

## Introduction

There are 2,058 pages of Royal Orders passed by King Badon (1782-1819) alone and this part is the last of the four (IV, V, VI and VII) given to his reign. He ruled for thirty seven years and most of the Orders he passed were more or less routine. Except for the fact that there is a wealth of details in these Orders regarding some events on which the chronicles are silent, they tell us nothing but the king's love of detail. He wanted, of course, the best of information in everything and he wanted things done properly. This eventually led him to start a religious reformation and introduce a new calendar and that finally brought in life and zest to the big pile of Orders that he passed in all these thirty seven years of his reign. Except *Bui:toau Bhura: Ayuwada: King Badon's Attitude on Buddhism in Burma*, (now in the Library of Archaeological Department of Burma, dated 23 May 1818 and appended to ROB 22 March 1807 in this collection) there is nothing written about this in the chronicles. This reformation is a very interesting and important episode in Burma because the king himself tried to start the reformation and he was correct in most cases, he failed to achieve his aims. The opposition he met was immense though tacit. When he started his attempts to change the religious beliefs and practices or to ignore the later innovations by going back to the prescriptions given in the religious texts supposed to be original and therefore most authoritative the monks only said that they follow their teachers who could trace their lineage to the Buddha. In fact he was alone in his opinion that the Buddha himself would not recognize his religion as practiced in Burma at that time because of many innovations. At first it seems that he would succeed and in spite of the fact that he never gave up his attempts, he realized that his endeavours to keep the Buddhist way of life as it was in the time of the Buddha, although he did not say it this way, would not have a lasting effect. There are some Royal Orders suggesting his acknowledgement of defeat as he allowed people to do anything in the way they like best, he also maintained on the other hand that he too would go his own way in the first place and secondly he expressed his hope that people would eventually study old original works on religion, etc. and correct themselves by conforming to his ways. He sent missions to central India to collect old and original works on both religion and non-religious texts. (There is a manuscript called *Majjhimadesa Are:toaupum: Central India Affairs*, on these missions in the India Office Library. For texts imported from India see Than Tun: "The Influence of Occultism in Burmese

History with Special Reference to Bodawpaya's Reign 1782-1819", *Bulletin of the Burma Historical Commission*, I, II, December 1960, 117-145).

The king's first concern, when he usurped the throne on 11 February 1782 was to establish himself firmly on the throne with a solemn promise that he would like any other Burmese king support the Buddha's Religion as much as possible. Two important Orders that he passed within the first month of his ascendancy evidenced his determination to be a good Buddhist king. One Order says :

- (1) There shall be no making, selling and consumption of any kind of intoxicant drink or inhaling a stimulent drug in the entire kingdom.
- (2) There shall be no big game hunting in the entire kingdom.
- (3) There shall be no gambling of any kind in the entire kingdom.
- (4) Resume the time announcements by the beating of drums from the usual places where special drums for this purpose are kept.
- (5) Check all weight, capacity and length measures and fix a seal to every one of these things or instruments used in measuring to verify that it agrees with the standards. (ROB 20 February 1782)

Then another Order says :

Monks called Kyeik Ban Daing, Thawutthi, Sipa and Htandabin are not living like real monks.

- (1) Kyaik Ban Daing shall change to wearing only white robes and he shall be exiled to Gangaw and Talaw.
- (2) Send Thawutthi, Sipa and Htandabin, each to one of the four (big) forests. (ROB 10 March 1782)

The people were told to keep the five silas and lead a Buddhist way of life (ROB 5 April 1784) during the three months of the Buddhist Lent (ROB 17 June 1784) as well in months after the Lent (ROB 21 August 1787) and the ordained monks to obey the Vinaya (ROB 31 May 1814 and ROB 10 July 1810). Lecture courses on the Vinaya were started (ROB 10 March 1782 and ROB 12 March 1784). There were also religious examinations to test how well the teachers could teach the Buddhist scriptures and how well the pupils could understand the lessons (ROB 24 May 1784). The examinations were made in three grades and the curriculum was defined (ROB 8 July 1785). After two successive failures in the examination the candidate had to leave the monkhood with a tattoo mark on one of his ribs to signify that he was a drop out (ROB 9 October 1787) and his teacher would also leave the monkhood with a similar tattoo mark on his rib (ROB 11 October 1787). Later the king also asked the local leaders of monasteries in the provinces

to come to the capital to sit in the examination (ROB 12 October 1787, ROB 17 October 1787 and ROB 28 October 1787).

