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The Question of “China” in Burmese Chronicles

Introduction

The term *tayok* (spelled either *tarup* [တရုတ်] or *taruk* [တရုတ်]) in different sources) is an exonym¹ used by the Burmese to refer to the Chinese today, but a survey of the Burmese chronicles indicates that the term has not always been used to refer to a single homogenous entity. *Tarup* may have been used at various times and in various sources to refer to at least two or three different groups who came from the region to the north, northwest and northeast of Burma. The phrase, *tarup amyomyo*, contains a pun on the words “amyomyo” depending on the spelling and pronunciation of the words. *Amyomyo* (အမျိုးမျိုး) can either refer to “varieties” or “all sorts” .

This discussion of the *Tarup* in Burmese sources represents an important contribution to the study of early Southeast Asian perceptions of the Chinese. Few indigenous Southeast Asian sources discuss the Chinese except Vietnamese. Most Southeast Asian sources only discussed the Chinese in the context of the Mongol invasions. The Javanese 14th-century text, *Desawarnana*, describes the rulers of China as “Tartar”;² it does not refer to the Chinese at all. Little work has been undertaken to examine Southeast Asian views of ancient China by

¹ Exonym refers to a name given to an ethnic group by outsiders, so the members of that ethnic group may or may not accept the moniker as an accurate description of themselves.

² See Theodore G.Th. Pigeaud, *Java in the 14th Century: A Study in Cultural History -- The Nagara-Kertagama by Rakawi Prapanca of Majapahit, 1365 A.D. III: Translations.*

Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde Translation Series 4, 3. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p. 51.

using indigenous texts. On the contrary, most work has focused on Chinese textual sources' descriptions of early Southeast Asian polities which are then compared with Southeast Asian indigenous textual evidence.³ This however does not mean that Southeast Asian texts do not discuss China or any groups associated with the Chinese at all, but few scholars have used indigenous sources to examine Southeast Asian perceptions of ancient China. Scholarship has largely focused on anthropological study of the Chinese in Southeast Asia in colonial and postcolonial times.

The principal exception is Vietnam. The earliest Vietnamese texts, including the *Annam chi luoc* and *Dai Viet su luoc*, were largely derived from Chinese records.⁴ The ultimate motivation of most scholars who have studied Vietnamese indigenous sources has been to gain a better understanding of the workings of early Vietnamese polities and Vietnamese kingdoms' relations with China. Rarely have they looked at Vietnamese views of the Chinese. Burmese descriptions of early Bagan-Tarup relations emphasise a shared Buddhist culture; this approach to the description of relations is unusual in Southeast Asian sources. For example during the early Bagan period, in the competition for Buddha's relic, the Burmese chronicles describe the *Tarup* ("China") as the successful possessor of the relic (to the detriment of the Burmese).

The Burmese chronicle or *yazawin* is one of many different genres of the Burmese textual tradition. *Yazawin*, commonly translated in English as "chronicle", focuses on the

³ See George Coedès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1968) and Paul Wheatley, *Nagara and Commandery: Origins of the Southeast Asian Urban Traditions* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Department of Geography, 1983).

⁴ Keith W. Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of Los Angeles, 1983), pp. 350–1.

royal genealogy of kings, and the rise and fall of dynasties and kingdoms. It is similar to the *rajavamsa* of the Sri Lankan tradition. We do not know when the genre was introduced; the earliest extant *yazawin* can be dated to 1520 CE. Burmese chronicles contain numerous accounts of the relations between *Tarup pyi* (*Tarup* country, presently used to refer to China) and Burma. The best-known example of the use of the word “Tarup” appears in the epithet “Taruppye” (“he who fled from the Chinese”) infamously borne by Narathihapate, king of Bagan (1257–87), who fled his capital during the Mongol invasion of 1284/1287.⁵ In this instance, *Tarup* clearly refers to the Mongols. However, a chronological assessment of events pertaining to *Tarup* reveals that at other times, *Tarup* has referred to different groups of people. This is the first study to look in depth at how a Southeast Asian society perceived China in the precolonial period.

Why is it important to define the identity of the *Tarup*, and how does understanding the Burmese perception of the *Tarup* contribute to historical scholarship of not just Burma but the larger world? On one level the Burmese representation of *Tarup* is not unique; it is a common practice by a single community, nation, kingdom, or a nation-state to apply a single label to a diverse group of people. Examples of such categorisation include the Chinese use of “Kunlun”⁶ to refer to Southeast Asians regardless of their ethnic, geographical and cultural

⁵ For detailed discussions, see Michael Aung-Thwin, *Myth and History in the Historiography of Early Burma: Paradigms, Primary Sources, and Prejudices* (Ohio and Singapore: Ohio University Center for International Studies and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), pp. 33–62; J. Paul Bennett, ‘The ‘Fall of Pagan’: Continuity and Change in 14th Century Burma’, in *Conference Under the Tamarind Tree: Three Essays in Burmese History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 3–53.

⁶ In the Chinese account of the pilgrim Puṇyodaya, in 656 the emperor asked the Indian pilgrim who was then in China to travel to Kunlun, which was Southeast Asia. The account is

diversity; the Western European appropriation of the term “Tartar” to refer to both Turks and Mongols as the latter two groups were seen in the same light as marauders on horseback;⁷

contained in the T. 486 *Maṇḍāsta sūtra*, (see Lin Li-kouang, ‘Puṇyodaya (Na-t’i), un propagateur du tantrisme en Chine et au Cambodge à l’époque de Hiuan-tsang’, *Journal Asiatique*, 227 (1935): 83–100; Hiram Woodward, ‘A Review Article: Esoteric Buddhism in Southeast Asia in the Light of Recent Scholarship’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 35, 2 (June 2004): 336). Paul Wheatley also pointed out that just like “Suvarṇadvīpa”, “Kunlun” was used by the Chinese as a regional toponym to refer to “a succession of peoples ranging from the Malays around the coasts of the Peninsula to Chams along the shores of Indo-China”. See Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese: Studies in the Historical Geography of the Malay Peninsula before A.D. 1500* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1961), pp. 283 and 285. For Po-sse’ and k’un-lun-po, refer to J. Innes Miller, *The Spice Trade of the Roman Empire: 29 B.C. to A.D. 641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 52, and O.W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce: a study of the origins of Srivijaya* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), chapters 6–10.

⁷ W.R. Jones, ‘The Image of the Barbarian in Medieval Europe’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 13, 4 (1971): 398–400. The Tartar threat to Europe during the later medieval period was exemplified in the popular legend which described Alexander the Great’s deliberate exclusion of the peoples of Gog and Magog from his civilised world. The Gog and Magog were identified with the steppe nomads who included the Scythians, Huns, Avars, Tartars, and Turks. The Franciscan monk John of Plano de Carpine used the term “Tartar” to describe Mongol society in his descriptions of his travels to China which was then under Mongol rule. The text he purportedly wrote was *Ystoria Mongalorum* or Mongol Mission which was the source for two later documents: *Hystoria Tartarorum* (mid-13th century) or *Tartar Relation* and the *Vinland Map* (mid-15th century) (see B.B. Szczesniak,

and the Burmese use of the term “Kula” (ကုလ) to refer to people from South Asia regardless of whether they were Cholas or Mughals.

How did the Burmese in the 13th century perceive ethnicity? What does it matter whether the Burmese of the 1280s could distinguish between Chinese, Mongols, and Yunnanese/Tibeto-Burman speakers? Understanding whether the Burmese distinguished these identities in the 1280s would enable us to compare the relative compatibility between the emic (internally-generated set of primordial and ascribed traits) and the etic categories of ethnicity. Ethnicity theorists such as Fredrik Barth emphasise that the fluctuating and dynamic nature of the boundary between ethnic groups is constantly being negotiated and determined;⁸ in the case of Burma, Edmund Leach’s work represents the most famous study of ethnic distinctions in postcolonial Burma.⁹ Exploration of additional dimensions of the important insights Leach obtained for the Shan in the same general area has the potential to illuminate further aspects of this topic. History as well as anthropology can be studied

‘Notes and Remarks on the Newly Discovered Tartar Relation and the Vinland Map’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 86, 4 (1966): 373–6). Tartary was used to signify the “territories occupied mostly by the Mongols or Turkic nomads between the lower Volga and Western borders of China” (Szczesniak, ‘Notes and Remarks on the Newly Discovered Tartar Relation and the Vinland Map’, p. 373). Fourteenth-century Javanese poet Mpu Prapanca also used “Tartar” to refer to the Mongol invaders in his work, *Desawarnana*.

⁸ Fredrik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Oslo: Universitets-forlaget, 1969); Thomas H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (Boulder, Colorado: Pluto Press, 1993).

⁹ Edmund R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure* (London: Athlone Press, 1970).

through this perspective. This *Tarup* study fits within this framework of enquiry by examining the process through which ethnic relations between two groups of varying composition developed over a long period of contact. Therefore the Burmese perception of the Shans is associated with a negotiable frontier. The *Tarup*-Burmese boundary by contrast was not negotiable. The spatial division between the *Tarup* and Burmese was clearly marked by a stable border which could not be simply crossed over by either ethnic group.¹⁰

It is possible that the Burmese during the 11th to 13th centuries perceived ethnicity differently from the Burmese of the 18th century. Thus the referent of the linguistic term “*Tarup*” could well have been characterized differently in these two periods. In order to settle this point, it is necessary to determine whether “*Tarup*” referred to an ethnic category or a political entity. It is suggested here that the ethnic definition of the *Tarup* was fluid, but its geopolitical association was less flexible. *Tarup pyi* designated the area north and northeast of what later Burmese chroniclers considered to be the northernmost extent of classical Burmese kingdoms’ spheres of influence.

The earliest extant Burmese chronicle, the ရာဇဝင်ကျမ်း *Yazawingyaw* [‘Celebrated Chronicle’] begun by Shin Thilawuntha (Silavamsa) in 1502, does not describe Anawrahta’s expedition to *Tarup*, but refers to Taruppye Min’s reign as signaling the end of the Bagan

¹⁰ The negotiability of boundary between Burmese and Shan on one hand and the non-negotiability of Burmese and *Tarup* on the other were likely determined by the nature of relationships between these groups. The Shan, unlike the *Tarup*, fell within the Burmese kingdoms’ spheres of authority in the sense that the Shans were traditionally seen as tributaries of the Burmese states. The Burmese perceived *Tarup pyi* as an independent political entity which was comparable in size or in fact was larger than the Burmese kingdoms.

dynasty.¹¹ The most elaborate accounts of Burma's relations with the *Tarup* appear first in the early 18th-century chronicle by U Kala (c. 1678–1738), the မဟာရာဇဝင်ကြီး:

Mahayazawingyi ['Great Chronicle']. The *Mahayazawinthat*¹² ['Great New Chronicle'] completed by Twinthin Taikwun Mahasitthu (1726–1806) in 1798¹³ contains much reduced descriptions of the same events. Scholars such as G.H. Luce, Pe Maung Tin, U Thaw Kaung, and Dr. Yi Yi have regarded this chronicle as a critical history, which represents “a serious

¹¹ ရှင်မဟာသီလဝံသ၏ရာဇဝင်ကျော်။ရန်ကုန်၊၁၉၆၅။ Shin Maha Thilawuntha, *Rājavan`kyo`* (Yangon: Hanthawati, 1965).

¹² တွင်းသင်း၏မြန်မာရာဇဝင်သစ်။ပဌမတွဲ။ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊မင်္ဂလာပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊၁၉၆၈။ Twinthin Taikwun Mahasitthu, *Tvan``* *San``* * *Mran`mā Rājavan`sac`* (Ran`kuin` : Maṅgalā puṃnhip`tuik`, 1968). The first volume of Twinthin's chronicle published in 1968 bears the title, *Myanma Yazawinthat*, but volumes 2 and 3 which were published later in 1998 and 1997 respectively both bear the title, *Mahayazawinthat*. Palm leaf manuscript copies of the same chronicle normally bear the title, *Mahayazawinthat* or *Yazawinthat*.

