

## Re-examining on Ascending the Throne of King Thibaw and Its Effects

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### I. Introduction

King Thibaw who was the most junior prince ascended the throne on 1 October 1878 though there were many senior princes in royal family during Yadanapon Period. Many royal conflicts occurred during the reign of King Thibaw especially mass killing of royal princes took place on 12-18 February 1878 that was four months after King Thibaw ascended the throne. King Thibaw faced its reflection and he lost trust from his subjects. It was said that King Thibaw was not involved in the affairs of the palace as he had spent most of his time in the monkhood. King Thibaw therefore did not know worldly affair, religious affair and royal affairs so that King Thibaw could not afford to govern the country to be stabilized and he was deported to Yadanagiri by the British. Similarly, it was assumed that ruling enable King governed the country was one of the root cause of the downfall of Konbaung dynasty. In fact King Thibaw faced threaten by the British soon after ascending the throne. Especially the rival princes, Prince Myingun and Nyaung Yan under the protection of the foreign powers tried to make efforts to seize the throne as King Thibaw had feared and

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these affairs even caused for the stability of in the governance of the King Thibaw. In this way King Thibaw could not handle his position very long and he was deported to Yadanagiri soon after ascending the throne within seven years.

## II. Literature review and Methodology

Konbaung Dynasty downfall during the reign of King Thibaw and it was prominent/significant event in Myanmar History. Especially the impact of deportation of King Thibaw to Yadanagiri in India was the great changing not only in Myanmar politic but also in society among nationalities and its effect was still suffering in Myanmar. There were many research papers and M.A thesis from History Department in Yangon University and Mandalay University which related with downfall of Konbaung Dynasty. It was found that the scholars, not only local but also outsiders discussed about ascending the throne of King Thibaw and mass killing of royal prince in their research papers and they concluded that KinwunMingyi and Hsinphyumashin were key players of choosing Crown Prince to Thibaw. The outsider called J Paul Bennett expressed the tactics of Hsinphyumashin and KinwunMingyi in Conference under Tamarind tree essay in Burmese History as follows:

Queen Hsinphyumashin wished to be sovereign Queen and the king should be under her influence. She had no surviving sons and only three daughters. She liked to have one of her daughters to be married to the next king... Hsinphyumashin's logical tactics was to elevate a young unmarried prince to throne and arrange his marriage to one of her daughters (Bennett 1971: 70-71).

Similarly the following expression can be seen about KinwunMingyi's logical tactics.

KinwunMingyi wanted a young and pliable king. KinwunMingyi considered that if the able prince would have succeeded the throne, they would not follow the wise counselors because of their backbones... Prince Thibaw had spent many years in monastery and he was soft-minded. KinwunMingyi therefore thought that he could steer the prince who was simple, educated and young in ruling the country. He had a plan for sweeping government reorganization and saw the accession of a youthful new king as the logical time for implementing it (Bennett 1971: 70-71).

Many scholars agreed to conclude that Prince Thibaw became a king with the supporting of Queen Hsinphyumashin and Kinwun Mingyi and Prince Thibaw did not involve the royal affairs to choose crown prince because he had spent his youth life as monkhood as well as he did not know about royal affairs, worldly affairs and religious affairs. Moreover, the scholars including local and outsiders pointed out King Thibaw's weakness in comparing with King Mindon. It was found comprehensive research papers related with downfall of Konbaung Dynasty, particularly the research papers entitled "Imperialist stratagem and Myanmar Heir Apparent" and Triangulation Relation by Daw Ni Ni Myint linked some missing event. However it is necessary to re-examining the truth event and re-considering related with King Thibaw dignity and Kinwun Mingyi who played key role at the Hultlaw. About mass killing, Daw Ohn Kyi said in her paper entitled "King Thibaw's Effort in Administrative Reform" that King Thibaw was anxious his position because he became a king although there were abler princes in royal family and the mass killing of royal prince was a characteristic of feudalism system. It might be true but it was not enough to accept it whilst to study chronology events in historical

record. It was found that King Thibaw tried to handle his position as much as he can but he had faced external threat as well as internal weakness so that he could not govern effectively.

Micro research methodology would be used to re-examining the ascending the throne of King Thibaw and its effect under these criterion:

Why Prince Thibaw was supported by KinwunMingyi and Hsinphyumashin and What would be a true of ascending the throne of King Thibaw?

What would be internal weakness and external strength to fail handles his position after ascending the throne of King Thibaw?

### III. Why Prince Thibaw was supported by Queen Hsinphyumashin and Kinwun Mingyi?

It was the tradition of the Myanmar feudal kings to have a lot of queen, lesser queens and female attendants. Though there may be a great number of queens, there was only one person for the Chief Queen. The son of Chief Queen had the right to inherit the throne. The Chief Queen would not fall from her position if she got favour from the King. King Mindon had twelve queens and forty- four lessor queens. The Chief Queen was Princess Setkyadevi, the daughter of King Thayawaddy and Chief Queen Thiri Pawara Tilawka Maha Yadana Paduma Dewi (Prince Kya Pin). She was awarded the title of Thiri Pawara Maha Yazeindadipati Yadanadewai. Some well known queens of King Mindon were Khunhnitywa Taiksa, Queen HsinPhyumashin, Tataishay, Queen Taung Saung Taw (Southern Palace Queen) and Queen Laungshey. King Mindon and Chief Queen had no royal sons and daughters but she had not fallen from the position of the Chief Queen. She had been given a lot of favour by King Mindon. Chief

Queen Setkyadewi was well beloved and respected by other queens. As she was much beloved and got favour from the King, other queen also took advice from the Chief Queen when they had problems. The Chief Queen was a respectable Queen. She was much respected by the King Mindon. And she passed away on 12 November 1876 (Maung Maung Tin 2004: 287).

