

CHAPTER VI

Annexation by Marching Columns

We have seen in the previous chapter how conditions in the Shan States had become chaotic even before Mandalay fell to the forces of General Prendegast and how the situation deteriorated as the result of the abolition of central authority from Mandalay. The Limbin League had not yet made its authority felt even in the whole of the South when Sao On, the usurper Sawbwa of Yawnghwe, sent a letter of appeal for help to the British in Mandalay. In the North, the rivalries between the Myinzaing Prince and the descendants of the ancient House of Hsenwi on the one hand; and between Khun Seng, the influential Sawbwa of Hsipaw, and Khungsang Tonhung, the new master of Hsenwi, on the other, had created similar unsettled conditions as in the South. The proximity of the region to Mandalay, however, made the urgency of the situation felt at headquarters more readily. It was also reported that a caravan of some 1000 loaded pack cattle had been prevented from coming down from the Shan hills to Mandalay by dacoits and unsettled conditions in Hsumhsai. This stoppage of the free flow of trade had touched the nerve centre of British policy. There must be unrestricted trade and communications to help stabilise conditions in the newly-conquered Upper Burma. Only when the shops, pweyons and bazaars were full of merchandise would faith and confidence be created in the new and foreign government.

Thus, occupied though the Chief Commissioner and his military commanders were with affairs and risings in the newly-conquered territory of the plains, it was found imperative that a military column should be sent to Hsumhsai, equally to make a show of British power and to open up the trade route between Mandalay and the Northern Shan States. The columns consisted of 200 men of the 3rd Gurkhas under the command of Colonel E. Stedman, with Mr. H. Thirkell White as its political head. The small force assembled at Pyinulwin and reached Hsumhsai via Nawngsakaw on November 18, 1886. In the Political Officer's staff were two representatives of the Shan ruling families of Tampak and Mawkmai - one of the two men was actually the ex-myosa of Tampak, named Khun Nu, of whom we shall hear more later. These two men were formerly kept as hostages and attached to the Court at Mandalay and, after the British occupation of that city, were employed by the British Commissioner of the Northern Division to take British "Letters of friendship" to various Shan States. White found them

at Zibingale¹ and kept them with him until his return to Mandalay as he found them working well and loyally.

White found the country-side in a state of desolation and this is how he describes the scene at Hsumhsai at the time:

The country was to a great extent deserted; villages had been abandoned, and many inhabitants had fled to the neighbouring States of Mainglon, Thibaw and Yatsauk, but chiefly to Mainglon. Much of the land had been left uncultivated, the road was neglected and overgrown with long grass. These evidences of disorder we saw as we passed through Thonze; and I learned from the people that the rest of the country was the same as that of the part which we saw.

Part of White's task was to install at Hsumhsai a ruler who would be confirmed in his position by the British in return for a pledge to keep law and order among his people. We have seen how Hein Sai of Hsumhsai was an adherent of the Myinzaing faction and how he was fighting with the brother of Hsipaw Sawbwa, Khun Meik, who had claimed the State² at the invitation of Hein Sai himself and Hein Sa. On arrival of the British at Hsumhsai Hein Sai would have nothing to do with them; in fact, he took White's advance messengers to task for serving the British after having been in the service of the Burmese King. All attempts of the British agent to bring together Hein Sai and Khun Meik in order to come to some amicable settlement failed. At one point Khun Nu, ex-myosa of Tampak, was sent as messenger; and to assure Hein Sai of his sincerity and good faith White told him to keep Khun Nu as a hostage until his safe return from the British camp to his own headquarters. Hein Sai refused to come out to meet White, while Khun Meik and his brother, the Sawbwa, sent Amats to see him with friendly messages couched in a conciliatory tone. If only Hein Sai could have known how White favoured him (even without seeing him) as a ruler of Hsumhsai as against Khun Meik, he might have put in a personal appearance which would have immediately secured his confirmation as ruler of Hsumhsai. For some reason White was not in favour of adding Hsumhsai to Hsipaw territory, and he recommended that the Hsipaw troops should be made to withdraw as soon as a British political agent could be appointed to Hsipaw with the support of some British troops! White considered his mission a complete failure in as much as he "was unable to place in power in Hsumhsai a ruler acceptable to the people, able to maintain himself there, and willing to accept his appointment from the British, and to pay a reasonable tribute". Sir Charles Crossthwaite, writing in 1912 on this mission remarked that Mr. White's "view was unnecessarily despondent". The Expedition left Nawngsakaw and Hsumhsai territory on November 25th.²

1. Near Maymyo.

2. Burma Foreign Department Proceeding No. 57, December 18868

One month later, the Chief Commissioner was able to report to India:

Since the return of the force from Thonze Caravans of Shans and Panthays have come down from Thibaw by Thonze route; and replies have now been received from the Sawbwa of Thibaw to letters previously sent by the Chief Commissioner, and to the letters sent to him by the Political Officer from Thonze! The substance of the letter is satisfactory! In more than one of them the Sawbwa recites his obligations to the British Government for the treatment which he received in Rangoon. By one of the messengers who came down from Thibaw, the Sawbwa is reported to have said that he is under great obligations to the British Government because, when his life was forfeited according to their laws, they did not kill him but permitted him to go in peace to his own country. This statement of his sentiments did not contain¹ in so many words in the Sawbwa's letters, but it is in accordance with several passages in them. In the Chief Commissioner's judgment, it is a mark of enlightenment and credible to a man of the Sawbwa's race, position and training that he should recognise that the treatment he received in Rangoon was really magnanimous. It would have seemed not unnatural if the Sawbwa had cherished resentment against the people whose Government had punished him, even mildly, for an act which he himself could not regard as a crime.

