a region of the Madras coast whence so many of them came. Like good Hindus, they built little shrines, and it is probably these shrines that formed the original strata of such pagodas as the Shwemawdaw of Pegu, the Shwedagon at Rangoon, and the Shwezayan at Thaton, all of which may well date back, in some shape or another, to before the Christian era... What have been a decisive factoe was the rise, in the fifth century after Christ, of a great Hinayana centre at Conjeveram in Madras under the commentator Dhammapala, ancient Talaing writings frequently mention Dhammapala and Conjeveram, and the earliest Talaing inscription is in the Pallava alphabet used in his time.

Burma by Sir J.G. Scott, p. 16 The people. About two years ago, the countries occupied by the Mon and the Khmer were colonised by Dravidians from Talingana in India... The Mon were then the kind of people whom the Maha Bharata calls Rakshas and Asuras, and the Burmese call Nagas rude savages. The men may have been loathly ogres, but the daughters of them were fair to look upon, and the new arrivals married them,. It was a sort of fusion like that of the Norman and the Saxon. It is now that the name Talaing appears in place of Mon. The later arrivals came from Kalinga or Talingana and the Talaing is said to record the fact.

18. The administration of Burma by Daw Mya Sein, p.3. Oxford University Press 1973.

Ari Doctrine is a creed fostered by coarse corpulent men (from India) practiced superstition over the illiterate people of Pagan and indulged in strong drink and sexuality.

19. See appendix I.



*One of the Pa-oh Pagodas.*

### Chapter III

## The Years of Subjugation

As a member of the Karen tribes, the Pa-oh suffered less discrimination from the Burmans than did the others in lower Burma. However, in the Shan Highland Plateau, they were faced with another political repression under the feudal system.

In lower Burma after the collapse of the Pa-oh kingdom, the Pa-oh were a suppressed people, hunted down by the Burmese bands of dacoits organised by the governor left behind by Anawrahtah in "Tsai Htomg". When their villages were destroyed, the Pa-oh clans, about a hundred families under Htun Chi, as recorded, moved north and built new settlements, taking earth and stones from their former towns as a symbol for their new settlements, named "Tsai Htomg Pey", later it was to become "Thaton Gale". Today it is known as Hsi Saing, situated 20 miles north of the Karenni border.

There were many Pa-oh princes with several principalities scattered in the southern Shan Highland Plateau, who in the course of time, inter-married with the Shan people and as a result, their national identity. But the Pa-oh people kept their national identity and increased in great numbers, more quickly than their Shan neighbours.

Three clans who stayed further west on the Salween estuary ventured even further east and crossed the Dawna range, settling at a place known today as "Three Pagoda Pass". According to history, each Pa-oh collected one stone and piled these stones in three heaps representing each to form the basis of the three pagodas which stand there today. After a short time, they moved on and southwards probably reaching Malay peninsula.

The persecution of the Pa-oh in the lowland continued and the Burmans introduced repressive measures,

such as forbidding them to speak their mother tongue and to read or write in their own language. These repressive measures were not imposed on the Karen tribes alone. Similar but worse measures were used twice against the Mon people by the Burmans; the second time being when the British withdrew from Rangoon in 1826. The Burmans alleged that the Mons and the Karens had helped the British in the first Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-1826. While the Karen villages were burnt down and destroyed, the Pa-oh, who lived further east, escaped these further persecutions.

In the lowland, though they lived in low profile, the Pa-oh retained their strong Buddhist faith which helped them overcome their persecution. They settled down to rebuild their agriculture. The Burmans were now concentrating their repressive measures more against the Karens in lower Burma which gave some relief to the Pa-oh. Nevertheless their status quo had not improved much and their daily life was dull and uninspiring.

In 1881, the Karens had established their first ever political organization named "Karen National Association". This was set up entirely by Christians and was viewed by the Burmese kingdom in Mandalay and the Burmans in Lower Burma as an attempt by the British to destroy Buddhism. In 1884, the Burmese king Thibaw sent down dacoiting bands to harass the Karens who, for the first time, were enjoying freedom from the Burmese despotic rule. Karen volunteers were organized to combat them and having been armed by the British, soundly defeated the Burmese rebels.

What happened in the east, however, was a different story. The Burman, claiming the British had come to destroy Buddhism, managed to gain the militant support of the Pa-oh people who were devout Buddhists. The Pa-oh under the leadership of Mayan Kyaung monk and his lieutenant Po Kham rose in rebellion against the British. First they attacked the British outpost at Bilin

and then the uprising spread as far west to the Pegu Yoma, then as far west to Sittang valley-Shwe Kyin, Kyauk Kyi and Toungoo. Had it not been for the Karens who came to their aid, the British would certainly been driven out of Burma; for the British army, comprised almost entirely of Indian sepoy, proved no match for the Pa-oh warriors. Many histories of this rebellion referred to it as a "Shan rebellion", But this is quite incorrect. Po Kham was finally surrounded. He refused to surrender and be captured alive. So gallantly did he fight that the British built a monument to him in sheer admiration which stands to this day in the middle of a field where he fell, near to Bilin Town.

In 1886, The British captured Mandalay and took king Thibaw and his queen prisoner, sending them to exile in India. While they were still in exile, there was an uprising in Upper Burma aimed at the release of the king. Here again, 101 Karen volunteers and 6 trackers were engaged by the British under Captain Grendair to quell the uprising..At Minbu they located the hide-out of the King-pretender to the throne, U Ottama, who was killed in the, ensuing battle. But the rebellion continued in the Shan Highland Plateau. Here the Pa-oh under Hkun Oh of Tsai Htomg Pey (Thaton Gale) put up a strong resistance supported by Hkun Konra and the Pa-oh swordsmen. At first the neighbouring Shan Feudalists (Sao Phao) cooperated with the Pa-oh resistance, but they soon deserted when the more influential Feudalist of Nyaung hwe made a peace treaty with the British bringing the Indian sepoy to fight the continuing Pa-oh resistance. Alone and against overwhelming odd, the Pa-oh were thus forced to make peace and submit to the majority of the Shan Feudalists wish. While the Pa-oh rebellion in Lower Burma stemmed from a fear that Buddhism would be destroyed, the resistance in the Shan Plateau was conducted more on a purely nationalistic basis.

Under British rule, the Pa-oh gained great advantages. Buddhist Squatter Law came into force enabling the

Pa-oh to become land owners. Their villages rapidly grew in size, their economic well-being increased in proportion. Roads and railway were developed which bridged the gap between the highland and lowland Pa-oh, on the threshold, awaiting a new national consciousness. However, while the Pa-oh in Lower Burma were recruited into the police and military services, those in the highland plateau did not receive much encouragement. Again those in Lower Burma received educational advantages from the Anglo Vernacular schools run by the mission, while those in the highland plateau, continued to be educated by their monasteries only, and lost much advantage by missing the more advance teaching for further development. When the children of the well to do Pa-oh wanted to receive such advance education, the parents were forced to surrender their children to Shan families for adoption. But in the agricultural field, the Pa-oh made good studies and became prosperous land owners. For this reason, the Burmans became jealous of them and ostracized them as "peasant" a third class citizen. As we have seen before, they were called "Taungthu" and the Burmans looked down on them and called them "Peasant". The British, due to their policy of "Divide and rule" did not officially care to repair the racial justice which the Pa-oh had received at the hands of the Burmans. The British came to Burma for material gain, and not to help the down-trodden minorities. It was the American Missionaries who took a greater interest in such people. Only one missionary William Hackett made a serious study of the Pa-oh people and through his work, some understanding of the Pa-oh people's predicament were made known.

Many centuries of subjugation have had the effect of turning the once proud and cultured Pa-oh into a humble people, suffering mostly in silence. That does not mean that their nationalist spirit is cowed. As we have seen, the Pa-oh were soon up in arms against the British when they believed that Buddhism was threatened. They proved themselves second to none in battle. But on the whole,

the Pa-oh are a peace loving people, avoiding hostility with their neighbours if possible. Their lives and interests are almost entirely devoted to agriculture.

PART II  
Chapter IV  
The People

The Taunghsu so called by the Shan are well known all over Thailand and Cambodia, and as far as the Lower Mae Khong - about Kassac and the rapids of the thousand Islands. In the Shan Highland Plateau, they are cultivators. When they travel abroad they are most commonly known as elephant and horse dealers.

The Taunghsu called themselves Pa-oh which immediately suggests Pwo (Pwaoh). The Taunghsu form more than one half the population of the Myelat, and the state of Hsa-htung (Hsi-saing) is so completely Taunghsu that the chief is of that race. Elsewhere they are found in majority, all over the eastern part of the southern Shan state, but they do not spread northwards where there are the black and striped Karen which compose 15% of the population of the Shan state. In Lower Burma they are found in Sittang and Salween river vallies.

There are two distinct groups - the lowland and highland Pa-oh with two dissimilar economic way of life which builds a social gap between the two in their national advancement. The Lowland Pa-oh with the construction of railways and roads, find their movement easier and quicker. This elevate their standard of living. The progress made by the lowland Pa-oh is found to exceed far more than that of the highland Pa-oh. Living mostly among the Pwaoh and Sgaoh, the lowland Pa-oh enjoy a more secure and quiet village life than those in villages in proximity to the Burmese villages on the main roads and river banks. A few by force of environment of social pollution, allow themselves to be Burmanized. But the majority maintaining loyalty to their mother tongue and national identity, prevent themselves to be a vanishing race.

Though they are oppurtuned for educational progress, most Pa-oh do not encourage their children continue for higher education, and take less interest in the participation of civil and military services. The few who enter the services bear themselves to be good characters and receive high esteem for their trustworthiness.

On the whole, the lowland Pa-oh are cultivators, and as land owners, they are thrifty and modest not to fall into debt. During the world depression of the thirties, it was found that a very few lands belonging to the Pa-oh farmers lost to the Indian money lenders-the Chettiyars.

The main occupation is growing the staple food paddy. After the harvest, they enter into the cold season cultivation where dew is the deciding factor for good cash crop. After storing paddy for their family yearly consumption in the barns, the surplus paddy is sold to the brokers who collected the paddy in the country and re-sold it to the merchants in the towns. The cold season cultivation consists mainly of two crops-peanut and tobacco for cash, and vegetables are grown for home consumption, as a practice to be independent of their neighbours.

Money derived from their cultivation is spent frugally on family welfare but liberally on the enjoyment of festivals, and still lavishly on "Merit making". It has been observed that religious practices are still extravagant and even more elegant as modernization takes place in the country.

As "Law and Order" takes care of the public security, martial arts as a measure for self-defence, is no more an important exercise. Among the lowland Pa-oh, who, inlarge number, are well-to-dö farmers. Like others, they too suffer when the Burmese Socialist Economic Construction comes into force and totalitarian system is imposed on every one in the country.

The highland Pa-oh to this day adhered to their national tradition and culture, which to such an extent,

an indication of conservatism. But still the distribution of population is more in density as compared to that of the neighbouring Shan. As a matter of fact, the highland Pa-oh population is several times more than those in the lowland where there are many Pa-oh big villages (over five hundred houses). Whereas, in the highland, villages are of equal size and located within an equal distance from one another. The Pa-oh population concentrated mainly in the two districts-Taunggyi and Loilem, and area not over 8,000 square miles. The land is a rolling high plateau, interrupted with a few high mountain ranges, stretching from Kong Sang in the North towards the Karenni border in the south, and an expanse of fertile land roughly from Pawnlaung river in the west and Salween river in the reaching Thailand border.

In-lay lake, noted for its floating villages, is situated in the middle of the land. People of In-lay, known as In-tha, speak a Burmese dialect, but unlike the Burmans, they are industrious. Each village specialized in a particular trade, such as, gold or silver works, blacksmithy, weaving and other handicrafts. Besides the home industry, pieces of land constructed in the lake where cultivation of high yield crops are for commercial produce. Fish is abundant here.