Eventually there appeared cases where poor students passed the examination (ROB 31 May 1810) and not all the religious teachers were qualified in teachership. This is the first of his bitter defeats that the king experienced in his endeavour to help the Religion. When a monk could not live in the way approved by his associates, it was considered best for him to leave the monkhood. If he did not leave voluntarily, the king passed an Order to do so (ROB 15 March 1788, ROB 18 March 1788, ROB 28 June 1795, ROB 6 July 1799, ROB 20 July 1801, 22 July 1801, ROB 23 July 1801, ROB 27 December 1807 and ROB 31 May 1810). There were also cases when a monk was found guilty of either one of the four parajikas or major crimes and then he lost his monkhood. (The crimes are 1/ having any homo- and or hetero- sexual realtions, 2/ having stolen property worth more than Ks 5.00, 3/ having committed homicide and 4/ claiming arantship)

(ROB 10 March 1782 and ROB 2 October 1810). For every monk it is important that he is not causing monks to be divided into different sects. Once a dispute was started on the style of wearing the robe. One group said that a monk would be allowed to leave the premises of his monastery in just a casual way of using his robe to cover only his left shoulder (Atin) but another group maintained that he should go in the most formal way of covering both shoulders (Ayon). The two groups met in a debate and Atin was defeated (ROB 3 January 1782, ROB 21 April 1784, ROB 23 April 1784, ROB 25 April 1784, ROB 26 April 1784, ROB 27 April 1784 and ROB 28 August 1784). Then there were the Zoti sect (ROB 15 July 1783) and other sects (ROB 8 July 1810) which were labelled downright heretical and therefore they were suppressed (ROB 17 July 1783, ROB 8 September 1783 and ROB 8 July 1810). The King claimed that there was only one Buddhism in his realm on 28 August 1784 (ROB 28 August 1784) but there remained some elements of schism that he had to wait some more years to eliminate them completely (ROB 15 July 1811). Although there were no records left to say what were thier beliefs and practices because they were all burnt (ROB 6 July 1799), we still have a vague idea that these so called hereics tried nothing new. They simply wanted Buddhism in its simplest form. The Buddha had given the way to nirvana and they did not want the monks as the middlemen. When a man has renounced the world and turned himself into a mendicant, he would not bother what kind of robe he uses or in which style that he puts it on if he has one. As a matter of fact

he does not have to ask anybody's permission to become a beggar nor he has to promise anyone that he would not commit any carnal sins, nor he has to care about these mundane things while he meditates. The king himself was talking like that soon. At first he accepted the idea that a new candidate to monkhood needed a good teacher to teach him the ways of a monk and therefore he agreed to have ordination halls built (ROB 25 July 1787) and committee of elders appointed to receive new members in the Order of Monks and that committee to appoint an elder to become uppajaya to a new monk. The line of teachers in all important monastic establishments were checked (ROB 15 July 1801, ROB 17 October 1805 and ROB 3 September 1806). A guardian of the Religion was appointed to do the over all supervision on monks and to do the propagation and extension of the Buddha's Religion (ROB 27 June 1786, ROB 19 March 1787, ROB 7 March 1788, ROB 1 May 1806 and 30 September 1806). In order to send Buddhist missions to outlying places of the kingdom, missionary trainings were started (ROB 12 March 1784, ROB 15 June 1784, ROB 3 October 1787 and 3 January 1788).

From about the 11th century AD large areas of cultivable land had been given to religion. Some establishments fell into ruin and their land became the king's land in several cases.

Land had been dedicated to various religious establishments by kings of the olden times. From some land so dedicated, the agricultural produce was for the religious establishment but from others, it was the tax of the land that was meant for the religion. The dedications were usually recorded by inscriptions on stones. Sometimes the records would be lost. Sometimes the establishment would be in ruins. In any case, it becomes increasingly difficult to know how much of the religious land has passed unwittingly as king's land.

- (1) All local chiefs shall report the extent of religious land in the areas under their charge with the help of people who would know their existence through some kind of dealing with these lands from several generations before them.
- (2) Collect the dues and taxes from such lands and give them to Mahadan Wun - Religious Affairs Officer, to keep them safe for use on religion only (ROB 24 March 1783).

Then the king asked the Supreme Leader of the Buddhist Order of Monks eleven questions regarding the religious land (ROB 27 July 1785). With

reference to religious texts, the answers are :

- (1) The king alone owned all land in his kingdom.
- (2) No one of his subjects could own land.
- (3) A person who is nominally called land owner is simply the one who has the king's permission to use a certain portion land in the kingdom.
- (4) A land owner giving away his land to religion means that he transfers the king's permission to use that land to a religious establishment or he gives the yearly produce of that land for maintenance of the religion.
- (5) When a certain religious establishment fell into ruin, management of the land was given to a nearest existing religious establishment in the locality.
- (6) A person working in a religious land shall give whatever dues he is supposed to give to the religion to a nearest religious establishment when the one to which he usually gave fell into ruin.
- (7) When there were no one to look after the land of a ruined religious establishment anyone is free to take or use the fruits of that land (though someone is expected to take the initiative and put that land under the care of a nearest religious establishment.)
- (8) Although there usually were instructions as to how much of the dues from the land should be used for food of the chief monk, food of the student monks, lamps at the pagoda, repairs of the monuments, etc. it is generally understood that the dues are for the maintenance of the religion.
- (9) The king does not knowingly take back a religious land.
- (10) Land once given to the religion shall remain so even when the king who gave it died.
- (11) Even though certain rules were not observed in the giving of a land to religion, the transfer is considered legal.