In the same letter, the Chief Commissioner also reported that the presence of the Sawbwa's troops in Hsumhsai had the effect of securing peaceful passage of traders, while at the same time the Sawbwa expressed his willingness to withdraw his troops "as soon as a permanent arrangement could be made. The evident desire of the Sawbwa to cultivate the goodwill" of the British made the Chief Commissioner reluctant to call upon the Sawbwa to evacuate Hsumhsai. The Chief Commissioner even stated that if the situation improved by the time a second expedition was sent to Hsumhsai "there would be no objection to the grant of permission to the Sawbwa to continue to administer Thonze." White's recommendations would be carried out only if conditions deteriorated.²

Hsumhsai eventually became part of Hsipaw. Diplomacy and a conciliatory attitude on the part of Khun Seng, the Sawbwa of Hsipaw State, certainly defeated the recommendations of a British Officer "on the spot", who in this case seemed unduly prejudiced against Hsipaw from the beginning. And looking back years later when British rule had become an established fact, there could be no doubt as to which was the more sensible course of action, the Chief Commissioner's action in befriending the Sawbwa and adding Hsumhsai to

1. Sic.

2. Burma Foreign Department Proceeding No! 313, December 1886.

Hsipaw, or Mr. White's recommendation of finding an independent ruler for Hsumhsai.

But Mr. Thirkell White's expedition to Hsumhsai was only in the nature of a foray to remove a barrier to free trade; it was not a major undertaking to establish British rule - not yet. After the Myinzaing Prince's death activities by his faction seemed to have petered out in Hsipaw and the neighbouring state where Sawbwa Khun Seng and his troops were in complete control, and no more was to be heard of Hein Sai. In the State of Hsenwi Sac Nawmong, son of the old Sawbwa Sao Hsengnawhpa, and his friend Saw Yannaing, the Chaunggwa Prince, did not come to grips with their implacable foe, Khunsang Tonhung, until a few months later. The situation in the North at the end of White's mission then seemed tolerably stable for the British not to attempt to station a permanent garrison or a political agent for the time being. Their main attention was directed to the South where the forces of the Limbin League were closing in upon Sao On, the usurper Sawbwa of Yawnghwe, who had sent many appeals of help to the British at Mandalay and the latter had not been slow to take full advantage of the situation. With their promise to help Sao On, the British were fully committed to entering the Shan States; whether as conquerors or merely as suzerain will be unfolded as they advanced. As soon as the monsoon of 1886 came to an end, therefore, the British commenced collecting men and equipment at Hlaingdet in preparation for the major advance into the Shan States, and it is here that we must now turn our attention.

Though the Pyindet Pass had been chosen by the British as the best route to reach Yawnghwe from the central plains of Burma, the roads themselves had not been in use for many months - practically since the fall of Mandalay when the breakdown in the state of law and order seemed complete. All roads traversable for bullocks and carts were blocked on purpose by the Burmese and Shan villagers to prevent cattle raiders from driving away their animals. In many places towards the Pass, the routes were blocked by special orders of Sao Weng, the Sawbwa of Lawksawk on behalf of the Limbin League, to delay the progress of the British forces. Work on the roads was slow because it was not easy to procure labourers to clear and repair the roads so as to make them passable for transport animals and the main body of the force. Even when labourers had been procured, the strenuous nature of the work was such that on December 26th they went on a strike! Entry for that day in Mr. J. G. Scott's diary: "Coolies struck. Had the leaders up and threatened to do heaps of illegal things. Got the fear of death on them and extorted promises never to do any more".¹ On top of these difficulties, the commissariat supplies of the Expedition did not arrive regularly or promptly as planned.

In spite of these delays, however, the Expedition was able to advance earlier than the target date of the 15th January. On the

1. Mitten, G. E., Scott of the Shan Hills, p. 76.

3rd January 1887, Colonel E. Stedman with 200 Gurkhas left Hlaingdet and proceeded to occupy Pyinnyaung in two marches. The column found the road blocked in many places with fallen trees, some of which having been felled on the very morning of the day of its passage.

On the political side, Mr. Hildebrand had not yet arrived at Hlaingdet, but Scott, his assistant and deputy, accompanied the military and spent his time in distributing copies of the Chief Commissioner's proclamation explaining the aims and objects of the Expedition to the Chiefs of the Myelat States and in writing letters in his own name to headmen and prominent persons en-route. Scott also had time to explore the road and get labourers to improve them. Of the military head of the column, Scott writes: "Colonel Stedman of the Gurkhas very energetic. Likely to hurry the expedition up".¹

From Pyinnyaung the column pushed on to Kyatsakan and crossing the Pyindeik Pass occupied Singu on the 20th January. It was harassed ineffectually at many places by men sent by the Sawbwa of Lawksawk. From one of the wounded men captured by the Gurkhas in the scuffle, the British learned that 200 men has been sent down from Pwehla to delay their passage, and that there were 4,000 men awaiting to give battle. But the men who gave trouble to the column were ill-armed and undisciplined and their resistance was more in the nature of pin pricks than anything else. Besides these levies sent down to delay their progress, the British also had to deal with ordinary dacoits who looted the villages through which they passed. When the villagers appealed to them, the troops had to go after the dacoits and in many cases recovered the stolen property or animals. The dacoits were so bold one night as to drive off one of the Expedition's elephants, which however was retrieved soon after.