Queen HsinPhyumashin was Queen of the central Palace and she was very eager to become a Chief Queen. When Setkyadewi passed away she tried her best to become the Chief Queen. She was the daughter of King Bagyidaw (Sagaing Min) and Chief Queen Nanmadaw MaeNu. HsinPhyumashin also had no royal son and so there was nobody to inherit the throne. So she tried to find ways to become influential. But King Mindon and Setkyadewi had appointed Princess Salin Supaya, daughter of Queen That Pan Mibaya as Tabibdaing Minthamee (Chief Queen designate) and so the wish of HsinPhyumashin to become influential inside the palace was far from reach. Therefore she tried to form groups within the palace to become influential. She also requested King Mindon to appoint her as Chief Queen when Setkyadewi passed away. King Mindon knew her nature and other Queen did not want her became Chief Queen one hand. He was afraid of increasing internal conflict because of Hsin Phyumashin if she had a right of Chief Queen so he hesitated to promote her status as Chief Queen. She made all sort of approaches so she was given the white elephant presented to the king from the Dawei and was awarded the title of Thiripawara Tilawka Mahayazadewi on 25 November 1877 (Nyo Mya 1997: 350). Therefore she became famous as Hsin Phyumashin. When King Mindon became ill she grasped this opportunity and tried her best to be influential inside the palace.

The Lekaing Myosa Wungyi who was known as Kinwun Mingyi was one of potential resource person at Hluttaw during Yadanapon period. His childhood named was Maung Chinn and this named was

changed to Maung Kaung when he began to serve under King Mindon. When Mindon ascended the throne Maung Kaung was appointed as the Register of Royal Treasury (ShweTaik Soe). At the time of the uprising of Prince Myingun and Myingon Daing in 1866, the palace tower where King Mindon resided was attacked by the rebels and so Taung Dawe Bo and U Kaung had to resist these rebels. U Kaung together with Pakhan Mingyi supervised to suppress the rebellion. U Kaung also supervised to suppress the uprising of Prince Badaine. So U Kaung was appointed as a Junior Minister (Wundauk) and was awarded the title of *Mingyi Maha Sithu* (Maung Tuta 1962: 479).

He was given the duties to supervise the riverine outposts of Kyauktalone, Mingun, Sampanago and the land out posts of Mrauk U, Balatha, Pyinhteik,, Nathteik, Shaungtaphway and so he was appointed as Kinwun. Later he was famous as Kinwunmin (Maung Tuta 1962: 587-588). He was appointed as minister with the title of *Agga Maha Thenapathi* on 15 January 1872 (Maung Maung Tin 2004: 265) and he headed the Embassy to the Queen of England on 22 February 1872. He was sent again to France in 1873 as a diplomat. He made effort to make treaties with European countries such as France and Italy. On his return via France and Italy in 1873, he was promoted to the rank to Thado, thus becoming *ThadoMingyi Maha Minhla Sithu* (Maung Maung Tin 2004: 267). He was again sent to France for the ratification of a commercial treaty concluded by him on his previous visit (Maung Maung Tin 2004: 268). The next year he was made Thenat Wungyi (Maung Maung Tin 2004: 269). This implies the special command of the armed forces at the capital and in the following year he was given Lakaing Kinwun Mingyi or Thenat Wungyi. Above mention his efficient work, he got certain authority at Hluttaw and he was one of reliable ministers of King Mindon. As he having foreign exposure, Kinwun Mingyi became farsighted and wanted to change the administrative system. He therefore informed constitutional Monarchy

to King Mindon. However Kinwun Mingyi was clever minister and he did not urge King Mindon because Kin Mindon paid less interest in it.

As King Mindon had not chosen a successor, there were problems inside the palace as regards to the succession of the throne when King Mindon fell ill and was in his final days. At the court of Mandalay there was also confusion as regards to who should be chosen as the successor to the king among the three most-trusted sons of the king and who were also popular among the ministers and counselors and around the palace. Prince Mekhara was a very capable prince who continued to manage the industrial projects after Crown Prince Kanaung was assassinated. Prince Thonze was well known for his valour and abilities. Prince Nyaung Yan was noted for his wisdom and piety and he was much respected. Besides these princes there was also the young prince who was well admired by King Mindon for passing the highest examination in Buddhist scriptures. King Mindon was unable to choose a successor by himself as he was terminally ill. In accordance with the palace tradition, when a King was terminally ill and was in his final days, the most senior Queen in the absence of the Chief Queen had to lead the ministers and counselors in the meetings and discussions to choose a new king (Tin 1970: 203).