The king accepted all these points without question and started rededication of land to religion where former religious establishments were no longer in existence or no records were left of the former dedications (ROB 22 August 1785). He even have new stone inscriptions made for the dedications (24 June 1793, *Konbaungzet II 1967*, 88).

On slaves of the religion, the king's attitude was very precise and

clear.

- (1) Servants of the religion remain so forever and that includes their descendants (ROB 28 January 1795 \*16)
- (2) All children of a marriage union when one parent is a servant of the religion shall become servants of the religion without exception (ROB 28 January 1795 \*16).
- (3) Both the servant of the religion who wants to escape slavery and any one who helps him or her shall be punished (ROB 11 December 1806 and ROB 2 January 1807).
- (4) Man born of a slave mother cannot become a monk (ROB 28 January 1795 \*16)
- (5) No servant of the king shall become a monk (ROB 30 March 1810).

Strictly from religious view, anyone can renounce the world and become a mendicant and therefore the king was just reiterating the later restrictions that the customs of the people considered necessary. The King also felt that monks allowed much laxity in observing the Vinaya and the people did not respect their own social rules (ROB 18 April 1811). On the other hand he would encourage men becoming monks without the usual ordination service (ROB 9 August 1812, ROB 12 August 1812 and ROB 25 August 1812) and men observing sila without giving the promise to do so to a monk (ROB 3 December 1807). From the time that the King decided to help the propagation of the religion, he knew that he needed many copies of the Pitaka. So they were copied by scribes who were assigned to do just the copying without any other work (ROB 30 June 1783, ROB 30 June 1784, ROB 5 July 1784, ROB 6 February 1785, ROB 20 September 1785, ROB 25 September 1785 and ROB 24 December 1785). It became important to standardize the spelling (ROB 14 December 1785) and to determine the style of script (ROB 29 December 1785). An editorial board was appointed (ROB 29 December 1785) to check the copies made. That eventually led the king to contemplate seriously on the authority of these Pitaka texts. No one could say who checked the first copy made according to tradition by Buddhaghosa in Srilanka and brought to Burma (ROB 22 April 1807, ROB 29 March 1807 and ROB 23 March 1818). There might be omissions as well as additions. If religious texts were directly imported from central or northern India, it would be much better (ROB 10 July 1810). The Burmese court had also adopted many Brahmanical rites as well as the Indian calendar and the king wanted to check the Brahmanical beliefs and practices in Burma with the texts from India. Missions were sent to India

to get the necessary works. Scholars were also invited to come and help the translations (ROB 30 April 1810 and ROB 12 October 1810). The King in this way began to have some misgiving on the Burmese translations of the Pitaka (ROB 22 March 1801, ROB 31 May 1810 and 23 May 1818). He invited learned monks to Min Gun where he resided often, to discuss religion (ROB 22 March 1807, ROB 5 December 1807, ROB 19 December 1807, ROB 7 January 1811, ROB 12 January 1811, ROB 13 January 1811, ROB 16 January 1811, ROB 30 January 1811, ROB 21 October 1811, ROB 26 December 1811 and ROB 23 May 1818). In one of the Royal Orders we find this :

Pali Daw - Original Texts in Pali of the Buddha's Religion, have been edited with much care to exclude later additions; in some sections of the commentaries which are part Pali and part Burmese, His Majesty was of the opinion that a few ideas or expressions given in Burmese needed reconsideration; why did scholars of all generations before had ignored these? (ROB 22 March 1807)

A few years later the king began to doubt the authenticity of the so-called Original Texts in Pali.

Royal Preceptors made (frequent) references to the Buddhist Religious Texts in their treatise (on religion); these texts are in fact the copies made by Buddhaghosa from Sri Lankan copies; according to the life story of Buddhaghosa, he happened to have a great conceit and it was not unlikely that he made much additions or omissions in his copy; Royal Preceptors shall submit a note of their opinion on it (ROB 30 December 1811).

Next the king gave several reasons why he was reluctant to accept the Buddhism of Pagan as the best conceivable form of Buddhism.

