

by a Burman for use or ornament—his ear-rings, cap of ceremony, horse-furniture, the material of his drinking-cup, if it be of gold or any other metal, the colour and quality of his umbrella (an article in general use, and one of the principal insignia of rank), whether it be of brown varnished paper, red, green, gilded, or plain white, the royal colour—all indicate the rank of the person; if any of the lower orders usurp the insignia of a higher class, he may be slain with impunity by the first person who meets him; and so exclusive is the aristocratical spirit of the higher orders, that such a usurpation would be sure of punishment.

When a merchant acquires property he is registered by a royal edict under the name of Thuthé or "rich man," which gives him a title to the protection of the court, while it exposes him also to regular extortion. The priesthood form a separate order, who are interdicted from all other employment, and are supported by voluntary contributions. They are distinguished by the yellow colours in their dress, which it would be reckoned sacrilege in any other person to wear. A formal complaint was made, during the conferences with the British previous to the peace, because some of their camp followers were seen dressed in yellow clothes. There is also an order of nuns and priestesses, who make a vow of chastity, but may at any time quit their order.

The free labouring population consist of proprietors or common labourers; and they are all considered the slaves of the king, who may at all times call for their services as soldiers, artisans, or common labourers. Hence a Burman, being the property of the king, can never quit the country without his especial permission, which is only granted for a limited time, and never to women on any pretence. The British and others who had children by Burmese women during a residence in the country experienced the greatest difficulty, even with the aid of heavy douceurs, in taking them along with them. The *Dhammasat* numbers seven classes of slaves, of which the most important are prisoners of war, and those who have mortgaged their services for a debt. The class of outcasts consists of the slaves of the pagodas, the burners of the dead, the jailers and executioners (who are generally condemned criminals), and the lepers and other incurables, who are held in great abhorrence, and treated with singular caprice and cruelty. They are condemned to dwell alone, and in a state of disgrace; and any man who is infected with leprosy, however high his rank, is forced, by continual bribes to the officers of justice, to purchase an exemption from the penalties which attach to him. Prostitutes are also considered as outcasts. The women in Burmah are not shut up as in many other parts of the East, and excluded from the sight of men; on the contrary, they are suffered to appear openly in society, and have free access in their own name to the courts of law, where, if ill-treatment is proved, divorce is readily obtained. In many other respects, however, they are exposed to the most degrading treatment. They are sold for a time to strangers; and the practice is not considered shameful, nor the female in any respect dishonoured. They are seldom unfaithful to their new master; and many of them have proved essentially useful to strangers in the Burmese dominions, being generally of industrious and domestic habits, and not addicted to vice.

The taxes from which the public revenue arises are in general rude and ill-contrived expedients for extortion, and are vexatious to the people at the same time that they are little productive to the state. The most important is the house or family tax, which is said to be assessed by a *Domesday Book*, compiled by order of Mentaragyi in 1783. The amount varies greatly in different years, and to a remarkable extent in different districts. Next in order is the tax on agriculture, which is also very irregularly imposed. A large part of the cultivated land of the

kingdom is assigned to favourites of the court or to public functionaries in lieu of stipends or salaries, or is appropriated to the expenses of public establishments, such as war-boats, elephants, &c.; and this assignment conveys a right to tax the inhabitants according to the discretion of the assignee. The court favourites who receive these grants generally appoint agents to manage their estates; they pay a certain tax or quit-rent to the crown, and their agents extort from the cultivators as much more as they can by every mode of oppression, often by torture. Besides this stated tax, extraordinary contributions are levied by the council of the state directly from the lords and nobles to whom the lands are assigned, who in their turn levy it from the cultivators, and generally make it a pretence for plunder and extortion. Taxes are also laid on fruit-trees, on the sugar palm, on the tobacco-land on the teak forests, on the petroleum springs, on mines of gold and precious stones, on the fishery of ponds, lakes, rivers, and salt-water creeks, on the manufacture of salt, on the eggs of the green turtle, and on esculent swallows' nests. As the consumption of wines, spirits, opium, and other intoxicating drugs is forbidden by law, they cannot, of course, be subject to any tax.

