

A Brief Study of Palm-Leaf Manuscript No. 49887 of the Universities Central Library

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Abstract

In the studies of Myanmar history especially in the monarchical period, *Arei:to pum* is a very important literary genre which gives record of historical events. Of the *Arei:to pum* Kyans available in Myanmar historiography, the work of Shin Kawisara, generally known as Rakhine *Arei:to pum* or Dhanyawaddy *Arei:to pum*, is listed as one of the distinguished *Arei:to pum* in Myanmar history. In this paper, the critical examination of a source, namely External and Internal Criticism, is applied. The study attempts to provide some information about the Rakhine *Arei:to pum* and its author as External Criticism and it also attempts to explicate the text of Rakhine *Arei:to pum* and the motive of the author in writing this Rakhine *Arei:to pum* as Internal Criticism.

Key words: *Arei:to pum*, External and Internal Criticism

Introduction

In Southeast Asia, Myanmar has exceptionally rich recourses of manuscripts in the form of *parabaik*¹ and *pe-sa*². Manuscripts have been kept, preserved and copied for the last one thousand years and more in Myanmar. Manuscripts are one of the important sources in estimating the past as they contain written texts concerning thought, history, cultural and religious traditions and socio-economic practices of the people in a particular period. In this regard, it can be stressed that manuscripts in Myanmar are extremely rich in their contents. Among the various contents available in the manuscripts, it is true that the traditional historiography of a region or country gives us a record of events of the past and how space of one's own history was defined. Myanmar has comparatively a significant number of source materials with regard to the traditional historiography writing not only on Myanmar people but on other indigenous groups, such as, Mon and Rakhine. When we try to find the place of Rakhine historical records which are existent today are located in Myanmar, particularly in the National Library³, the Universities' Central Library in Yangon⁴ and some of them are preserved in private possession⁵. Apart from these, outside the country, some of the Rakhine historical records are well preserved in libraries, such as the Oriental and India Office

¹ *Parabaik*: black or white thick oblong paper folded like an accordion. It was widely used to record various aspects of both official and private life of people under Myanmar dynasties.

² *Pe-sa*: manuscripts written on dried palm-leaf.

³ Three palm-leaf manuscripts concerning Rakhine historiography are found in the National Library: Sithu Gamani Thingyan. 1887, *Rakhine Razawin* [Palm-leaf manuscript number 2297], *Rakhine razawan kho Min Razagri sadam* (Chronicle Rakhine called Min Razagri sadam) (No date) AMs. [Palm-leaf manuscript number 2093] and *Rakhine Razawin* (No date) AMs. [Palm-leaf manuscript number 1483].

⁴ *Rakhine Razawin Akauk Shyauk htoon* 1848. AMs. [Palm-leaf manuscript number 96336 (kha)], *Rakhine Ayepon* 1849. AMs. [Palm-leaf manuscript number 49887 (tabasa)], *Razawingyi* 1851. AMs. [Palm-leaf manuscript number 9837 (tabasa)] and *Dannyawady Arei:to pon hnin Maha razawan* (No date), AMs. [Palm-leaf manuscript number 5302] are deposited in the Universities' Central Library in Yangon.

⁵ Lack of information, we cannot trace properly about the Rakhine historical documents owned by the private possession. Thus, we could present only one private possession by U Tun Yi (Researcher on Myanmar Literature): *Rakhine razawan, Rakhapura*, 1870, AMs. [Palm-leaf manuscript].

Collection of the British Library in London and the Museum of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta¹.

In the context of research on the historical writing of Rakhine, there are generally two types of historical writing as *Arei:to pum* - the biography of a king, his struggle to power and his struggle to retain it after he had achieved it² and *Razawun (Razawuntha)* - the chronicle of the king. As an attempt to investigate on the regional historical records of Myanmar, a palm-leaf manuscript entitled “*Rakhine Arei:to pum*”, which is a well known historical document in Myanmar history was examined.