Parts of the road were spiked with bamboo stakes.

On the 21st January, Hildebrand with the rest of the force at Hlaingdet caught up and joined the advance party at Singu. Before seeing him, Scott wrote in his diary of Hildebrand: "2 January 1887: I am likely to be Assistant Political Officer in Shan States - Hildebrand coming up to be Commissioner. Doosed hard luck. He'll grab all the credit". Later, after Hildebrand's arrival, Scott wrote on the 21st: "Hildebrand bossing. Don't see what I shall do if things go on like this".

On the 27th of January the main body of the British forces advanced as far as Namkhom. Here another feeble attempt was made by the Limbin men to delay them. They fired a few rounds from a distance of 700 yards, and hurled abuse and defiance to reinforce the bullets, but broke up and melted away when a shell was fired at them. This shell killed a nonbelligerent villager whose wife later received as

1. Ibid., p. 77.

compensation Rs. 100/- from Stedman, on advice given by his political colleagues. That seemed to have been the last shots fired by both sides before the British reached Yawnghwe. On the following day, elders and headmen from nearby villages came in to the British camp bringing, as is customary, oranges, bananas, cane sugar slabs and other tokens of friendliness, including charcoal which is still an article to be greatly welcomed on winter nights on the Shan Plateau, especially in the open and windy downs of the Myelat, where the British were then camping.

The British entered Pwehla on the 29th and they were met by the Chief and people including the prominent pongyis outside the town, augering well for their entry! It was here, at Pwehla, that the British discovered that the news of their ally the usurper Sawbwa of Yawnghwe, Sao On, being hard pressed by the Limbin League forces, had been greatly exaggerated and that he was in no immediate danger! With the cause for their haste towards Yawnghwe thus removed, the British decided to take their own time to proceed to Yawnghwe. The halt at Pwehla gave them the excellent opportunity of contacting the Myelat Chiefs who showed willingness to submit. Moreover, they were eager that Sao Weng, the Sawbwa of Lawksawk, should see the futility of resistance and that he should thereby submit peacefully, whereupon they would confirm him in his State! The British offered to settle his differences with the Sawbwa of Yawnghwe, but they insisted that he must first withdraw his forces from his stockade at Kugyo. Messengers were despatched from Pwehla with Hildebrand's letter explaining the situation to the Sawbwa. A reply from Sao Weng was received on the 3rd February to the effect that he did not know the British were coming up, that Sao On was not the rightful Sawbwa but a dacoit and usurper, and that he saw no reason for coming and visiting the British camp. To this reply, the Political Officer despatched on the same day another letter inviting the Sawbwa to meet him at Heho! To this letter, no answer was received.¹ Of the Sawbwa's warlike activities, the British learned from the people of Pindaya that he was levying one man from every house to fight them and that he intended to flee to Mongnai if defeated.²

During this halt at Pwehla some amusing incidents occurred which had much bearing on the prestige and precedence of the new rulers and the ruled. One day when a Chief came to see the Political Officer, Hildebrand, he was given a chair because "he called himself a Sawbwa"! This apparently annoyed the others. On another day, the Chiefs of Pangmi and Loimaw came in with gold umbrellas, but the Political Officers! because of embarrassing experience of the previous occasion, made them sit on the ground. The chair, a common and sensible seat all over Europe, and sat on by every ordinary citizen there, thus became the symbol of "face" and superiority and had contributed in no small degree to some of the bitterness in the rise of nationalism in Burma.

1. Military Report on the Shan States, Intelligence Branch, Q. M. G. Department, Simla, 1905, p. 33.

2. Mitton, G. E., op. cit., p. 79.

The work of the Political Officer was by no means smooth or easy, as can be seen from the following "unofficial view" of his assistant: "The column ... lumbered along in a very slow and stately way, and the Political Officer, who had instructions to avoid fighting if it was in any way possible, sent off numerous letters to the nearest and most powerful of the Chiefs, full of arguments, promises and veiled threats". All these proved of no effect. He got few replies, couched in very lofty language, but most of the letters remained unanswered.

Some of the answers stated that the Chief whom the column had gone to relieve, had no business to be a Chief at all, and that was why he was being attacked. He had got himself appointed Chief by a dirty trick played on his own brother. He was a man no one liked and his people were cattle-thieves.

The column marched east, and the country was a series of ranges and valleys running north and south and it was practically unmapped, so that it was a good deal longer than had been expected before the expedition arrived at its destination. The beleaguered Chief came out on an elephant with a double row of retainers. They were armed with comic opera weapons, tridents and pikes and spears fastened with horse-hair dyed red.