In many of the useful arts the Burmese have not made any great advances, while in others they are possessed of no small amount of proficiency. The architecture of religious edifices erected in the Middle Ages is of striking and effective character, though only of brick. The general style bears evidence of an Indian origin; but numerous local modifications have been introduced. Perhaps the feature of most interest is the use of the pointed arch as well as the flat and the circular, and that at a time long anterior to its employment in India. Modern buildings are chiefly of wood; palaces and monasteries, carved with extraordinary richness of detail, and often gilt all over, present an aspect of barbaric splendour. The dagobas, or solid domes, which form at once the objects and the localities of Buddhist worship, are almost the only brick structures now erected; and these are often gilt all over. In carving the Burmese artisans display unusual skill and inventiveness, and give full scope to the working of a luxuriant and whimsical fancy. As in our mediæval wood-work, sometimes there is often displayed a large amount of satirical and facetious caricature. The application of gilding is carried to an extravagant extent; as much as £40,000 is said to have been expended on this article for a single temple. The finest architectural monuments are to be found in the deserted city of Pagán; and many of the most magnificent are greatly shattered by earthquakes.¹ The number of religious buildings, small and great, throughout the country is enormous; at every turn the traveller finds pagodas or kyongs (monasteries), or lesser shrines, or zayats (resting-places for travellers founded by the Buddhists in order to acquire religious merit). The ordinary buildings are of a very slight construction, and the architect is prevented from giving them any great height by the whimsical prejudice of the people against any one walking over their heads. The whole process of the cotton manufacture is performed by women, who use a rude but efficient species of loom, and produce an excellent cloth, though they are much inferior in dexterity to the Indian artisans. Silk cloths are manufactured at different places from Chinese silk. The favourite patterns are zigzag longitudinal stripes of different colours, and the brilliance of the contrasts is frequently gorgeous in its results. The dyeing of the yellow robes of the priests is effected by means of the leaves of the jacktree.

¹ For full details the reader ought to consult Captain Yule's chapter on Pagán.

The common, coarse, unglazed earthenware is of an excellent quality; and a better description of pottery is also made. The art of making porcelain, however, is entirely unknown, and this ware is imported from China. Iron ore, as already mentioned, is smelted; but the Burmese cannot manufacture steel, which is brought from Bengal. Bell-founding has been carried to considerable perfection; and the craftsmen take pride in the magnitude of some of their productions. Perhaps the largest specimen is that in the neighbourhood of Amarapura, which measures 16 feet across the lip and weighs about 80 tons. Coarse articles of cutlery, including swords, spears, knives, also muskets and matchlocks, scissors, and carpenters' tools, are manufactured in the capital, and gold and silver ornaments are produced in every considerable place in the country. Embossed work in drinking cups and the like is executed with great richness of effect. North of the capital, and east of the Irawadi, as before stated, is an entire hill of pure white marble, and there are sculptured marble images of Gautama or Buddha. The marble is of the finest quality; and the workmen give it an exquisite polish by means of a paste of pulverized fossil wood. The chief seat of the manufacture of lacquered wares is at Nyoun-goo, near the ancient city of Pagán. Since Burmah was deprived of its harbours and maritime districts, its foreign commerce has been extremely limited. The trade of the country centres chiefly in the capital. The imports are rice, pickled and dried fish, and foreign commodities obtained from Bengal, the Asiatic Archipelago, and Europe. Petroleum, saltpetre, lime, paper, lacquer-ware, cotton and silk fabrics, iron, cutlery, some brass ware, terra japonica, sugar, and tamarinds are given in exchange. One of the most important branches of the trade of the country was formerly that maintained with the Chinese province of Yunnan; but it has been for a considerable period in abeyance owing to the disturbed state of the frontier counties. The principal marts of this trade, which was carried on at annual fairs, were Madé, near the capital, and Bhamo. The Chinese caravan, setting out from the western province of Yunnan at the close of the periodical rains, generally reached Burmah in the beginning of December, after a journey of six weeks over difficult and mountainous roads. The principal fair was held at Bhamo, comparatively few traders arriving at the capital. The articles imported from China were raw silk, wrought copper, orpiment or yellow arsenic from the mines in Yunnan (of a very fine quality, which found its way into Western Asia, and into Europe through Calcutta), quicksilver, vermilion, iron pans, brass-wire, tin, lead, alum, silver, gold and gold-leaf, earthenware, paints, carpets, rhubarb, tea, honey, velvets and other wrought silks, spirits, musk, verdigris, dry fruits, paper, fans, umbrellas, shoes, and wearing apparel. The metals were chiefly produced in the province of Yunnan. The articles sent to China consisted of raw cotton, by far the most considerable article of export; feathers, chiefly of the blue jay, for ornamenting the dresses of ceremony of the Chinese mandarins; esculent swallows' nests, ivory, rhinoceros' and deers' horns; sapphires, used for buttons to the caps of the Chinese officers of rank, jade, and amber, with a small quantity of British woollens. The trade of the northern part of Burmah proper is chiefly carried on at large fairs held in connection with religious festivals. One of the most important articles, in addition to European cloth goods, is salt, for their supply of which all the hill-tribes are dependent on Burmah.²