Higher on the hill sides live the Yaung-yo who speak a different Burmese dialect to that of the In-tha. They are less developed and live mainly on dry cultivation. Along side the Taung-yo are Pa-laungs who still live in long houses. On the whole, these are the few people who contributed to the growth of the land.

Since the Pa-oh are the majority, the national economy is virtually in their hands. Inveterate as they are, the Pa-oh live on the Mother Earth and take good care of it. In their rudiment ways, they conserve the soil by rotation of crops and periodically leave portions of the land for animal grazing, enabling the droppings to scatter in the fields. There are lands for rice, wheat, garlic, peanut,

potatoes, soy bean, all kinds of pulses, and plantations for sain-la (mulberry leaves for Burmese cheroots) tea, coffee and other fruit trees. Fruit trees flourish here so richly that any processing of canned industry would benefit the Pa-oh growers. One foreign firm once constructed a canning factory in this area. It was, however, nationalized and the plant was shifted to Mandalay where tin provision was manufactured for the military use.

A village life is an all day toil in the field and it is uniform every where. Morning starts with hustle bustle of womanfolks preparing to go to work. First, early in the morning, they cook and prepare food for the family while the men (heads of the families) chant their daily meditation before the family shrine. With mid-day lunch in the baskets which are slung across their shoulders they gather their hoes and hurry towards their respective fields. Weeding and harrowing are easily done by the hoe, and done the whole day long. There is a break at mid-day during which the workers partake their lunch and have some rest.

The elders, having chores to finish at home, leave late in the morning. First they let loose the cattle penned during the night. The cow dung and excretion of the animals are collected and heaped in the pit prepared for fermentation. This is one method where organic manure is prepared from the refuse of the domestic animals, the Pa-oh rear. The animals are domesticated not for milk or meat, but for the soil of the Mother Earth. These cattle are herded by hired persons who separate one herd from the other in the fields reserved for grazing. The number of heads of the cattle is usually between 90 to 100 and there are three or four herds belonging to a village. In the evening again the elders leave for home early as they have to round up the cattle for the night. The young, however, usually return from the fields at dusk time less if they are seen returning while there is day light, neighbours would say they are lazy.

Night time is usually quiet but occasionally interrupted by a mute musical note denoting the name of the girl for courting. Serenade by the teenagers are common and the musical instrument used is the flute attached to the dried shell of gourd fruit. The art is to stimulate the romantic feeling of the girl for courting and only rustic way of life could appreciate it in feeling. The courting custom is made at night time. The man comes up to the house and occupy a place by the hearth which is a communal place where the house-hosts should sit near the fire, to keep themselves warm before going to bed. Normal practice is that, when a young man comes to court, understandable he has no business with the elders who in all formality play host to him till it is time for them to retire to bed.

Sometimes, there is only a couple left to themselves, but very often a number of boys and girls sit around the fire place and talk right into the night. There is nothing as hands holding, hugging and kissing. Generally in every village, there is only one rooster for crowing and which gives time signal. By custom, when this rooster starts crowing the young people take their leave and go home. When the man and girl fall in love, the parents or the guardians take charge and made necessary arrangement for their marriage. Formal wedding ceremony is not an elaborate event. Normally, the bride and groom would make their vow in the presence of the elders who would tie or coil strings on their hands while wishing them well and good. The simple formality binds the couple man and wife. Divorce cases are rare and once a man is married, he has no further romantic life to go flirting, as the wife takes care of his comfort and need.

Flirting is generally permitted to take place in the open when working in the fields. The man has to learn to play the flute well if he wishes to be a good flirt. During mid-day rest, the young flirt would play a particular tune on his flute, calling the name of the girl he wants to flirt with. The girl in the next field across, on hearing the

flute music (if played to her) would realise straight on that some one is wanting to flirt with her. If she is in the mood, all she has to do is walk up and down in the field, indicating that she too wants to flirt. What follows is - the boy continues to play his flute with the love songs. Sometimes they would leave their fields and meet halfway where they would flirt. But, it is a clean flirtation.

The peasant life is not a drudgery but equally enjoyed by the Pa-oh. Tenant is not known, and instead "aid and loan" labour system is a traditional communal practice to solve labour problem, when and where extra labourer is needed to finish the work in time. Loan of labour is paid back with an equal amount of labour loaned. Communal labour as to public works such as roads and bridges is undertaken as a responsibility and needs no urge.

With a voluntary sense of duty, the villages are kept clean. Water for public utility and sanitation are provided for in every village. Village monastery is understood to be the symbol of Buddhist establishment where religious festival takes place and commences from. As parents are head of a family, monks, in large measure, take great care to maintain the morality of the villagers. Drunkenness and rowdiness are not encouraged in the village. Killing of animals, wild or domestic, as a part of Buddhist teaching, is prohibited in the village vicinity. Should there be any bad character in a village, one in a thousand and incorrigible, the elders and the monks banish the said man for life.

Leading a simple life, the dress the Pa-oh prefer, is made plain from black coloured material, preferable of high quality. Man wears a pair of pants, girdled at the waist, over a shirt on top of which is worn a jacket. The woman wears a garment, a sort of canisole, under a snock-frock and over it is a cardigan of velvet or serge, black or dark blue are favorite colours. To keep herself warm and to prevent insect bites, leggings are used. Both

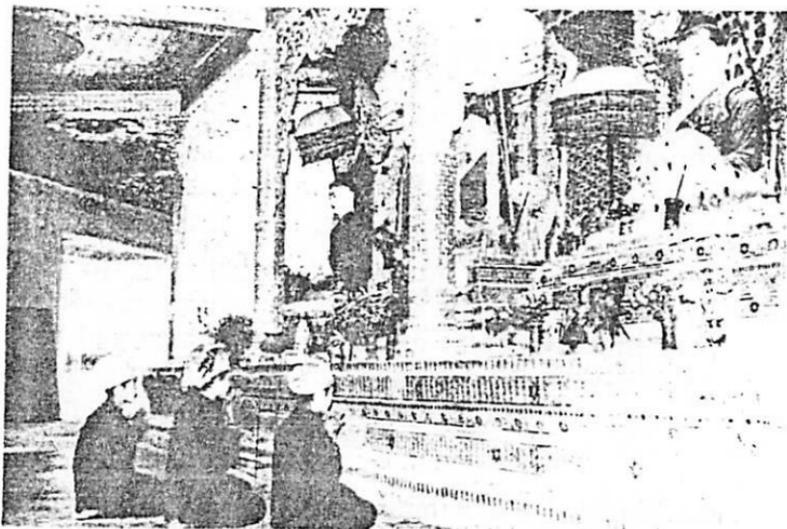
man and woman wear turbans of bold colours with prominent patterns in variety, done up in fashion particularly not in the same style as that of the Shan. The head dress of a woman is elaborate, and the turban is fashion to symbolise the head of a flying dragon (the matriarchial symbolic). The hair is done up in a chignon and a large hair pin denotes the status of wealth the wearer has.

All Pa-oh are cultivators, and such as they are, there is no distinction in class behaviour among them. All possess the means of production and each is independent in the economic life. Not one is hampered by any social discrimination. Among the people a classless society is prevailed, and as Buddhists, the concept of being rich or poor depends on the amount of merits one contributes in life.

“Merit making” is the pivot of the Pa-oh economic life. They are not extravagant in taste and enjoy religious festivals. They make pilgrimage to distant religious centres to worship and give donation - the practice which is meant “merit making”. After they would return home and resume the daily toil - to work and save up for another “merit making.”

Significantly, monastery is the mainstream of Pa-oh culture and traditional custom. Monastery plays the largest part in the molding of cohesiveness and national spirit without which national units would not have been possible. It, however, is not only established to conduct religious ceremony but to promote and guide the people in moral armament and social security.

There are many monks who follow the steps of their predecessors and continue to do research in the knowledge of herbal, and from it they teach the native herbalists and their medication. Normally, the medicine is extracted from the herb (root, stem and leave) and prepared as a powdered condiment. In some cases, boiled herb water is used as fomentation and ablution in cases of pain and burn. The condensation of hard-boiled herb-water is



*Pa-oh women in meditation.*



*Pa-oh women in K'tain festival.*

used as medicine in chronic diseases. Though the preparation is not perfect for medication, it has produced good result where no modern medical aid could reach people in remote places.

When and where modern health programme covers an area, the general public health in that certain area, has improved remarkably. However, it is yet early to dis-pense with the herbalists and their medication. It is deplorable that the infant mortality rate is high and the span of life is very short. The death rate of middle age is very high because the demand of hard labour of them is acute.

The knowledge and incentive of martial arts come from the monastery which is the centre of every festival. There, in the monastery, are sets of drums and gongs, big and small, a variety to suit any occasion called for. The beating of drums and gongs, the band is played by villagers. The band is practiced and played, and to complete the exercise, one or two persons would roll up their trousers and step out to perform the arts as taught to them in their early age. It is the monks who induce the art to the youngsters with the fundamental of self-defence.

Historically, the reputation of the Pa-oh swordsmanship had been played down. There were many instances where Pa-oh swordsmen were engaged in battles. Ba Yin Naung, the warrior, mobilised a contingent of Pa-oh swordsmen in the attack and occupation of Ava and Alaung Paya with his Pa-oh cavalry in the invasion of Siam.

From the monastery, young Pa-oh are induced with the desire that self-defence is an essential art for man-hood. As they grow older and in their teens, they under-go a series of training under capable masters. The training is done in the jungle. First, the lesson of freehand art is taught, then with stick or staff; when this art is mastered, sword fencing is taught last and for graduation. On

graduation, each student is to fight his way through the gates where swordmen are planted to cut him down. The art itself is a combination of karate and judo, but locally is known as "Lai dong and Lai swa".

The characteristic traits of the Pa-oh people are: loyalty, honesty, and their love of a peaceful life. Their taste is simple though their hospitality (like all members of the Karen race) is proverbial. As cultivators, they are industrious and learn the hard way to conserve the land they till so that they would be self-sufficient and may not be in want to feed themselves. They understand the value of independence from their toil.

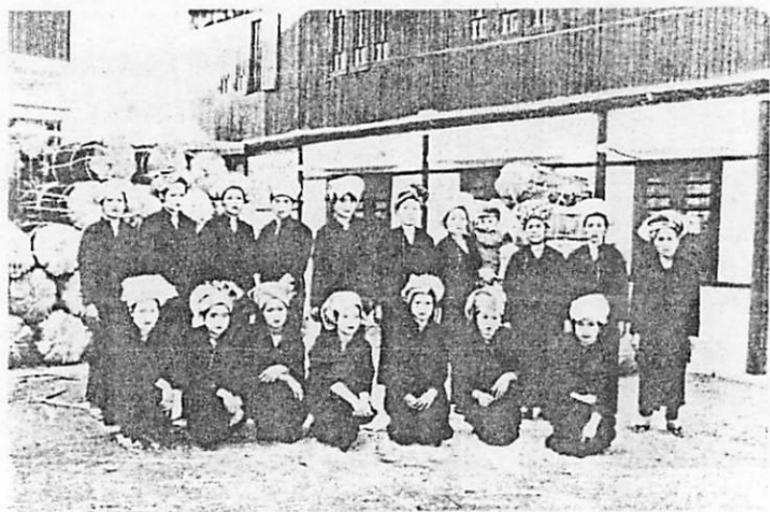
On the whole, the simple life they pursue helps them to be humble and gracious. They learn to suffer silently whatever hardship meted out to them. But when human self-restraint comes under stress and strain, it snaps to let loose uncontrollable temper. The Pa-oh are not the exception. The turn of history is like the writing on the wall; for, the destiny of a people is defined by its own men of principle who, in time of crucial period, stand up for the right to lead their own people.