The king in his desire to get men and monks do things properly in accordance with either the Pitaka in religious affairs or in the Vedas in non-religious affairs, taught them for several years, unfortunately they failed to learn from him. (Buddhism reached central Burma first and spread to places south) where Thayaykhittaya (Sriksetra) was the centre under twenty seven Buddhist kings; from there it spread to Pagan where forty one kings ruled; nevertheless there is a popular story that Anawyatha (was the first to) introduce Buddhism (in Pagan with the help of Shin Arahan

from Thaton) of the Talaings; religious works taken from there by Anawyatha would not be either old enough or authorative enough and therefore Anawyatha was wrong to rely on them and start a new religion in Pagan; kings of Pagan, Myin Zaing, Sagaing, Pinya and Ava followed Anawyatha and they all went wrong; all the successive religious teachers would know it and they should try somehow or other to correct it but they failed to do so; in the time of Nyaung Yan ten kings, Thalun 1633-1648, collected all available Buddhist literature and allowed monks to be ordained as it was introduced by Anawyatha and Araham and to hold religious examinations annually, but he also allowed all other sects of Buddhism to carry on with their own ways; they would be doing one or several of the following:

Beating the Drum	Si Ti
Binding the Breast	(Yin Hpwe)
Burning Incense / Turning Lantern	Mi Hnet
Burying the Dead	Ma Tha Lite
Covering Both Shoulders with Robe	Ayon
Covering only the Left Shoulder with Robe	Atin
Holding Tarpaulin	Ta La Bat Kaing
Hanging Robe from Shoulder	(Du Gote Tin)
Living in Forest	Taw Gyaung
Living in Village	Gamavasi
Offering to Various Deities	Pwe Gyaung
Originating in Ton Village	Ton (Atin)
Painting the Face	(Say Yay)
Putting on Cap	(Ta La ButHsaung)
Putting on Hat	Ok Htote Hsaung
Racing Boat	(Hlay Hlaw)
Reading Horoscope	(Bay Din Haw)
Tattooing	(Gwin Hto)
Wrestling	(Let Hpway That);

(like Thalun 1633-1648) the king considered it best to allow monks and men to fall back into their old ways that their teachers had prescribed for them; he would let Pyay Ywa Da Lay Shi Mye Shi Aung Kyat Kyat Ti Ti Si Yin - Customs of Capital and Villages shall be maintained



very strictly; the monks would have the 'Anawyatha way' or Kyint Lo Tha Hmya Kyint Saung - Any Other Way that they fancy; the men shall build monasteries for any monk of any sect; hold the ordination service, noviation ceremony, etc. as usual and the ministers shall see to the fact that this Order is followed explicitly; send this Order to all provincial chiefs in the kingdom. (ROB 7 August 1817)

With the order mentioned above one would assume that the king admitted defeat (see also ROB 24 September 1808, ROB 23 July 1810 and ROB 28 May 1817). But he was only careful not to directly that there was no more of the Buddha's Religion in his kingdom. In one order he said :

Learned monks shall elaborate on five causes leading to the extinction of the Buddha's Religion. (ROB 29 March 1807)

The five are :

- (1) Buddhist text would have many adulterations
- (2) new students would not have any chance to learn Buddhism from its original texts
- (3) there are no more eminent teachers of Buddhism
- (4) Buddhist leaders would only try to acquire funds to enrich themselves and
- (5) there appeared many sects quarrelling among themselves.

He even pointed out that there is no scriptural support to maintain that Buddhism would last for five thousand years. (ROB 5 October 1806) The Buddhism that he believed was summed up in a record dated 23 May 1818 (attached to ROB 22 March 1807). According to it the cessation of suffering even if it were for a few moment is nirvana. The king knew that the monks would never agree to this way of thinking because they had never been encouraged to think or say differently from their masters. The monks on the other hand admitted that they know the mistakes in the Burmese translation of some part of the Pali scriptures and their commentaries but they never had the courage to correct them which were in existence long before their time. Then the king pointed out to them some of their practices that he thought ridiculous. A sham of sending the boy to a monastery for noviation with all solemn ceremonies has become very important. No ordination service is really necessary when a man wants to renounce the world and becomes a mendicant. Nor it is necessary to tell him to use any particular dress or style to put it on while he meditates. To determine how he should be dressed when he leaves his place to beg for

food, etc. is also superfluous. It is certainly not the dress that would help a man to go the way of the Buddha. It is superfluous too for a man to go before a monk because he wants to keep a promise not to kill, etc. He must do it by himself. He alone is responsible to keep the sila even if it has been extended from five to as many as ten promises. This attitude would be extended to a monk who would have many rules to observe according to the Vinaya. Finally the king was of the opinion that the monks did not understand the Pitaka well in order to follow it explicitly. (ROB 18 April 1811). He asked the monks eleven problems and told them to consider them very seriously. In this way he was indirectly persuading them to come around to his views. After having considered all these points we find that the king was sincere in his attempts on religious reformation and he was far in advance of his time in his way of thinking. The opposition was tacit but strong. After his death his reforms were forgotten except some stray references as to how the religion suffered through some recent whimsical reforms (see Salin Sayadaw : *Parit Kri Nissaya*, 285).

Most of the Royal Orders were good only in the time of the king who passed them; but there certainly are many that have been used by later kings. The Royal Orders of lasting influence fall under three categories:

- (1) those bearing on the religious attitude on everyday life of the people,
- (2) those trying to interpret or reinterpret some part of the customary law and
- (3) those defining some aspect of administrative procedure.