About the manuscript

Rakhine Arei:to pum is compiled on 5 waxing Tabaun:, M.E.1149 (February 21, 1787). It is deposited in the Universities Central Library Collection, Rangoon, Myanmar as No. *tabasa* 49887. It has 5 *aingas* and 6 palm-leaf manuscripts with a text of ten lines on each of a leaf. One dozen is called an *ainga* in Myanmar. This one *ainga* has 12 palm-leaf manuscripts and one palm-leaf has two pages of writing, both face and back of the palm-leaf. Thus, one *ainga* has twenty four pages of writing in palm-leaves³. According to this calculation, *Rakhine Arei:to pum* has 66 palm-leaves and 132 pages of writings.

About the author

The author of *Rakhine Arei:to pum* was Kawisara. It is stated that he was a *Tharthanarpyu Sayadaw*, the missionary monk in Dwaravati (Thantwei, the southern most part of the town in Rakhine). He finished the compilation of *Rakhine Arei:to pum* three years after the conquest of Rakhine by King Badon in 1784. There is no information about whether Kawisara was a native monk who resided in Dwaravati before the conquest of Rakhine or a Burmese monk who was sent by King Badon to purify Buddhism in Rakhine after the conquest. *Kon-baung-zet Maha ya-za-win-daw-gyi* (Royal Chronicle of Konbaung Dynasty) gives us some information about the dispatches of missionary monks to the *Taings* (Divisions) of Myanmar during the reign of King Badon as follows:

As the great ancestor, King *Thri Dhamasoka* dispatched fourteen *Arhats* (monks) to the other countries for the propagation of Buddhism. King Badon, Lord of the White Elephants, decided to dispatch the religious missions to the provinces of Myanmar. Then he dispatched one chief monk together with the five other monks to each of the *Taing* (division) of Myanmar. The *Taings* (Divisions) which King Badon sent the missionary monks were *Wideiha Taing* (the towns of *Kaingmar*, *Kyaingyone*, *Minelyin* and *Minenyaung*), *Khaymarrahta Taing* (the town of *Kyaingtoun*), *Haribuza Taing* (the town of *Kyaingthay*), *Kambawza taing* (the towns of *Kyaingtaung*, *Theingei*, *Lechya*, *Yatsauk*, *Minekhaung*, *Taungpaing*, *Minekaing*, *Naungmon*, *Nyaungshwe*, *Minelon*, *Theepaw*, *Sagar*, *Theekyit*, *Tabat*, *Kyaingkhann*, *Helon*, *Moene* and *Minepan*), *Zawtinagara Taing* (the town of *Moekaung*), *Saint Taing* (the towns of *Moemeik*, *Bhamo* and *Kaungton*), *Thunaparanta Taing* (the towns of *Thaungthwut* and *Khaungtone*), *Yawnaka Taing* (the town of *Kalay*), *Ramanya Taing* (the towns of *Pathein*, *Mottama*, *Dawei* and

¹ *Rakhine Razawin* (No date). AMs. [Palm-leaf manuscript number B 95].

² Tin Ohn. ‘Modern Historical Writing in Burmese, 1724-1942’. In D.G.E. Hall (ed.), *Historians of South East Asia*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961, p.86

³ Myat Kyaw, U. *Myanma Yoyar Amweahnit Shehaung Pesa and Parabaiksa* (The Traditional Heritage of Myanmar Pesa and Parabaik manuscripts), Rangoon: Sarpe Beikman Press, 1993. p.32

Mreik) and *Mahawihika Taing* (the towns of *Dannyavati*, *Ranmarvati*, *Mekhavati* and *Dwaravati*)¹.