*Preparing cheroot leaves.*



*Cheroot leaves production.*



*Pa-oh women workers.*



*Orange garden.*



*Wheat farm.*

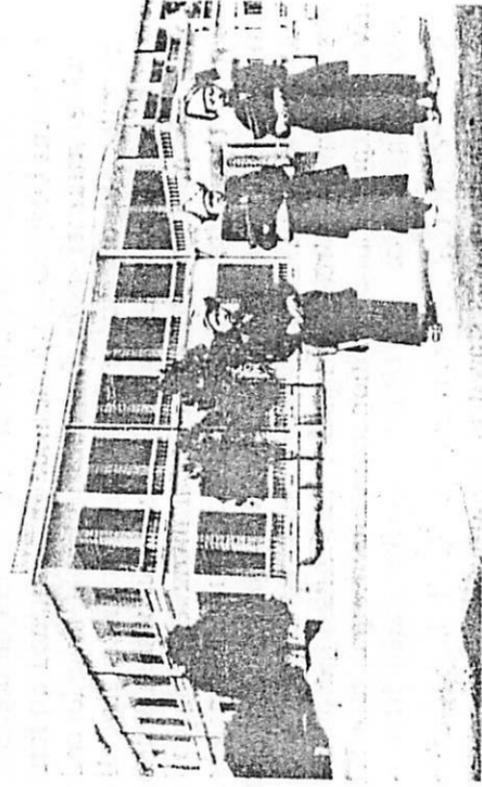
## Chapter V

### Under the Colonial Rule

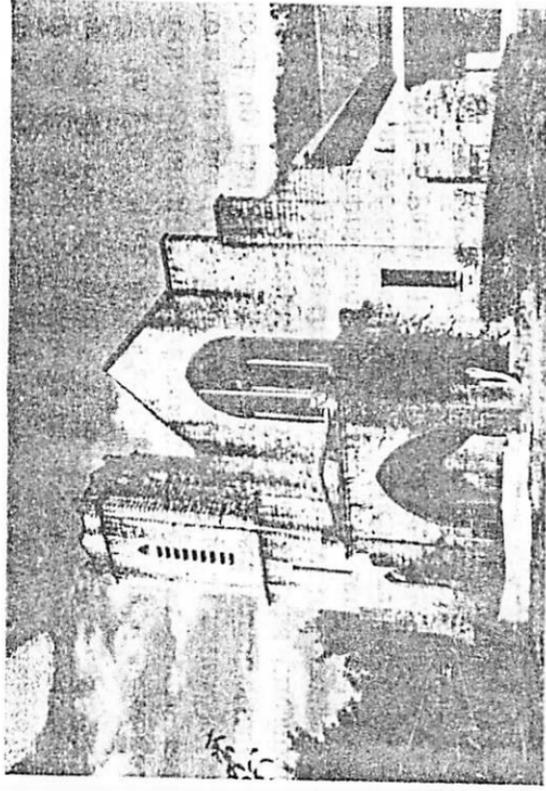
The Burmans were the favoured majority and helped the British to exploit on the country. Though the British police surveillance for law and order checked the racial hostility at bay, the policy of the British "divide and rule" bred distrust and hatred between the privileged and the non-privileged, or the majority and minority, the latter who had the obsession that they were still being subjected to the dominance of the Burmese superiority especially in the fields of social uplifting and in the public services.

The introduction of western education hastened the advancement and progress of the Burmese people in prosperity, many to become elite in the public services. In the early years, when there were only Christian schools, many Burmese parents sent their children to be educated, from which they obtained good position in the civil administrative offices. The Karen Anglo-Vernacular schools could not encourage Pa-oh parents to send their children for better education. For, they feared and suspected that the Christian missionary were to destroy Buddhism.

Before and after World war I, Burmans were encouraged to study law, civil service, political science and such akin subjects, primarily to train civil servants. With profound social changes, Rangoon University, established at the end of World War I, became the centre of the Student Body for political activity. The Burmans began to organise themselves politically. First, Young Man Buddhist Association was formed to ferment nationalism among the students, the majority of which studied in Christian schools, where morality and discipline were maintained. Later on, the Grand Council of Buddhist Association but renamed, the Grand Council of Burmese Association was formed to represent the entire Burmese community. Political agitation took in its stride, perpetrated a student



*First Taung Kyauing Gyi Monastery.*



*One of the churches in Pa-oh land.*

strike in 1921. The strike was sparked by the Burmese students in the Cushing Baptist High School on the allegation that Christian teaching did not flatter Buddhism. The Student body took up the issue and launched a country wide student strike for constitutional change and home rule. Pa-oh students, studying in Karen schools which did not take part in the strike, perceived how the strike was manipulated for political intrigue. In retrospect, they reiterated stories retold about their ancient achievement. Then, they were confirmed in their belief that education was the pillar for growth and nationalism was the driving force. This prompted the Pa-oh to indentify their political asperation with the Karen National Association (KNA).

In the thirties, before the World War II the Saya San Peasant Rebellion was staged in support for Home Rule. But the Karen National Association (KNA) fought for communal representation in the Assembly with the advocacy of the separation of Burma from India. With Pa-oh national leaders taking active part in the political struggle, The Karen National Association (KNA) had the united support from all Karen communities; and the Burmese ire was nonetheless irritated.

In 1942, there was a certain change-the upheaval of Pa-oh sentiment from sluggishness. It was motivated from the fact that the ever docile Karen (in the Delta) stood up gallantly against the Burmese brutal attacks. The political awakening was on hand, at the threshold when Dr. Ba Maw as the Prime Minister, to form an interim government chose Pa-oh Hla Pe to serve under him as the Minister for Forestry and Agriculture. To the best of his ability, Pa-oh Hla Pe partly utilized his good offices as a staging ground for future leadership. When the Burma campaign was about to end, many Pa-oh guerrillas and freedom fighters in Shan Highland Plateau organised themselves under local leaders. When official contact was made with Col. Tulloch, a commander under Col. Peacock, commander of Force 136, the Pa-oh irregulars, in conjunc-

tion with "Operation Character", seized and occupied Hsi Saing, Banyin, and Loiput. Here they constructed road blocks to the retreating Japanese army from Shan Highland Plateau to Toungoo. At the end of the war many were cited in certificates of merits for valuable services rendered for war effort and a few were awarded with the double barrel guns during the Durbar held in Loikaw. But Pa-oh Hla Pe was suspected as being the prime mover of Pa-oh resistance and was taken to Thanbyu-Zayat for questioning. After suffering brutal outrages at the hands of the Kampetai, he was at last released.

The war ended and therein ushered a new breed of Burmese nationalists who had training under the Japanese fascist regime. There were communists and socialist with political pre-eminence. They formed the Anti-Fascist Peoples Freedom League (A.F.P.F.L) representing the majority opinion of the Burmans, preponderously to dominate the will of the indigenous races.

The K.N.A. changed its sign board to the Karen National Union (K.N.U.) a move to encompass all the diversified Karen communities with the self-expression the Karens did not trust the bad intentions of the Burmese nationalists. Once the British left, they would be vulnerable to brutal treatments at the hands of the hostile Burmese elements. The Pa-oh people with an instinct of self-preservation joined the K.N.U.. Pa-oh Hla Pe was elected as the vice-President of the K.N.U. In all appearance the Karen race was united, but soon the enemy won over the renegades who separately formed the Karen Youth Organization (K.Y.O.). Many Pa-oh leaders in the Highland Plateau joined. U Kyaw Sein became the Vice-President of the K.Y.O. But the Karen mass did not forget their bitter experience during the Japanese occupation.

The Burmese nationalists wanted independence in one year and that they did not want Burma to be dismembered. The stipulation of the British White Paper for Burma was that Burma proper would attain independence

in three years' time on the signing of the agreement and that the Frontier Areas would still remain under the British care. They threatened country wide rebellion. London summoned Aung San who met with Attlee. On assurance from Aung San that the A.F.P.F.L. would form a democratic government with suitable autonomous privileges to the frontier peoples, Attlee conceded on the verbal statement. Aung San-Attlee agreement was concluded. Aung San came back and started to woo the frontier leaders. He made promises, gave assurance; and when that failed, he used coercion and intimidation.

To Attlee, Aung San did not say anything about 50-50 for the Karen and the Burman as he did it to Lord Mount Batten in Kandy meeting. The political fate of the Karen race was at stake and they were worried. The K.N.U. sent a delegation to London to put up their case but was told to talk it over with their counter parts. However, London sent Rees Williams to chair the Frontier Areas Enquiry Committee. During the first hearing at Rangoon, Witnesses from the K.N.U., to the question asked, "Why do you not want independence with Burmans?", gave similar answers that the Karens do not trust the Burmans. But on the second hearing in May Myo, a couple of Karens from Papun hills stated that they wanted independence along with the Burmans. There were two sets of testimony and the legal practice and procedure called for a new hearing where the authenticity of the testimonies given by the witnesses could be ascertained. But it was observed that the British Labour government wanted a hasty exit. So next came Major Bottomley (Now Lord Bottomley) to coordinate the Panglong Treaty. Mr. H.N.C. Stevenson was then the director of Frontier Administration and knew the evils and woes of Burmese politics. On many occasions he warned the frontier leaders not to commit themselves in any political agreement with the Burmans. He was frustrated when his warning fell on dead ears. When his protest to the Governor strongly against the Panglong Treaty failed, he put

up his resignation and forfeited his life pension. On the first day negotiation for Panglong Treaty nearly all the frontier leaders were reluctant to endorse the treaty, But the next morning saw every one bent to the will of Aung San. And so Major Bottomley. concluded the treaty to the expressed wish of Aung San.

The Thaton district, predominantly Karen was to become a testing ground. The Socialist Kyaw Nyein (A.F.P.F.L.) launched a land Reform Programme by which the lands belonging to the Karen, Pa-oh and Mon were to be distributed to the landless Burmans.. This infuriated the land owners, who, if not guided, would take action by themselves, which would be disastrous. In March 1947, Pa-oh Hla Pe organized a mass rally for the demonstration against the Land Reform Programme. Nearly all the manfolks from Pa-oh villages turned out to show unity and strength. A multitude of not less than 10,000 assembled at a Pa-oh monastery from where a procession of a peace loving people took place, to demand justice. When the demonstrators passed by the Socialist office, the unruly Burmans from the office started flaying obscene expression and made fun of the Pa-oh farmers. Though the demonstration was meant to be peaceful, things went out of hand when some of the marchers broke out from the procession and attacked the miscreants from the office. The office was ransacked and pulled down. However, the procession reached the District Commissioner's Office where they handed in their petition to the District Commissioner. They demanded that:-

- (1) They be called and known as Pa-oh, (and not as Taungthu).
- (2) The Land Reform Programme be cancelled, and
- (3) Two battalions of Pa-oh soldiers be formed in the Burma Army.

Some time later, the Government Gazetteer issued one publication to the effect that, such people known as "Taungthu", herein after shall be known as Pa-oh.

No answer was made to the other two demands. However, the socialist activity came to an end and soon the incidence was forgotten.

When Aung San formed his Burma Defence Army he failed to foresee the tragedy that his rank and file would subsequently segregate themselves into distinct groups according to the political ideology absorbed by them in the course of their career. With the prospect of independence in view, the army officers had struggled along with the politicians who, after independence, wielded more power and ostentatiously profitted more by it. The army officer were disgruntled and since Aung San was dead they had no allegiance to honour but to themselves. They were prone and vulnerable to chances of personal power and glory, acquisition of rights and privileges and ventilation of grievances. Than Tun launched a personal offensive against the constitution and able to wedge a division between the socialists and the People Voluntary Organization who fought for power inside the ranks of A.F.P.F.L. Than Tun by this time had infiltrated into the Army and won over officers to his side. Three months after the independence, Burma was torn country wide with internal strife as Than Tun led his Communist Party of Burma in active rebellion.