¹³ Although there were some controversy over the date of the chronicle, most scholars such as U Tin Ohn, U Thaw Kaung, and Victor Lieberman have concurred on “1798” as the date of the completion of Twinthin's chronicle (see Tin Ohn, ‘Modern Historical Writing in Burmese, 1724-1942’, in *Historians of South East Asia*, ed. D.G.E Hall (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 88; Thaw Kaung, ‘Two Compilers of Myanmar History and Their Chronicles’, paper presented at the Universities Historical Research Centre Golden Jubilee Conference, Yangon, January 2005, p. 9; and Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830: Volume 1: Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 198.

attempt to check history by means of inscriptions”.¹⁴ The မှန်နန်းရာဇဝင်တော်ကြီး: *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi* [‘Great Glass Palace Chronicle’] was commissioned in 1829,¹⁵ and the compilers replicated *almost* verbatim the elaborate descriptions of accounts of figures, events, and kingdoms found in U Kala’s chronicle at least up to the Inwa period which marks the end of volume three of the latter’s work. The *Hmannan* does vary slightly from the latter chronicle in terms of the organisation of the narrative sequence, insertions of certain short statements justifying the sequence of events, and the commentaries inserted by the compilers. When these chronicles were compiled, China was ruled by the Qing dynasty. Chinese government was more highly centralised than at any previous period. This situation may have led the 18th- and 19th-century Burmese writers to project the concept of *Tarup* as an all-encompassing category which referred to the Chinese in the past. This could explain the chroniclers’ tendency to see *Tarup*/China as a single political unit. The chroniclers may have assumed that the *Tarup* of the earlier periods conformed to this categorisation. The chronicles contained perhaps the largest repository of information on Burma’s relations with neighbouring polities, including *Tarup*. This is one major justification for the use of the Burmese chronicles as important sources of information on early Burmese history. The

¹⁴ G.H. Luce and Pe Maung Tin, *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma* (Rangoon: Rangoon University Press, 1960), p. xvii; see also Thaw Kaung, ‘Two Compilers of Myanmar History and Their Chronicles’, and Dr Yi Yi, ‘A Bibliographical Essay on the Burmese Sources for the History of the Konbaung Period, 1752-1885’, *Bulletin of the Burma Historical Commission*, 3 (1963): 143–70.

¹⁵ မှန်နန်းမဟာရာဇဝင်တော်ကြီး။ပထမတွဲ။ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊မျိုးချစ်စိတ်ဓာတ်ထက်သန်ရေး၊၁၉၉၂။ *Mhan`nan`*”

*Mahārājavan`to`krī`*” (*Hmannan Maha Yazawindawgyi*) (Ran`kuin`: Myui” Khyac` Sit`dhāt` Thak`san`re”, 1992). Three volumes.

chronicles also contain hitherto relatively unexplored Burmese perceptions of their neighbours.

This leads to the second justification for this study — the much debated historiographical question of the reliability of the chronicles as a depiction of Bagan-period attitudes toward ethnicity. The reliability of the Burmese chronicles has often been questioned and that has made historians reluctant to use them as reliable sources. Legge's statement that: "It can be argued that — with the exception of Vietnam whose dynastic historians did attempt to preserve a record of events — there was no genuinely historical tradition in Southeast Asia" shows that the reluctance to use traditional chronicles extends to other writing traditions in the region too.¹⁶ Most Western scholars, such as G.E. Harvey, D.G.E. Hall, John Cady, and even Luce himself, refused to accept chronicles as histories, criticising their use of legends and folktales on the one hand; and their concern with legitimisation on the other. Cady wrote in his preface: "the dependable sources covering Burmese-British relations are almost entirely in English. The relevant historical chronicles prepared by the Burmese Court down to 1885 were often designed not to record actual happenings but to salve royal prestige".¹⁷ Hall even went to the extent of questioning the ability of contemporary Burmese scholars to produce serious historical works. He noted in his review of Maung Htin's Aung's book, *The Stricken Peacock*: "it seems highly doubtful whether a work of adequate critical standards can be produced by a Burmese scholar".¹⁸

¹⁶ J.D. Legge, 'The Writing of Southeast Asian History', in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* Vol. 1, ed. Nicholas Tarling (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 2.

¹⁷ John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), p. vi.

¹⁸ See Reynaldo Ileto, 'On the Historiography of Southeast Asia and the Philippines: The "Golden Age" of Southeast Asian Studies — Experiences and Reflections', paper presented

Burmese scholars, on the other hand, were split into two camps: western-educated scholars like the late Than Tun tended to treat the chronicles with a tinge of distrust, whereas others such as Maung Htin Aung and U Tet Htoot tended to treat them as factual histories.¹⁹ Within the last three decades, scholars in general have become more open to the idea of using the chronicles as sources for specific periods of Burmese history. Lieberman, for instance, suggests at least two reasons which support the historicity of Burmese chronicles such as the *Mahayazawingyi*: the influence of the Theravada historiographic tradition, which emphasises “accurate history”, and the degree of discretion the Burmese chroniclers exercised by not discussing contemporary issues.²⁰ By avoiding discussion of contemporary issues, writers were able to eliminate at least one potential source of biased interpretation. In a recent article, Aung-Thwin argues that the Burmese chronicles provide accurate descriptions of the notion of “Mranma Pran” and its reality.²¹

Even if the Burmese writers of the 18th and 19th centuries saw the term “Tarup” as the unified polity China, it was not new. It can be found in the 1285 inscription of Shin Dissapramok. The 12th-century Bagan temple, Kyanzittha Umin, also contains a depiction of

at Workshop for the Academic Frontier Project: ‘Social Change in Asia and the Pacific’, Meiji Gakuin University, March 1-2, 2003, p. 12.

¹⁹ Htin Aung, *Burmese History Before 1287: A Defense of the Chronicles* (Oxford: Asoka Society, 1970); Htin Aung, *A History of Burma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967); Tet Htoot, ‘The Nature of Burmese Chronicles’, in *Historians of South East Asia*, ed. D.G.E Hall (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 50–62.

²⁰ Victor Lieberman, ‘How Reliable is U Kala’s Chronicle? Some New Comparisons’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 17, 2 (1986): 253.

²¹ See Michael Aung-Thwin, ‘Mranma Pran: When context encounters notion’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 39, 2 (2008): 193–217.

what the Burmese now refer to as Mongol warriors with their bows and arrows. The 18th- and 19th-century Burmese writers would have been aware of these references to the *Tarup*. By attempting to distinguish between the *Tarup* at different periods, it is possible to get a better idea of how to use the chronicles. A comparison of the chronicles with Chinese sources reveals that in spite of the cultural bias of each country's histories, it is possible to glean from them a perspective on the distant past. This perspective will allow one to understand the worldview of the 11th-, 13th- and 18th-century Burmese, diverse as they also were.

It is possible to isolate two variant forms of contact in a diachronic study of the interactions between the Burmese²² rulers and the *Tarup Utibhwa* (တရုဏ်ဦးတည်ဘွား). The first appears to be conducted within the scope of a religious network which spanned the region from India and Sri Lanka across Burma and Northern Thailand to Southeast China and parts of Central Asia between the 10th and 13th centuries. The other appears to represent a shift of ideology, from one informed by religion to one that is concerned with territorial expansion and political sovereignty. This transformation took place when large states disintegrated some time after the Mongol invasion of 1284/1287. The first form of interaction can be perceived within the scope of religious *cosmopoleis* whereby individual cities such as Bagan and *Tarup* (Gandhara Division) represent two among numerous cities which comprised a religious *oikoumene* or commonwealth.²³ An analysis of the accounts of Burmese-*Tarup*

²² Burmese is used here to refer to the rulers of various kingdoms which existed at different periods in what is known today as Myanmar/Burma.

²³ In the words of Marius the Epicure, *polis* can also refer to a commonwealth. “*Ho kosmos hūsanei polis estin*--the world is as it were a commonwealth, a city: and there are observances, customs, usages, actually current in it, things our friends and companions will expect of us, as the condition of our living there with them at all, as really their peers or

relations provides clues to who and what was *Tarup* and thus contributes to a better understanding of the complex relations between Myanmar and “Tarup” (China) today. The second theme of contact is represented by the smaller socio-political and urban Burmese *cosmopoleis* which emphasised ethnic differences, fought with each other and often enlisted the help of the *Tarup* to resolve these conflicts. In this later period competition for resources such as people, land, and commercial gains determines the nature of the *Tarup*-Burmese relationship, not religious values.

***Tarup Amyomyo* (“Varieties of *Tarup*”)**

The question of who and what was *Tarup* is not new; it is rather a revisiting of an old question posed by G.H. Luce in 1959. What is interesting is not that Luce never resolved the controversy but rather that this issue, like numerous other questions which emerged in the study of Burmese past, was never picked up by another scholar or student, except Michael Aung-Thwin. In a footnote in *Myth and History in the Historiography of Early Burma*, Aung-Thwin wrote, “The word *Tarup* or Tarok is a current reference to the Chinese, but was said to have been a reference, at the time [*context of the 13th century*: my emendation], to Turks in the Mongol armies. However, the latter interpretation is not entirely correct, since contemporary (Pagan period) and near-contemporary (Ava period) inscriptions clearly used the word to refer to the Chinese”.²⁴ Aung-Thwin refers here to Sir Arthur Phayre’s suggestion that *Tarup* is derived from the Chinese word for the Turks, who comprised a large contingent of the Mongol army during the 13th century. Luce, on the other hand, notwithstanding the fact that he was writing at an earlier time, found it a perplexing enigma. He wrote, “whether the fellow-citizens.” Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicure*, Vol. II., Etext of the Project Gutenberg.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/4058>, p. 12.

²⁴ Michael Aung-Thwin, *Myth and History in the Historiography of Early Burma*, p. 162.

Taruk in Old Burmese ever means, as it does today, the Chinese, is highly questionable”.²⁵ Luce believed that *Taruk* ought to refer to the Mongols based on the inscription of 1285, which describes Shin Dissapramok’s peace mission to China. In this inscription the “Taruk king” is Kubilai Khan. Luce also tended to accept Phayre’s allusion to the Turks: “the word *Taruk* (probably ‘Turk’) comes in first with the Mongols, at the end of the Pagán dynasty”.²⁶

Phonetically *Tarup* and *tujue*²⁷ (突厥 the Chinese term for Turk) sound a little different; although it is possible that the former could have been a mispronunciation of the latter. In addition the word “turuk,” which sounds close to the Burmese *Tarup*, was used in the 8th century inscriptions of the Orkhon valley in Mongolia, regarded as the heartlands of the Mongol civilisation. The Orkhon inscriptions are bilingual comprising both minor Chinese language texts and inscriptions written in a form of Turkic script (Orkhon).²⁸ Though these do not by any means prove with certainty that the Burmese term *Tarup* indeed was derived from the Chinese term for the Turks, it is a possibility which requires further investigation.

²⁵ G.H. Luce, ‘Note on the Peoples of Burma in the 12th-13th Century A.D.’, *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, 42, 1 (June 1959): 69.

²⁶ G.H. Luce, *Old Burma-Early Pagan* (Locust Valley, New York: J. J. Augustin Publisher, 1969), p. 28; and G.H. Luce, ‘The Early Syam in Burma’s History: A Supplement’, *Journal of the Siam Society*, 47, 1 (June 1959): 136, 184.

²⁷ For discussion of *tujue* and China’s relations with the Turks, see Pan Yihong, *Son of Heaven and Heavenly Qaghan: Sui-Tang China and Its Neighbors* (Bellingham, Washington: Center for East Asian Studies, Western Washington University, 1997), and Xiong’s review of Pan’s book in *China Review International*, 6, 2 (Fall 1999): 511–4.

²⁸ György Kara, ‘Aramaic Scripts for Altaic Languages’, in *The World's Writing Systems*, ed. Peter Daniels and William Bright (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 536–58.