The Hluttaw ministers including KinwunMingyi and Queen Hsinphyumashin firmly grasped this opportunity and they compete with each other. Hsinphyumashin wished to give the throne to Prince Thibaw. Yenanchaung Myosa Mingyi U Soe made an advice that his grandson Prince Pyinmana should become a king. Yaw Ahtwinwun and Myotha Wundauk wished to give the throne to Prince Mekhara. Kinwun Mingyi at first assumed that the relationship with the British would become better if Prince Nyaung Yan ascended the throne. He therefore wished to give the throne to the Prince Nyaung Yan and he was well known among the westerners as a person of wide knowledge (Htin Aung 1967: 252). The main purpose of Kinwun Mingyi was to

change the administrative system into constitutional monarchy. He could not implement his aim during the reign of King Mindon because the King was not agreeable with his idea. Therefore it was the time of opportunity for Kinwun Mingyi to choose young prince as Crown Prince who would likely to accept the desire of his idea. Therefore it was found that the Chief Queen and Hluttaw ministers led by KinwunMingyi made a discussion under the tamarind tree and they selected Thibaw from the list of candidates. After a short discussion, they returned to the meeting room and they all marked Thibaw's name on the Parabike which was taken to King Mindon (Htin Aung 1967: 71). The Chief Queen and Kinwun Mingyi announced that King Mindon's silence meant that he had approval of Prince Thibaw as his successor (Keeton 1947: 20).

On 12 September, a royal order was proclaimed that the twenty-four sons of King and several dozen lesser princes would report to beside of their father. However this order was a forgery on entering the palace all the princes were arrested by Kinwun Mingyi's troop and they were put in jail (Mandalay Diary 20). After that they proclaimed the appointment of Crown Prince to Prince Thibaw on 19 September, 1878. After conferring Crown Prince to Thibaw, the queens such as Linpan, Thet Pan, Khunhnitywasa came to pay respect to King Mindon in his illness. They reported the King that all the royal sons were under arrest. The King let them free from their arrest and all of there were called to attend before him. King Mindon instructed to divided up his kingdom into three parts and ordered that the Taungdwingyi area southeast of Mandalay to be under the under the rule of Prince Mekhara, the Chindwin river valley north of Mandalay to be under the rule of Prince Thonze and Ayeyawaddy River area south of Mandalay to be under the rule of Prince Nyaung Yan (Keeton 1947: 20). However Kinwun Mingyi and Queen Hsinphyumashin decided to ignore the order of King Mindon and Kinwun Minggyi ordered the

inner palace guards to rearrest the prince (Thein 1923: 230). It was obviously seen that why KinwunMingyi and Hsinphyumashin selected Prince Thibaw as a Crown Prince.

It can be said that King Thibaw ascended the throne at the time of confusion and turmoil inside the palace. In fact it can be said that Prince Thibaw achieved the throne while there were other senior princes who were abler than him and who had better qualifications than Thibaw was the result of the Hluttaw officers who had great passion for power and their personal benefit. Therefore Sladen and Kinwun Mingyi were mentioned as traitors of King Mindon in the historical documents (Htin Aung 1967: 253). Were Kinwun Mingyi be loyal to King Mindon, the fate of the country might up in some other way and it can be expected that King Thiibaw might not be remembered in the history as a cruel and bad king.

### 3.1. What would be a true for ascending the throne of King Thibaw?

It is necessary to consider about Prince Thibaw that there were many people who believed that Prince Thibaw inherited the throne with the support of Kinwun Mingyi and Hsinphyumashin. These people thought that Prince Thibaw was not involved in the affairs of the palace as he had spent most of his time in the monkhood. But in fact it can be assumed that Prince Thibaw himself had made some efforts to have a chance to inherit the throne. Prince Thibaw was a son of Queen Laung Shay and King Mindon. King Mindon suspected his mother with a monk so she had to move out the palace and stay outside palace. Thibaw was grown up in the palace in the quite an inferior mood because of the King Mindon's anger upon his mother Laung Shay. Therefore it was found that a prophecy (Tabaung) spread among the people which said that "tahle de see, takhayi de thwa" (we are in

the same boat) and it means "the son of nymphomaniac" soon after Prince Thibaw ascended the throne. According to that prophecy it can be assumed that the palace communities as well as the citizens were doubtful as to whether Prince Thibaw was the real son of King Mindon. As regards to this, there was evidence which should be taken into consideration. Princess Salin had been awarded the title of Chief Queen designate by King Mindon.. Therefore King Thibaw considered Princess Salin to be appointed as Chief Queen. At that time Princess Salin had already entered the nun-hood. Therefore Queen Hsinphyumashin and King Thibaw felt anger towards Princess Salin and they gave punishments to the supporters of Princess Salin who helped her to cut off all her hair to enter the nun hood (Mya Kay Tu 107).

The reason behind the refusal of Princess Salin might be connected with lineage of Prince Thibaw. Moreover, Prince Thibaw was not favorable person inside the palace. On the other hand, when King Mindon made examination of the horoscopes of his sons for the inheritance of the throne, Prince Thibaw was taken into consideration together with Prince Thonze, Prince Mekhara, and Prince Nyaung Yan. From this point of view, it can be assumed that it was not possible that King Mindon felt anger upon Prince Thibaw. But King Mindon came to recognize Prince Thibaw because the prince passed the Pahtamapyan examination (an examination held to test one's knowledge of Buddhist Scriptures) outstanding for three times. Therefore it can be assumed that Prince Thibaw had made efforts to inherit the throne by giving priority to religion. King Mindon was a great supporter of the religion. There were many occasions where King Mindon appointed the persons who were outstanding in the religious studies at the appropriate posts inside the palace (Win Maung 1979).