The column pitched camp four miles from the Capital, near some dry rice beds and a mountain stream. To further complicate the situation, it seemed that the people from the Capital had mostly gone over to a village behind the enemy's lines, as it was bazaar day there. It was difficult to know how to fit all this in.

The place where the column pitched camp was Bawrithat, named after a pagoda built there, according to legends, by King Anawrahta, founder of the Pagan Dynasty. It is half way between Yawngwe town and Kugyo where Sao Weng the Sawbwa of Lawksawk had fortified positions. The column arrived there on the 7th February, after having spent the 5th and 6th at Heho in the vain hope of treating with Sao Weng. Sao Ong, the usurper Sawbwa of Yawngwe, came out to meet the British at Bawrithat, riding on an elephant with five gold umbrellas - one actually shading him while the remaining four merely surrounded the elephant to enhance pomp and glory; and his son rode on another with four gold umbrellas. The Sawbwa was described as a thick-set man with a freckled face and small, half-closed bright eyes, but unpleasant looking. He represented Sao Weng (actually a distant cousin of his) as anti-British and was against the idea of communicating with him. He himself must have been thankful and delighted to see the arrival of the British; for almost a year he had been surrounded by the Limbin forces, and, having usurped his brother's place, he must have felt insecure all the time. With the arrival of the British, his throne was secure and his state would soon be free from any external armed attack.

At Bawrithat, another attempt was made by the Political Officer to communicate with the Sawbwa of Lawksawk asking him to disperse his men at Kugyo. No one could be found as a messenger - even the pongyi who had volunteered on the 7th declined on the next day. The official excuse was that Sao Weng had many "wild" Kachins and Panthays in his camp and it was through fear of these men that none dared to approach Kugyo. It is difficult to say how far Sao On himself had been responsible for instilling this or other fear, since he himself was against the idea of communicating with Sao Weng from the beginning, and from subsequent events his capacity for intrigue seemed enormous. Nor was it likely that Sao Weng would retire peacefully, ignorant as he was of the fire power and discipline of a modern army such as that arrayed against him. So it was decided by the British to take Kugyo by frontal assault on the 9th February.

The day before the attack was spent in reconnoitering the geographical position of Kugyo and its fortifications. While on this "spying" work, some British Officers came upon a cultivator who, on being questioned, seemed to know Kugyo inside out. The man was at once taken to their camp and asked to make a mud model of the fortifications, which he did to perfection, showing all the ravines, paths and places where spikes had been embedded. This the Officers proclaimed as a work of art which gave them the greatest satisfaction and extracted from them the greatest admiration for the artist.

British forces began to move against Kugyo before dawn on the 9th. It was taken without any difficulty and all was over in 15 hours from start to finish.

For the Lawksawk Sawbwa and the Limbin League generally the capture of Kugyo seemed a great defeat and disaster; for the British, it was a cheap victory for it was won without loss of a man on their side. Some details of this operation were recorded by Scott in his diary: "I went ahead with guides, and after a list made a variety of excursions, a quarter of a mile ahead of the troops to warn the friendly posts not to be alarmed, or to make a noise when we passed. Found most of them more wide awake than I had expected. At one place nearly fired on. Awful third class funeral business; animals so slow not withstanding the moonlight. Got on to ridge leading south-west towards Kugyo about dawn. Then some d-d humbug, skirmishing through a pagoda enclosure where there could not possibly be anybody. Result, rising of sun and firing of a warning gun to our left front. Got guns into position, and wasted a lot of time blazing away shells at different ranges. Lot of men from the fort left, but the rest cheered defiantly and fired guns. Then advanced infantry. Went along with right flank. Stream fourteen feet deep, sheer, nine foot wide channel. Hard to jump it. Up beastly hill slope and into stockade. Beggars bolted. Volleys after them down the hill. Signs of a boss pongyi, said to be the Sawbwa's step-father, but more possibly Sawbwa himself. Had some sandwiches and then went on. Got in at 3 p.m., 15 hours of it".

The British made a triumphant entry into Yawnghwe on the following day. The Sawbwa sent two elephants for their Chiefs to ride in on - Hildebrand on one, and Stedman and Scott on the other. Sao On himself came out one mile beyond the gates of Yawnghwe town to welcome his saviours with Shan drums, gongs, trumpets and all the emblems of pomp and glory that a year ago belonged to his brother Sao Maung by right. On the British side, the Gurkhas band struck up and at once caused the two state elephants so much consternation that they nearly stampeded.

The British arrival in Yawnghwe and their capture of Kugyo produced the effect desired and expected by them! The Myosa of Samka and ex-Myosa of Sikip (Thigyit) came in personally at once to acknowledge British supremacy. Representatives of Laikha, Mongkung and Kesi-Bansan arrived with letters for the Secretary of Upper Burma asking for assistance against Mongpan and Mongnai who had overrun their States. These three States also showed signs of coming to terms. Not having sufficient troops to commit themselves to anything positive and still lacking definite plans, the British sent back the emissaries with a promise that their States would be visited. By the middle of February all the Myelat Chiefs had come in, most of them in person. Mongpai acknowledged the British rule by letter. Letters were despatched by the Political Officer to the Sawbwas and Myosas of Mongnai, Mongpaw, Mongsit, Hopong, Namkhok, Nawngwawn, Banyin and Hsantung telling them to carefully consider the proclamation of the Chief Commissioner, while these letters to Shan Chiefs demanded "loyalty" and "submission", letters to the Karenni Chiefs, in deference to their "independent" identity during the Burmese regime "offered friendship" and "suggested a meeting"! These Karenni Chiefs were Sawlapaw of Kantarawadi, Pobyay of Nammekon and the Myosas of Bawlake, Kyebogyi, Ngwedaung and Naungpale.