Pelliot, on the other hand, tended to think of *Tarup* as originating from Daliguo (大理國), the old kingdom of Nanzhao (南詔), concluding from his reading of the Hledauk inscription of 1110–11 CE.²⁹ Pelliot was an influential Sinologist, whose research on Chinese sources pertaining to Southeast Asia and Burma in particular, was considered by scholars such as Luce to be most reliable. Luce had studied early Chinese sources with Pelliot and Louis Finot, another famous Sinologist, at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1917. Luce suggested that it is likely that the Burmese, reflecting their perception of the Mongols, saw the Nanzhao troops as also *Tarup*.³⁰

Here I will suggest two other possible origins of “Tarup”: first as a literal transliteration of “Ta Yue” and second as a corruption of “Tangut”. “Ta Yue” supports the argument that “Tarup” did in fact refer to a Turkic speaking group of people, in this case, the Kusan or Kushan Huns. “[T]he Annals of Wei (c. CII fol. 15) say that ‘the kingdom of Ta Yüe-Chi (Kušan Huns)...was bordered on the north by the Jwen-Jwen,³¹ and they were often exposed to their attacks. They therefore moved westward and established themselves in the city of Po-lo’.³² This westward migration supposedly began around the year 450 CE. By 468 CE, most of the Kušan had settled in India following Peroz’s victory over them. In Macartney’s article, he described how the term “Turk” or the Greek rendering of it, “Toue-Kioue”,³³ was used “almost in consecutive breaths to describe different peoples...”.³⁴ This is

²⁹ G.H. Luce, ‘Note on the Peoples of Burma in the 12th-13th Century A.D.’, p. 69.

³⁰ Luce, *ibid.*, pp. 69–70.

³¹ Jwen Jwen here refers to the Juan Juan or the Avar Turks.

³² C.A. Macartney, ‘On the Greek Sources for the History of the Turks in the Sixth Century’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 11, 2 (1944): 268.

³³ According to Macartney’s discussion of Németh’s description of Mongol tribal names, the Avars, Huns (including the Kushan), and Toue-Kioue belong to the same linguistic branch of

a common problem with using ethnonyms and exonyms³⁵ which can be used to refer to more than one specific language group, ethnic group, or sometimes to people occupying a particular geographical location. It is possible that *Tarup* represents the Burmese attempt to render Chinese description of the Ta Yue or Kushan, known Buddhists. In the context of the 11th century, and considering that the references to *Tarup* during Anawrahta's reign emphasise the Buddhist character of the *Tarup* polity, it is probable that in the universal history of Buddhism the Burmese chroniclers of later times continued to refer to the former territory once occupied by the Kushans as *Tarup* derived from Ta Yue. That the meaning of *Tarup* of the pre-Mongol invasion period is closely tied up with the history of Buddhism should be acknowledged as an important factor in determining the identity of the *Tarup* during this early time period.

Tarup as a corruption of Tangut fits well within the context of Burmese historiographers' interest in relating Burma's history of kingdoms with the history of Buddhism, particularly in the case of Burmese reference to *Tarup*-“China” in the pre-Mongol invasion period. Tangut refers to the ethnic group which established the state of Xia (1038–1227),³⁶ which also came to be known as Xixia. “Tangut” is an ethnic name which first

the Turkish family. The Kushan can thus be considered Turkic-speaking people or in many ways, Turks.

³⁴ Macartney, ‘On the Greek Sources for the History of the Turks in the Sixth Century’, p. 272.

³⁵ Anthropologically ethnonyms have been used to refer exclusively to names which ethnic groups have given themselves as opposed to exonyms which refer to names given by outsiders.

³⁶ Ruth W. Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), p. 3.

appeared in Orkhon Turkic runic inscriptions of 735.³⁷ The Tangut elite spoke a language which is related to Tibetan, and referred to themselves as Mi or Mi-nyag in Tibetan. They never called themselves “Tangut”, a name attributed to them by outsiders, particularly the Chinese who called them “Dangxiang”. Tangut Xixia began building its empire around the same time Bagan rose to prominence as a Buddhist centre around 1038. It was probable that the 18th- and 19th-century Burmese chroniclers knew that Tangut Xixia was a contemporary Buddhist polity of 11th-century Bagan. It had requested and received numerous Buddhist scriptures from Song China, and was an important nexus of the Buddhist communications and trade network between India and China. There were at least three overland routes linking these various Buddhist polities: a Tibetan route through Central Asia, a route from Khotan through Gilgit and Chilas, and the third and by far the oldest, which could be divided into two sub-routes, both of which crossed Burma.³⁸ Along these overland routes and networks religious persons, texts, and relics circulated. It is thus not surprising if Burmese chroniclers of the 18th and 19th centuries saw and recorded Tangut Xixia as representing the contemporary and powerful Buddhist polity of *Tarup pyi*, especially since Buddhism was on the wane in Song China. The Tangut court was said to have “commemorated 150 relic fragments of the Buddha with lavish gifts and donations” in 1038.³⁹ This statement describes the devout Buddhist character of Tangut Xixia.

In addition, Tangut Xixia was also a militarily strong neighbour of Song China. Song China, having suffered countless defeats in battles with the Khitans, Jurchens, and Tanguts,

³⁷ Dunnell, *ibid.*, p. xiii.

³⁸ Tansen Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600-1400* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), pp. 171–4.

³⁹ Sen, *ibid.*, p. 191.

agreed to send Tangut Xixia an “annual tribute of 50,000 tales of silver, 130,000 bolts of silk, and 10,000 catties of tea in exchange for peace” in 1044,⁴⁰ which was coincidentally the first year of King Anawrahta’s reign.

It would appear that pre-Mongol invasion *Tarup* could have referred to a few possible ethno-political groups, although it is likely that the *Tarup* of the 11th and 12th centuries, particularly during Anawrahta’s reign (1044–77) could only have been either Tangut or Nanzhao.

In contrast, the 1285 Dissapramok inscription clearly suggests that the *Tarup* referred to were the Mongols or the Yuan and this is a point agreed upon by several scholars from Luce through Chen Yi-sein and Aung-Thwin. The main points of dispute revolve around the actual date of Dissapramok’s mission, whether his mission preceded or followed another mission by Anantapisan and Mahabuiw, and whether there were two missions instead of one.⁴¹ As these issues lie beyond the scope of my paper, it will be sufficient to note that the *Tarup* described in this inscription and referred to in the chronicles with reference to King Narathihapate were the Mongols. Whether the Mongols actually reached Bagan or whether

⁴⁰ Sen, *ibid.*, p. 153.

⁴¹ For a detailed discussion on these issues, please refer to the following: Chen Yi Sein, ‘The Chinese Inscription at Pagan’, *Bulletin of the Burma Historical Commission*, 1, 2 (December 1960); Chen Yi Sein, ‘Rhan Disapamkha Nrim Khyam Re Mac Rhan Aphwai’ [Account of Shin Disapramok’s Peace Mission], *Nuiññam Samuiñ Sutesana* [Researches in Burmese History], 1 (1977): 41–57; G.H. Luce “The Early Syam in Burma’s History,” *Journal of the Siam Society*, 46, 2 (November 1958); Luce, ‘The Early Syam in Burma’s History: A Supplement’, pp. 59–101; Than Tun, ‘History of Buddhism in Burma: A.D. 1000-1300’, *Journal of the Burma Research Society*, 61, 1 and 2 (December 1978): 1–266; Aung-Thwin, *Myth and History in the Historiography of Early Burma*, chapters 2 and 3.

Narathihapate fled in fear as stated in the chronicles is irrelevant. It will be noted that in the inscription, during the year Sakkaraj 647 (1285), the king who was then staying in Hlaykya, in the western part of the country, wished to be informed of the coming of the *Tarup*.⁴² This suggests that during the year 1285, the *Tarup* had not yet reached where the king was staying and therefore most likely had not reached Bagan.

The *Yuan Shi* contains numerous accounts of campaigns against the *Mian* (Burmese) and tribute missions by them. One account describes a campaign sent against the Burmese in 1284, which succeeded in invading Tagaung, attacking with 200 boats.⁴³ The *Yuan Shi* stated

⁴² “သကရစ်၆၄၇ခုမြောက်(သို)ဝန်စံ။ ပြည်အနောက်ဖက်လှည့်တ္တနိုက်မင်ကြိနိယံတပ်မူ၏။ အနန္တဝိစည်မ(ဟာ)ပိုင်ကိုဝန်တိုင်တရက်၏အလာအလာကိုဝန်သိပြင်မူလိယဟုစိယတ်မူ၏အနန္တ(ဝိ)စည်မဟာပိုင်ဆိုဝန်၏။”

ဦးမြင်းမောင်။ ရှေးဟောင်းမြန်မာကျောက်စာများ၊ တတိယတွဲ၊ သက္ကရာဇ်၆၂၂မှ၆၉၉။ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ရှေးဟောင်းသုတေသနဦးစီးဌာန၊ ၁၉၈၃။ U

Ngyein Maung (U Nrim`” Moñ`), *Rhe`”hoñ`” Mran`mā Kyok`sāmyā`*. Tatiyatvai.

Sakkarāj`622 mha 699 (Ran`kuin`mrui` : Rhe`”hoñ` Sutesana Usī`”thāna, 1983), p. 141. An account of this was first discussed by Aung-Thwin (see Aung-Thwin, *Myth and History in the Historiography of Early Burma*, pp. 42–3). Aung-Thwin is the first scholar to mention and demonstrate that Hlaykya was the place to which Narathihapate fled.

⁴³ The account can be found in 宋濂，*元史*（上海：中華書局影印，1935），252-54 页。Song Lian, *Yuan Shi*, vol. 12 (Shanghai: Zhonghua Book Image and Print, 1935), pp. 253–54. See also: 余定邦和黄重言（编），*中国古籍中有关缅甸资料汇编*（北京：中华书局，2002），40 页。Yu Dingbang and Huang Zhongyan, ed., *Compilation of Research Materials on Myanmar in Ancient Chinese Sources* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2002), p. 40.

that *Mian* country sent a diplomatic mission led by Ma-la-bu and Ti-ban-de with tribute.⁴⁴

The mission by Mahabuiw and Anantapisan is therefore corroborated by the *Yuan Shi*, even though the history of the Yuan contains many references to campaigns against the Burmese which are not mentioned in Burmese inscriptions or later Burmese chronicles.

The account of the Mongols is one of the better-known episodes in the Burmese chronicles, but it is not the only description of the *Tarup*. There were other accounts of Burmese interactions with the *Tarup* prior to and after the reign of King Narathihapate. Examples may be taken from King Pyuminhti's reign (Tharehzettara or Sriksetra kingdom) to the Ava-Burma period (reigns of Rajadhiraj and Ava king Minkhaung). Several Burmese texts contain variant versions of the same events. These include U Kala's *Mahayazawingyi*, Twinthin Taikwun Mahasithu's *Mahayazawinthat*, and the *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*, which were referred to earlier. Others, which have not been discussed yet, are: 1) a palm-leaf recension of the *Bagan Yazawin* ['Bagan Chronicle'] believed to be compiled some time during the later part of the 19th century, 2) the *Bagan Yazawinthat* or *Yazawunthazalinikyam* ['New Bagan Chronicle'], which date of composition is unknown but most scholars believe it to be compiled after the original *Bagan Yazawin*; and 3) the *Zatadawpon Yazawin* ['Chronicle of Royal Horoscopes'] which was most likely compiled over a long span of time by different authors; although the introduction to the 1960 printed edition suggests that the text was compiled during the reign of King Minyeh Kyawhtin (c. 1672–98).⁴⁵ Aung-Thwin,

⁴⁴ Song Lian, *Yuan Shi*, vol. 15, p. 311; Yu and Huang, *Compilation of Research Materials on Myanmar in Ancient Chinese Sources*, p. 43.