One of the earliest known Royal Orders of Burma was inscribed on a stone with date 6 May 1249. It was expected to be in use for many years to come. Unfortunately the dynasty fell by the end of the thirteenth century and it was forgotten before it was fifty years old. But its tenets are still respected.

Listen with great care to this proclamation because it is in conformity with the teachings of the Buddha as well as the orders passed by ancient kings. Give the most severe punishments to those who are guilty of theft and robbery. The king wants to be magnanimous but one good example could stop others from becoming bad. Therefore some punishments are necessary. No one could escape punishment for doing any of these hideous crimes because no one is going to escape hell in his next life for his misdeeds in this present life.

Live a good and moral life.

Every village of more than fifty houses must have one stone inscription pillar of this proclamation. Once in a fortnight all villagers (including those from small villages where there are no such inscription stones of this proclamation) shall come to a site where this Order inscribed on stone is kept to listen the Headman reading it (ROB 6 May 1249).

An order of social behaviour based on religion would also have a lasting use; for example :

During the Buddhist Lent (May to September) everyone shall not even think of doing the following ten

(*Akusalakammapha*) courses of immoral acts:

- life-taking
- theft
- sensual misbehaviour
- lying
- slander
- harsh language
- frivolous talk
- covetousness
- ill-will and
- wrong views;

those who would indulge in doing these courses of immoral act will never be able to free themselves from (*samsara* - chain of rebirths) and those who abstain from doing them will attain nirvana the ultimate bliss. (ROB 29 May 1817)

Damathat is the name of Burmese customary law and when it was first reduced to writing in about the later half of the thirteenth century, it was supposed to be written in Pali because that was the language of the learned. The original was lost and there is a Burmese translation of it though it had been revised and enlarged several times so that it would be very difficult to say how much of it still remains true to its first rendering into Burmese. *Manu* was believed to be the law giver and sooner or later the name *Manu* became analogous to a work on law called Damathat. Thus *Manu Yin* is the original Dhamathat and *Manu Kye* becomes a work which explained the Damathat. *Manothaya Shwe Myin* is the digest

of law in a gold-edged notebook. Judges were told to make a good study of these Damathats (ROB 19 August 1758) and pleaders were warned to confine their arguments within the framework of Damathat. (ROB 29 April 1769) A judge however was told to be careful in using the Damathat. The Order says :

A judge should use the Damathat to determine the punishment though he should remember the fact that there are the differences of time and place between the case cited as an example in the Damathat and the case for which he would now be passing a judgement. (ROB 23 June 1607).

On various works of Damathat, the order of importance was determined as follows :

When a plaint is made at a court, the judges shall consult *Manu Damathat* first. If that is not sufficient, use *Manothaya Shwe Myin* in four parts. If further reference is necessary, use *Kainza Manu Yaza* which was compiled in the time of our ancestors; in another words precedence shall be taken into consideration in making a decision. (ROB 21 June 1814)

In matters of inheritance the Damathat is generally good for common people but it is not applicable to hereditary chiefs and the king's men in the fighting forces. (ROB 11 August 1692) There is however an Order that could be used to supplement the Damathat. It says :

In addition that various Damathats disagree (in some aspects of law), (*sic*) the original *Manu Kye - Manu Explained* has never been brought (into this country , it is therefore recommended to use) *Amain Daw Tan Gyi - Great Royal Orders* (ROB 28 January 1795). If there were no judgements that could be used as precedence on some particular type of dispute, etc., decision shall be made on the aggregate of the four major works of Damathat , viz. *Mano Thaya Shwe Myin - Digest of Manu in Gold-Edged Notes* in four parts. (ROB 31 May 1817).

In fact there are four notable *Amain Daw Tan Gyi - Great Royal Orders* (ROB 19 June 1368, ROB 29 April 1597, ROB 27 April 1691 and ROB 28 January 1795) that would have an ever lasting effect on administration of justice as well as the administrative system in Burma. King Taya Hpya III (Min Gyi Swa Saw Ke 1367-1400) was the first king who passed an Order that had been used by his successors.

Ministers, Assistant Ministers and Deputy Ministers should see that the following points are taken care of in the execution of various aspects of administration :

- ( 1) Officers are appointed to maintain law and order.
- ( 2) Officers are expected to be well versed in the affairs of state so that they might not do anything detrimental to the interest of the king, the royal family and the state. (On the other hand) they are given the permission to remonstrate the king if necessary.
- ( 3) Officers of the Interior are solely responsible for the Palace Defence and they are expected to act as the King's Eyes and Ears. Righteousness should be the guiding principle in the execution of all their state functions.
- ( 4) Guards of the Palace are to be on duty for twenty four hours a day and they must be very sharp in detecting spies or enemies coming into the precincts of the Palace.
- ( 5) Personnel of All the Armed Forces must be loyal and courageous but they are discouraged to be exceedingly ruthless and cruel.
- ( 6) Officer-in-Charge of the Capital City has the jurisdiction over the area within ten miles radius of the City and he is held responsible to keep this area free of burglars, thieves, robbers, rapists and arsonists. His duty is to safeguard life and property.
- ( 7) Officers-in-Charge of other towns and villages must help the people to work and prosper. They are to use arbitration to mitigate a serious offence and forget a small one. They should keep taxes and revenue in the minimum.
- ( 8) Group Leaders of All Groups in the Service of the King including palace menial servants should take care that they do their duties with efficiency.
- ( 9) Secretarial Staff of Palace. i.e. Bye Daik and Hluttaw, should be prompt in their work but they are to be civil in all their public dealings.
- (10) In dealing with the Vassala, civility is again the

catchword.