The Power struggle within the A.F.P.F.L. caused the dissension which followed among the indigenous parties and factions. In the country side, armed dacoiting bands roamed and looted the unprotected villagers, while the rebelling communists demanded personal services from the mass. There was no security and to protect their lives and property, the K.N.U. began to form defence units and named it the Karen National Defence Organization (K.N.D.O.). The K.N.U. believed that unless the Karen race was adequately armed they would be easily opened to abuse, insult and brutal attacks. Soon nearly all villages were protected by small detachments K.N.D.O. Many Pa-oh leaders came out to the call; notably, Boh Tah Kara

of Pyu township, Boh Pyu of Tantabin Township, Boh Ye Htut of Thaton and others who organised their K.N.D.O. to protect Pa-oh villages.

U Nu was the first Prime Minister, versatile in political intrigue. In his handling of the Karen case, he used flattery with honeyed words. He ostensibly welcomed the K.N.U. assurance that the Karen would not use force in the quest for a Karen state. But when his Police Auxiliary Force - the Sitwuntaing which he built up secretly, was in preparedness, he proffered a challenge to the Karen in a firm tone that they would have to fight for it if they wanted a Karen state. U Nu had thrown down his gauntlet. The decision was made and U Nu was determined to destroy the Karen race.

In a country where there are diverse races with different culture, custom and manner, ethnical tradition and background, nationalism can not be itemised for the integration or assimilation of the indigenous races into one homogenous unit. It is definitely chauvinism. When the Burmese nationalism breeds racial antagonism, the law of reciprocation crops up. The Karen who are the second largest race next to the Burmese, stood up to honour their national dignity and to prove that nationalism is not ill-gotten in the battle fields of life and death.

U Nu said the first shot was not fired in Insein. It was correct and he knew it because he had set his Sitwuntaing to massacre Karen villagers at Wet-Net—Chaung a week earlier than the attack made on Insein. And so the war between the majority Burman and the minority Karen race started on January 31, 1949. Soon the Mon National Defence Organization joined in the fight.

It was not a rebellion. It was the K.N.D.O. and M.N.D.O. who took military action to protect their races for national survival against the genocidal attacks of the numerous Burmese armed forces not only the Sitwuntaings and the Burma Army - the Burma Communist party, the People Voluntary Organization and the Army

deserters who actually were in active rebellion against the government, now joined rank and attacked the K.N.D.O. and the M.N.D.O. from all sides. It had the characteristics of a total war of extermination. It was indeed a racial war between the majority Burman and the minorities.

In Thongoo and Thaton districts the Pa-oh mobilised their K.N.D.O. units and took active part in the occupation of Toungoo, Nyaunglaybin and Daik-U. The K.N.D.O. moved north and occupied Taunggyi, the provincial capital of Shan State in September 1949. Boh Chan Zone, a commander of U.M.P. unit took part in the occupation and he mobilised Pa-oh armed force in the Southern Highland Plateau. From Toungoo, Pa-oh Hla Pe came up to Taunggyi where he organised his people into a political body. It was the first political-military movement ever to materialise under a national leadership. Commander Naung Seng, presently commanding the First Kachin Rifles, formerly of the Burma Army had joined the K.N.D.O. On the first instant, he made several attempts to induce the Shan Chiefs to join them, The Chiefs, in the expectation that the Panglong Treaty was binding and the Burmans would honour it in time, did not want to play any part which would engender quarrel with the Burmans. Commander Naung Seng and his Kachintroops marched to Kachin sub-state. His intention was to set up bastion where the liberation of Kachin people could be staged. The prospect of arousing the Kachin people from the backwardness and to get organised politically and militarily as a measure of preparedness to meet any urgency, was ruined when the Kachin mass leaders asked him not to interrupt the prevailing peace and security the mass was having in that period. Naung Seng was frustrated. He and his troops bolted across the frontier to write a new page of history. The two races, Shan and Kachin were innocent and ignorant. But their leaders failed to see thing in the right perspective for the future, in the course of time when more evils and woes would be carved out for them, more intense in severity.

Part three  
Chapter VI  
An Emerging Nation

The concept of a nation is the sense of belonging to the common identity which necessarily defines national culture, tradition and language. It has been shown that a nation can be of any size, irrespective of its greatness in population or in the growth of its prosperity. Manoca (0.6 square mile) or Vatican is as much a nation as China. Burma attained nationhood by legal process, force upon the Nationalities, who definitely have no common identity, tradition, culture of language. The Karen and the Burman live side by side for over two thousand years, but like the North Pole and the South Pole, they, characteristically, are far apart and in opposite. In the concept of a nation, they have no common factor to bring them into a nation-state. Lack of diligence and due to their carelessness, the Karen passed through historical misfortune to become a suppressed people. In the case of the Pa-oh, the arrogance of the proud king caused the loss of their culture and scripts-looted and duplicated.

The Karen tribes, being the foremost settlers, in large measure, developed the country. They are fully justified to claim ownership of part of the country they had fostered and nurtured. Over this claim of ownership, precipitated a bloody dispute which escalated to a communal war, expanding across the Shan highland Plateau. When the Shan and the Kachin races hesitated to side with the K.N.D.O. and declare the Burmese government as being the aggressor, the K.N.D.O. campaign in the highland Plateau ended. Taunggyi was evacuated by the K.N.D.O. and the Pa-oh troops in December 1949. While the K.N.D.O. withdrew to LoiKaw and Toungoo, Pa-oh Hla Pe set up his new Headquarters at Hsi Saing.

He was fully involed with his highland Pa-oh. At last, on the death of Saw Ba U Gyi, he was requested to take up the leadership.

But he made the right decision over has dual loyalty, and sent his letter of resignation requesting the K.N.U. to release him of his duty and office. Eventually he organised a national movement which, as a result, an emerging nation was conceived.

### Feudalism

Feudalism in the Shan Highland Plateau was a typical and hereditary ruling class emerged rather than nominally based on autonomous manors. Classical European pattern of feudalism did not evolve here. Under the British colonial administration and recognition, the authority of the feudal lords went unchallenge. How much severe the people were downtrodden socially, politically and economically, they dare not complain.

By the time Taunggyi was occupied, the national asperation, national spirit, patriotism, loyalty and self-confidence were restored as national values. Hitherto, worse was the case of the Pa-oh people. Under the alien feudal authority, as it is the way of the world when there was no leader to stand up for the principle—the Pa-oh continued to exist as the oppressed and the only law over them was the law of the strong. They were not treated as a people to be fostered and nurtured for progress, but ruled over as a class only for exploitation by the ruling class for their own betterment.

Public functions and festivals were numerous and organised to conduct public gambling from which the henchmen collected taxes and fees to enrich their masters and themselves. Opium cultivation was promoted as a source of tax. Every family was allowed to distil rice wine which could be sold openly. Gambling, drunkenness and opium smoking were vices which were the roots of robbery and theft. Crimes occurred frequently and became uncontrolled. There was no law and order as it would under a democratic society where there were very few minions.

Under the corrupt and bad system, the people lost

all appreciation of social and moral values. Aimless and bewildered, yet they still hoped for a better future, while they submitted themselves to the will of the repressive environment. It was appalling to perceive how humble the Pa-oh were demeaned to behave. In public eating shops, they were not allowed to eat on the tables but to use the ground floor. What humiliation and degrading treatment they suffered in those days under feudalism.

In post World War II, a disaster almost as bad as a calamity prevailed in the form of disease, lack of food, scarcity of currency, for the Japanese currency was invalid, dacoity and hooliganism were rampant. It was not only the Pa-oh but also the other races as well. Greediness and self-centeredness made men lose their morals. The feudal lords were no exception. Instead of eradicating the vices which damaged the social life of the people they ruled, they selfishly exploited on them. And the good people suffered the worst. Thus the bad situation was doubly increased under feudalism, and there was no social security for them.

For every disease there is a cure. To cure it is to attack and destroy the cause. During these darkest days, there were still men of principle, nationalists and patriotic monks. A few in number may they be but, were dedicated and determined to save the people from the living hell. An open attack on the feudal system, verbal or any other means, was not advisable. It was premature and would hasten the fast deteriorated situation to get out of hand, from worse to worst. But the good mass was already in the mood to be organised. They needed leaders to follow. They wanted reform.

For reform, the prime movers were :- (1) Sayadaw U Thu Riya, the most influential Abbot among the Burmese monks, (2) Sayadaw U Htut Nandah, the noted scholar who re coined the Pa-oh written language, (3) Sayadaw U Gandamah, the great national organiser and the torch-bearer for the liberation from feudalism.



*One ancient Pa-oh monastery.*



*New monastery of this age.*

They together with other enthusiastic reformists among the monks and laymen, contrived a movement. First they formed a pilot movement as an initial programme for moral-rearmament, seemingly not to be a hostile action against the feudal ruling class. They formed several cells of monks who conducted special religious services for the public. They preached to the gatherings and delivered messages of the immorality. As more attendants were won over, the movement was expanded. It was soon found out that the mass were all ears to hear the message on moral-rearmament. When the public response gained strength and in momentum, several-monk associations were formed. These monk associations took up the challenge against vices and preached about the evils derived from the abuse of these vices. The pilot movement on moral-rearmament, the active challenge against vices and the consequences awakened the public who by this time regained their self-confidence. They aspired for reform, to take better care of their lives, their villages, communities, religion and country. The public response was then significantly positive.

By the end of 1946, a direct challenge and attack was launched — a movement for the eradication of all vices. The movement publicly called for the immediate eradication of the followings:-

- (1) Opium and all intoxication,
- (2) Gambling,
- (3) The ruling class taking lesser wives, and
- (4) Poaching and butchering in the vicinity of the monasteries and villages.

The active attack on immorality practiced by the ruling class, though verbal, was violent and damaging in public. The denunciation made, revealed the ugliest image of them. Many repented and reformed. By the end of 1947, "Pa-oh Long Bu" — Pa-oh Solidarity was established. From this "Pa-oh Long Bu" besides the Pa-oh, all the other races became politically awakened.

During this period, the three existing organizations were:- the Asia Youth Organization, the Shan State Independence Organization and the "Pa-oh Long Bu"- (Pa-oh Solidarity). With the support of the mass, they joined rank and launched intensive attack on the feudal system and fought for democracy.

Very soon retaliation took place. The lackeys with the support of the levies and police, intensified their suppression on the mass. Then the conflict between the mass and the feudal lords come to a crucial state. By the end of 1948, for village security, Sayadaw U Gandamah, organised a militia unit at kyauk-ta-lone village, and equipped the militiamen with arms they seized from the Sawbwas feudalist levies. This action encouraged the other local leaders to follow suit. Soon the Naung Ka villagers organised themselves as militia men and conducted a movement against the feudal ruling class. Thus among the Pa-oh, they said, "The revolution started first at Kyauk-ta-lone and second at Naung Ka."



*Agga Maha Pan-di-da Ba-dan-da  
Na-rein-da, Abbot of First Taung Monastery.*

## CHAPTER VII

### Feudal Revolution

At the new Headquarters set up at Hsi Saing, Phra Bwah Hla Pe was assisted by Phra Tan Nam Aw and Boh Chan Zone. With a considerable amount of arms and ammunition purchased from the K.N.D.O. the Pa-oh National Liberation Organization (P.N.L.O.) was established to fight and liberate their people from the yoke of feudalism. So, on December 11, 1949 the P.N.L.O. declared war on the feudalists of Nyaunghwé, Ban Yin, Hopon, Naung Mong, Pung Lone Sanka, Mong Pong, Loi Lem, Mong Nai, and Mauk Mai

In the early beginning, any P.N.L.O. personnel captured alive by the levies, his head was cut off. It was then displayed on the market day for public view. This act of barbarity, instead of frightening the Pa-oh mass, as it was intended for, infuriated them instead. The result was the whole mass rallied under the P.N.L.O. with complete support. Then the situation began to get very grave against the feudalists, as the peasant population—the Shan, Danu and In-tha joined rank.