⁴⁵ ဦးလှတင်(လှသမိန်)။ဇာတာတော်ပုံရာဇဝင်။ရန်ကုန်။ပြည်တောင်စုယဉ်ကျေးမှုဝန်ကြီးဌာန၊ရှေးဟောင်းသုတေသနညွှန်

ကြားရေးဝန်ရုံး၊ရှေးဟောင်းစာပေနှင့်ယဉ်ကျေးမှုဌာန။၁၉၆၀။

however, believes that “the earliest portions of this text appear to have been written sometime in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries”.⁴⁶

These chronicles discuss the subject of Burma-*Tarup* relations more extensively than inscriptions and other sources of information. Even though the information in the chronicles was not necessarily recorded at the time of the events which they are supposedly describing, they are still the primary source that historians must rely on. The accounts in the Burmese chronicles will be discussed in conjunction with references corresponding to the events, figures or time periods taken from Chinese sources such as the *Yuan Shi* and *Ming Shih-lu* wherever possible. Even though the Burmese chronicles are not contemporaneous with the Chinese sources, their descriptions of the events which involve both countries characterize important information on the *Tarup* (“China”).

The *Tarup* in Burmese Chronicles

The earliest extant Burmese chronicle to mention “Tarup” is Shin Thilawuntha’s *Yazawingyaw*, which was composed in 1520. It appears in the infamous epithet, *Taruppye* (တရုပျေ), held by King Narathihapate.

In the chronology of Burmese history, the earliest reference to “Tarup” appears in the accounts describing the destruction of Tagaung kingdom. This account can be found in the *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*, but not the other two earlier chronicles, U Kala’s

U. Hla Tin, *Jātāto`pum. Rājawan` (Zatadawpon Yazawin)* (Ran`kun` : Praññ`toñ`cu Yañ`kye"mhu van`krī" țāna, Rhe"hoñ`" Sutesana Ññvhan`krā" re"van`ruṃ, Rhe"hoñ" cāpe nhañ" yañ`kye" mhu țāna, 1960), p. 1.

⁴⁶ Michael Aung-Thwin, *The Mists of Rāmañña: The Legend that was Lower Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai`i Press, 2005), p. 121.

Mahayazawingyi and Twinthin Taikwun Mahasitthu's *Mahayazawinthat*. The *Hmannan* states:

During the reign of King Bheinnaka, the last of those kings of Tagaung country called Sanghassaratha, the Tarups and Tayeks from Sein country (စိန့် is an archaic word used to refer to China), Gandhalaraj division came to disrupt and destroy the great country of Tagaung named Sanghassatha. King Bheinnaka assembled all his remaining troops and they entered Malaykhyang where they remained.⁴⁷

According to this account, the *Tarups* attacked Tagaung with another “ethnic” group, Tayeks. Who were these Tayeks? Were they the “Ta Yue”, a term used by the Chinese to refer to the Kushans? As the Kushans were White Huns and they spoke a Turkic language, the *Tarups* and Tayeks could very well refer not to two separate groups, but rather the Kushans and the Turkish groups who did inhabit the Gandhara region from which the Buddha's tooth relic originated. Even though “Sein” is an archaic term⁴⁸ used to refer to China, it was used to refer to a general area in which China was located in relation to Burma. Gandharalaj, Sein country, refers thus to the Central Asian homeland from which the Kushans (*Tarups* and Tayeks)

⁴⁷ ထိုမင်းတို့ အဆုံးစွန် ဖြစ်သော ဘိန္ဒကရာဇာ မင်းကြီး လက်ထက် သစ်သရဋ္ဌ မည်သော တကောင်းပြည်ကြီးကို ဂန္ဓာလရာဇ်တိုင်း

စိန့်ပြည်က တရုတ်တရက်တို့ နှောင့်ယှက်လာ၍ သစ်သရဋ္ဌ မည်သော တကောင်း ပြည်ကြီးပျက်စီးလေလျှင် ဘိန္ဒကမင်းကြီးသည်

ရုံးမိသမျှသော မိမိဗိုလ်ခြေ အလုံးအရင်းနှင့် မလည်ချောင်းသို့ ဝင်၍ နေတော်မူ၏။ *Mhan`nan`'' Mahārājavan`to`krī`*,

vol. 1, p. 156; Pe and Luce, *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*, p. 3.

⁴⁸ The *Myanmar-English Dictionary* describes the term “Sein” as archaic, suggesting that it is no longer used in everyday usage in Burma today; see Department of the Myanmar Language Commission, *Myanmar-English Dictionary* (Yangon: Department of the Myanmar Language Commission, Ministry of Education, 1993), p. 125.

came from. Chronologically when this attack on Tagaung took place around the 5th century, the Kushans of Gandhara were closed to completing their mass exodus from Central Asia into northern India. Could this purported attack on Tagaung represent a foray made by the fleeing Kushans on the kingdom located in the northern region of Burma? It is possible, but a speculation at that, since it would be difficult to prove.

Another reference to “Tarup” appears in the section under the first kingdom of Arimaddana-Bagan. This account describes the legendary King Pyuminhti’s victory over a numerically superior army of *Tarup* soldiers. The event is purportedly celebrated as one of the 12 great festivals of Pyuminhti. Other festivals include the king’s slaying of the four great enemies of Bagan: giant boar, giant flying squirrel, giant bird, and giant tiger.

It is one festival (to commemorate) the time when the great king on elephant marched with his cavalry and elephant troops to do battle as a unified whole against more than ten million and hundreds of Tarup soldiers arrived at Kawthambhi town, which had formerly been a village in the country.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ နိုင်ငံတော်ကျေးဖြစ်သော ကောသန္တိမြို့သို့ ကုဋေအရာမကသောတရုတ်စစ်သည်တို့ရောက်သောအခါ မင်းကြီးကိုယ်တော်တိုင်

ဆင်လုံးမြင်းရင်းအများနှင့် ချီတော်မူ၍ နှိပ်နင်းလုပ်ကြံတော်မူသောပွဲလည်းတကြိမ်။ ဦးကုလား။မဟာရာဇဝင်ကြီး။ပထမအုပ်။ဆရာပွါး—

တည်းဖြင့်သည်။ရန်ကုန်မြို့မြန်မာသုတေသန အသင်း၊၁၉၆၀။သုံးအုပ်ရှိသည်။ U Kala, *Mahayazawingyi*, vol. 1

(Yangon: Burma Research Society, 1960), 142; Twinthin, *Tvan`’’ San`’’ e* Mran`mā*

Rājavan`sac`, p. 55; *Mhan`nan`’’ Mahārājavan`to`krī`*, vol. 1, p. 203; see also Pe and Luce, *The*

Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma, p. 41.

Another chronicle, *Bagan Yazawin*, contains an elaborate description of the actual battle, noting that it took place over three months.⁵⁰

These first two accounts of “Tarup” clearly characterise the *Tarups* as a military power, capable of wreaking destruction in the first instance, and clearly not a match for the supernatural legendary prowess of Pyuminhti in the second.

Burmese Depictions of the Tarup in Connection with the Bagan Period

The first religious allusion to the *Tarup* is likely the account contained in the *Yazawunthazalini*, otherwise known as the *Bagan Yazawinthat* [‘New Bagan Chronicle’]. Although the version of the text used here is undated, Luce and Pe Maung Tin noted that it “was said to have been written in 1785”.⁵¹

In the *Yazawunthazalini*, an unusual connection is made between *Tarup* and the “heretical” Ari monks of Bagan which cannot be found in the main chronicles of *Yazawingyaw*, *Mahayazawingyi*, *Mahayazawinthat*, and *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*. This description interestingly points out the unsavory aspects of *Tarup* monks’ behaviour. In one instance, it refers to *Tarup* (“Chinese”) *arahant* robes:

⁵⁰ ဂုံရာဇဝင်။ *Pugaṃ Rājavan`*, palm-leaf manuscript Accession no. 585 (Yangon: Universities

Historical Research Centre, 1895), leaves ၈-ကျော် to ၇-ဝမ်း; leaves ၇-ဝမ်း to ၇-ကျော်. 1895 refers not to the original year of composition, but rather to the date on which this particular palm leaf manuscript was copied.

⁵¹ Pe and Luce, *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*, p. xv.

Those Ari monks do not wear the dye-cloths of hermits or monks (which is made with boiled tree bark) but like the Palaung and Tarup (“Chinese”) monks, when they wear indigo blue dark cloths they place a new bamboo in their heavy hair.⁵²

The passage however is not found in U Kala’s *Mahayazawingyi*, which gives an account of the Ari monks and their followers, their practice of the wrong law, and their use of charms to beguile others, but does not refer to their appearance. The description is also omitted in the *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi* and *Bagan Yazawin*. This suggests that the description was probably inserted during the compilation of the *Yazawunthazalini*. Whether the description was inserted at a more recent time is perhaps not as important as the two following points: Ari, *Tarup* and Panlaung monks do not belong to the same school of Buddhism as the Burmese hermit monks (who practice the “correct” Law), and there are distinctive differences in the dress code. As an integral part of establishing the “correct” form of Buddhism (Theravada) in Bagan, Anawrahta carried out a purging of Ari monks who were considered heretics. Religiously, the similarity between Ari, *Tarup* and Panlaung monks suggests that they belong to what could have been a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, especially one which emphasises the use of spells, incantations, and other means of aiding people in their path toward salvation.

⁵² ထိုအရင်းကြီးတို့ကား။ ဖန်ရည်စွန်းသောအဝတ်ကိုမဝတ်။ ပလောင်ရဟန်းတရပ်ရဟန်းများကဲ့သို့ မဲတည်မဲပြာအ နက်

အမည်းကိုဝတ်လျက်ဆံပင်လေးသစ်တဝါးထား၏။ သိရီစတုရင်္ဂဗလဘွဲ့ခံ။ အငြိမ်းစားကျောက်စာရုံးစာရေးကြီးမြန်မာပညာရှိဦးဇေ

ဘ။ ရာဇဝံသဇာလိနီမည်သောပုဂံရာဇဝင်သစ်။ U Bhe, *Rāzavaṃsarālīnī maññ`so Pugam Rāzavan`sac`*,

p. 106. This text contains no publication date.

The next reference to “Tarup” in the Burmese chronicles appears in the account of King Anawrahta’s march to Gandhara division in *Tarup* country. In the *Yazawunthazalini*, the following is stated:

King Anawrahta based on the saying that the Buddha’s tooth relic is in Gandhara division, marches toward Tarup kingdom once the weapons and artillery for the purpose of besieging are assembled.⁵³

A similar description can be found in the *Mahayazawingyi*:

Anawrahtaminsaw wanting to generate a lot of faith in the noble religion begins to form a plan. “There is a noble Buddha’s tooth relic in the Gandhalaraj division which became/which will be Tarup country. In asking the Tarup Utibhwa for the noble Buddha’s tooth relic, all sentient beings together will be able to worship it and as such the noble religion also to a large extent exceedingly shall shine, and all sentient beings will also enjoy the many rewards until the end of 5,000 [years] of the noble religion”. In stating this and when the plan is made, [he] assembles the elephants, horses and soldiers in the whole nation and [once he] gathers [all] 36 million [soldiers] by water route, 36 million [soldiers] by land route together with the four spirit horses [implying that it would include his four warriors, Kyansittha, Ngahtweyu, Ngalonlekhpek, and Nyaung U Bhi] and the Shwephya brothers, to march to Tarup country.⁵⁴

The versions of this account in *Bagan Yazawin*⁵⁵ and *Mahayazawin*⁵⁶ contain some major variations. The *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*’s version contains an almost verbatim description

⁵³ U Bhe, *ibid.*, p. 115.

⁵⁴ U Kala, *Mahayazawingyi*, vol. 1, pp. 184–5. This passage can be found in the fourth volume of U Kala’s *Mahayazawingyi*, published in the second book of the 1960 edition which contains three books altogether.

⁵⁵ *Pugaṃ Rājavan`*, leaves ငဲ-ဝေဝေ-ဝေဝေ to ခေင်-ဝေဝေ.