- (11) Boundary demarcations are always to be respected and each chief of an administrative unit must have a record of the extent of the area under his control.
- (12) Any act of treason should be dealt with promptness though thorough investigations are necessary before punishment. Keep the people happy is the slogan.
- (13) Provincial Chiefs must bring customary tributes to the King on the first day of the ninth month (Nadaw) of the Burmese calendar and failing to do so would be taken as an act of rebellion.
- (14) Vigilance is the keynote of all officers and men under the king. (ROB 19 June 1368)

When a person started a new dynasty like King Nyaung Yan 1600-1606, he would be anxious to have a good administration established as quickly as possible and he knew that he must have had the service of good and able men as ministers to do that. So he told the ministers as follows and an order like this would be respected in the reigns of his successors too.

Ministers now appointed shall do the following :

- ( 1) Give the King all kinds of useful information.
- ( 2) Look after the interest of the King exclusively.
- ( 3) Work full-time on state affairs.
- ( 4) Help the people whenever help is necessary.
- ( 5) Try to mitigate crimes like theft and arson.
- ( 6) Administer punishment in proportion to the extent of the crime committed.
- ( 7) Report the King on the ability or success on men in the subordinate services.
- ( 8) Report on the efficiency of all the King's officers.
- ( 9) Aid the people according to the needs of their respective classes.
- (10) Give provisions, etc. to the King's officers who are in need of them.
- (11) Supply the necessary equipments or the insignias of rank to all officers.
- (12) Take measures at all times to prevent crimes like robbery and rape.
- (13) Quote the precedent as to what punishment should be given for what crime and advice the King on giving

Judgements.

- (14) Dissuade people who have a love for crime from doing anything bad.
- (15) Take no bribes.
- (16) Suppress anger during the trial of any case.
- (17) Try to discover truth before a judgement is made.
- (18) Take care not to be unduly influenced by clever lawyers.
- (19) Pass a judgement so that each party gets what it deserves.
- (20) Check the seating plan on the Audience Day so that each courtier sits in his own place wearing his proper ceremonial dress which should be in good condition.
- (21) Molest no young women.
- (22) Have a correct behaviour at all time.
- (23) Dismiss from office anyone guilty of corruption or negligence of duty.
- (24) Observe the five silas everyday.
- (25) Extend *metta* to the King.
- (26) Extend *metta* to all creatures.
- (27) Try to do meritorious deeds as often as possible.
- (29) Mitigate the big offence and forget the small one.
- (30) Take half of the gifts received and send the other half to the King's stores.
- (31) Send the taxes, dues, revenues, custom duties, etc. promptly on the first day of every month to the King's treasury or granary as the case may be.
- (32) Wait from ten to thirty days before a prisoner is given the punishment meant for him and report the execution of the punishment to the King.
- (33) Recommend promotions.
- (34) Know the King's pleasures and displeasures.
- (35) Keep the state secrets well.
- (36) Keep the promises well.
- (37) Act like a gardener nursing the trees or weeding the unwanted plants in matters of state projects.
- (38) Get the best people to guard the King.
- (39) Do nothing detrimental to the interest of the King.
- (40) Do not give much favour to one's wife.
- (41) Seek time to improve oneself by learning from or

discussing with learned men.

- (42) Sleep only one third of the night time in each night.
  - (43) Try to follow the thirty two virtues of a good and wise man.
  - (44) Keep away personal interests when one is on state duty.
  - (45) Suppress heresy.
  - (46) Check frequently to detect misappropriations.
  - (47) Keep proper account of revenue, etc.
  - (48) Keep proper account of palace expenditures.
  - (49) Report account discrepancies immediately.
  - (50) Give the ministers insignias befitting their rank.
- (ROB 29 April 1597)

King Thalun 1633-1648 had another set of instructions given to his ministers and officers and they would also serve as a guide in the administration in the following reigns.

- ( 1) Suppress bribery and corruption.
- ( 2) Avoid unnecessary exaction of taxes.
- ( 3) Observe the moral precepts.
- ( 4) Enlist only

courageous and loyal men as soldiers,  
honest and thrifty men as keepers of treasury,  
intelligent and tactful men as diplomats,  
resourceful and efficient men as administrators,  
just and humane men as judges,  
clever and observant men as crime investigators,  
learned and wise men as the King's councillors,  
most learned men in astrology as astrologers,  
most experienced men in the art of war as generals,  
best men in the treatment of illness as physicians,  
best men in the art of espionage as spies and  
best men in all branches of arts and sciences as the  
King's advisers (in some special programmes).