In 1950, as a support to the revolution, the Union of the Pa-oh National Organization was formed in Taunggyi. They made three petitions to the government of Burma and the Shan State Council. They are:- the abolition of feudalism, the installation of democracy, and immoral activity such as gambling and intoxication be prohibited. Though the last demand was considered as moral correction no apparent action was taken.

As the fighting credibility of the P.N.L.O. improved and successive battle victories mounted, the fighting strength of the feudalist levies began to diminish rapidly. Daily desertion increased. Still the feudalist expected that the fresh reinforcement from the north, on arrival would boost up the morale. From the Northern Shan State, Sao Noon brought down the levies in thirty three trucks. On their way at Pan-ka-poke, the P.N.L.O. am-

bushed them and finished the levies. Virtually in the battle fields, the feudalists were losing and defeat was a matter of time. Like a drowning man, they made the last try hanging on the straw. They invited the Burma Army to step in and help them out of their present predicament. Surprisingly not, the Burmese government had already installed its military strength, strong enough to cope with any urgent action called for. This logistic pre-arrangement was made, when, in case the feudalists could not run their states any longer, maintain law and order and oversee the internal security, the army would be in position and simply walk in and take control of the Shan States.

In 1954, the army with four regiments strong, intervened and launched its aggression on the Pa-oh people. U Nu's assistance to the feudalists, was not a gesture of supporting feudalism. He had his own intrinsic plan, conceived since 1949 when Phra Bwah Hla Pe was then the vice president of the K.N.U.. This was to smash the national spirit of the Pa-oh people by first crushing the stability of the P.N.L.O.. What the Shan feudalists failed to perform, U Nu would subdue and teach the Pa-oh a life-time lesson, never to dare and argue against the Burmese authority.

From the onset, as the Burma army marched into the battle field; they were sure of a quick victory. That after many years of war (1950-1954) the P.N.L.O. would be war weary and that the Burmese troops fresh and primed for a kill, and with the levies attacking on the flanks and from the rear, the P.N.L.O. would surely be wiped out easily, was the wrong military assessment. On the contrary, they suffered numerous battle defeats and the loss of lives and arms mounted. The Burmese army realised that the more they lost in battle, the stronger the P.N.L.O. grew with arms they captured. Besides their expectation from the levies was negative. Like a bon-fire of straw they flared, flickered and died down.

In 1958, the Communists and the Anti-government elements launched a country wide propaganda calling for peace, with three expressed slogans:- First, peace for the people; second, peace for the government; third, peace for the land. According to the stipulation of the Panglong Treaty, when ten years lapsed, , Shan state could secede from the Union. On this issue, the feudalists were already planning to propose a revision of the constitution for a federation union. For the Burmese government to make peace with the P.N.L.O. is to kill the feudalism, and thereby frustrating any feudalist effort. While the clamour for peace in the land was loud in the air, the Burmese government was opportuned to stimulate a peace accord with the P.N.L.O. At the same time it would be construed that the government was not averse to any peace exploration. To kill two birds at one stroke, the Burmese government under U Ba Swe as the Prime Minister, approached the P.N.L.O. for a peace parley.

In any country with civil war and belligerency, any return of peace and tranquility is the happy desire of the people. The P.N.L.O. was therefore obliged to negotiate a peace talk with the A.F.P.F.L. government. A peace accord was arranged and the following conditions put up by the P.N.L.O. became a dialogue for the peace overture. The conditions were:-

- (i) That the feudalists surrender their feudal authority within one year, and
- (ii) that the present Pa-oh dominated areas to come under local administration as local administrative areas governed by the Pa-oh Affairs Council, duly nominated by the people.

Since the loss of men and arms was heavy, and that the conditions put forward by the P.N.L.O. were democratic, moderate and practicable, an agreement was reached to end hostility.

On May 1958, for the peace loving people, a ceremony to symbolise an exchange of arms for democracy was celebrated in Taunggyi. The peace conclusion enhanced the Pa-oh people to rehabilitate and reconstruct their economic and social life in the war torn land.

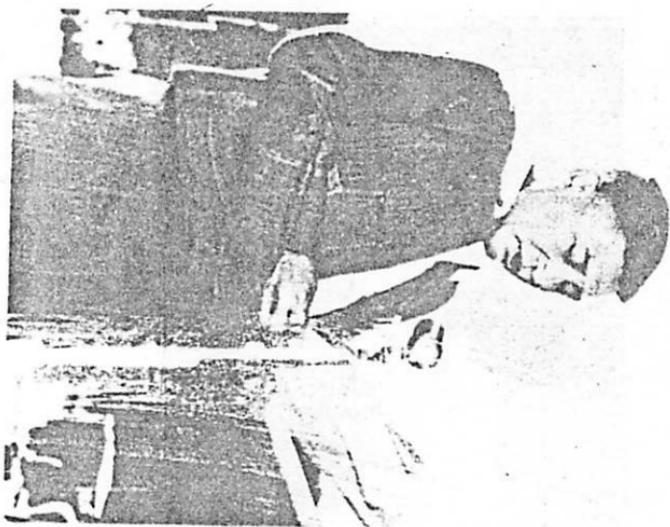
Accordingly, in April 1959, the feudalists surrendered their feudal power. The sun of feudal power which never set in the past thousand of years, at last set never to rise again.

For every war fought, it was fought to end in peace. And the damage done was great, and incurred in the loss of lives and limbs. This shall always remain in the history. The estimate death toll:-

1. The feudalists' levies.....	500 men.
2. The Burma army.....	1000 "
3. The Pa-oh mass.....	600 "
4. The P.N.L.O.....	700 "
5. Houses destroyed.....	5,000



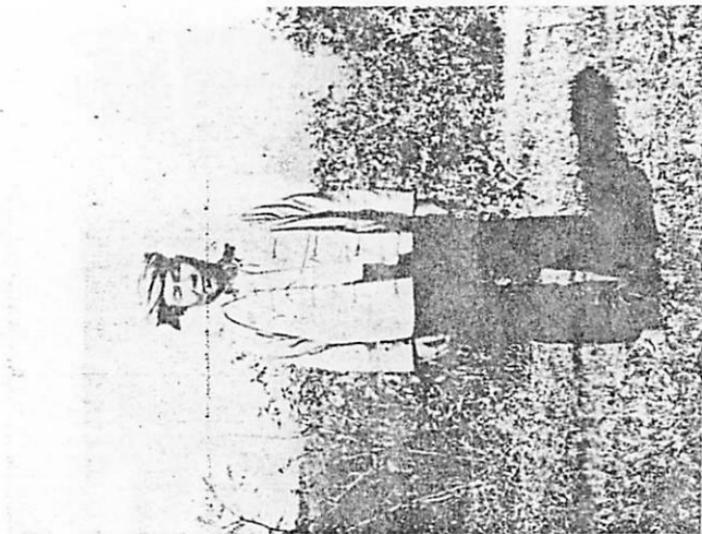
*Hnat Awng Tha*



*Bo Kyan Zone*



*Bo San Thein*



*Khun Wait Za*

## CHAPTER VIII

### Peace and Progress

The rewards gained from the feudal revolution were:-

1. The end of feudalism,
2. The abolition of gambling,
3. The prohibition of opium cultivation,
4. The modification of various taxes, and
5. The establishment of local administration.

To guarantee that the return of peace be permanent and to assure the practice of democratic rights – right of ownership, right of work, right of expression and the equal right for opportunity, under the auspicious leadership of

1. U Pyi Nya Wum Tha of Min Gyaung (Thaton)
2. Phra Tan Kaun Keh,
3. Phra Tan Nam Aw,
4. Phra Tan Kyaung Wara, and
5. Phra Tan Kyaung Bok,

an all Pa-oh General Congress was convened on March 12, 1959, as a celebration of the return of peace, and to assure it a permanent one. Representatives from the P.N.L.O., U.P.N.O., and the Pa-oh Student Association attended to deliberate a single political platform under which the solidarity of the Pa-oh people could be mustered.

The Union of Pa-oh National Organization was adopted with the following leaders nominated for the Pa-oh Affairs Council.

They were :-

1. President . . . . . Tara Thu Kyi U Pyu
2. General Secretary . . . . U Kyaw Sein
3. Economic and . . . . . Phra Bwah Hla Pe  
Rehabilitation
4. Organization . . . . . Bo Chan Zone.
5. Members . . . . . Phra San Shwe (Thaton)
6.         " . . . . . Phra Than Htoon (Thaton)

7.	”	.....Saray Kam (Taunggyi)
8.	”	.....Pa-di Wida ”
9.	”	.....Phra Sara Pay ”
10.	”	.....Boh Shwe Win ”

#### Deliberation :-

1. To set up the local administration, and
2. To build up a Pa-oh Land.

#### The Local Administration

The Pa-oh dominated area was divided into four rural regions. This was done to facilitate the setting up of the Local Administration, to be under a proper working programme which was drawn up at the centre of the U.P.N.O. The four regions are:- Eastern, Central, Western and Northern Regions.

The Pa-oh people are the agriculturists, producers as well as the suppliers. The reconstruction of their economic life came first. On the basis of being producers and suppliers, the whole national economic durability relied on the cooperative system. First, Pilot cooperative centres were set up at Taunggyi, Hopon and Ping Long. Next, a rehabilitate programme was introduced and cooperatives for marketing and public works were set up at every village tract. The programme was directly under the management of the U.P.N.O.

The cooperative Centres are:-

1. Sain La cooperatives,
2. Agri-producers cooperatives.
3. Agri-suppliers cooperatives,
4. Public Educational Programme Centres,
5. Public Health Programme Centres and
6. Transports and Road Construction Centres.

Under the able, guidance of the U.P.N.O., the programmes for economic, education and health were implemented. The pilot cooperative centres at Taunggyi, Hopon and Ping Long stimulated a healthy steady economic growth which as the result, better urban-rural relationship was developed. This paved the way for pro-

gress and prosperity in peace time.

Compulsary education for primary was enforced and village schools were constructed. As rural educational programme widely set up in the rural, public health was introduced, followed up with public education on personal health, hygiene and village sanitation. Public health centres were erected. But in this respect, the handicap was that there was a limited number of trained and qualified nurses and assistant health inspectors or doctors. But the management took the initiative and opened courses for nursing and health education. At the end of the course, the trainees were assigned to the health centres, to look after the general health of the mass.

Public roads to commute between villages were constructed. This was made easier with the mass contribution of voluntary labour force. This development enabled quick movement from the country-side to transport local produces to the markets. This promoted the increment in production. With the village defend unit, the security of life and property was taken care of. Social security of the mass and the stability of the economic life were assured.

Opium and gambling were strictly prohibited. While the sale of liquor was restricted. Mass education on the evils and bad effect derived from the indulgence of opium and gambling was extensively stressed.

Disciplinary action was meted out to the defaulters. Drug addicts were cured by native medication. Any one, not addict, found or known to be fooling with the abuse of drug, was put under the corrective care of the U.P.N.O. Sometimes public punishment was executed to discourage any further misuse.

The exchange of arms for democracy was after all, to the Pa-oh people, an achievement. At first criticized by many political observers as a political blunder — as it was in the first place to be a political illusion and would end as a national sold out. In fact it was a “trial and

error" under taking. The success was primarily due to the driving force afforded by Phra Bwah Hle Pe's philosophy and his correct definition of democracy for the people and not vice versa.

His philosophy on nationalism is native and naive — not a borrowed or imported one. As a true nationalist, he belonged to his people and not that the people belonged to him. He knew what his people wanted and needed. He had molded his people the way they wanted to be — simple, loyal and industrious. With a common understanding, they will value the cost of democracy which they dearly paid for and from which their democratic way of life, social and economic structures were the rewards.