With the fall of Kugyo, all the Limbin forces retired to their own territories or States, and the prince himself moved his headquarters to a place near Hopong, but there was no sign of the principal Limbin partners in the East giving in - it was even announced the leaders had taken a fresh oath to stand or fall together. This item of news must have dismayed the British somewhat, for while they knew no one could really withstand them, the forces at their disposal at Yawnghwe then were insufficient to deal effectively with scattered resistance and chaos on a large scale. Knowing their superiority, they wanted to avoid fighting, if possible, even against people whom they did not consider their civilised equals! Moreover, the orders from the Viceroy were not to shed avoidable blood!

In spite of this news, however, Limbin Prince wrote a letter to the Political Officer announcing his willingness to surrender if granted a pardon. Better than any of his supporters who had taken the "last ditch" oath to defend him or his cause, the prince knew the British might. But did he write the letter in secret or with the full knowledge of the Leaguers? Either way, the British could not have wished for any better solution than this offer to surrender. A

reply was at once despatched promising full immunity if he would surrender, an allowance of Rs. 250/- a month (an increment of Rs. 150/- over his last pension of Rs. 100/-) and a free house for him to live either in Rangoon or Moulmein. More letters were also sent to the Limbin League States in the east, including one to Sao Weng, the Sawbwa of Lawksawk, who was told that in spite of Kugyo he had nothing to fear if he surrendered. To this last letter, an unfavourable reply came two days later.

In the south, in spite of his letter to the British welcoming them, the Sawbwa of Mongpai was still fighting desultory village warfare against Pobyá of Nammekon. Both the contestants wrote to the British at Yawnghwe "praying" that troops be sent to their aid. Their "prayers" were promptly answered! On the 26th February, the Assistant Political Officer, J. G. Scott, with 100 Gurkhas under the command of Captain Pulley and Lieutenant Battye with Surgeon Fuller in medical charge, started by boats down the Nam Pílu (Bílu Chaung)! On both sides of the river were scenes of desolation bearing witness to the anarchy of the last few years. Burnt-out villages, deserted kyaungs, neglected fields and plantations were to be seen everywhere! Only kingfishers, egrets and paddy birds flapped their wings or lazed about unconcerned with the troop movements. Within ten days of the passage of the British troops, a good many families had returned and erected temporary huts - families of people who had no share in the avarice and ambitions of their rulers and who, beyond the necessities of life, wanted nothing but peace.

The British party arrived at Pekon (Peyakon), the Sawbwa's headquarters, on the 1st of March. The Sawbwa, Khun Yon, came out to meet them and was most "profuse in his expressions of delight at the settlement of the Shan States by British Agency". He said he had hoped for it and had been urging it for the last thirty years and that now that they had come there would be peace, likening their coming to the descent from heaven of the Thagyamin. He asked the British to establish a military outpost at Pekon as in the Burmese days, to preserve the peace that had thus come. He undertook to persuade the Sawbwas of Mongnai and Mongpaw to share his views on the coming of the British, and wrote letters to them accordingly. Some British Officers thought these letters influenced the Sawbwas concerned in their eventual decision to recognise the British supremacy.

Pobyá, who had also "prayed" for the British troops' arrival, received the following ominous letter from the warrior Chief of Kantarawadi, Sawlapaw!

Order from Sawlapaw to Pobyá and Bawlake!

I have not interfered in the struggles that have been going on between the Mobyé Sawbwa and Bawlake, aided by Pobyá. I hear that Bawlake and Pobyá have invited the English Kalas to come, and I now send down messengers to inquire whether this report is true. If the Kalas are invited to

the Karenni country, all the Karennis will become slaves to the Kalas. If it is desired that the government of Karenni should be hereditary, the Kalas should not be asked to come. But if the invitation has been sent, the Kalas should be written to return.

The Kalas are not an ordinary race. They captured the Burmese King and annexed his empire. This is known to Pobyas and Bawlakes. By all means the Kalas should be asked to turn back.

An early reply as to whether the present order will be obeyed is requested.

Although Sawlapaw, the first frontier Chief in the East to offer serious resistance, later on, to the British, knew the "English Kalas" to be of no ordinary race, little did he realise the effectiveness of their fire power or that in world politics, particularly towards the end of the 19th century, small tracts like Karenni, however wild and independent, could not be left alone. Sawlapaw had no thoughts of yielding and he maintained this attitude to the very last, but his Karenni brother Chief, Pobyas, held different views, and his answer to the former's request as to whether his order would be obeyed or not, was to forward the order to the Assistant Political Officer.