Therefore it might be assumed that Prince Thibaw tried very hard in his religious studies to get recognized by his father. Similar events and instances can be seen in feudal Buddhist countries, King Mongut

of Thailand could be said to be a similar event. During the reign of King Rama III, he spent his life in the monkhood, studied Buddhist scriptures and Buddhist teachings very hard and passed the religious examinations outstanding (Kyat 1948: 176). For these religious successes he got the support of the counselors and citizens when he was chosen as a king. Kinwun Mingyi also seriously considered about King Mongkut of Thailand who had been a monk before he ascended the throne and so he finally accepted the nominees of Queen Hsinphyumashin (Htin Aung 1965: 69). The fact that Prince Thibaw was in loved with Supyalat, daughter of Queen Hsinphyumashin should also be taken into consideration as to why Hsinphyumashin had chosen Prince Thibaw as Crown Prince. Moreover there were some legend and folk-tale about the relationship between Prince Thibaw and Hsainphyumashin. As mentioned above LaungShay, mother of Prince was punished by King Mindon and Prince had been under looking after of Hsinphyumashin's brother (Shan Ahmat, likely counselor) who lived in Naungwain village near Naung Cho Township in Shan State. Therefore it might be assumed that King Thibaw inherited the throne not only with the support of KinwunMingyi and Queen Hsinphyumashin but also with his own efforts.

It was assumed that King Thibaw did not know worldly affair, religious affairs and royal affairs because he had spent most of his time in the monkhood. But it is not totally right and it can be seen his stratagem when he solve about mass killing of royal prince. There were many controversial facts as regards to the murder of royal princes. In the documents written by foreign scholars as well as domestic scholars, it was mentioned that King Thibaw was not involved in the murder of royal princes and that the arrangement to kill the royal princes was made by Supyalat and Ya Naung Maung Toke. It was also mentioned that King Thibaw was fully enjoying the comforts and luxury of being a King at the time of the murder of the royal princes As regards to the

murder of the princes, King Thibaw made a press conference on 29 November 1885. Referring to words of King Thibaw as told the reported from the London Times at the press conference most people believed that King Thibaw was not responsible for the mass killing of the royal princes. But the words of King Thibaw as told in the press conference and the facts mentioned in the "Great Chronicle of Konbaung Dynasty" were not compatible. The words of King Thibaw mentioned in the London Times as follows:

I gave an order not to kill the royal princes. They were put in prison upon my orders so as to avoid bloodshed and turmoil inside the country. When the counselors gave out the order to kill the prince, I was sleeping in my bed (Ko Lay 1969: 89).

In the "Great Chronicle of Konbaung Dynasty", it was written as follows:

The King became aware of the fact that the royal princes were no longer alive only on 18 February 1879... An order was issued which forbade the Lethonedaws (the King's trusted servants) to handle the affairs of the country without prior knowledge of the ministers and interior ministers in the future. Therefore the power and authority of the Lethonedaws gradually declined (Maung Maung Tin 2004: 340-341).

According to the report mentioned in the London Times, it can be assumed that the royal princes were killed upon the order of the ministers. But according to the fact mentioned in the "Great Chronicle of Konbaung Dynasty" it can be assumed that the killing of the royal princes was arranged by Lethonedaws without the knowledge and consent of the ministers. Here a possibility was that the Lethonedaws made their own arrangements to solve a problem of King Thibaw,

which was the anxiety for the safety of his throne. According to old traditions, it was a well known fact for the Lethonedaws that this way of solving the problem had no adverse effects, there would be only be beneficial effects. It was cleverness on the part of the trusted servants that the handled the problem in their own way. Therefore it can be said that the controversy as regards to the fact that King Thibaw did not have any prior knowledge of the execution of the royal princes was just a royal deception on the part of King Thibaw. So it can be assumed that it was not possible that the monkhood was unaware of the royal affairs, worldly affairs and religious affairs. It can be concluded that it was also not possible that he ascended the throne only with the support of Kinwun Mingyi and Hsinphyumashin, Prince Thibaw might have his own ideas and intention to inherit the throne in rivalry with his elder brothers.

### 3.2. What would be the internal weakness and external strength during the reign of King Thibaw?

King Thibaw remembered as cruel and bad King in Myanmar History because there was mass killing of royal prince in his reign. Moreover it was said that King Thibaw gave favour to the persons who relied on physical strength and it paved the way to deteriorate his governance. In fact King Thibaw would be able to handle his position until his final day if the trust building could concrete between King and his ministers like as Kinwun Mingyi and Yaw Ahtwin Wun. It was found that King Thibaw tried to build trust his ministers and to change administrative system with the supporting of his ministers. But his rival potential prince escaped from the capital to the British territory with the helping of Kinwun Mingyi and he started to lose the trust on his ministers.