In 1962, the military took over power and in 1963 introduced the Burmese Socialist Economic Construction Programme as a new social and economic order. Under this order, all the diverse minorities would be assimilated into one single society where there existed only one common social-economic system. Though the system professed no exploitation of man over man, it was aggrandized as the Burmese way to socialism-masala as it was dubbed. In fact it is the Burmese way by the Burmans and for the Burmans.

#### Under Ne Win Military Regime

A decade of struggle against feudalism had not only tempered their will of resistance, but also molded the people into a solid cohesion of mankind. The Burmese Way to Socialism is not only foreign to them, but it has an overtone of chauvinism, which the Pa-oh will not tolerate. At first, they are passive and play a game of "Fish follow water, water follows fish.", by making any possible accommodation to the programme. But, being the main suppliers of consumer goods which are in great demand in Lower Burma, they suffered the greatest loss under the new regulation erected by the government controlled consumer co-operatives. Control of market-

ting and distribution of raw agricultural products is meant to obstruct the growth of the Pa-oh national economy. This is insufferable.

Imposition of several agricultural goods, such as, wheat, garlic, potato, ground nut, soy bean, corn and etc., causes more delay in the already slow movement in the surface transportation. Damage and decay of goods in transit which incurs unnecessary loss of time and value. All these, affected productivity. Apart from pretending to sail with wind, the Pa-oh have not departed from their democratic in social economic system as adapted to them earlier. However they are wary and suspicious of the Burmese bad intentions.

The two events which indented the greatest damage done to the Pa-oh national economy are:-

1. The demonetization of the Burmese currency notes of 50 and 100 denominations, and
2. The nationalization of Sain-La business (a kind of mulberry leaves used in Burmese cheroots.)

When the announcement of the demonetization with only a five days of grace during which period the money should cashed in the banks was made, the majority of Pa-oh who sustain their livelihood in the country failed to learn about the catastrophe. By the time they learn about it the time of grace is lapsed. They lost all their personal savings which amount more than a hundred crores of Kyats. Sain-la is exclusively grown, picked, cured and processed by the Pa-oh. Though it consumes light labour it absorbs a considerable time. As a national cash crop, Pa-oh are the only producers and distributors as well. Sain-la is the Pa-oh proprietary business and as such, the Burmese Way of Socialism wants it destroyed. The business is at a standstill for two years. During this time, the Pa-oh turned to the cultivation of wheat extensively from which they made a lot of money. This too does not pleased the Burmese Socialists (Masala) who makes another reckless control on milling and marketting

of wheat. However much the Masala wants to destroy Pa-oh economy, what actions it takes and how far it goes, the consolation to this day is that the middle men who deal and handle the "Supply and demand" sections are the very people who managed the cooperatives set up by the U.P.L.O. in the past years.

### The Minority Committee

Under the rule of military gun and bayonet, even the strong supporters of the deposed A.F.P.F.L. became stupified and stymied. The Student Body and the Workers Union became the silent majority. Amidst the intimidation of military threat, there were men of courage who stood up for the principle they believed to be true and right, and that "Might is not always right". For democracy they would fight for it and practice it too. And if that was not enough they would die for it.

Pa-oh Hla Pe, best revered by his people as Pra Bwah Hla Pe, organised the Minority Committee. He was the chairman and Mahn David, the secretary. A seminar was convened where the minorities, such as, the Karen, Kachine, Mon, Pa-oh, and Chin attended to unite for a common effort. In the opening speech, the chairman in an emphetic, said, "In the building of multi-nation state, the affairs of the minorities could not be neglected. The minorities living in Burma are oppressed by the Burmese chauvinism at every position and every occasion..... The blood assimilation is the process to ultimately reduce a minority to vanishment....." He concluded by calling the minorities to unite and unitedly fight for democracy and self-determination.

In the middle of 1963, the Minority Committee sponsored a mass rally to be held in Rangoon. From 6 districts in the Lower Burma, some 200,000 persons came to Rangoon by organised transports under the management of the Minority Committee. As Chairman of the Minority Committee, Pa-oh Hla Pe addressed the mass and stressed for unity and action. In his incitement

for an uprising, he said, "In this country, people of different races live together, but the minorities are losing their rights. The minorities shall unite and rise against these chavinism...."

The next day he was summoned to appear before the Revolutionary Council where the Secretary General, Brig. San Yu handed the first and last warning order to Pa-oh Hla Pe. His reply to the Secretary General was simple and firm. He said, "As the authority, it is your duty to arrest; whereas, as the chairman nominated by the minorities, my duty is to speak up for them no matter what happens to me."

At the end of the second rally held in Mandalay, Pa-oh Hla Pe was arrested and jailed; on account of his courageous speech delivered on the behalf of the minorities. There followed more arrest made on the Pa-oh leaders in Taunggyi; the few among them were, Boh Chan Zone, Phra tan Kaung Khe and Sara Haing. U Pyu and U Kyaw Sein were arrested earlier when Ne Win took over the complete power in 1962, on March the 2nd.

Nearly all the top level leaders were tucked away, but in their absence, the junior leaders and the district elders becoming more careful in their underground activity. The underground machinery was not to be destroyed. The area commander of Masala, Col. Thura Aung Pe set up his headquarters in Taunggyi and started to play a double game, firstly to be friendly with the members of the U.P.N.O. and secondly to smash the Pa-oh underground net works. He made friend with Boh San Thein, the only senior leader left not as yet arrested by the military government. Col. Aung Pe offered Boh San Thein some considerable amount of ammunitions which he could sell it to the communists who were buying it from several sources. This concession made to him was the beginning of Burmese duplicity to ensnare the Pa-oh activists in the towns. On the other hand Col. Aung Pe was collecting evidence against the Pa-oh activists and

when his reports to higher authority were confirmed for further action, he made his final move against the Pa-oh. The Masala party invited all the Pa-oh elders to come to a meeting where they could put up any complaint or any question on what they did not understand or did not agree to. The Party official proposed to discuss matters on the local administration by which the problems and difficulties the mass experienced. It appeared that the meeting would benefit the Pa-oh people who encouraged every responsible person not to miss the meeting. But it turned out that the meeting was a trap and every one attending it was not allowed to leave until he could prove himself not a member of the Pa-oh underground activists. Boh San Thein was sick on that day and did not attend it. He was taken to the country where he organised the village defence units into a new fighting force armed with the serricable weapons cached secretly by Pra Bwah Hla Pe for emergent national issue. Once again for the second time the Pa-Oh took up arms to defend themselves against the Burmese aggression.

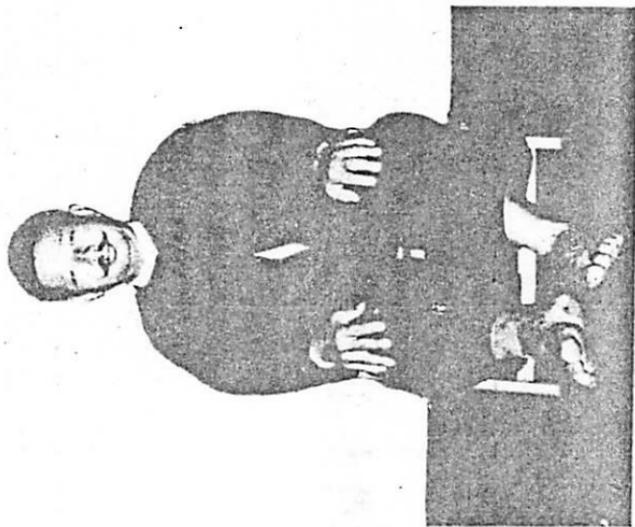
It took Boh San Thein some time to reorganise the P.N.L.O. But by the time it was in form and ready for action one undesired disturbance should have happened. The Burma Communist Party which have been lying low in the north started its infiltration into the Pa-oh territory now not under the Masala control but the P.N.L.O. The BCP started to erect its Headquarters in the In-lay area and Boh San Thein protested against it and asked the communists to leave the area. When they did not listen and take any heed a battle broke out between the BCP and the P.N.L.O. The result was the BCP was driven out with 27 killed and many wounded. This incident was to happen as the BCP's first incursion with an intention of fight and organise. But there was never an occasion by which the BCP made any admission of violation of territorial integrity. From this incident the Pa-oh people look on the BCP as foreign intruders and the relation between the P.N.L.O. and the BCP has never been any friendly.

Boh San Thein was greatly handicapped with all the top leaders in Burmese prison, and himself in need of advice on political, military and mass affairs. He too needed patriotic person to consult with and was prepared to receive any comrade to help. He found himself elated when Hla Maung (formally the Communist District Member) offered to join ranks. With no reservation of any suspicion, Boh San Thein took in Hla Maung as one of them. Soon Hla Maung asserted his position and made friend with Takeleh. Takeleh is the KNDO remnant, and excelling himself in battles, he is recognised to be a military leader. In politics he is rustic and dull, and therefore is vulnerable to communist manipulation. While the P.N.L.O. is in the tender age of political maturity, whether it is a stroke of providence, fate or chance, a detachment of progressive but left oriented K.N.U.O. and K.N.P.P. had to arrive at the P.N.L.O. Headquarters. There began a period of political illusion under-lying Pa-oh national unity.

Part IV  
Chapter IX  
Nationalism and Political Illusion

Traditionally, the Pa-oh people have a strong attachment and a high sentimental opinion toward the Karen who, in general aspect, are the esteemed "Big Brothers". Right from the beginning, they fought shoulder to shoulder in the campaigns of Nyaung Lay Bin and Daik-U; together they occupied Taunggyi and together they left it. After then, the K.N.D.O. left them to fend independently by themselves, entirely as an independent people. Alone and independent, they achieved victory over the feudalists: they made peace with the Burma Government. But when they could no more tolerate the Burmese Way to Socialism, they took up arms again and fought the Burma Army. Singly, they had managed their own affairs and never met with hindrances or ever needed outside interference. Then the "Smiling intrusion" of the K.N.U.P. and the profused smile of their leaders had altered the course of the Pa-oh national struggle. Had they been left alone and allowed to write their own history, a different page of history would have been written.

The large detachment of the Karen National Union Party, (K.N.U.P.) including the Karenni Progressive Party was not coldly welcomed but equally warm treatment was willingly offered. The welfare of the personnel was taken care of to the details, and special attention was provided to the officers according to each individual rank and office. Through out their stay, no discrimination was shown by the host, in word or deed. Soon friendliness was in the atmosphere and comradeship was established. The visitors were at home. Then the majority of the K.N.U.P. left Pa-oh area, reportedly to persuade the Shan Palaung and Kachin to join the United National Democratic Front (U.N.D.F.). "Accidentally", a few were left behind, on what pretext they were left behind, was never

*Bo Shwe Win**Khun Sein (Previous President)*



*Doi Kaung Mu-Zedi*

made known or the purpose ever indicated. The evil intention, in time, came to light and before the damage done was un-reparable the Pa-oh leaders stepped in with a firm hold on the situation. The snake in grass was exposed and it was learned that, the K.N.U.P. sinister method was : "Divide and Control" and "Fight or Join"; the weapon is national democracy, the strategy is U.N.D.P. and the aim is communism.

(The Karen by nature, and traditionally, are people who want to live peacefully with their neighbours. When the BCP offered pacification and rapprochement for peace they welcomed it to bring back normal relation with the Burmese people. Then the BCP infiltrated legitimately and started to indoctrinate the mass. They won over some of the minority groupings, expounding to them the importance of national democracy for national struggle. Under the national democracy, there are favourable opportunities for class struggle and the national liberation struggle of the people – which together amount to national communism, and is no less totalitarian and anti-democratic than any other variety. The Karen, Karenni and Mon were then under the clouds of political illusion, and for many years were lost in the political wilderness.)