With both Mongpai and Pobyas professing such friendliness it looked as if peace had at last come to the warring villages. But it was not to be. This was due to a sudden change of plans in the British troop movements. Originally a good part of the British column was to have returned to Burma at Toungoo via Mongpai, and it had been intended that the Assistant Political Officer's escort of Gurkhas should wait at Mongpai until the main body joined them. This period of waiting would give the Assistant Political Officer time to settle Mongpai-Pobyas affairs. Owing to some military exigencies, the original plan of troops returning to Toungoo were changed and the expedition was ordered to return to Burma by the route it came through, namely, the Fyindet Pass. The Gurkhas under Captain Pulley received orders to leave Mongpai and return to Yawnghwe immediately. Consequently the Assistant Political Officer was compelled to retire with the troops, leaving Mongpai-Pobyas quarrels to be settled finally only in the cold weather of 1889. The whole party left Mongpai on the 5th of March. Whether their departure was taken by the Sawbwa of Mongpai as the earth itself opening up or as the ascent of the Thagyamin back to his heavenly abode, has not been recorded.

The Assistant Political Officer and his hundred Gurkhas returned by land and reached Fort Stedman on the 7th. This site was chosen to be the headquarters of the British, civil as well as military, and named after the military commander of the Expedition. When the Expedition first arrived they billeted in thatch-and-bamboo

huts, or tawmaws, built for them by the people of Yawnghwe, near the town itself. The camp was too close to the town and the whole area was low lying and unhealthy, and also liable to be submerged under water during the rains. Indian and British troops and their officers, having been used to the segregated cantonment life in India, would never be happy in such a place. They therefore asked for a piece of land from the Sawbwa, as originally planned, and the most suitable spot was found on a high ground above the village of Mongsauk (Maingthauk), on the eastern shore of Inle Lake and about 7 miles from Yawnghwe by road. The place remained the British Residency and cantonment for quite a number of years until the administrative headquarters moved to Taunggyi on the 15th September 1894.

After the Limbin Prince had retired to Hopong following the fall of Kugyo, the Political Officer sent letters to him and to the Sawbwas of Mongnai and Mongpawm inviting them to meet him at Hopong on the 17th of March so that some political settlement could be arrived at. Preparations were accordingly made for the march from Yawnghwe to Hopong; pack bullocks were procured and carriers were collected. When everything was ready, the Sawbwa of Mongpawm, Khun Hti, wrote in to say that he could not meet the Political Officer on the appointed day because the principal Sawbwa of Mongnai, Khun Kyi, was away in Kantarawadi attending the marriage ceremony of his nephew to a daughter of Sawlapaw. At the same time, Mongnai's own mother-in-law had died and could not be buried until the Sawbwa returned; and until the funeral was over the Sawbwa himself could not attend to any business, political or otherwise. And without Mongnai's participation, others could not or would not do anything.

This unexpected delay, natural to the Sawbwa in the circumstances, must have appeared to the Political Officer as Shan or Oriental unpredictability and it at once placed him in a dilemma. To insist on a meeting on the date fixed was clearly impossible. To halt the intended march was not easy either as everything had been geared for it. On the other hand, delay might be interpreted as weakness which must be avoided at all costs. The Political Officer also feared that Sawlapaw, who was hostile from the beginning might take advantage of the delay to persuade the wavering Karenni Chiefs and Shan Sawbwas to refuse to treat with the British. States in the neighbourhood of Yawnghwe which had recently acknowledged British rule were watching the situation. In the north, Sao Weng was still at large in his State. When the mail runners were attacked and robbed for the first time since the British establishment at Fort Stedman, it was suspected that the Sawbwa of Lawksawk was behind the deed. To get out of the dilemma, therefore, the British decided to move against Lawksawk, and a letter was accordingly sent to its Sawbwa to the effect that the Political Officer was coming to his capital and that opposition or flight on his part would result in someone else being appointed as Sawbwa of Lawksawk, but that submission would confirm him in his throne.

For reasons of his own, Sao On, who was not in favour of postponing the march to Hopong, was now reluctant to assist in the

expedition against his erstwhile enemy, Sao Weng. The British accused him of making the most money out of the expedition by demanding at every opportunity very exorbitant rates for hiring of transport and animals. But he could not stop the march to Lawksawk, and the Political Officer with a contingent of troops set out on the 4th of April and moved by easy stages towards Lawksawk via Pwehla and Pangtara, partly to allow Sao Weng time to "see the light" and partly to clear the country side of bands of dacoits and men posted to harass their progress. These bands were working in cooperation with gangs in the districts below the hills. The Political Officer's flag march had the effect of forcing the latter to surrender to the British outpost at Wundwin. Men posted to harass the British en-route disappeared as their troops advanced.

On April 10th the British party arrived at Magyipin, 3 miles from Lawksawk, and a letter was about to be sent to the Sawbwa asking him to meet the Political Officer outside the capital on the next day when a deputation from the same town arrived and announced that the Sawbwa had fled. Lawksawk town was entered on the 11th and one Bo Saing who had held office under the former government was placed in temporary charge of the administration. The column then continued its march and reached Mongping on the 15th, and a myook was appointed to act under Bo Saing. It was here, at Mongping, that another letter was received from Mongpawm finally postponing the meeting at Hopong. The column, nevertheless, continued its march towards Hopong which was reached on the 17th. The whole village was in ruins and was all but deserted. The Limbin Prince had not come in and Khun Hti was occupied in defending himself against forces from Laikha, Mongkung and Kesi-Bansam.