The currency used by the Burmese is of the rudest description. For the smaller payments lead is employed;

² An interesting survey of the various trade-routes from Burmah to China is given by Mr J. Coryton in the *Jour. of the R. Geogr. Soc.* for 1875.

and for the larger payments silver almost exclusively. This is not coined into pieces of any known weight and fineness; and in every payment of any consequence the metal must be weighed and is generally assayed, for which a premium is paid to the bankers or money-changers of 2½ per cent. besides 1 per cent. which they say is lost in the operation. There are three or four different alloys of silver in common use as money; the best is Bau, which is almost pure; next is Dain, with about 6.4 per cent. of copper; and so on through several grades. An attempt was made by King Mentaragyi to introduce a coinage; but his plans failed because he fixed the current value of his money considerably above the real value of the silver. The high rate of interest for money—which is 25 per cent., and 60 per cent. when no security is given—is another proof of the low state of commerce among the Burmese. The seeds of the *Abrus precatorius* (Khyin Rhwe), a little red and black pea, serve as the smallest weight; they ordinarily weigh about a grain, but vary from one to two. Two of them make a rhwe-kyi, four rhwe-kyis a great pae, four great pae a mat, four mats a kyap, and 100 kyaps a piktha (peissa) or viss, which is equal to 3.6516 lb avoirdupois. The Burmese year is divided into three seasons and twelve months, beginning with what corresponds to our April, and every third year a month is intercalated. Every pakka or half-month consists of 15 days (ret) of 60 narih each. The ret is divided into the nay or period from sunrise to sunset, and the guyin or period from sunset to sunrise,—the 60 narih being assigned in different proportions to the two periods in each of the twelve months, the first month having 30 in each period, and the second 30 in the daytime and 28 in the night, and so on. The Burmese have borrowed their astronomy and astrology, as well as this division of the day, from the Hindus. They are ignorant of oceanic navigation; and in their voyages to Calcutta, during the fine season, they creep along the coast, never losing sight of it.

The Burmese proper use a monosyllabic language, spoken with distinctive tones, like the Chinese and several other Indo-Chinese tongues. Its vocabulary shows distinct relation to Chinese on one side and to Tibetan on another. In contrast with Siamese it is a very soft and flexible language, and its monosyllabic character is somewhat modified in pronunciation. It has no distinctly sibilant sound, the only letter approximate to "s" having a resemblance rather to the English "th." It is a literary language, and has been under cultivation for perhaps six or seven centuries. It is written with an alphabet of Indian origin, which probably came in with Buddhism; and most of the letters are of a more or less circular form. The Pali remaining the dialect of sacred literature, the Burmese has been almost confined to secular uses. It has developed a poetic diction of such complete individuality that it is unintelligible without special study. Another peculiar dialect, largely mingled with Pali elements, is spoken at court, and also requires separate study, as it substitutes a vocabulary of elaborate artificiality subordinate to the etiquette of the courtiers. The word for "to go," for example, is different according as it is said that the king goes, or the prince goes, or the priest goes. Of the literary forms in which the Burmese express themselves, the favourite one is the drama, which appears under the various forms of masquerades, puppet shows, ballet-opera, and farces, as well as in the more dignified character of the regular tragedy. The moral character of the plays is often of the lowest kind, the utmost licence both of speech and action being allowed on the stage. The scenery is of a very simple and purely suggestive kind, a single branch of a tree standing for a forest, and frequently the filling up of the dialogue is largely left to the ingenuity of the actors, little more than hints of the plot being con-

tained in many of the librettos. The popular interest in the dramatic exhibitions is intense, and, as in Siam, the same piece often drags its slow length along for days together. Specimens of the plots will be found in the appendixes to Yule's *Narrative*, Williams's *Through Burmah*, and Bastian's *Reisen*. The national chronicles, or chronicles of the kings (*Maha-Radza Weng*), go back at least in name to the early centuries of the Christian era, but their historical value is of a very dubious kind. Libraries are common throughout the country, principally in the monasteries. Though a certain kind of paper is manufactured from bamboo pulp, the usual material of the books is the palm leaf, while for ordinary notebook purposes a kind of black tablet, called a *parabeik*, and a steatite pencil are employed. A dictionary of Burmese was published by Judson at Maulmein in 1852; Schleiermacher made the language the object of a remarkable study in his *Influence of Writing upon Language*, 1835; and Bastian has contributed an essay on the literature to the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenl. Gesellschaft*, 1863, and has also published an interesting sketch of the peculiarities of the language in his *Sprachvergleichende Studien*, Leipsic, 1870.