⁵⁶ Twinthin, *Tvan` Sañ` e* Mran` mā Rājavan` sac`*, pp. 86–7.

of what was recorded in U Kala's chronicle with little differences.⁵⁷ There are several important points pertaining to this description of Anawrahta's interest in marching to *Tarup* country.

First, the title of the *Tarup* "ruler" or *Tarup Utibhwa* (ဦးတည်ဘွား) is of interest. There are two possible literal meanings of *utibhwa*: one which refers to the hereditary nature of the position whereby *bhwa* (ဘွား) suggests "to be born (with)" as in the case of the Shan *sawbhwa* (စော်ဘွား),⁵⁸ and the other suggests a woman leader which seems less likely.

Utibhwa is most likely a hereditary rank passed down through a line of chiefs. It is also highly likely that the *utibhwa* is not the ruler of *Tarup*, but an official appointed by the Chinese ruler. Should the emperor of China be referred to, the title of *mingyi* (မင်းကြီး) or *ekayaj* (ဧကရာဇ်) would have been used as in the context of the Dissapramok inscription in particular which refers to the *mingyi* Kubilai Khan and other contemporary Burmese inscriptions where the king is mentioned. Luce suggested that the term "utibhwa" was a term derived "from titles conferred by Tibet on the Nan-chao emperor in the 8th century — lorded it over the plains".⁵⁹ He also wondered whether *bhwa* might have been derived from the

⁵⁷ *Mhan`nan`" Mahārājavan`to`krī*", vol. 1, p. 250.

⁵⁸ *Sawbhwa* is the Burmese transliteration of the Shan title, *saopha* (စောဖာ), which is often defined as "king" or "prince" in Shan language, and refers to the Shan chieftains of olden days. *Saw* in Shan language refers to "lord or master" (Thomas J. Hudak, ed., *Cushing's Shan-English Dictionary: A Phonetic Version* (Tempe: Arizona State University, Program for Southeast Asian Studies, Monograph Series Press, 2000), p. 205.

⁵⁹ Luce, *Old Burma-Early Pagan*, p. 28.

Burmese term, *sawbhwa*.⁶⁰ It is very likely that *utibhwa* relates to the Nanzhao leader, even though etymologically it is difficult to prove the origin of the term. A noteworthy point is that *utibhwa* certainly does not refer to the Chinese emperor and implies a title conferred by a higher authority, either the Chinese emperor or as argued by Luce, Tibet, on a leader of Nanzhao.

The next question pertains to whether *Tarup* is the name of an administrative region, a protectorate or a vassal country of China. *Tarup* is described as a *pyi* (ပြည်) in both chronicle and epigraphic references, which means simultaneously two different spatial categories: a country and a royal city. *Pyi* most certainly in this context refers to a country, but this does not necessarily imply any inherent autonomy. There are examples in the chronicles which refer to entities, such as Bagan, Tharehkettara (Srikssetra), Thaton and Pegu, as a *pyi* in one instance and a *myo* in another. Obviously the latter is used to refer specifically to the city or capital (another variation of which is the term *naypyidaw* (နေပြည်တော်) or place/seat of the abode or country) while the former pertains to the area which falls directly under the circle of influence of the sovereign of the country. This, however, does not negate the possibility that a *pyi* may have an overlord to whom it pays tribute or pledges allegiance. *Tarup* may perhaps refer to China after all and it is only through transference of identity that the *utibhwa*, an official or vassal of the emperor of China becomes known as the hereditary leader/chief of *Tarup*.

The next issue concerns the location of Gandhalaraj (or Gandhara in some cases). In the history of the noble Buddha's tooth relic, the upper left eye-tooth of the historic Buddha was first taken to the Gandhara division (in the Indian context, it is traditionally believed to be in the vicinity of present-day Taxila, a northwestern province of Pakistan) by a local

⁶⁰ See Luce, *ibid*.

Gandharan monk and placed in a *cedi* (စေတီ) to be worshipped. The tooth relic was moved at different times to various places ranging from the Khotanese capital (Xinjiang province) to its final resting place now in Beijing.⁶¹ According to Kyaw, by 1071 CE, the mother of a chief over governors in the internal palace of the Liao emperor (Khitan dynasty) built a *cedi* in which she placed the revered tooth relic on the southeastern corner of the enclosure of the Lingguang monastery to the west of Beijing.⁶² If this is true, the tooth relic, which Anawrahta eagerly sought, is indeed in what constitutes China today, but during that earlier time it was considered a part of Khitanese territory. In order to get there, Anawrahta would have to travel either across Song-ruled territory or the Xixia kingdom. In addition, the so-called place where the tooth relic was placed was no longer at Gandhara, hence what would “Gandhalaraj division” have meant? Does it mean an administrative district within a country or kingdom with that name which perhaps traced its roots to the Gandhara dynasty that saw its end in the 5th/6th century CE?

The Huns captured Gandhara around the mid-5th century and by the next century the Sassanians aided by Turks destroyed the Huns. When the Muslim Arabs defeated the Sassanians in 644 in Persia, Buddhist Turks ruled Gandhara from Kabul. In the same year, Xuan Zang visited Gandhara and noted that Buddhism was on the decline.⁶³ Xuan Zang, a 7th-century Buddhist monk, wrote 大唐西域記 *Da Tang Xi Yu Ji* [‘Journey to the West

⁶¹ ကျော်ဇောအောင်။ ပုဂံမြတ်စွာဘုရားတော်လေးဆူသမိုင်း။ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ယုံကြည်ချက်စာပေ၊ ၂၀၀၄။ Kyaw Zaw Aung, *Pugam*

*Mrat`svay`to` Le`chū Samuiñ`* (Ran`kuin`mrui` : Yum Kraññ` Khyak` Sāpe, 2004), pp. 17–21.

⁶² Kyaw, *ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

⁶³ Samuel Beal, transl., *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World, by Hiuen Tsiang*, 2 vols (London. Reprint: Delhi. Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1969).

during the Tang Dynasty’], which is an important primary source for studying medieval Buddhism in Central and South Asia. By the early 11th century, the new Muslim ruler Mahmud of Ghazni had ordered the destruction of all remaining standing monuments.⁶⁴ Gandhara no longer existed during the reign of King Anawrahta.

Monywe Hsayadaw (1766–1835), a Konbaung period scholar and one of the main compilers of the *Hmannan Yazawindawgyi*, similarly found it highly unlikely that Gandhara and *Tarup* were both in the same location, although he arrived at a different conclusion, believing that the tooth relic had remained the whole time in Gandhara.

Gandara division where the noble Buddha’s tooth relic is placed is not Tarup country but the Gandara division within the Central Indian continent (*Mizzima taik*) as is evident (in the) decisive treatise (written) by the intelligent and educated Monywa Hsayadaw. In that decisive treatise, Gandara division is [situated] at a distance of 45 *yuzana* (Sanskrit *yujana*; 1 *yuzana* = 12.72 miles) from Thawutti country, Tarup country [would then] be more than 5000 *yuzana* far from Gandara division. Therefore Tarup country is not the Gandara division in where the Buddha’s tooth relic is placed.⁶⁵

To a fair extent, one can conclude that the famous Gandhara kingdom of the Buddhist Kushan kings (first to fifth century CE) was not the same entity as the *Tarup* of the 11th century, although the question of whether there was a division or a kind of administrative area called Gandhara in *Tarup* remains unanswered. *Tarup* hence in this context could have referred to China then (either the Liao, Xixia or Song kingdoms) or it may have referred to an administrative region, probably a small country to the north of Burma ruled by an indigenous leader who was either an official of the Chinese emperor (Song or Tangut?) or a vassal with high degree of internal autonomy.

⁶⁴ J. Hussain, *An Illustrated History of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1983).

⁶⁵ U Bhe, *Rāzavaṃsarālinī maññ`so Pugam Rāzavaṃ`sac`*, p. 116.

If *Tarup* were a country with a high degree of autonomy but was nevertheless a vassal of the Chinese, the likeliest candidate would have been Nanzhao, as the French Sinologist Pelliot believed. The area of Nanzhao, which roughly corresponded to what is western Yunnan province today, was an autonomous polity until the 7th century when Tang China assumed control of much of Yunnan, and made it a tributary of China. By the beginning of the 9th century Nanzhao had regained autonomy from China and in a series of attacks seized numerous captives from central Burma (Pyus), resettling them at Kunming.⁶⁶ The *Man Shu*, written in China in the 860s, described the kingdom as a multi-ethnic society with a complex administrative system similar to that of China.⁶⁷ From the 11th century Nanzhao was probably weakening, a process which accelerated as Thai principalities began to emerge around the late 12th century. The Mongols attacked and conquered Nanzhao in 1253, and by 1257 they controlled most of Yunnan.⁶⁸

Another piece of description which must be discussed before deciding whether the *Tarup* of 11th century was indeed Nanzhao or Tangut Xixia is the term: *pyigyī* (ပြည်ကြီး) or large country. The use of *pyigyī* suggests that *Tarup* was a country that was either larger than Bagan or if not comparable in autonomy and strength. It was also stated that

ပြည်ကြီးကိုအစိုးရသောဦးတည်ဘွား (“[the] *utibhwa* [who] governs this large country...”),⁶⁹

suggesting that the *utibhwa* was not an official or minister nor a king, but a leader who

⁶⁶ Lieberman, *Strange Parallels Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830*, p. 90; Luce, ‘The Early Syam in Burma’s History: A Supplement’; Luce, *Old Burma-Early Pagan*; David. K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

⁶⁷ Wyatt, *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Wyatt, *ibid.*

⁶⁹ U Kala, *Mahayazawingyi*, vol. 1, p. 186.

administers *Tarup pyi*.⁷⁰ The same phrase was used in the section regarding Alaungsithu's march to *Tarup pyi* to request the tooth relic. Both Anawrahta and Alaungsithu failed in the end to get the Buddha's tooth relic, plainly because the tooth relic chose to stay in *Tarup*. In a sense these events recognise the superiority of *Tarup*'s glory to that of Bagan, though the reasons given were couched in indirect terms but acknowledged the need to abide by the Buddha's prophecy that the tooth relic has to remain in *Tarup*. As a result of this, Anawrahta built a pagoda at the place where the tooth relic hovered in the sky. It is also implied that he continued to pay tribute in the form of gold and silver items sent as objects of worship for the relic.⁷¹ It is important to note that the nature of the contact between Anawrahta and Alaungsithu on the one hand and the *Tarup Utibhwa* is characterised by negotiation and unity in terms of religious values and knowledge, not military might. In fact the Burmese word *nyinywat* (ညှိညွတ်) is used in both accounts suggesting the union of minds, not disagreement.

The *Tarup* of the pre-Mongol invasion period were unlikely the Kushans or Turks or perhaps even the Song Chinese. Based on religious comparison and geography, *Tarup pyi* of Anawrahta's reign could have been either the kingdoms of Tangut or Nanzhao (known as Daliguo by the 10th century). Both kingdoms were Buddhist and located to the north of Burma, beyond the Gandhara division where the Buddha tooth relic previously inhabited.

⁷⁰ It is important to make a distinction between government with complete authority and government with some limitations such as in the case of Nanzhao, which being a vassal of China at this time, was not able to conduct foreign relations freely. There is a possibility that by using the title "Utibhwa" rather than "Mingyi" (as in the case of the Dissapramok inscription) and by stating that he was "governing" Tarup, the Burmese may have been trying to make a distinction between a sovereign and a vassal ruler.

⁷¹ U Kala, *Mahayazawingyi*, vol. 1, pp. 188–9.