Mahawihika Taing was referred to the Land of Rakhine. *Kon-baung-zet-Maha-Yazawin-daw-gyi* (Royal Chronicle of Konbaung Dynasty) also described in detail about the names of the chief monks who were sent to the four towns of Rakhine as follows:

King Badon sent the chief monk *Gunadhamarbidaza Maharazaguru* and five other monks to the town of *Dannyavati*, the chief monk *Candamaydharbidhaza Maharazaguru* and five other monks to the town of *Ranmarvati*, the chief monk *Candatharadhaza Maharazaguru* and five other monks to the town of *Mekhavati* and the chief monk *Punyawunthadhaza Maharazaguru* and five other monks to the town of *Dwaravati*.²

There is no information about Kawisara in the list of the name of chief monks in *Kon-baung-zet-Maha-Yazawin-daw-gyi*. The only thing we could know about him is the full name of him. *Dannyavati Arei:to pum* which is verbatim the same with Rakhine *Arei:to pum* provides the full name of Kawisara as follows:

The chronicle (*Dannyavati Arei:to pum*) was based on the paper which has 48 *aingas* written by *Marama Amatmyou sa-phat Do Wai* (which will be dealt in the later part of this paper) who knew about both worldly and religious affairs and *Razawingyi*, the great chronicle, which included historical epic and verses. The *Tharthanarpyu Sayadaw*, the missionary monk of Dwaravati named *Kawisarabi Thiripavara Aggamaha Dhamarazadhirazaguru* checked the paper written by Do Wai and the text of *Razawingyi*. After that he wrote about the *Arei:to pum* of the kings of Mrauk U named *Dannyavati*, *Rakhine Taing*, by taking extract from the two historical sources mentioned above, in order to record for the future generation.³

Thus, it can be known that the full name of *Tharthanarpyu Sayadaw*, missionary monk in Dwaravati is Kawisarabi and his religious title is *Thiripavara Aggamaha Dhamarazadhirazaguru*.

About the text of *Rakhine Arei:to pum*

Before the text of *Rakhine Arei: to pum*, the contradictory information on the name of Do Wai which is provided in the colophon of *Rakhine Arei:to pum* and *Dannyavati Arei:to pum* will be dealt with. *Rakhine Arei:to pum* states the name of Do Wai as *Marama Amatmyo sa-phat Do Wai* (အံ အထာအာ, အံအထာအာ, အံအထာအာ, အံအထာအာ)⁴ and the latter states as *Marama Amatmyou sa-phat Do Wai* (အံ အထာအာ, အံအထာအာ, အံအထာအာ, အံအထာအာ)⁵. Thus there is a difference between *Amatmyo* and *Amatmyou*. In order to understand which word will be the most suitable one to use between these two

¹ Maung Maung Tin, U. *Kon-baung -zet Maha ya-za-win-daw-gyi* (Royal Chronicle of Konbaung Dynasty). Volume II. Rangoon:Yapay Publishing House, 2004 (Fourth Edition) p.34 (Hereafter cited as Maung Maung Tin, *Kon-baung-zet*, II)

² Maung Maung Tin, *Kon-baung-zet*, II , p.34

³ Kawisara. 'Danyavati Arei:to pum hnit Maha Razawingyi'[Palm-leaf manuscript 5302] February 21,1787, Universities Central Library, Rangoon University, Rangoon, Union of Myanmar. p.84 b (thi-back)

⁴ Kawisara (1787) *Rakhine Arei:to Pum*, [Palm-leaf manuscript No. *tabasa* 49887], Universities Central Library,Rangoon University, Rangoon, Union of Myanmar. .p.66 a (nao-face)[Hereafter cited as Kawisara, 'Rakhine Arei:to Pum']

⁵ Kawisara, 'Rakhine Arei:to Pum',p, p.55 b (dhāu-back)

words, we need to define the whole name of Do Wai. Regarding the word, *Marama*, the most related word was found in Myaing Thant's thesis, *Rakhine Bhathar Sagaa Aphwant Sardan* (An Introduction to Rakhine Language) as follows:

Maramagyi is the name of a race. It is also called *Myanmargyi*. During the ancient time of Rakhine history, some Rakhine fled to the west (Bengal) in the time of crisis. After they settled there for a long time, they wore like the Bengali but worshiped in Buddhism. These people were called Maramagyi.¹