With the help of all these people the King would be able to maintain law and order in the kingdom and like a Guardian God of the World, he would bring peace and prosperity to all his subjects. (ROB 8 June 1655)

King Pyay 1661-1672 passed an order to collect old records and to get the collection complete in 1665. (ROB 24 May 1664)



It is very important that members of each group serving the king either as Su Gyi - Armed Men, or Su Cha - Foreign Armed Men, or Su Nu - Artisans, or Su Gyan - Menial Labourers, shall remain in his or her own group. The following Amain Daw Tan Gyi - Great Royal Order (ROB 27 April 1691) started this drive to keep men in his correct place and successive kings also continued to follow this example.

- ( 1) The servants of the King are divided into high, middle and low grades. With bribes, however, some succeeded in getting themselves transferred to a higher group. Check the servants of the King by the 1685 Register and correct the discrepancies.
- ( 2) Update the register of (143) fighting forces.
- ( 3) The children of intergroup marriages shall be divided as usual by the custom of 'boys go with father while girls stay with mother'.
- ( 4) For the children of intergroup marriages between the above (143) groups with (27) groups given below, all children remain with the (27) if anyone of their parents comes from the (27). This rule must be followed for all children born on or before 1685.
- ( 5) For children of intergroup marriages between (27) groups, the old custom of 'boys go with father while girls remain with mother' prevails.
- ( 6) The general principle in the division of children in an intergroup marriage now adopted is :
  - a. where the parents are of the same class (of servants) the old custom of 'boys go with father while girls remain with mother' prevails, but
  - b. where one of the parents belong to a lower class, all children without exception stay with the parent of the lower class, though
  - c. divisions made before 1685 remain undisturbed, and
  - d. in a marriage of slave and free person, where the father is free, two third of the children go free and where the mother is free, all daughters go free and all sons remain slaves. (ROB 27 April 1691)

There is another order that explains more clearly how to keep members of each group intact.

According to the Record of 19 April 1323, land given to

(men of the fighting forces) remained intact though the groups do not have their former strength in men. Trace the lost men in each group (i.e. find out who died, who were transferred and who absconded). Punish those who harbour the recalcitrants. One hundred lashes is the punishment. Reorganize the groups so that only the descendants of the original members of the group are in each particular group. Groups are of high, middle and low grades and neither a man of low grade could go up nor a high man come down. Tet Thet (Up or Down) is disallowed. (ROB 11 May 1692)

The jurisdiction of Myo Za - Noble who holds a town in fief, and Myo Gaing - Holder of Town, are determined and some points in the Damathat are clarified :

- ( 1) A noble who holds a town in fief shall try cases of theft and hand over the guilty person after the trial to the officer in charge of the town for punishment.
  - ( 2) As the city area has been defined, so shall the town (and village) areas defined.
  - ( 3) In the case of murder where a man was killed by more than one man, compensation for the dead shall be collected from every one involved in the murder.
  - ( 4) Only ministers shall try cases of conspiracy.
- (ROB 21 June 1691)

There are some orders referring to orders passed before by former kings by saying that they are still binding or good. An order in 1692 says :

The Royal Order of 1666 still holds good in determining how much an Athi (native of a place) or an Ala (one parent an outsider) should pay when a new officer takes charge of the town or village administration and how much the officer should exact from each household in raising funds to have his official residence repaired, furnished, etc.

(ROB 13 July 1692)

In fact there are two more important orders in 1666. Another one says :

- ( 1) (In the division of children of an intergroup marriage) follow the custom of 'boys go with father while girls remain with mother' (where the parents are of) groups like artillery, drummer, gardener, gold foil maker, guard, gun, shield, and tailor.

- ( 2) But the children of a union where the mother is a Lamaing -  
Royal Land Cultivator, remain Lamaing.  
(ROB 15 January 1666)

This correction that a king's cultivation group gets all the children of a union in an intergroup marriage when the woman is one of the king's cultivators would be new at that time; perhaps it follows the idea of keeping all children in a religious slave group where one of the parents was a religious slave. Another order in that same year says :

- ( 1) Discourage the slaves of the Royal Family from getting married with other slaves.  
( 2) Make one third of the children slave and two third free when a free woman takes a slave for her husband.  
(ROB 14 June 1666)

This order was passed in the time of King Pyay 1661-1672 but it was considered good by his successor King Wun Be In San 1673-1698 who said :

- ( 1) Service men of (27) groups in palace are not allowed to be ordained in the Buddhist Order of Monks.  
( 2) The children of a union between a palace servant and any other servant shall become only palace servants.  
( 3) As for the children of a union between two palace servants, (each from a different group), the custom of boys go with father while girls stay with mother, shall prevail.  
( 4) Two third of the children of a slave man with a free wife shall be free.  
( 5) Only the sons of a free men and a slave wife shall be free.  
( 6) A service man shall never become a debtor slave.  
( 7) A king's man who tries to hide in the service of a noble or lady shall be returned to his group without delay.  
(ROB 10 April 1679)

A much more clear order was passed later to uphold these points :

- ( 1) Any member of the family of a service man (of 18 groups) are safe from becoming debtor slaves; made some arrangement so that money lenders could get back their money.  
( 2) A child of the union between a servant of the Religion with any slave or free person shall become a servant of the religion without exception.  
( 3) Clerks of various offices in control of palace servants shall make a close watch on palace servants so that none of them

get involved with the servants of the Religion.