On learning that Mongpawm and his attackers were actually engaged in firing on each other only a few miles away, the Political Officer and his assistant with an escort of 40 mounted infantry and 50 Punjabis under Major Swetenham, went to the scene of the fight. The firing continued for some time after the arrival of the British party. When the Sawbwa of Mongpawm had been prevailed upon to cease firing, Assistant Political Officer Scott was told by his superior to go up to the stockade on a hill from which the attackers were firing and to persuade them to stop fighting. Scott was accompanied by Khun Nu, the ex-Myosa of Tampak (Tabet) who had been on a previous mission with Thirkell White to Hsumhsai in the North, and who had now come all the way with the British from Mandalay. Scott and Khun Nu, the former with a pipe in his mouth to demonstrate cool British courage in any emergency (so says Lady Scott),¹ walked up the hill, went inside the stockade and between them managed to persuade about a dozen leaders to return with them to Mongpawm camp. Among these men Scott recognised one or two who had gone to Mandalay in a mission to acknowledge British rule. Asked why they were now breaking the precious peace they were specially told to preserve, the men answered that they were doing precisely what they had been

1. Mitton, G. E., op. cit., pp. 91-92.

told to do, namely, to assist the new regime in every way possible, and that as Mongpawm was one of the chief supporters of the Limbin League he must be attacked. Their conviction however did not appear deep, for the Sawbwa of Mongpawm and his attackers soon came to terms of amicable settlement; so much so that by the time the British party returned to Mongpawm in the evening, leaders of both sides were mingling together as long lost friends and talking about deeds of valour each side had performed before they had become friends! The Sawbwa of Mongpawm himself promised to give his erstwhile enemies enough rice to see them home.

Khun Hti, Sawbwa of Mongpawm, was described as a man of strong character and the moving spirit in the Limbin League. He readily acknowledged British supremacy and advised strongly that a party should be sent to Mongnai to negotiate with its Sawbwa for recognition of British rule, and that the Limbin Prince, who had by now removed himself to Mongnai, should be brought in. The British then and there decided to act upon his advice, but as the monsoon had now begun in earnest, making roads difficult, it was thought sufficient to send the Assistant Political Officer with an escort of 50 rifles to Mongnai, while the Political Officer himself returned to Fort Stedman with the main body of the column.

The Assistant Political Officer was delayed in Mongpawm for some days waiting for the arrival of rations. While there, two minor Chiefs, Nawngwawn (a brother of Mongpawm) and Mongsit (Mongpawm's son-in-law and half-brother of Mawkmai) came in to submit. Other smaller Chiefs sent messengers or promise to meet the British Representative in Mongnai. British soldiers fraternised with the people, local chiefs came in for rifle shooting practice and people generally were entertained by military parades and manoeuvres. In spite of these signs of friendliness, no one could guarantee the surrender of the Limbin Prince. It must depend on his own decision, the Shans said. The Political Officer, Hildebrand, wrote: "This was an instance of the way in which the Shan Chiefs cling together, and of the sanctity they attached to an oath". They did not know that Limbin had written to the British: his last letter accepting British terms was received at Fort Stedman on April 1st.¹ They knew that his cause and the main object of the League had been lost, but they would not coerce him to surrender!

Leaving Mongpawm on the 2nd the Assistant Political Officer and his escort arrived at Mongnai, 70 miles distant, on the 5th of May. The party passed through a sad countryside - it had been ravaged both by Laikha men and by Twet Nga Lu, and in the last seventeen miles before Mongnai all the villages had been burnt! Of the town, Mongnai itself, official reports describe it as follows: "From the north there is a long avenue-like approach to Mongnai. The walls of the ancient city still exist in a very dilapidated state. They are

1. Military Report on the Shan States, Intelligence Branch, Q. M. G. Department, Simla 1905, p. 34.

about 20 feet high and machicolated. The city was about 1000 yards square, and there remain signs of extensive suburbs. Everything, however, had been destroyed. Of ten thousand houses only three hundred (mostly recently built) remain; out of one hundred and twenty monasteries only three are left standing. The Sawbwa himself lived in a bamboo house, instead of the former teak-wood haw (palace). The interior of the city walls is all jungle grown".

After quoting the above from the Political Officer's official report (of June 22, 1887, paragraph 97) Sir Charles Crossthwaite writes: "It is as well to put on record some description of the condition in which the British found the Shan States. A few years hence we shall be denounced as the ruthless destroyers of a country which we had found wealthy and prosperous". Did he already foresee, at the time of writing (1912), the rise of nationalism in Burma?

To continue with Crossthwaite's description of the British entry into Mongnai:

The Sawbwa of Mongnai came in an unpretentious fashion to see Mr. Scott the day after his arrival. His superiority in breeding and character to most of the Chiefs was marked. He made no difficulty about accepting British supremacy, and proffered all his influence to induce the other Chiefs to follow his example. The typical character of the Shans as a race of traders came out in his request that his submission to British authority should be made known in Moulmein. In former times there was a good trade in timber with the Moulmein merchants. When they were informed of the establishment of peace, this trade he anticipated would revive.