Tangut Xixia was known too to have been an important procurer of Buddhist relics which were brought to the kingdom via the overland routes by South Asian traders.⁷²

Another scholar, Brian Ruppert, also noted the resurgence in demands for Buddha relics around the 11th century and the role played by merchants in their circulation throughout East Asia.⁷³ Religiously, Nanzhao Buddhism shared several similarities with the earlier Buddhist practices of the Ari monks in Bagan. As described earlier, the *Yazawunthalini* describes *Tarup* and Ari monks as wearing the same robes suggesting that they engaged in the same religious rituals, notably those belonging to the esoteric Mahayana Buddhist School. As Angela Howard, one scholar of Nanzhao Buddhism, describes of the Azhali (*achārya*) Esoteric Buddhism which was practiced in Nanzhao-Yunnan: “The term ‘*achārya*’ translated into ‘*azhali*’, thus lost the connotation of someone well-versed in yoga practices and in orthodox Buddhist ritual, and conjured up instead, in the mind of Nanzhao people, incantation, superhuman powers and the control of events through magic”.⁷⁴ Once the foreign *azhali* monks received support from the ruling class, they did not try to transform the people’s view of their training and mission which highlighted their possession of supernatural powers through their use of spells.

This similarity in the form of Buddhist practices between the *azhali* and Ari monks of Nanzhao and Bagan respectively should be noted as an indication of the state of interaction

⁷² Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade*, p. 191.

⁷³ Brian Ruppert, *Jewel in the Ashes: Buddha Relics and Power in Early Medieval Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), p. 36.

⁷⁴ Angela Howard, ‘The Dhāraṇī Pillar of Kunming, Yunnan. A Legacy of Esoteric Buddhism and Burial Rites of the Bai People in the Kingdom of Dali (937-1253)’, *Artibus Asiae*, 57, 1/2 (1997): 43.

which had already existed between the two kingdoms prior to Anawrahta's establishment of Theravada Buddhism in Bagan. Howard suggests that Buddhism went from India to China via Burma around the first centuries CE.⁷⁵ In addition, considering the esoteric character of Nanzhao/Daliguo Buddhism, Anawrahta might have felt compelled to take any Buddha Tooth Relic from Nanzhao to Bagan, where the "true" and "correct" form of Buddhism was practiced.

Geographically, Nanzhao/Daliguo in the vicinity of Yunnan province was a lot closer to Bagan than Tangut Xixia. A Song-period text, *Lingwai Daida* 《嶺外代答》, describes the proximity of Dali to Bagan: "Pugan is distant from the country of Dali by five *cheng* (route marches) and 60 *cheng* from the country of Wali".⁷⁶ It was likely that by the 11th century, Nanzhao/Daliguo then weakened was a tributary vassal of Song China or even possibly a vassal of Tangut Xixia playing both polities against each other. In which case, Nanzhao/Daliguo was by transference of authority and identity a stand-in for *Tarup*-China (Song or Tangut?).

Furthermore, there has been controversy over the ethnic identity of the Nanzhao people. Scholars were divided over whether the Nanzhao were Thai/Tai or Tibeto-Burman speakers, with increasing evidence favoring the latter argument.⁷⁷ The title of the *Tarup* ruler or leader, *utibhwa*, appears to bear resemblance to the Burmese title given to Shan chiefs,

⁷⁵ See Howard, *ibid.*, pp. 43–4.

⁷⁶ 蒲甘國，自大理國五程至其國，自窩里國六十程至之。周去非，*嶺外代答*（台北：新文豐出版公司，1984），142 頁。Zhou Qufei, *Ling Wai Dai Da*, 10 vols. (Taipei: Xinwenfeng Publishing Co., 1984), p. 142.

⁷⁷ Charles Backus, *The Nan-chao Kingdom and T'ang China's Southwestern Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 46–52.

sawbwa. This suggests that it is possible that Burmese used the title to indicate the leader's connection to the Tai. According to Backus, the Nanzhao rulers were known to have used lowland "proto-Thai" peoples such as the "Mang Man, Chin-ch'ih Man, Hsiu-mien Man, and other groups" as fighters in their armies.⁷⁸ This might have influenced the Burmese characterisation of the *Tarup* leader.

In terms of the kingdoms' relative political might and size, Tangut Xixia was a powerful contemporary of Song China and Chin-Jurchen kingdom unlike Daliguo, the successor to Nanzhao, which then "controlled considerably less territory than had Nan-chao during its most expansive decades in the middle of the ninth century".⁷⁹ The chronicles' description of *Tarup* suggests that *Tarup pyi*, though a *pyigy*, was positively alarmed by the approach of the Burmese military led by Anawrahta. Though this could have been a literary device to characterise the Burmese might, the description of *Tarup* suggests a kingdom or state which parallels Bagan in political autonomy and size, rather than one which was much stronger.

The Chinese sources appear to support the argument that Bagan was at least by the early 12th century considered a country of major importance to Song China. The *Zhu Fan Zhi* 《诸蕃志》 is perhaps the only Song text to describe the earliest mission made by Bagan in 1004/1005.⁸⁰ Other Song sources mention the tribute mission of 1106;⁸¹ the *Song Shi* 宋史,

⁷⁸ Backus, *ibid.*, p. 51.

⁷⁹ Backus, *ibid.*, p. 164.

⁸⁰ 皇朝景德元年，遣使同三佛齊、大食國來貢。[“In the first year of Jingde reign of the current dynasty (1004/05), the envoys they sent came to the Court together with the envoys of the countries of Sanfoqi (Srivijaya) and Dashi (the Arab countries) to offer tribute.”] 趙汝适，〈諸蕃志〉《中國史學叢書續編 35》（台北：學生書局，1979），167–294 頁。Zhao

in particular, states that Bagan should not be treated like a minor country, and must be accorded respect given to countries such as Dashi (Arab countries) and Jiaozhi (Central Vietnam).⁸² Among these countries of major importance were Sanfoqi (Srivijaya) and Dali.

The connection between Bagan and Daliguo was first established in the Chinese source, *Song Hui Yao Ji Gao* 《宋会要辑稿》. It describes the joint tribute mission sent by Bagan and Daliguo in 1136 which comprised local products.⁸³ The *Yu Hai* mentions the same mission⁸⁴ and the *Ke Shu* contains an elaborate description of the envoys and the objects of tribute.⁸⁵ It is possible that by the mid-12th century, Daliguo's reduced status caused it to send a joint mission with Bagan. It is impossible to know whether Daliguo in the pre-12th century served as a default receiver of tribute from Bagan to Song China as it was only in 1136 that both Bagan and Daliguo had to send their tribute via the regional commission, in this case the Guangxi Regional Commission. Could Dali somehow have served in this capacity as a

Rugua, 'Zhu Fan Zhi', *Chinese Historical Works* 35 (Taipei: Student Book Bureau, 1979), p. 176.

⁸¹ Zhou, *Ling Wai Dai Da*, p. 142; Zhao, 'Zhu Fan Zhi', p. 176; 脱脱, *宋史* (台北: 中華書局, 1977), 376 页, 14087 页。Tuo Tuo, *Song Shi* (Taipei: Chinese Book Bureau, 1977), pp. 376 and 14087.

⁸² Tuo Tuo, *ibid.*, p. 14087.

⁸³ 徐松輯, *宋會要輯稿* (北京: 中華書局, 1957), 7682 页。Xu Song Ji, *Song Hui Yao Bian Gao* (Beijing: Chinese Book Bureau, 1957), p. 7682.

⁸⁴ 王应麟, *玉海* (浙江: 浙江书局版, 1883), 33 页。Wang Yinglin, *Yu Hai* (Zhejiang Province: Zhejiang Publisher, 1883), p. 33.

⁸⁵ 張知甫, *可書* (台北: 新文丰出版公司, 1984), 681 页。Zhang Zhifu, *Ke Shu* (Taipei: Xinwenfeng Publishing Company, 1984), p. 681.

regional nexus along which tribute that was being sent to the Chinese capital was evaluated before being forwarded to the capital? This remains a point to be resolved and an issue which requires more deliberation particularly on the subject of the routes along which tribute to Song China was sent.

Bagan's tradition of paying tribute was to continue through the reigns of all Bagan kings until Narathihapate, when his refusal to send tribute and his supposed killing of the envoys sent by the Mongols led to the Mongol attack and his downfall. Even the kings of the dynasties following the fall of Bagan at times received orders to continue to deliver the tribute. As the account of Narathihapate and the identity of the *Tarup* during his reign have to a fair degree been examined in the earlier part of this paper, the next section shall touch largely on descriptions of *Tarup* in connection with 15th-century Burmese kingdoms.

However there is one particular observation regarding the *Tarup*-Mongol invasion which should be discussed here. This refers to a particular characterisation of the *Tarup* which appears only in Twinthin's chronicle: he described the *Tarup* soldiers as ဝန်ဆေး,⁸⁶ identifying them as Muslims. This description appears in the account characterising the chaos and commotion following the Burmese king's flight from the palace. The limited resources available made it impossible for all palace maids-in-waiting to be transported out of Bagan. As the story alleges, it was decided then that 3,000 of them were to be drowned to prevent their falling into the hands of the *Tarup* soldiers. This description of Mongol Muslims does not appear in any other texts, including that of the *Hmannan*. There is no indication as to how Twinthin came to this conclusion that the *Tarup* soldiers were Muslims or that there were Muslims among them.

⁸⁶ Twinthin, *Tvañ'' Sañ'' e* Mrañ`mā Rājavan`sac`*, p. 155.

The presence of Muslim Turks among the Mongols supports the view that there were Muslims among the *Tarup*. The Yuan rulers, especially since the reign of Kubilai Khan, employed Muslims in government, particularly in financial administration.⁸⁷ Not many Muslims led military expeditions or were appointed to the highest ranks in the Mongol army, largely because rulers like Kubilai remained suspicious of them. However in 1277, the Yuan court dispatched Nāṣir-al-Dīn (Na-su-ting) to lead a military campaign against Burma.⁸⁸ He was the son of the first Muslim governor of Yunnan, Saiyid Ajall Shams al-Dīn, appointed by Kubilai in 1274. Prior to Kubilai Khan's conquest of much of Yunnan between 1252 and 1253, Yunnan had become a main centre for Muslims in the region. Southwest China had attracted a steady flow of Muslim merchants and craftsmen who were interested in exploiting its strategic location along the trade routes between China and Burma and India. By 1254, the Mongols had already captured Dali-Nanzhao's capital. It is thus within this context that we should understand Burmese characterisation of the *Tarup*. To the Burmese, the *Tarup* of the Mongol invasion period or even during the 12th century leading up to the invasion were the Dali-Nanzhao people including the Muslim Turks of Yunnan region⁸⁹ and the Mongol soldiers ruled by the great king or *mingyi*, Kubilai Khan.

⁸⁷ Morris Rossabi, 'The Muslims in the Early Yüan Dynasty', in *China Under Mongol Rule* ed. John D. Langlois Jr. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 274.

⁸⁸ Rossabi, *ibid.*, p. 277; Geoff Wade, 'An Annotated Translation of the *Yuan shi* account of Mian (Burma)', conference paper presented at the *Burma Studies Conference 2006* "Communities of Interpretation", 13-15 July 2006, Singapore, p. 4.

⁸⁹ Rossabi asserts that most of the prominent Muslims of the early Yuan period were from Central Asia or Middle East (see Rossabi, 'The Muslims in the Early Yüan Dynasty', p. 260). There were also Chinese Muslims from the northern Chinese region and of course other Muslim groups who were already in Yunnan. But following Kubilai Khan's successful

The title *mingyi* is used only in the Burmese inscriptions to refer to the khan; the chronicles continue to refer to the *utibhwa*, which I argue is in fact the title of the Mongol appointed administrator in Yunnan/Dali-Nanzhao and thus not the Mongol emperor. The strongest evidence lies in the *Yuan Shi* descriptions of Mian.⁹⁰ The first description in the *Yuan Shi* describes the envoys sent by the Dali Pacification Commission and Shanchan Chief Military Command⁹¹ to Mian country in 1271/1272.⁹² The mission returned with a Burmese envoy. Another mission was sent in 1273 also by the same two institutions. The two envoys sent were to deliver an imperial command. The missive contains an interesting allusion to the presence of a Buddha relic in the “great country” (大國); likely the same Buddha Tooth Relic which was said to be residing in Kubilai’s new capital (Beijing) since 1071 CE.