<Table 1> Chronology of events

|                     |                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 October 1878     | Ascended the throne                                                                                                   |
| 12 October 1878     | issued the order to draw and promulgate Laws and Orders for a more orderly governance of the country                  |
| 16 October 1878     | sent the order to call back Prince Nyaung Yan and his brother                                                         |
| November 1878       | made a plan to visit London in accordance with KinwunMingyi                                                           |
| 14 November 1878    | Nyaung Yan and his brother left to Calcutta with taking help from KinwunMingyi and ministers                          |
| 23 November 1878    | dismissed the their post Wundauk Myothit Myosa, Magway Wungyi and Yenanchaung Myosa Wungyi                            |
| 24 November 1879    | KinwunMingyi sent informing letter to the Yangon Commissioner that to take care for the granddaughter of Crown Prince |
| 27December 1878     | issued the order to build a prison compound with brick walls                                                          |
| 12-18 February 1879 | mass killing of royal prince                                                                                          |

It was found that mass killing of royal princes took place on 12-18 February 1879 and that was four months after King Thibaw ascended the throne. It was said in research article "King Thibaw's Effort in Administrative Reform" by Daw Ohn Kyi that it was a characteristic of feudalism that made killing rival princes. It was argued that King lost trust upon some of his ministers and counselors and it was main cause for mass killing. It was found that King Thibaw had not made any plans to kill the royal princes. Likewise it can be seen that he was following the ideas and wishes of the counselors. He accepted the advice of the counselors who put forward the idea to build a house for every prince under arrest so that they could live with their family and that these princes should be kept under house arrest closely watched by guards. Therefore King Thibaw gave an order to build a prison compound with brick walls at the west of the palace inside Shwe Latwe Kwet (at the western moat) on 27 December 1878 (Maung Maung Tin 2004: 334).

In fact King Thibaw tried to build trust upon his ministers that was found that Kinwun Mingyi advised King Thibaw to make friendly visit to European countries to witness the developments of the western countries. King Thibaw who wish to make changes for the country accepted this idea because he in the month of November 1878 he started to make plans to visit London by summoning the person who had previously visited London to his side and made constitution with them. This plan started to materialize in the month of February 1879 and a mission was organized (Tin 1970: 252). Therefore it could be said that King Thibaw was a person who looked forward for the benefit of the country. King Thibaw wished to discuss with ministers and counselors to draw and promulgate Laws and Orders for a more orderly governance of the country. It was found that the Royal Order which was issued eleven days after King Thibaw ascended the throne; it can be seen as follows:

Laws will be drawn up only after the king and the assembled counselors have made discussions and coordination at the meeting. The King together with the counselors must follow these laws. These laws shall still be in practice up to the time of the royal descents that is royal sons, grandsons, great grandsons and all their descents. The internal affairs will be decided only after discussions and coordination at the meeting. The meeting place will be the palace within the south garden and meeting will be held daily (Maung Maung Tin 2004: 319).

The administrative power was shared among the ministers and counselors. Therefore the rise or fall of a country's governance and economy came to depend upon the honesty and ability of the officials who took part in the duties administration. Therefore it was sure that King Thibaw wanted to reform the administrative system and he built trust upon his ministers and counselors soon after ascending the throne.

Similarly, the role of ministers and counselors was very important in King Thibaw's administration. Firstly it was necessary to consider that why King Thibaw indirectly involved killing of royal princes and what would be an internal weakness. As mentioned above, King Thibaw did not have a plan to kill royal princes but Prince Nyaung Yan and his brother, Nyaung Oak escaped from the capital to British territory with taking help of Mr. Shaw (Colbeck 1892: 4-7). On 16 October, 1878, King Thibaw sent Myotha Wundauk to the British Residency with a letter to Prince Nyaung Yan in which it was said that Prince Nyaung Yan should come back to the palace. King Thibaw also asked for a reply letter as regards to the wishes and intentions of Prince Nyaung Yan and his brother (Mandalay Diary 111). In the royal order it was mentioned as follows:

The two brothers will be served well as we are very fond of each other since the old days. The wishes and intentions of these brothers should be asked by the counselors and their reply should be submitted to me personally (Catalogue of Hluttaw Records 1970: 285).

But Prince Nyaung Yan refused to accept the offer made by King Thibaw. He made a reply saying that he wished to stay inside the British territory (Mandalay Diary 160). A rival prince staying inside the British territory might cause much anxiety for King Thibaw for the stability of his throne. Another internal weakness was found that Yan Aung Myin Myosa Wundauk made a plan to arrest the two princes by using force but Kinwun Mingyi did not give his consent and so the plan to seize the two brothers could not be carried out (Tin 1970: 259-260). Moreover the two Princes Nyaung Yan and his brothers together with their families and retinue left Capital city and then made their journey to Calcutta on 14 November 1878. The two Princes were

escorted by four High-Myanmar Officials: Wundauk Pathtanago Myosa Mingyi Maha Minhthi Yaza, Sayaygyi Minhla Thiri Kyaw Khaung, Khanpatwunhaung Maha Min Kyaw Tansaung, Tatsayayhaung Minhthi Yaza Kyaw Khaung together with Taung Marabin Thenat Bo, Thenat sayay and a guard of two hundred. It was said that the arrangement for escorting the two princes was made by Kinwun Mingyi (Tin 1970: 259-260). Moreover King Thibaw got information that some Hluttaw officers were making efforts to threaten his throne. For example, a number of people were arrested with the accusation that they were making plans to dethrone King Thibaw so that Prince Nyaung Yan to be made a king. It was also found in the documents that ex-Yangon Mayor (Myo Wunhaung) U Oak who was an uncle of Prince Nyaung Yan was arrested (Mandalay Diary 111). Similarly there were historical documents in which it was mentioned that King Thibaw felt anger upon Wundauk Myothit Myosa, Magway Wungyi and Yenanchaung Myosa Wungyi and they were dismissed from their officials post (Maung Maung Tin 2004: 337) because they were planning to enthrone Prince Mekkhara (Keeton 1947: 27).