Rakhine Arei:to pum also supports this statement presented by Myaing Thant. It is stated as follows:

After the murder of King Thiri Thudhamma by his minister Nga Kuthala and Thiri Thudhamma's chief queen Nat-shin-mei in M.E. 1002 (1640), the ministers including Nga Letyone, the trustful minister of King Thiri Thudhamma and the royal families of King Thiri Thudhamma fled to Kanthar Myo (town), which was situated in the west (Bengal). The ruler of Kanthar Myo (town) was called as *Marama Min* (The King of *Marama*) by the Bengali.²

Thus, it can be generally assumed that *Marama* is implied to Rakhine who fled to the west (Bengal) during the reign of Thiri Thudhamma. Regarding *Amatmyo* as it was described in *Rakhine Arei:to pum*, *Amat* is implied for "minister" and *myo* for "township". Therefore, *Amatmyo* means "Minister Township". *Dannyavati Arei:to pum*, however, is described as *Amatmyou*. As it was stated above *Amat* is implied for "minister" and *myou* is referred to "descendent or lineage". So, it can be said that *Amatmyou* is referred to "the descendent of minister". Compared with the definitions of two words, the word *Amatmyo* is not appropriate to use in the text and the word, *Amatmyou* described in *Dannyavati Arei:to pum* is the appropriate word to use. The last word *sa-phat* refers to the reader. Thus, it is also reasonable to consider that Do Wai will be *Marama Amatmyou sa-phat*, the descendent of Rakhine minister and who was serving as the reader.

After examining about Do Wai, the purpose of *Rakhine Arei:to pum* written by Kawisara will be looked at. Kawisara states his motive of writing *Rakhine Arei:to pum* as follows:

This chronicle (*Rakhine Arei:to pum*) was compiled in order to record the laws and customs of the good kings and ministers of Rakhapura Taing (The land of Rakhine)³.

The work of Kawisara provides a history of Rakhine from the reign of King Canda Thuriya of Dannyavati dynasty up to the annexation of Rakhine by King Badon in M.E. 1146 (1784). The first part of *Rakhine Arei:to pum* dealt with the history of Dannyavati dynasty and the successive dynasty of Laungret. Kawisara's account on this part is extremely slight. Instead of describing in detail about the two dynasties, Kawisara mentioned only a few kings of the two dynasties along with the dialogs between the kings and ministers on the matters of administration, omens and signs. People traditionally believed that the omens and signs can be predicted or foreseen. In *Rakhine Arei:to pum*, the kings of Dannyavati, Laungret and Mrauk U dynasties usually asked their ministers to interpret about the omens and signs whenever these occurred. Thus, the interpretation of omens and signs was a task of the wise ministers and the description of these interpretations is one of the main contents of *Rakhine*

¹ Myaing Thant. *Rakhine Bhathar cagaa Aphwant Sadan* (An Introduction to Rakhine Language), M.A Thesis, Rangoon University, 1960, p.227

² Kawisara, '*Rakhine Arei:to Pum*', p.55 b (dhāu-back)

³ Kawisara, '*Rakhine Arei:to pum*', p.1 b (ñi-back)

Arei:to pum. Regarding Dannyavati dynasty and Laungret dynasty, Kawisara highlighted four topics:

- (1) About the reigns of King Canda Thuriya, King Thuriya Ketu, King Sula Taing Candra, King Datha Raza and King Min Hti
- (2) The interpretations of omens and signs by the ministers during the reigns of these kings.
- (3) The coronation procedure of King Datha Raza of Laungret dynasty
- (4) The judicial and administration system during the reign of King Min Hti of Laungret dynasty.

It is also noted that Kawisara did not record any dates of the accession of the kings of Dannyavati dynasty and the successive dynasty of Laungret.