The Burmese are votaries of Buddha, and the rites, doctrines, and priesthood are in their main features the same as in other countries where Buddhism prevails. Every Burman must, at some period or other of his life, spend some time in a monastery; and it is no uncommon thing for a man to retire for a longer or shorter period from the bustle of life without any intention of permanently adopting the yellow robe which is the distinctive mark of the regular monk. Dr Bastian has supplied a great many interesting details on the religious beliefs and ceremonies of the people, but they are as yet unfortunately scattered through the pages of his *Travels*. Neither Christianity nor Mahometanism has made much progress, though a certain number of Mahometans have existed, especially at the capital, for a long time, and have mosques there. Foreigners enjoy religious toleration, but the Burmese rulers view any attempt to convert the natives to the Christian or any other foreign faith as an interference with their allegiance. An American mission was settled in the country in 1815, under the conduct of Dr Judson before mentioned, who brought to this perilous service zeal and discretion; but it entirely failed of success, not from any bigotry on the part of the natives, but from the opposition of men in power. On the war breaking out with the British the missionaries were imprisoned, and narrowly escaped with their lives, and on their release they retired to prosecute their labours in the British province of Martaban. There are now in the capital representatives of both English and French missionary agencies.

Education throughout the Burman empire is still in the ecclesiastical stage, but the educational statistics compare favourably with those of many portions of Europe. The first book, according to Dr Bastian, which is put into the hands of the boys in the monastery schools is the *Sin-pungyi*, or Great Basket of Learning, in which the meaning of the Burmese letters is explained. After this they learn the injunctions of religion in the *Mengalasut*, and next the prayers of Gautama in the *Pharitgyi*, which is written in Pali, so that their study consists in mechanically committing it to memory. They then proceed to the *Djats* (stories or legends) in which the Burmese words are mingled with Pali expressions and contractions; later on they pass to the study of *Saddo* or grammar, and finally to that of the *Yok* or general cyclopaedia. For those who enter the monastic profession there remain the Pali texts. The historical books are then read, as well as the *Pu-és* or dramatic productions. Fluency of speech and great skill in carrying on an argument according to their own system

of dialectics are the common possessions of the educated Burmese, and an unshaken conviction in the truth of their religion is almost universal.

It is probable that Burmah is the *Chryse Regio* of Ptolemy, a name parallel in meaning to *Sonaparanta*, the classic Pali title assigned to the country round the capital in Burmese documents. The royal history traces the lineage of the kings to the ancient Buddhist monarchs of India. This no doubt is fabulous, but it is hard to say how early communication with Gangetic India began. From the 11th to the 13th century the old Burman empire was at the height of its power, and to this period belong the splendid remains of architecture at Pagán. The city and the dynasty were destroyed by a Chinese (or rather Mongol) invasion (1284 A.D.) in the reign of Kublai Khan. After that the empire fell to a low ebb, and Central Burmah was often subject to Shan dynasties. In the early part of the 16th century the Burmese princes of Toungoo, in the north-east of Pegu, began to rise to power, and established a dynasty which at one time held possession of Pegu, Ava, and Arakán. They made their capital at Pegu, History. and to this dynasty belong the gorgeous descriptions of some of the travellers of the 16th century. Their wars exhausted the country, and before the end of the century it was in the greatest decay. A new dynasty arose in Ava, which subdued Pegu, and maintained their supremacy throughout the 17th and during the first forty years of the 18th century. The Peguans or Taleins then revolted, and having taken the capital Ava, and made the king prisoner, reduced the whole country to submission. Alompra, left by the conqueror in charge of the village of Monchaboo, planned the deliverance of his country. He attacked the Peguans at first with small detachments; but when his forces increased, he suddenly advanced, and took possession of the capital in the autumn of 1753. In 1754 the Peguans sent an armament of war-boats against Ava, but they were totally defeated by Alompra; while in the districts of Prome, Donabew, Loonzay, &c., the Burmans revolted, and expelled all the Pegu garrisons in their towns. In 1754 Prome was besieged by the king of Pegu, who was again defeated by Alompra, and the war was transferred from the upper provinces to the mouths of the navigable rivers, and the numerous creeks and canals which intersect the lower country. In 1755 Apporaza, the king of Pegu's brother, was equally unsuccessful, after which the Peguans were driven from Bassein and the adjacent country, and were forced to withdraw to the fortress of Syriam, distant twelve miles from Rangoon. Here they enjoyed a brief repose, Alompra being called away to quell an insurrection of his own subjects, and to repel an invasion of the Siamese; but returning victorious, he laid siege to the fortress of Syriam and took it by surprise. In these wars the French sided with the Peguans, the English with the Burmans. Duplex, the governor of Pondicherry, had sent two ships to the aid of the former; but the master of the first was decoyed up the river by Alompra, where he was massacred along with his whole crew. The other escaped to Pondicherry. Alompra was now master of all the navigable rivers; and the Peguans, shut out from foreign aid, were finally subdued. In 1757 the conqueror laid siege to the city of Pegu, which capitulated, on condition that their own king should govern the country, but that he should do homage for his kingdom, and should also surrender his daughter to the victorious monarch. Alompra never contemplated the fulfilment of the condition; and having obtained possession of the town, abandoned it to the fury of his soldiers. In the following year the Peguans vainly endeavoured to throw off the yoke. Alompra afterwards reduced the town and district of Tavoy, and finally undertook the conquest of