Moreover King Thibaw knew that he had ascended the throne not with unanimous support of Hluttaw officers. Therefore it might be more reasonable to assume that mass killing of royal princes took place because of internal weakness rather than the feudalism that make killing all the rivals. It was found that the mass killing of the royal princes took place on 12-18 February 1879 and that was four months after King Thibaw ascended the throne. It can be concluded that King Thibaw's governance could not be stability because rival prince came under the British territory as an asylum. Especially King Thibaw knew that he did not get supporting to throne from the ministers and Kinwun Mingyi was one of the persons who helped King Thibaw ascend the throne. There was no simplicity on the part of Kinwun Mingyi he was involved in the arrangements made for Prince Nyaung Yan for his

escape. Therefore King Thibaw indirectly involved mass killing of royal prince but King Thibaw was not entirely responsible person for this bloodshed. The root cause was that trust building became lost between King and a knowledgeable minister that was very dangerous for the country. King Thibaw lost his trust upon Kinwun Mingyi so Kinwun Mingyi became less influential in Hluttaw. Kinwun Mingyi who held the post of the Minister of Land Force (Thay Nat Wun) was transferred to the post of Legislative officer and the post the minister of Land Force was given to Taing Tar Mingyi. The post of Land Force was usually given to the most trusted person of the King. Kinwun Mingyi should made trust building firmly with King Thibaw.

Another internal weakness was found in 1883-84 that there were no solidarity among the counselors in the Hluttaw and the officers were divided in many groups so the governance of King Thibaw started weaken. Taing Tar Mingyi became powerful in the Hluttaw. It was said that he became powerful in the Hluttaw because he followed the wishes of the King and Queen especially in case of the murder of the royal princes and the social problem of the Mi Khin Gyi and Ya Naung Toke. He became very trusted officer of the King and Queen. In other words, Taing Tar Mingyi, by carrying out the King's orders and following the King's wishes concerning the social affairs became a trusted person of the King and also became influential in the Hluttaw. From the other point of view it can be said that the dignity of King Thibaw started to lose because of unreasonable and irrational performance of Taing Tar Mingyi in the political and social affairs of the palace. In fact it was true that Kinwun Mingyi and Yaw Ahtwinwun Upho Hlaing who wished to make reformations in the governance and the group led by Taing Tar Mingyi who was handling the affairs of the palace following the feudal customs were opposed to each other. Therefore the palace officers were divided into Kinwun group who wishes for reformation, Taing Tar group.

In fact solidarity was very important for the Kingdom and the King could not govern alone and the role of Hluttaw ministers indeed important for the development of country as well as peaceful country. As these counselors were not good terms they were no longer interested in the affairs of country and there was no coordination and cooperation among them in the palace meeting. Nobody tried to put forward a good and rational advice and none of them tried to make any efforts for the good of the country. Therefore in the special notes which made a record of what had been said by King Thibaw it can be found as follows:

Not only a good king but also the counselors are necessary for peace and development of the country. The country will surely be peaceful and developed when there is cooperation between the king and his counselors. The King always seriously considers the advice and plans of the counselors up to the present moment. But there were still many cases of theft and robbery inside the country. The country was not peaceful because the counselors who attended the palace meetings were not very active and they just seem to say things in a perfunctory manner and they do not cooperate with each other. They do not make enough efforts for the good of the country. They also are jealous of each other. Whatever it is their duty, they must keep in mind that they are serving the duties of the king and should help each other. Though having said these words for a number of times, the counselors seem to ignore my words (Own Kyi 1969: 95).

According to the above words of King Thibaw, it can be said that King Thibaw did not get effective assistance from the Hluttaw officers in governing the country. So it can also be guessed why King Thibaw's trust in his ministers and counselors was declining and why Supyalat became more influential in the administrative affairs of the country.

Moreover evidence related with the in-simplicity of Kinwun

Mingyi's political strategy which was found that Kinwun Mingyi tried to get in touch with Prince Nyaung Yan. The person who helped Kinwun Mingyi to get in touch with Prince Nyaung Yan was Taungtha Bo from Yangon. Kinwun Mingyi sent a letter together with money, gold and jewelleries to Prince Nyaung Yan through Taungtha Bo (Pho Kyar 1969: 62). In addition it was found that plans and arrangements had been made at Simla to enthrone Prince Nyaung Yan. This plan include to form a government led by Kinwun Mingyi, to appoint Kyauk Myaung Atwinwun to a post to handle the internal affairs of the country jointly with the British Embassy and to terminate all the Franco-Myanmar and Italian-Myanmar relation (Pho Kyar 1969: 62). Near the end of 1884, Prince Nyaung Yan met with Governor-General Lord Dufferin and they made discussions. Lord Dufferin told the Prince that the British would help him to achieve the throne if the Prince accepted the proposals of the British which are mentioned as follows:

1. Upper Myanmar will become a protectorate of the British
2. The Prince must refuse to accept the Franco-Myanmar treaties signed in Paris
3. The British will handle all the foreign relation
4. All the important government department should be under the supervision of the British officers and salaries for these officers should be paid by Myanmar government (Ni Ni Myint 184).