The rest of *Rakhine Arei:to pum* is about Mrauk U dynasty extending from M.E. 792 (1430) to M.E. 1146 (1784). In this part, Kawisara describes the history of Mrauk U kingdom from the foundation of its city, Mrauk U, on 1 waxing Tawthalin, M.E. 792 (1430) up to the conquest of Rakhine by King Badon in M.E. 1146 (1784). As it is mentioned in the first part of *Rakhine Arei:to pum*, Kawisara did not record about all of the kings of Mrauk U dynasty. He only describes in detail some of the able and mighty kings of Mrauk U dynasty like King Minbin, King Minpalaung and King Min Razagyi. However, he did not fail to record the prominent historical events like the foundation of Mrauk U by King Min Saw Mon in M.E. 792 (1430)¹, the meeting between King Narapati of Ava dynasty and King Naranu of Rakhine at the hill top Phokhaung (The mountain range of Rakhine which lay between the land of Rakhine and Myanmar proper)², the royal campaign of Bengal during the reign of King Minbin in M.E. 872 (1511)³, the repulse of the invasion of Taungoo King Tabinshwehti in M.E. 905 (1543)⁴, the siege of Pegu by King Min Razagyi in alliance with the King of Taungoo in M.E. 960 (1598)⁵ and the palace intrigue during the reign of King Thirithudhama⁶. There is also contradictory information that King Min Razagyi appointed Nga Ainga who was one of the sons of King Minbin, the grandfather of King Min Razagyi, as *Myosa* (the governor of the town) of Syriam (Thanhlyan)⁷. However, the other sources unanimously claimed that the *Myosa* of Syriam (Thanhlyan) who was appointed by King Min Razagyi was the Portuguese soldier named Philippe de Brito e Nicote⁸. The dialogues between the king and ministers on the matter of religion, administration, royal affairs and omens will be continued to be described in this part.

The motive of writing *Rakhine Arei:to pum*

After the text of *Rakhine Arei:to pum* have been examined, how Kawisara tried to elaborate on the good kings and ministers and the laws and customs which the king and

¹ Kawisara, '*Rakhine Arei:to Pum*', p.14 a (tau-face)

² Ibid., p.14 b (tau-back)

³ Ibid., p.18 b (tao-back)

⁴ Ibid., p.20 b (ta:-back)

⁵ Ibid., p.52 a (dhe-face)

⁶ Ibid., p.55a (dhau-face)

⁷ Ibid., p.52 b (dhe-back)

⁸(a) Danvers, Frederick Charles. *The Portuguese in India: being a history of the rise and decline of their Eastern Empire*, Volume II, London, Frank Cass, 1966. p.123.

(b) Lieberman, Victor B. *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580-1760*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984. p.44

minister should follow will be studied. *Rakhine Arei:to pum* shows that Kawisara emphasized on three main points in order to fulfil his motives of writing as he set forth in the preface of the text. These three main points are as follows:

- (1) The suppression of the uprisings of the royal blood, ministers and local elites by the king.
- (2) The royal campaigns and expansion of the domain of Rakhine
- (3) The presentation of royal ethics and advisable speeches of the learned ministers for the prosperity of the kingdom.

(1) The suppression of the uprisings of the royal blood, ministers and local elites by the king

One of the important tasks for the king after he ascended to the throne is to control his realm in peace. However, there usually arose some uprisings of the royal blood, ministers and local elites who disagreed about the ascendancy of the king or who tried to dethrone the king. The mighty and able kings suppressed those uprisings whenever these occurred and it was the task of good king. We learnt from *Rakhine Arei:to pum* the historical account of uprisings and how the kings suppressed those uprisings. The prominent examples of those uprisings were: the suppression of the uprising of Kula (Natives of Bengal) and Thet tribe (a tribe in once spread throughout Rakhine but today to the south of Chittagong) from Bengal by King Min Hti of Laungret dynasty¹, the suppression of the uprising of the King's uncle Thantwei sa: (the governor of Thantwei) named Sakrawadai and Nga Ainga (the son of King Minbin) by King Minpalaung² and the suppression of the uprising of the King's younger brother, Chittagong sa: (the governor of Chittagong) Saw Hla by King Min Razagyi³.