In the subsequent descriptions of missions and campaigns undertaken by the Mongols, the actions were largely carried out by Mongol officials such as the Pacification Commissioner or high-ranking administrator from the Yunnan Branch Secretariat. It is clear that Yunnan (Dali-Nanzhao of old) represented the regional capital to which tribute missions particularly those from Mian-Burma and other lesser polities gathered before being taken to the capital if they were allowed to proceed. It is highly unlikely that *utibhwa* was a title used to refer to the Mongol khan.

conquest of the Yunnan region, the Mongol court encouraged further migration of Muslim groups into the Yunnan area, some of which were in fact forced migrations (see Rossabi 1981 for more discussion on this matter).

⁹⁰ Song Lian, *Yuan Shi*, vol. 210, pp. 1423–1424. For English translation of the folio, see “appendix” of Wade, ‘An Annotated Translation of the *Yuan shi* account of Mian (Burma)’.

⁹¹ 大理鄯闡等路宣慰司都元帥府。Wade states that Shanchan is the name of polity which was derived from the earlier Dali kingdom.

⁹² See appendix of Wade, ‘An Annotated Translation of the *Yuan shi* account of Mian (Burma)’.

Utibhwa, a title used previously to refer to the Nanzhao hereditary ruler of Anawrahta's and Alaungsitthu's reigns was likely transferred to the position of the Pacification Commissioner of Yunnan Branch Secretariat or the governor of Yunnan, an appointee of the Mongol ruler. Both were subordinate positions in comparison to the title of *mingyi* or the Mongol emperor, and the main difference is characterised by the transition made from indirect to direct "rule". In terms of geography and territorial identification, *Tarup* refers both to the Yunnan region and the overlord, Mongol-ruled China, though what the Burmese saw as *Tarup* was likely very much determined by the regional administration in Yunnan.

In the post-Mongol period, descriptions of *Tarup* in Burmese chronicles increased in frequency and length. To some extent, this may have something to do with Ming China's more coercive methods of collecting allegiance and tribute, a point which Wade strongly argued.⁹³ Burma's relations with *Tarup* have clearly been transformed by the Mongol invasion and numerous wars (largely described in Yuan sources) that occurred between the two polities; Burmese interactions with *Tarup* (in this case, Ming China) were characterised solely by wars between the two parties. References to Buddhism and Buddha relics clearly no longer appear in both Burmese and Chinese sources. Unlike Yuan China, particularly during the reign of Kubilai Khan, which not only tolerated but also promoted Buddhism, the religion did not feature prominently in Ming China's relations with other polities which it considered its vassals.

Burmese Descriptions of Tarup in Association with Inwa Period

Following the Mongol "invasion" and the fall of Bagan, there are at least two separate accounts of contact between the Burmese and *Tarup*, one of which occurred during the

⁹³ See Geoff Wade, 'Ming China and Southeast Asia in the 15th Century: A Reappraisal', *ARI Working Paper* 28 (Singapore: ARI, 2004).

Myinsaing period (c. 1298–1364). However the most elaborate accounts pertain to the 15th-century period in which corresponding records from the Chinese *Ming Shi-lu* (based on Wade's translation) can be used to give a more complete picture of not only the nature of the interactions but also the biases embedded in the perceptions of each party.

The following description refers to an attack carried out by the Burmese on the Shan *sawbwa* of Theinni, who then enlisted the *Tarup*'s assistance to defend his city against the Burmese attack:

During Sakkaraj 773 (Myanmar era 773 = 1411 CE)⁹⁴ all the *sawbwa* of Theinni (Seinni) together with his hordes and multitudes [people] came marching to Ava to do battle.Minyekyawswa also after presenting to his royal father the captured prisoners-of-war, elephants and horses, marched and reached Theinni. Theinni *sawbwa*'s sons and sons-in-law also called for military assistance from Tarup and when they successfully completed the work to strengthen their city, [even] if there were no more rations they withheld. Minyekyawswa also attacked Theinni city a number of times without success for approximately the duration of five months. In formulating a plan to resolve that (conundrum) (Yinthosi) Minyekyawswa even as he heard of the arrival of the reinforcements of 2,000 horses, and 20,000 foot soldiers from Tarup, [waited] until the night of Tamahti [or until the depths of night when no one was awake in Theinni city] to pull away from Theinni city. With [his] 200 battle elephants, 3,000 horses and 40,000 soldiers, [he] stayed in Sinkhan forest. By splitting the Tarup reinforcements into three groups, they destroyed the Tarup by attacking them as they came out from the forest. [He] captured as prisoners-of-war five Tarup officials with close to 1,000

⁹⁴ The date provided in the *Hmannan* differs from U Kala's chronicle by a year: Sakkaraj 774 (1412 CE). The same date appears in Twinthin's *Mahayazawinthat*, corroborating the date given in the *Hmannan*.

horses and almost 2,000 persons. An estimate of 500 horses died. As he was victorious over the Tarup, he returned to besiege Theinni city as always.⁹⁵

Although the dates of the Burmese and Chinese sources appear to be inconsistent, the above episode must refer to the following account in the *Ming Shi Lu*, which describes an envoy from Mu-bang (Hsenwi) to the Ming court:

In the early years of his reign, while vying with Ava-Burma for influence in Yun-nan, Yong-le was particularly concerned about the polity of Mu-bang (Hsenwi). When the Mu-bang envoy came to the Ming court in 1409, reportedly complaining about Na-luo-ta, the Ava-Burma ruler, the response by Yong-le included the following: ‘Na-luo-ta, with his petty piece of land, is double-hearted and is acting wrongly. I have long known of this. The reason that I have not sent troops there is that I am concerned that good people will be hurt. I have already sent people with instructions requiring him to change his ways and start anew. If he does not reform, I will order the generals to despatch the army. The troops will attack from the ocean route and you can arrange to have your native cavalry attack overland. The despicable fellow will not be equal to that.’⁹⁶

“When the Ming intended to attack Ava-Burma in 1409, Mu-bang was ordered to prepare its troops for an overland attack, while the Ming forces were to attack from the sea. Mu-bang (Hsenwi) was a frequent pawn in the Ming-Burma machinations, as it lay between the two and was subject to demands by both polities”.⁹⁷ Wade’s statement, though not concluding which side won the battle, does suggest that if Hsenwi usually ended up the

⁹⁵ U Kala, *Mahayazawingyi*, vol. 2, p. 10; *Mhan`nan`” Mahārājavan`to`krī`*, vol. 2, pp. 8–9; a variant description of the same event can be found in Twinthin, *Tvan`” San`” e\* Mran`mā Rājavan`sac`*, pp. 288–9.

⁹⁶ Wade, ‘Ming China and Southeast Asia in the 15th Century: A Reappraisal’, p. 14.

⁹⁷ Wade, *ibid.*, pp. 23–4.

victim of these tugs of war, the Burmese account may be true to some degree. The statement made by the Yongle emperor not only did not promise Chinese help but was also phrased in a vague manner. Probably the Chinese did send a small reinforcement of cavalry and foot soldiers either because the naval fleet of the western ocean was engaged in some other battles and unable to send reinforcements, or the logistics of moving troops across Burma from either the coast of Arakan or from the delta region would have exhausted the soldiers if not their food rations by the time they reached Hsenwi.

The following account in the early 18th-century *Mahayazawingyi* describes another episode in which a war took place between the Burmese and *Tarup* as a result of a request for intervention made to the *Tarup* by a chief. In this case, the request came from a Shan chief or *myosa*, Mawtonmawkaysa. This particular account is however not substantiated in the Ming sources, probably because the event either did not take place or the Chinese turned out to be the losers in this battle.

In Sakkaraj 774 (Myanmar Era 774 = 1412 CE)⁹⁸ when the account came to be said [that] Mawtonmawkaysa [and the] Shans [intend to] attack Mye Tu city. When the king, Minkhaung, heard [of this], he appointed [his] son, the crown prince Minyekyawswa, to start organizing 11 military units [for the] march. Minyekyawswa marched without gathering the last unit of the 11 military units of countless elephant and horse troops comprising 300 battling elephants, 4,000 horses, [and] 80,000 soldiers. They faced no obstacles in reaching Myetu, [and even] if [they] fought courageously, Mawtonmawkaysa [and his men] could not defeat the military units [and therefore] reached the point of destruction. Therefore [even] before the unit was destroyed, the two brothers of Mawtonmawkaysa assembled [and]

⁹⁸ There is a discrepancy between the dates in U Kala's chronicle and the *Hmannan*: the *Hmannan* gives Sakkaraj 775 (1413 CE) as the date of the Shans' attack on Mye Tu.

Twinthin's account again bears the same date as the *Hmannan* and very likely was the source for the *Hmannan* compilers.

together with soldiers and people [who were] not captured rode horses and fled to Tarup country. Prince Minyekyawswa also by taking as prisoners of war their sons, wives, elephants, horses and people returned to Ava.[The] Mawtonmawkaysa brothers went to the Tarup Utibhwa and implored, “Our sons and wives have been seized and placed in the place of the Sun King where they [now] are. Please be compassionate and ask the Sun King from [whom] we will get our sons and wives [back]”. Therefore the Tarup Utibhwa gathered all the *sawbwas* from all places near and far from Tarup city and sent an ultimatum to the Sun King demanding for the return of Mawtonmawkaysa’s sons and wives to him. “If [you] don’t give, there will be a war,” and he stated, “and when [my] 200 battle elephants, 4,000 horses and 40,000 foot soldiers arrive, the dirt they stir shall resemble the great battle of the fourth level of the purgatory of hell with the appearance of the mountain ogres and victory will be fixed and established at that very place”.⁹⁹

The Chinese then sent their demands to the Burmese king ordering the release of the Shan chief’s wife and children. Refusing to comply, King Minkhaung sent Thameinpayan, Rajadhiraja’s son-in-law. The crown prince Minyekyawswa had won Thameinpayan’s loyalty when he took the latter’s elephant after his victorious battle over Rajadhiraj’s Talaing country. By capturing Thameinpayan’s elephant, the crown prince won his service. The Burmese-Chinese battle is epitomised as a battle between two individuals, a joust on horseback between Thameinpayan and *Tarup* soldier, Kammani. Equipped with god-like weapons given by the king, Thameinpayan carried out an amazing battle with Kammani whereby the former used his elephant goad to hook onto Kammani’s body, cut his head off, and dropped it into a basket before re-entering the city. The *Tarup* soldiers, in awe, exclaimed, “no longer a human, [he] became a nat”. The Burmese term “nat” refers to three

⁹⁹ U Kala, *Mahayazawingyi*, vol. 2, pp. 15–8; *Mhan`nan`'' Mahārājavan`to`krī`*, vol. 2, pp. 21–8, a variant version is found in Twinthin, *Tvan`'' Sañ`'' e\* Mran`mā Rājavan`sac`*, pp. 301–8.

general categories of supernatural beings: *devas* (deities), natural spirits such as those which inhabit trees or rivers; and malevolent spirits which had died green, unnatural deaths, but stayed on in the living world in order to disrupt the order of the living. Kammani, obviously in death, became a *nat* of the last category.

The following account, also taken from U Kala's chronicle (see also the pages in *Hmannan* and *Mahayazawin*) and the last example to be given for this section, is corroborated in the Ming sources. Again the Burmese and Chinese dates differ but in this case by four years.