It remained to induce the Limbin Prince to submit and to accompany Mr. Scott to Fort Stedman. This was not a question of very high diplomacy, but it required some skill, tact, and patience to induce the Prince to make a voluntary surrender. It would have been very easy to have arrested and removed him by force. Such action, however, would have been distasteful to the Shan Chiefs and might have rendered it more difficult to dispose of other pretenders still remaining in the Northern States. The Prince showed himself to be a poor creature, whose chief characteristic was an immeasurable conceit. He was, after all, only the illegitimate son of the Einshemin, or War Prince, who was the brother of King Mindon. But Burmans and Shans, like some other people, if a man is a prince, do not ask too curiously what sort of a prince he may be. When he left Mongnai, mounted on an elephant, with his gong beating, great numbers of people knelt down by the road side as he passed, and similar respect was shown to him at other places. Notwithstanding his conceit, he did not put a very high price on his submission. This descendent of Kings, who had left his refuge in British Burma to become the head of a great Shan Confederacy to be formed on the model of the German Empire, was glad to

barter his lofty ambition for a stipend of £16 sterling a month and a house at Rangoon or Moulmein or elsewhere.¹

While waiting for the Limbin Prince to be ready for his journey, the Assistant Political Officer spent the time in dashing off to Mawkmai, 25 miles further south! Mawkmai town was situated in a beautiful and fertile valley and it was the only town in the Cis-Salween Shan States that up to this time had escaped the inter-State warfare. The Capital town had some substantial houses in it.

On arrival the British party was told that the Sawbwa had just died that morning. This was Nai Noi, the best known of all the Mawkmai Sawbwas, designated as "Kolan Sawbwa" because he was reported to have been able to jump across a length of nine lan (54 feet) with the help of his long spear which, it is said, he always carried about, together with his musket. Kolan seems to have been a man of exceptional strength and extraordinary height for a Shan. It is said that when he sat on his haunches with his knees up, his two knee-caps would be on the same level as his head, and the three points were likened to the three cooking-pot stones of a Shan kitchen. As far as territories south of Mawkmai were concerned, Kolan was no peaceful neighbour for he carried on raiding forays into Karenni and the now Siamese territory of Mahawngsawn, and it is said that nothing could stand in his way once he made up his mind to go for certain objectives - these were generally elephants and timber - and that the only man he would not go near was one Phnya Pharb, a high ranking officer of the Chaoluang (Sawbwa) of Chiengmai. Legends about Kolan's exploits can still be heard from old people of Mawkmai.

The new Sawbwa, Khun Hmon by name, was Kolan's son and a young man of about 25 years of age and he came to see the Assistant Political Officer the next morning to acknowledge British supremacy. He came in great state, riding in a gilt carriage drawn by men and surrounded by 10 gold umbrellas, bodyguards and all items of royal regalia. Mawkmai was eager for British protection partly because of its timber trade connections with Moulmein, and partly because its border villages had been victims of attacks by slave raiding parties from Karenni!²

On their return to Mongnai on the 11th of May, the party found the Sawbwa of Mongnai in even a better mood for co-operation. He gave assurances that he would be able to promise the acceptance of British rule by the powerful Sawbwas of the trans-Salween States who, he claimed, looked to him as their leader, and to Mongnai as their place of assemblage. The Sawbwa also asked that as a special favour to himself and as a confirmation of his authority, he might be allowed to fly the Union Jack. This request for an emblem that cost the giver nothing, but carried a great deal of prestige to the receiver, was immediately granted. On the evening of the 12th, the flag was ceremoniously hoisted in the ground of the Haw by the Assistant

1. Crossthwaite, C., op. cit.

2. More about Kolan and Mawkmai in chapter on Karenni.

Political Officer to the bugle sound of a general salute, while the small contingent of troops solemnly presented arms. Practically the whole town and countryside were there to witness the ceremony, and the ordinary people saluted the flag in their customary attitude of respect. As the 50 Punjabis marched back to their billet, Shan drums and gongs struck up. Such is the story behind the Union Jack flown by successive Sawbwas of Mongnai until the 4th January 1948.

The Limbin Prince had by now completed his preparations, and on the 13th started on his journey escorted by the British party. The prince was immensely pleased at being escorted by the small contingent of British sepoy who received instructions to see that he did not attempt to escape. The prince's own camp followers were also in the train, of whom 17 ran away the night before they reached Fort Stedman. The monsoon was now on in full force, making the roads slippery and travelling generally difficult, especially when the warring States during the past year had tried to make them impassable with spikes and fallen trees. Four soldiers and many of the camp followers were spiked in their feet. These seem to have been the only casualties since the British party left Mongpaw. Fort Stedman was reached on the 20th. The party was met by the regimental band two miles from the station and was "piped in", much to the satisfaction of the prisoner prince. After five days' rest, Limbin was sent under escort to Rangoon. At his own request he was later sent to India where he lived harmlessly for the rest of his life, first in Calcutta and then in Allahabad, with his family of eight.

The acceptance of the British authority by the influential Sawbwa of Mongnai and the surrender of the Limbin Prince relieved the British of much anxiety and represented a great diplomatic victory in their first major thrust into the Shan States. Practically the whole of the Southern Shan States west of the Salween had been annexed almost by stealth without a single casualty in actual combat, so far.