(ROB 5 October 1681)

This order of 1681 has its influence even today (though statutorily no slave of any category would be recognized.) People do not want anyone of their children married to a descendant of a religious slave. Local people would not readily forget that a certain family descended from former religious slaves. King Sunday 1714-1733 took this up and passed the following order :

- ( 1) Menial labourers employed in palace are not allowed to be ordained as Buddhist monks.
- ( 2) Children of intergroup marriages where the groups are of 'with father while girls stay with mother'.
- ( 3) Children of intergroup marriages where the groups are not of the same class, shall belong to the lower class.
- ( 4) Children of intergroup marriages where one of the parents is a servant of the Religion, shall belong to the Religion from the time when the Royal Order on Division of Children in Intergroup Marriages was passed on (sic.) 15 October 1666. [5 October 1681]
- ( 5) Two third of the children of a slave father are free.
- ( 6) Only the brother of a deceased Myin Zi - Chief of Horsemen, shall take the place of his late brother.
- ( 7) The price of a slave is doubled when another man wants him while the price is halved when it is proved that his master is cruel.
- ( 8) A redemption is permissible only when the master agrees to accept the money and let the slave go free.
- ( 9) Fees to summon evidences at court are fixed.
- (10) Only one branch of a line of headman in a village is recognized to succeed the office of a headman.
- (11) An officer when appointed to take charge of a village or town is permitted to raise funds to build a suitable residence. (ROB 8 June 1728)

In addition to these evidences where some orders that corrected certain part of old customs were used by successive kings, we also have an order saying that very old orders could not be used any more though recent ones must be copied and kept for reference. It says :

- ( 1) The Royal Orders of earlier periods are ambiguous; ignore them.

( 2) Collect the Royal Orders of only these four kings, viz. King Thalun 1638-1618, King Pindale 1648-1661, King Pyay 1661-1672 and King Narawara 1672-1673 and use them (from now onward) in all relevent cases of the state. (ROB 5 October 1681)

King Badon 1782-1819 passed an order (ROB 28 January 1795) that would be used by his successors as a manual of administration. He recommended taking the cue from these Jataka stories in passing some judgements or to follow the advices given in them for administration. The Jatakas of his choice are :

Abbhantara	281
Asampadana	131
Ubhatobhattha	139
Kanha	29
Kanhadipayama	444
Kulavaka	31
Gamani-canda	257
Cullapaduma	193
Dubbhapuppha	400
Nakkhatta	49
Namdivisala	28
Pabbatupatthara	195
Bhojajaniya	23
Mahaummagga	546
Mahahamsa	534
Rathalatthi	332
Rajovada	151
Sarabhanga	522
Supatta	292
Susima	163

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Next he prescribed the use of works on law and customs before a judgement was passed. To use only the standard weight and measure and to use the best silver as medium of exchange was considered very important too. He also prescribed the standard land measure called Pe by having two model plots , one for Bagadi Pe (1.75 acre) and another for Min Pe (3.5 acres). The model plots are still in existence in Mandalay near the Chan Mya Thazi airport. Boundary demarcations for religious land, royal land and administrative area are to be respected once they were fixed and the

record of these boundary limits were kept in palace archives. In all land disputes, these records were referred. The register of common folks as well as register of religious servants, king's servants and slaves are to be updated and various communities should be checked so that men or women who lived in a group where he or she did not belong would be sent back to his or her respective group. Land were given to king's men as Nay Myay - Land to live, and Loke Myay - Land to cultivate, and they all must live and work only in places given to them. Dues collected at toll gates must be only in the amount that they had always been collected. Prostitution was legal when authorised.

Gambling was permissible when there were no cheatings. Divorces were discouraged and right of primogeniture was recognized. People were advised to learn the lessons on life as given in the Jataka stories and historical works. There shall be no laxity of discipline among the monks. Men had their own rules of conduct and they must follow them to keep a healthy social life. All these things written in one single Royal Order (ROB 29 January 1795) would have a lasting effect in administrative affairs of later reigns and for people until now. Although there is a general impression that the Royal Orders are largely on events that would not be useful to people who were not immediately concerned there are exceptionally useful ones which could be and would be put to good use in all the affairs of state and religion and therefore they are considered as the Royal Orders of lasting value.