Boh San Thein was the chairman and saw the dark cloud over hanging for what casting he could not make out and with no recommendation from his own friends, he did not impose any restriction on the few K.N.U.P. remaining with them. Taking the cue that they were accepted as comrades within the ranks, the K.N.U.P. became eloquent and then persuasive. They started to indoctrinate the rank and file of the P.N.L.O. First they took Takeleh as a marker. With the help from Hla Maung Takeleh was won over, then followed suit was Sein Shwe, An initial cell of cadres was conceived. The result was the instigation for power as an inner struggle in issue. The indoctrination took its form as discussion over the political terms and usages and was aimed at as reorientation of

the leaders' thoughts and to conclude judgement dialectically. They criticised the P.N.L.O. to be egoistic, self-centred and narrow-minded for the Pa-oh only. Emphasis on broader nationalism was advocated to include the other minorities, such as, the In-tha, Taung Yo, Danu, Yin net, Palaung, Lisu and Lahu. On this premise they asserted their will and over rule all dissensions. They changed the name of the Pa-oh National Liberation Organization (P.N.L.O.) to the Shan State Nationalities Liberation Organization (S.S.N.L.O.). The change of names did not take place from the consensus of a seminar or congress. There was no seminar or congress in record to prove the authenticity of the new organisation. Where and how did it take place, and who sponsored it are questions to which no one can answer. But one thing is certain—it was the work of the agnostics.

The result as calculated was fractional opposition precipitated between the nationalists and the leftist elements whose objective was to divide and control. To make matter worsening was the mis-understanding and hostile attitude coming from the Shan nationalist groupings. To them the "Shan State Nationalities Liberation Organization" was, in sheer presumption, a usurper and illegitimate. They had not been consulted and treated as unimportant. The issue was an armed confrontation and clashes between the Shan Noon-Sit-Han and the S.S.N.L.O. Boh San Thein, unfortunately, was killed in one of the clashes. How he was killed, but with a bullet wound inflicted from the rear, presented a suspicion of murder, but it was never to be proved.

In December 1968. Hla Maung became the president of S.S.N.L.O. Now, he, Takeleh and Sein Shwe were men of authority. They were still outnumbered by the majority of nationalist in the central committee. This did not please the communists who thereon advised them to convene a meeting and to organise a majority vote to back them. They did not succeed. Again a second meeting was arranged. The voting went against them and Hla

Maung was ousted. Phra Mau Hai was elected instead. Twice they failed to beat the nationalists by a democratic means. Now they were told to use force. In 1972, Takeleh and Sein Shwe took absolute power and arrested Phra Mau Hai, Phra Aung Tha, Hkun Weik Za and Phra Sara Khin. Takeleh and Sein Shwe made themselves the President and the General Secretary respectively and in complete control of the S.S.N.L.O.

In early 1973, Phra Bwah Hla Pe and U Kyaw Sein were released from jail. They went straight to rejoin their friends in the jungles. To their surprise, they found their home-coming welcome was cold and soon they understood why. They were quite upset that in their absence the communists should have taken an authoritative position over the Pa-oh people. This Phra Bwah Hla Pe would not allow. He took his stance firmly on nationalism and told his people that the national struggle was more important than the class struggle is, and that the people had the sole responsibility to conduct their own national struggle by themselves and not to be influenced by any outside leftist elements.

With the recognised leaders back among them the people eagerly anticipated that they be given the right position of authority. The communists who had a foothold would hold fast to it and destroy any opposition. To the BCP, Phra Bwah Hla Pe presented himself as No. 1 enemy. He must be destroyed. So the BCP sent down Boh Myo Myint who already had a firm hold on Takeleh and Sein Shwe, to make instigation against Phra Bwah Hla Pe and his nationalist colleagues.

They arranged political classes and Myo Myint, in his lectures stressed the danger presented by Phra Bwah, who, as the recognised leader, had the most influence on his people and in return the people have highest respect and confidence in him. Instead of giving him due respect and honourable leadership, a position fit for a man of outstanding calibre, highest acumen and lasting stamina

for national leadership, Boh Myo Myint and his faithful stooges flayed slanderous accusation on Phra Bwah Hla Pe and U Kyaw Sein that they were released by Ne Win as spies, and that, they together with Col. Aung Kham Hti and Major Ki Dqund were narrow-minded nationalists, anti-communist and therefore anti-BCP. They would one day rejoin Ne Win. They were not only being ridiculed and abused, their lives were threatened.

In an ordinary organization where there are two factions struggling for power, there is always a leakage when dirtiness is cooked up. From faithful friends and followers, it was learned that there was a plot to wipe out all the nationalist leaders within S.S.N.L.O. Hla Maung who had been demoted and now not in any responsible position, was assigned to take command of the Boy Company. This Boy Company comprised of selected youngsters of bad reputation. They were to be trained as executors. Detailed plan was drawn, zero hour was set and the assassination would take place.

The resistance day was drawing near. It offered a good excuse for the few nationalists to get away from the camp. With the pretention that they would celebrate the day at Kyauk-ta-lone, twenty seven nationalists, taking Phra Bwah along, left the camp quietly in the dark without raising any suspicion or creating any commotion. It was many days later after their departure, they received news of the killing of the faithful left behind. Among them was the son of Phra Bwah Hla Pe. The sad news stunned him but he realised that his leadership was needed ever more than it was before. He was determined to lead his people against the communists and set up a foundation of nationalism for his people. He resolved to lead them to the end. In November 1973 the S.S.N.L.O. was divided into two camps – the nationalists led by Phra Bwah Hla Pe and the leftists led by Takeleh. At first the force amounting to 1500 or more in strength could not decide which side to join. As it was, almost the entire force was under intimidation. They were stupified under

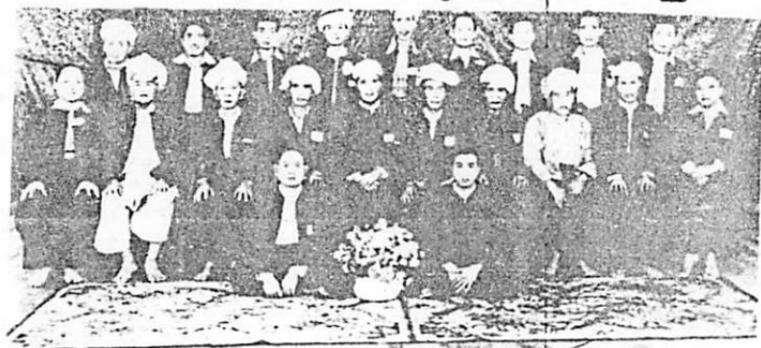
threat of death. No one was dare enough to come out in the open and declared himself to belong to the nationalist

The steadfastness maintained and goodwill shown by Phra Bwah Pe, finally won their confidence in his leadership. First, small number rejoined the nationalists and gradually the number increased. In this manner, by the middle of 1974, the strength of the two camps became even. The Nationalist declared their political identity as a front and named it as "Shan State National Liberation Front".

Phra Bwah Hla Pe was the chairman and Col. Aung Kham Hti acted as the General Secretary. This was during the interim period when the fighting force was reorganised. And the fight against the communists continued. By the end of 1974, the mounting success achieved by the nationalists encouraged a large number of Takeleh's men to desert him. In the end, by the middle of 1975, Takeleh, who had been on the run for months, eventually fled to the BCP headquarters at Pang Sang.

၁၃၂၀ ခုနှစ် တစ်ယ ဘကြိမ်မြောက်

ပြည်ထောင်စုပုဆိပ် အမျိုးသားအဖွဲ့ ညီလာခံသဘင်ကြီး



*Elected UPNO leaders at Tounggyi in 1959.*



*Koung Neng Camp*



*Pa-oh National Army*

## CHAPTER X

## The Pa-oh National Organization

## The Death of Phra Bwah Hla Pe.

During his last attempt to consolidate the Pa-oh fighting force against the communists, he died in September, 1975, after a long illness—a chronic disease contracted while he was in the Burmese jail. His unselfish devotion to his people and the other minorities, as well as the fight for Human Rights, the staunch stand against the communists, are the milestones ever cherished by his people and those who know him well.

He was a remarkable man for :

His aim is freedom for his people and the other Minorities,

His strategy is peace and progress, and

His weapon is the Human Rights.

His political conceptions and national aspirations are

1. Political equality for all Nationalities,
2. All Nationalities shall have the rights of self-determination,
3. The formation of a Union of States, with equal status within the Union, and the formation by the the free will—the right to join and the right to secede, and
4. Victory to be achieved by the combined military forces.

Every national leader in his life time wants to see his dream comes true. The ambition of Phra Bwah was to bring all his people under one single national organisation. With all the diversified environment around, he had not been successful. Ironically his dream came true a year after his death. The two existing Pa-oh national political parties are :-

The Shan State National Liberation Front, and  
The Pa-oh National Liberation Army.



Just as the Shan State National Liberation Front represents only the Pa-oh and not the others, the Pa-oh National Liberation army represents only the Lowland Pa-oh, and not the whole Pa-oh people. The leaders of the two groups met and agreed to merge as a single organization. The new organization is named as:-

#### The Pa-oh National Organization (P.N.O.)

The following leaders were chosen:-

- |                      |       |                    |
|----------------------|-------|--------------------|
| 1. President         | ..... | U Kyaw Sein        |
| 2. Vice-President    | ..... | Col. Aung Kham     |
| 3.            "      | ..... | Col. Khun Ye Naung |
| 4. General Secretary | ..... | Col. Aung Kham Hti |
| 5. Asst.           " | ..... | Maj. Khin Kyaw Nyo |
| 6. Asst.           " | ..... | Maj. Khun San      |

The general policy and line of action are as follow:-

1. Political ideology ... Democracy and Nationalism
2. Aim and objective ... Independent state for Pa-oh  
Federal Union with equal political status to all states.
3. Enemy ... The Burmese Socialist Programme Party and the Burma Communist Party and its elements.

The Administration ... The local administration is reorganised and the following regions are formed and demarcated :

1. Suriya Division,
2. Khun Phra Bwah Division,
3. Myeng Moh Division,
4. Sanda Division, and
5. (Suvarna Division - Thaton)

As the implementation of the national economy, health, education and security is in progress, unfortunately, one military set back was to happen. Col. Khun Ye Naung and his troops surrendered to the enemy. The areas under his control was left defenceless and vulner-



၁၃၃၉ နိုင်းဖွယ်တန်ခူးနိန္ဒိပအိုဝ်းနောင်ယာသို့  
စီမံကိန်းဦးစီးဌာန

*Pa-oh National Day 1978*  
*A celebration parade*



*P.N.O. Central Committee members nominated in 1978.*

able to the communist take over. As a result, an emergency meeting was arranged to weed out any undesirable and suspicious characters which are detrimental to the national progress in the war effort.

In December, 1978, a meeting was convened and the new leaders were selected as follows:-

- |                      |       |                         |
|----------------------|-------|-------------------------|
| 1. President         | ..... | Col. Aung Kham Hti      |
| 2. Vice-President    | ..... | Phra Tan San Pha Shain, |
| 3. General Secretary | ..... | Col. Khin Kyaw Nyo      |
| 4. Asst. "           | ..... | Col. Khun Weik Za,      |
| 5. Asst. "           | ..... | Sara San Tun Han        |
| 6. Member            | ..... | Col. Tun Yi             |
| 7. "                 | ..... | Col. Kyaw Myaing        |
| 8. "                 | ..... | Major Khun Okker        |
| 9. "                 | ..... | Major Soe La Kham, and  |
| 10. "                | ..... | Phra Tan Ti Han.        |

#### Pa-oh National Day (1978)

(King Thuriya Sanda was the famous Pa-oh king who founded the Kingdom known as Suvarna Bhummi in B.C. 7th century. He was born on the full moon day of Pa-oh lunar month – Dein Thee La which corresponds to the Burmese month of Tabaung. The Pa-oh people chose the full moon day of Dein Thee La to commemorate his birthday as their National Day.)