This plan to enthrone Prince Nyaung Yan and to recognize Myanmar as a protectorate was not successful because Prince Nyaung Yan passed away in Calcutta on 26 June 1885.

Similarly, Queen Hsinphyumashin also intended to let her younger daughter to marry Prince Myingun and then enthrone Prince Myingun. Therefore she secretly sent 50,000 kyats in cash together with diamonds to Prince Myingun to be used in the arrangements to seize

the throne (Ni Ni Myint 2004: 182). Similarly it was found that Myingun received many jewelleries and requesting letter from ministers, Myowun, Myothygyi, and monks to seize the throne due to the political situation of Myanmar (Than Swe 2004: 166). It was found another the external strength for the France that Prince Myingun made the following proposals to the French. The prince said that if the French helped him to ascend the throne-

1. A treaty would be drawn in preparation and the confirmation of the treaty will be made as soon as he ascended the throne.
2. Upper Myanmar will become a member of the Federation of the Indochina countries which was under the influence of the French (Ni Ni Myint 2004: 183).

There were no sufficient reasons for the British to take over Upper Myanmar up to the time of March 1885. But the British made exaggeration of Bombay-Burma Teak Company's problem and sent ultimatum to the Myanmar government on 22 October 1885 demanding five points which might never be complied by Myanmar. They also asked for reply from the Myanmar not later than 10 November 1885. The main cause is that the Franco-Myanmar treaty was made on 15 January 1885 and it became really necessary for the British to take over Upper Myanmar (Aye Mon Kyi 2010: 126-127). In fact it can be said that the Franco-Myanmar treaty was "Couping Strategy" by King Thibaw for his survival. Because King Thibaw got a hint of the movements Kinwun Mingyi and the political activities of Prince Myingun and also because he wished to promote the relation with French and also with the purpose to deter the threat of the British, he sent a Myanmar delegation led by Ahtwinwun Myothit Myosa Mingyi Maha Zeya Thingyan to France on 30 May 1883 (Khin Mya Kyu 1979: 136). The French always tried to avoid situations which might lead to

direct confrontation with British. But it was found that a mission from France led by French diplomat Deloncle arrived at Mandalay Nay Pyitaw on 12 May 1884. The King together with his palace counselors made negotiations with Deloncle for nine days (Khin Mya Kyu 1979: 138-139).

The Myanmar government made a proposal to take away Prince Myingun to Paris and that a yearly grant of 50,000 Francs would be given by Myanmar government. But on the next day King Thibaw made another proposal to the French in which he asked the help of the French to encourage Prince Myingun to return to Mandalay and if he were to return he would be given a high position in the palace. But Deloncle said that the matter of political asylum will only be considered at the time of making treaty. An announcement was made in which it was said that Jules Ferry and Myothit Myosa Mingyi Maha Zeya Thingyan and signed an agreement on 1 June 1884 for the treaty which had been made in 1873 when France and Myanmar became allied countries (Ni Ni Myint 2004: 145; Maung Maung Tin 2004: 426). Therefore it can be said that French were making use of the affair of prince Myingun to exploit in commercial business from the Myanmar government. In other words the French took opportunity of the Myanmar palace intrigue for their benefit.

As the French were getting such opportunities, the British government was under pressure to take over Upper Myanmar with the reason that Upper Myanmar under the governance of the incompetent King Thibaw. It can be seen the political poverty during the reign of King Thibaw because of internal weakness as well as external strength due to have potential trump cards in their hand. The French tried to grasp the opportunity in the Myanmar political crisis by making good use of Prince Myingun. On 12 November 1885 the French Foreign Minister Freycinet informed to British Ambassador Lord Salisbury as regards to the matter of Prince Myingun. The British were informed that Prince

Myingun was trying to get over to a region close to Myanmar, that the personal freedom of the prince must be recognized, that the French authorities at Pondicherry might not be able to prevent him from travelling that it was possible to make incitements to overthrow King Thibaw and then enthrone Prince Myingun and that if the British agreed to this plan, the French would urge the prince to leave Pondicherry and make his way to Yangon as quick as possible (Correspondence 1885: 10).

It can be seen that the French authorities were trying to make efforts to enthrone Prince Myingun so as to defend their interests and their opportunities up to the final moments. On 24 November 1885, the French urged Prince Myingun to send telegrams to London, Paris, Berlin and Rome in which he was to say that he, Prince Myingun as the King of Myanmar had accepted the demands of the British sent to King Thibaw, and also that he would recognize all the existing treaties which Myanmar had made with the European countries. Prince Myingun made a reply with a telegram on 26 November saying that he would accept the advice of the French (Ni Ni Myint 2004: 188). However they were not able to deter the plan of the British to take over Myanmar.