In Sakkaraj 806 (ME 806 = 1444 CE)¹⁰⁰ after stating, "I [referring to Minngeh Kyawhtin] shall welcome the Tarup who come to attack," he marched with five military units on land among which were 800 battle elephants, 15,000 horses, and 250,000 soldiers. With [his] water military unit comprising 500 battle boats, 300 royal boats (with high and ornamented prow and stern) made of iron, 80,000 soldiers, he rides his golden royal barge and advanced strong on the water. The land and water military units settled on Nga Yin U island on which they landed and liked. After the vestments of cloths have been given out on Tagaung's Thintwe island, [together] with [the] four Tarup generals and tens of millions of soldiers who could not cross the water, they came asking for the Maw official (*min* here most likely refers to the status of the official, implying his subordinate status to the Burmese) Tho Ngam Pwa (Bhwa). King Narapati also said to Tho Ngam Bhwa, "You slave being in my possession I shall not give," and in saying so gave his order. The Tarup also descended into Kaung Ton with all their generals. At that time the Tarup general killed the "eater" (of Kaungton) Maw Thaug Pein. The Tarup soldiers also died in great numbers. Having suffered losses, the Tarup troops having scarce food and water, retreated to Mo Wun and stayed there. King Narapati also returned [to his capital] after he had assigned elephants, horses and people to [assist] the Mo Kaung and Mo Nay *sawbwas* who were to stand guard at Ban Maw. At that time, the On Bhaung *sawbwa* Tho Khin Bhwa also came to Kaung Ton with presents and weapons to pay

¹⁰⁰ Interestingly the date first cited in Twinthin's chronicle is the same one given in U Kala's *Mahayazawingyi*. The date given in the *Hmannan* is Sakkaraj 807 (1445 CE).

obeisance at the feet...The Tarup soldiers also stayed at the place to which they withdrew during the time when food and water were scarce. Having gotten their provisions, they would return advancing on their march, [as] they would not return until after they have taken Tho Ngam Bhwa.....Three days having passed since the Tarup reached [Yamethin city], the envoy came, bearing the statement, “Give us the person Tho Ngam Bhwa. If [you] don’t give [him up] we will go to war”..... When King Narapati also had [finished] selecting the skilled elephant riders, he assembled, with 100 battle elephants, men skilled in [using] shields and 10,000 soldiers, and marched toward Yamethin city. On the Tarup side, the four generals and horses together with 10,000 assigned men placed a boat across a small river to form a bridge and crossed over. Having reached Hlaing Tek, Minngeh Kyaw Htin also did not dare to stay in the hole [hiding place?] in the city and together with all his people exited from Yamethin city. When Minngeh Kyawhtin fled, all of Yamethin was able to stand firmly together with Bhaya Kyawhtin.

When the Tarup went back, Tho Ngam Bhwa having reached Ava, also ate poison and died. King Narapati happily packed Tho Ngam Bhwa’s corpse and sent it to the Tarup. The Tarup also having gotten Tho Ngam Bhwa, chopped off his head and placed it on an iron spit and having finished roasting it, dried it out in the sun and took it with them.¹⁰¹

The above description very likely refers to the following account contained in the Ming history:

A further major Ming military expedition which was to greatly affect the upland Southeast Asian polities was that launched in 1448 to capture Si Ji-fa, a son of Si Ren-fa [a Tai-Mao political leader]. At a date equivalent to April/May 1448, Imperial instructions were issued to Wang Ji requiring him to capture Si Ji-fa and the chieftains of Meng-yang. The surrounding polities of Ava-Burma, Mu-bang, Nan Dian, Gan-yai and Long-chuan were also required to provide troops for deployment against Si Ji-fa. The imperial orders sent to Wang Ji presaged the disruption which such an expedition would have wrought in the region. ‘He [Si Ji-fa] may

¹⁰¹ U Kala, *Mahayazawingyi*, vol. 2, pp. 80–82; *Mhan`nan`” Mahārājavaṇ`to`krī`*, vol. 2, pp. 86–8; see a variant account in Twinthin, *Tvaṇ`” Saṇ`” e\* Mran`mā Rājavaṇ`sac`*, pp. 360–2.

flee into Ava-Burma's territory and be concealed by the people there. If so, capture persons as the situation demands, so that the *yi* people will know fear and the Great Army will not have been sent in vain.' While Wang Ji reported success in his attack on Si Ji-fa's stockade, later accounts tell of how Wang Ji had sought personal advantages from the 'native officials' and how in fact he had been defeated by Si Ji-fa.¹⁰²

The Burmese chronicle cites the date of the *Tarup* attack as 1444 whereas the Ming account gives 1448 as the date. Besides the relative proximity in dates, the *Mahayazawingyi* further refers to the prior long-standing enmity between the *Tarup Utibhwa* and Tho Ngam Bhwa's father which has led to this particular episode related above. The significance of the four-year discrepancy in dates is not known. It probably resulted from inherent flaws within the Burmese *Sakkaraj* system. The term *Sakkaraj* can be translated as "Myanmar Era", and refers to the number of years which should be added to the dates used in the Burmese chronicles in order to calculate corresponding dates in the Gregorian calendar. After incorporating two prior modifications (သေဝါသေဝါ *dawdawwyatha* and ဆယ့်ဝှံ *khahsapyinsa*), the year "638 CE" was selected to mark the first year of the Myanmar Era. Discrepancies in the dates of events are known to exist between different Burmese chronicles.

Who are the *Tarup* in the chronicles?

Evidence from the accounts of *Tarup* in the Burmese chronicles leads one to conclude that the territory of the *Tarup* most likely corresponds to the region of Yunnan, at one time the autonomous polity of Nanzhao-Dali, next a polity which was directly governed by a Mongol-appointed administrator during the 13th and 14th centuries, and later a tributary of Ming China in the 15th century. However, that being stated, the word "Tarup" does not merely relate to a

¹⁰² Wade, 'Ming China and Southeast Asia in the 15th Century: A Reappraisal', p. 16.

bounded territory with an unchanging population, but rather an imagined space, the actual size of which the Burmese were perhaps never absolutely sure. The Burmese consistently use the term “Tarup” to refer to an entity located to the north of Burma and considered an “other” administrative region. “Tarup” was thus an exonym used by the Burmese to refer to peoples living beyond northern Burma. Politically and geographically *Tarup* likely switched from the Central Asian polity of Kushan-Gandhara to Nanzhao-Dali and by transference of authority, to the overlord of Dali which was at one time Yuan and subsequently Ming. But they remain nevertheless in the region north of Burma’s kingdoms. Ethnically the identity of the *Tarup* was a complex issue to resolve. Chinese is a problematic ethnic term to define even today if one is to consider the variety of dialect groups which fall under this general category.

From the 5th through the 15th centuries CE, what constituted the *Tarup* underwent many character manifestations. Clearly the composite group would have included Turkic speakers (many of whom were Central Asians, some of whom were Muslims who settled in the Yunnan region), Nanzhao peoples who were Tibeto-Burman speakers but soldiers in their armies would have included what Backus refers to as the “Proto-Thai” groups, Mongols, Han Chinese, etc. To attempt to attribute an ethnic identity to the *Tarup* is clearly not just problematic, but wrong. *Tarup* in the context of the 20th century does refer to the broad category, “Chinese” and “China”, but such a definition is inadequate in explaining its historical ramifications. To problematise *Tarup* as a term of identity is thus a necessary pursuit, not one undertaken for the pure pleasure of intellectualising an unchallenging characterisation.

As discussed earlier, the original premise for “Tarup” is likely *taruk* (တရုတ်), derived from Orkhon inscription rendering of “turuk” for the Turkic speakers or *Ta Yue*, a Chinese characterisation of the Kushans of Gandhara. It is clear that Burmese descriptions of the *Tarup*, particularly by the Bagan period (especially beginning with Anawrahta’s reign)

emphasise the Buddhist character of the *Tarup* polity. That *Tarup* is mentioned often in relation with Gandhara is telling in its indication that the Burmese saw the “Tarup” of later times as synonymous or at least related to the “Tarup” of earlier periods, which were likely the Kushan rulers of Gandhara, where the famed Buddha Tooth Relic resided before being transported to China proper. Thus the identity of *Tarup* should be perceived in connection with its Buddhist character and connotations. For the Burmese, whether it was Kushan-Gandhara or China-Gandhara, *Tarup pyi* was the place which possessed the Buddha Tooth Relic.

At various times in the past, the *Tarup* corresponded to populations of probable different composition, which might have been autonomous polities that pledged allegiance to the Chinese emperors of various dynasties during some periods or at other times vassals directly governed or submissive to the Chinese government. Hence whether or not the attacking party referred to as the *Tarup* actually came on the pretext of representing the “Tarup” who were the Chinese, it was nevertheless perceived by the Burmese to be the *Tarup*. By observing that these people came from the region which the *Tarup* supposedly inhabited, the Burmese identified them as the *Tarup*, regardless of any differences in their ethnic makeup, language or attire. Of course the Chinese were not and never have been a homogenous ethnic group, like any other, but the Burmese like all ethnic groups sometimes speak and act as though such homogenous entities exist.

Conclusion

The following description of Mian-Burmese in the *Yuan Shi* is particularly telling of the ways the identities of individuals, groups and polities were determined: “Mian country is of the Southernwestern *Yi* (Chinese term for barbarians, used to refer to the groups living beyond

the “Han” borders), of which type it is (however) not known”/緬國為西南夷不知何種。¹⁰³

Just as the Yuan could not clearly characterise the type of *yi* the Mian-Burmese were, the Burmese probably were equally unable to classify the *Tarup* as simply one single type.

“Mian” is an exonym the Chinese used to refer to peoples of Burmese ethnicity whereas in earlier Chinese sources of the Tang and Song periods, Chinese descriptions of Myanmar comprised kingdoms’ names. Just like *Tarup* which has come to refer exclusively to the Chinese ethnic group, *Mian* also refers to the peoples of the country, Myanmar.

This analysis of Burmese-*Tarup* relations challenges historians to confront the problems of classifications which involve geographically mobile populations within boundaries which not only have shifted but were probably measured by a different set of principles in the premodern mindset. *Tarup* cannot be ascribed to any specific ethnic population because it was not the nature of *Tarup* ethnicity which changed, but rather the population which was described as *Tarup* actually changed physically. *Tarup* hence is closely tied in with a specific geographical region (area beyond northern Burma) and this fixedness of *Tarup pyi* is not negotiable. The Burmese envisioned the *Tarup* as the inhabitants of a region to the north of what was the northernmost extent of the Burmese kingdom *par excellence*,¹⁰⁴ Bagan. Just as the form determines the perception regardless of its content, the *Tarup* were always seen as *Tarup* whether they were Nanzhao, Mongol, Yunnanese, Ming Chinese, Turks, or any other. However one important point which makes a group *Tarup*, and

¹⁰³ Song Lian, *Yuan Shi*, vol. 210, p. 1423; see also appendix of Wade, ‘An Annotated Translation of the *Yuan shi* account of Mian (Burma)’.

¹⁰⁴ *Par excellence* not in terms of territorial expanse, but rather with relation to the importance of the Buddha’s religion epitomized in the monuments and by association to the genealogy of kingship. Presumably later Burmese kingdoms such as the second Hanthawati of Bayinnaung and Konbaung Burma amassed greater areas for their empires.

not Maw Shan or another ethnic minority, is that the space where the *Tarup* are is “other”, beyond the boundary and suzerainty of Burma. In this sense there is a perception of an imagined boundary which may not be clearly marked by either military outposts or natural environmental features.

The observation that a number of the Burmese chroniclers’ accounts of the *Tarup* are corroborated by Chinese historical sources suggests that the Burmese chronicles can be treated as valid primary historical records for this particular type of information. Similar to most other primary sources, a researcher must exercise discretion in the use of these documents, often checking them against other contemporary sources, including those of external origins or more established traditions such as the Chinese histories. Even though Burmese chronicles of the 18th and 19th centuries still contain descriptions which celebrate and possibly exaggerate the glory of former Burmese kings and their courts, there remain sufficient narrative descriptions of activities, events, and personages which can prove important in filling the gaps of knowledge which still exist in the relatively barren field of Burmese history,¹⁰⁵ especially in the case of Burmese-“Chinese” relations via the borderlands of Yunnan and Shan areas.

¹⁰⁵ Other than in areas such as religion and politics, research in Burma, particularly on subjects pertaining to the early periods of Burmese history, remain scant compared to other Southeast Asian countries, except perhaps Laos.