It has been observed that for the last decade or more, the Burmese Socialist Programme for the socialist economic construction is a long term programme to assimilate all the nationalities to become Burmese in language, culture, in thought and behaviour, and in general term, as a homogenous unit under one social-economic order as a way of life. Under the programme, national unity, national educational, cultural and economic projects, developments are planned for the implementation of one social structure.

It has been noticed with concern the bad intentions of the Burmans taking effect on the young students – the

Pa-oh students who have to study under the educational system which will eventually mold them as an integral part of the Burmese society. The question is how to counter and check-mate the Burmese bad intentions. The answer is: "Do it the Burmese way".

In March, 1978, the Pa-oh National Day ever to take place in splendour and magnitude was successfully organised. A country-wide mass celebration took place under the auspicious sponsorship of the Pa-oh Monks Association and with the cooperation of the P.N.O. It falls on the full moon day of Pa-oh lunar month – Dein Thee La, 1339 B.E. The celebration was pre-determined to induce a new force to engender a lasting will for national unity and solidarity. At the same time it was to stimulate a desire to build and stabilise national economy, improve public health and education, and to uphold the national culture and lastly, to improve the Pa-oh literature. The celebration lasted seven days. 850 monks took part. 150 Pa-oh musical troupes and cultural teams participated to make the days eventful. The festival management did the job well and the celebration of the Pa-oh National Day at Kyauk-ta-lone ended with no mishap.

#### The Burman Chauvinism.

The civil war perpetrated by the Burma Communist Party and the Burma Army on the nationalities has one common aim – malevolence, but not identical in method. The Burma Army are terrorists to destroy the spirit of will to resist and subsequently submission to the Burmese authority. The Burma Army fight to destroy – not to conquer and rule. Whereas, the Burma Communist Party's strategy is – "Fight or join". They fight and organise. To the opposition, they are ruthless. With a broad smile, they will win you over or kill you. Their military tactic is to drive you to the extreme impoverishment and then, as a result, submission to ideological indoctrination takes root and it will dominate you. The Burma Army and the Burma Communist Party are commanded by the Bur-

mans. It is therefore understandable they will do battle more against the nationalities than they would between themselves.

The Pa-oh people are between the upper grinding stone of the Burma Army and the lower grinding stone of the Burma Communist Party. The Pa-oh people find the fight against the two Burmese Parties as a national struggle for survival. The resistance against the Burmese aggression is now twenty years over and there is no sign of its ending. It is not yet predictable when the two grinding stones can wear out. One thing is certain – the Pa-oh people will continue the fight, The fight against both the Burma Army and the Burma Communist Party is to destroy the Burman Chauvinism.

#### The National Democratic Front

As a member of the National Democratic Front (N.D.F.) The Pa-oh National Organization (P.N.O.), besides its resisting against aggression of the Burma Army and the Burma Communist Party, takes active part in the struggle to liberate all minorities for the ultimate freedom liberty and the rights of self-determination,

In the first congress of the National Democratic Front, held in June, 1982, President Aung Kham Hti of the P.N.O. and some members of its Central Committee attended it. The speech of the president of P.N.O. delivered to the congress, in brief, is: “....As the Ne Win Dictator Government is the enemy of all the non-Burman Nationalities, so is the Burma Communist Party. For the Burma Communist Party is not only encroaching the territories of the Nationalities, but fight the Nationalities to submission with the slogan : “Fight or Join”. .... The Burmese Socialist Programme Party, Masala as they are dubbed in Burmese, and the Burma Communist Party (BCP) are Burmans and Chauvinists. They have the same common socialist outlook and politically to dominate every one of us. The P.N.O., therefore declare them to

be the twin Burmese Parties.... Therefore, in the building of a Union, in which all the Nationalities can have freedom, equality and the rights of self-determination, first thing to be done is to destroy the Masala and the BCP. Then we can unitedly build a Union.....”.



*Khun Weik Za, Aung Kham Hti, Saw La Kham*

## CHAPTER XI

## Conclusion

All nations are built in sweat, tears and blood. Sacrifice of sweat, tears and blood is not enough. Leadership, determination and the singleness of the will of the people are the most deciding factors.

Under the leadership of Phra Bwah Hla Pe, the Pa-oh people are liberated from the yoke of feudalism. It is not only for the Pa-oh people but also for all races in the Shan State. For democracy he molded his people from the down-trodden class by the Burmans and the feudalists to become a people among peoples. For democracy, he led the Minority Committee to land in Jail.

When he died, he left his unfinished task to his faithful friends who have the misfortune to overcome the military set-backs with a loss in arms and lives. But with the sturdy support from the mass, they have weathered the storms of political adversity. In confidence they will continue to finish the task in the manner with which Phra Bwah Hla Pe would have done. The national goal may not be in sight yet. But the future is brighter than it is in the past. For the Pa-oh people are marching forward to the new democratic way of life in hope and their earnest desire is that Burma as a state in Southeast Asia, should establish cooperation with the states within the region, and by so doing, she may try to resolve the outstanding problems within the country by peaceful discussions among the indigenous peoples and thus establish an atmosphere in which they could concentrate on the pressing domestic problems which face them. In working in this direction, it is becoming more and more evident that Burma needs regional intervention to ensure the exclusion of great power presence, rivalries and interference and the establishment of a new "Burma" as a strong independent sovereign Nations-States.

Words cannot be found to describe the trials and

tribulation the Pa-oh have faced in the last four decades. Even today, the people still face manifold problems. They will admire any efforts made by any outside source to bring peace in the land. They would only wish to express the hope that such efforts will meet with success they deserve and that the whole people may look forward to a better life thereafter.

## Appendix I

Further analysis of the Pyu inscription by Robert Shafer, Berkeley, California: ..... About the seventh century, there was cultured Tibeto-burmese people, the Pyu, with a capital near the modern Prome whose size covers a greater area than that of any city ever built by the Burman. Their earliest inscriptions may antedate the earliest Burmese inscription by several centuries, and be contemporaneous with the Tibetan documents. A number of Pyu inscriptions have been found but most of these have not been deciphered. The Rosette stone to the Pyu inscriptions is the Myazedi inscription of Pagan (1118 A.D.) written in Pyu, Mon, Burmese and Pali.

Comparison with the Karen language.

(The Karen claimed they established 'Pgaoh way' at the mouth of Ce Wah river (Irrawaddy) now known as Prome, later to be developed as The-re-kitara.)

J.G.Scott's Burma, p23 ...The Pyu were the branch that had a written character, and their inscription did for all. We are very far from having mastered it. One of the four slabs of Myazedi columns at Pagan is inscribed as assumed to be Pyu. Page 21, ... In the days of T'ang Dynasty (A.D. 617-907), Burma, so far as it was at all to the Chinese, was called P'iao. This was in the days of the Pyu, Kanran and the Sak who amalgamated to form Mranma. In the days when spelling was a matter of individual fancy, P'iao might as well be Pyu

History of Burma by Harvey, p312...Pyu physiography: The people called Pyu in the chronicles, the people who lorded it at Prome, the people called P'iao by the Chinese and the people who wrote the Pyu inscriptions, may have been distinct peoples. Villagers called these inscriptions "Pyu writing". All authority agree provisionally to assume that these people are one and the same.

Imperial Gazetteer of India Vol. IV, 1885, p 555  
It was formerly assumed that the Taungthu of Lower Burma came from Hsa-htung (Thaton), but the Shan

States tradition is precisely the reverse, and the original home of the Hsa-htung people is asserted to have been Thaton in the Amherst District. The following is the local legend:-

In the year 419 B.E. (1057 A.D.) Manuha, the Taungthu king of Thaton invited a Buddhist monk to visit his country for the purpose of spreading the Buddhist religion..... The neighbouring king of Pagan heard of this and wrote to the Taungthu king Manuha asking for one set of the scriptures..but the king of Thaton returned an insolent reply to the effect that the subjects of the king of Pagan were so exceedingly ignorant and wild that a copy would be wasted on them for they would not be able to understand it... Thaton was attacked and taken; king Manuha and his wife and family were made prisoners, the copies of the scriptures were carried on eight white elephants to Pagan. King Manuha and all the Taungthu nobility were made pagoda-slaves to the Shwezigon and other pagodas in Pagan and all the more prosperous people were also carried thither as slaves. Those who were left, migrated from the ruins of the Taungthu capital to the Shan States and there founded a new State, to which they gave the same name. This is the modern Hsa-htung. ....

The Taungthu certainly have a written character, but those who are able to read it are even fewer than the specimens of the literature.

Some comparisons: Transliteration of Pyu to Pgaoh and Pa-oh

English	Pyu	Pgaoh/Pa-oh
one	ta	ta
two	kni	ni
three	ho	oaa
four	pla	li
five	pi-na	yai
six	tru	tou
seven	kni	nwi

eight	hra	tco
nine	tkuo	k'wi
ten	su	tsi
year	sni	ni
name	mi	mi
grandson	pli	li
die	hi	oi
speak	si	si
iron	ta	t'a
month	la	la'
village	o	ta wa
give	pa	p'e
water	tdu	ti

Daw Mya Sein: The Administration of Burma. Oxford University Press, 1973. Historical background.

Anawrahta with the help of Shin Arahan, established Theravada Buddhism in the Upper Burma.... with the conquest of Thaton, Theravada teachings superceded the northern Buddhism and the Burmese scripts, copies from the "Mon" was formed. The glorious temples which still exist in memory of the splendour of the Pagan days, were mostly built by "Mon" craftsmen directed by Indian architects.

Anawrahta, (A.D. 1044-1077), though not the first king, was the founder of the powers of Pagan. It was poor, loosely organised and in the grip of Ari priesthood.. He wanted to substitute something in the place of a degrading superstition fostered by the Aris. In A.D. 1056, he found a religious leader in Shin Arahan, a celebrated young Buddhist of Theravada school from Thaton.... Together, Anawrahta and Shin Arahan established Theravada Buddhism as the national religion and the coarse corpulent and hated Aris who had indulged in strong drinks and sensuality were expelled. Shin Arahan sent for helpers and soon missionaries came from Thaton but had no sacred books to found a permanent school of thought. Shin Arahan urged Anawrahta to procure

copies from Thaton, but King Manuha of Thaton gave a haughty and complete refusal. At that time, Thaton was a refined religious but effete city with a weak army. Anawrahta siezed on Manuha's insolence as a pretext for aggression and as he had an effective army intelligence system, he managed to defeat the "Mon" king and sacked Thaton. He took the king, queen and all the most learned priests, about 30,000 people among whom were the best artists and craftsmen and all the scriptures and relics.....

The Thaton Shwezayan Payagyi Thamaing (printed at the Sun press, 1915) says: in 994, the year of Buddhist religion, Anawrahta went to dig up the relics at Thaton Payagyi (Shwezayan) built in King Thuri Sanda's time. But he was chastised by the spirit so that he became deluded and put on his queen's skirt. Hence the name of the place is le-hte-mi. And the Shwe Nat Taung Thamaing, printed at the same press, 1911, says the Pyu king ruled over the Shan country called Savana; The Kayan kings ruled over seven hill-tracks on the west bank of the Irrawaddy. The Talaings were in the south in pre-buddhist time, when Shwe Daung was founded by king Suratapa, son of king Accema, 28th in descent from mahasamada of Malakusavati. The Talaings governed the Mron in Tavoyese.

History of Burma by Harvey: Ancient Sites, The Kalayani inscriptions (p 12) do not mention him (Asoka). If he brought the scriptures to Thaton in B.S. 403 and a few years later they reached Pagan, Pagan in 1057 would not have had to fight Thaton to get them. (p 27).



*The Pagoda where all the bones and ashes are consecrated.*



The present Pa-oh President  
President Aung Kham Hti