It can be seen that the British did not use military power but also stratagem to take hold of Upper Myanmar. Likewise it can be seen that Kinwun Mingyi for his influence and power had betrayed King Thibaw as an accomplice of the British up to the last moment. An ideological warfare was made in which said that the annexation of Myanmar was to save the people from the hands of an incompetent King. Moreover they had made prior arrangements to enthrone one of the princes who was under foreign protection in place of King Thibaw. They had made plan for Myanmar to become a protectorate of the British. The British were already aware of the efforts of Queen Hsinphyumashin and Kinwun Mingyi who were trying to get in touch with Prince Myingun

and Nyaung yan who were in foreign lands and to enthrone any of the two princes in place of King Thibaw and so the British made a deception on the palace officers as well as the people. Therefore to deceive the people who were very much expecting for a change of monarch, the British had a man with them on the steamer who was dressed like Prince Nyaung Yan. Then posing as Prince Nyaung Yan, they let him stay at the bow of the steamer in view of the people. KinwunMingyi had the knowledge of the passing away of Prince Nyaung Yan but did not make any interference in this deception of the British (Keeton 1947: 172-278). Moreover he gave orders to fortresses along the Ayeyawaddy river not to take make any resistance efforts. Therefore the British were able to take over Upper Myanmar without any difficulty.

<Table 2> Chronology of events

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1883              | Prince Myingun left to French territory                                                                                                                                                          |
| July 1883         | Myanmar delegation arrived at Paris with the purpose for sending back Prince Myingun to Myanmar proper                                                                                           |
| August 1883       | French informed Prince Myingun's activity to British                                                                                                                                             |
| 12 May1884        | French diplomat Deloncle arrived at NayPyitaw and King Thibaw request to handover Prince Myingun or take care under their protection                                                             |
| 1 June 1884       | Myanmar signed an agreement (trade)                                                                                                                                                              |
| 12 September 1884 | Prince Myingun made agreement with French to help for ascending the throne                                                                                                                       |
| 24 September 1884 | uprising in Jail and Political situation became deteriorated.                                                                                                                                    |
| November 1884     | the delegation comprised of two English men (Meckerton, Banking Business) and 14 Myanmar arrived in Pondicherry to make negotiate with Prince Myingun as regards to seize the throne of Mandalay |
| End of 1884       | Nyaung Yan made discussion with Lord Dufferin to achieve the throne.                                                                                                                             |
| 15 January 1885   | French and Myanmar made treaty not only trade but also allied nation.                                                                                                                            |
| 22 October 1885   | Myanmar government and Bombay-Burma Teak Company became clashed and British sent ultimatum to the Myanmar government                                                                             |

#### IV. Conclusion

There were many abler senior princes to succeed the King Mindon's successor in royal family. However Prince Thibaw, KinwunMingyi and Hsinphyumashin had their own plan to succeed the throne. It can be said that these three people were "tahle de see, takhayi de thwa" (in the same boat) so that they need to have concrete trust building each other. At first King Thibaw expressed that he was reformist and accepted the advice of his ministers. The King issued the order for the administration sectors. However Kinwun Mingyi helped Prince Nyaung Yan and his family to escape from the capital and it can be said that the trust building between Kinwun Mingyi and King Thibaw and his Queen started to break.

On the other hand if King Thibaw was real innocent and did not involve the palace affair he could pay trust to his ministers because he got supporting to become a king from these ministers. However he himself had effort to succeed the throne. In this way Kinwun Mingyi could not steer King Thibaw as he expected and King Thibaw also did not accept all of Kinwun Mingyi's advice as well as wise ministers. The Hluttaw ministers and counselors gave reason that King Thibaw's governance did not effective and made secret arrangement enthrone Prince Nyaung yan who was under the protection of British. It was the great opportunity for the British and France. In fact the relationship between Britain and France were balance power and they used Myanmar Heir apparent as political victim for their benefit. In this way King Thibaw could not afford to handle his throne until his final days like King Mindon.

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<Abstract>

## **Re-examining on Ascending the Throne of King Thibaw and Its Effects**

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This paper is attempted to clarify the controversial event King Thibaw ascending the throne. Moreover it was presented with the purpose of how important "Trust Building" is in politic. After ascending the throne, King Thibaw faced external threat as well as internal weakness. The Hluttaw ministers and counselors did not support effectively and King Thibaw lost trust his ministers and counselors. Therefore mass killing of royal prince took place after the ascending the throne and it made discredit to King Thibaw. Senior minister like Kinwun Mingyi and Hsinphyumashin secretly contact with Prince Nyaung Yan whom was staying under the protection of British. On the other hand Prince Myingun took refuge under protection of the French and was trying to seize the power with the supporters from lower Myanmar as well as taking the financial help from Hsinphyu Mashin. They were external strength for the British and French. In this way King Thibaw's administration became deteriorated and finally the British anxious about Franco-Myanmar treaty so they exaggerated the Bombay-Burma Teak company's problem. In this way King Thibaw was taken away by the British due to the internal weakness and external strength.

Key words : King Thibaw, Minister KinwunMingyi, Queen Hsinphyu Mashin, Ascending the throne and Mass killing of royal blood