(2) The royal campaigns and expansion of domain of Rakhine

The expansion of the domain of a kingdom is politically important for the rulers not only to expand the domain of their kingdom but also to acquire the wealth and manpower needed for the kingdom. *Rakhine Arei:to pum* also describes the royal campaigns of Rakhine Kings. The prominent campaigns that describe in *Rakhine Arei:to pum* are: the royal campaign of Bengal during the reign of King Min Hti of Laungret dynasty⁴, the royal campaign of Bengal during the reign of King Minbin in M.E 873 (1511)⁵, and the royal campaign of Pegu in alliance with the King of Taungoo during the reign of King Min Razagyi in M.E. 960 (1598)⁶. These royal campaigns brought to Rakhine larger number of war captives. For example, during the time of the royal campaign against Pegu in M.E. 960 (1598), King Min Razagyi obtained a large number of people from Lower Myanmar and Yodaya (Thai) families as the war captives who were brought to Rakhine and resettled into various *asus* (groups) like the group of dancer, the cleaner group of elephant and the group of royal page.⁷

¹ Kawisara, '*Rakhine Arei:to Pum*', p.8 b (ñan-back)

² Ibid., p.20 a (ṭan-face)

³ Ibid., p.51 b (dhu-back)

⁴ Ibid. p. 8 b (ñan-back)

⁵ Ibid., p.18 b (ṭao-back)

⁶ Ibid., p.52 a ((dhe-face)

⁷ Ibid., 52 b-53 a (dhe-back-dhai-face)

(3) The presentation of royal ethics and advisable speeches of the learned ministers for the prosperity of the kingdom

Good kings are kings who observed ethical principals and these were laid down in the *Nati* (Guidance) tradition. In *Rakhine Arei:to pum*, one of the strong motives of Kawisara is to present the royal ethics and advisable speeches of the learned ministers. There was always an emblematic wise minister who not only played as the political and ethical advisor but also interpret the omens and signs. Kawisara clearly illustrated the essential virtues of the good kings and ministers for the prosperity of the kingdom. *Min Phonekyatthaye Chit pa:* (The eight glories of a king)¹, *Minei Pragatei Khunhnit pa:* (The seven qualities of a king)², *Aparharniya Taya Khunhnit pa:* (the seven rules that lead to a king's prosperity)³, and *Amatkaung Ainga Chit pa:* (The eight characteristics of good minister)⁴ and so on are described in order to portray the good king and ministers.

Conclusion

Rakhine Arei:to pum does not provide a coherent picture of Rakhine history. The chronicler, Kawisara, only highlighted the particular reigns instead of proceeding by chronological periods of Rakhine. It can be assumed that Kawisara used the extract form in order to portray the good kings and ministers because Kawisara mentioned that his work relied on the paper written by *Marama Amatmyou sa-phat Do Wai* having 48 ainga and *Razawingyi* which was included in epic and verses. Apart from describing about the particular reigns, the ethical disciplines of king and ministers were mostly described in *Rakhine Arei:to pum*. The chronicler, Kawisara, intended to convey lessons and meanings to guide king and ministers that he had contributed a lot to the ethical disciplines. Regarding the source materials which Kawisara relied on, we need to find more information about Do Wai in order to know about the connection of Do Wai with *Rakhine Arei:to pum* and there is also no documented material about *Razawungyi* which was relied by Kawisara in compiling *Rakhine Arei:to pum*. Therefore, the source materials which Kawisara used for the better understanding of *Rakhine Arei:to pum* and the historical writing of Rakhine need to be further researched.

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¹ Kawisara, '*Rakhine Arei:to Pum*', p.44 a (dan-face)

² Ibid.,p.48 a (dhi-face)

³ Ibid.,p.50 a (dhu-face)

⁴ Ibid.,p.50 b (dhu-back)

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