the Siamese. His army advanced to Mergui and Tenasserim, both which towns were taken; and he was besieging the capital of Siam when he was taken ill. He immediately ordered his army to retreat, in hopes of reaching his capital alive; but he expired on the way, in 1760, in the fiftieth year of his age, after he had reigned eight years. In the previous year he had massacred the English of the establishment of Negrais, whom he suspected of assisting the Peguans. He was succeeded by his oldest son Nounгдаугyi, whose reign was disturbed by the rebellion of his brother Tshen-byo-yen or Shembuan, and afterwards by one of his father's generals. He died in little more than three years, leaving one son in his infancy; and on his decease the throne was seized by his brother Tshen-byo-yen. The new king was intent, like his predecessors, on the conquest of the adjacent states, and accordingly made war in 1765 on the Munnipore kingdom, and also on the Siamese, with partial success. In the following year he defeated the Siamese, and, after a long blockade, obtained possession of their capital. But while the Burmans were extending their conquests in this quarter, they were invaded by a Chinese army of 50,000 men from the province of Yunnan. This army was hemmed in by the skill of the Burmans; and, being reduced by the want of provisions, it was afterwards attacked and totally destroyed, with the exception of 2500 men, who were sent in fetters to work in the Burmese capital at their several trades. In the meantime the Siamese revolted, and while the Burman army was marching against them, the Peguan soldiers who had been incorporated in it rose against their companions, and commencing an indiscriminate massacre, pursued the Burman army to the gates of Rangoon, which they besieged, but were unable to capture. In 1774 Tshen-byo-yen was engaged in reducing the marauding tribes. He took the district and fort of Martaban from the revolted Peguans; and in the following year he sailed down the Irawadi with an army of 50,000 men, and, arriving at Rangoon, put to death the aged monarch of Pegu, along with many of his nobles, who had shared with him in the offence of rebellion. He died in 1776, after a reign of twelve years, during which he had extended the Burmese dominions on every side. He was succeeded by his son, a youth of eighteen, called Tsengooen (Chenguzza of Symes), who proved himself a blood-thirsty despot, and was put to death by his uncle, Bhodaphra or Mentaragyi, in 1781, who ascended the vacant throne. In 1783 the new king effected the conquest of Arakán. In the same year he removed his residence from Ava, which, with brief interruptions, had been the capital for four centuries, to the new city of Amarapura, "the City of the Immortals."

The Siamese who had revolted in 1771 were never afterwards subdued by the Burmans; but the latter retained their dominion over the sea-coast as far as Mergui. In the year 1785 they attacked the island of Junkseylon with a fleet of boats and an army, but were ultimately driven back with loss; and a second attempt by the Burman monarch, who in 1786 invaded Siam with an army of 30,000 men, was attended with no better success. In 1793 peace was concluded between these two powers, the Siamese yielding to the Burmans the entire possession of

¹ The frequent change of capital is quite remarkable in Burmese history. In the earlier periods, it is probable that the chronicles have made it seem more frequent than it is, by running the history of minor contemporaneous kingdoms into that of one great monarchy. But in more recent times the capital has been shifted from Prome to Pagán, from Pagán to Panya, from Panya to Ava, and from Ava to Amarapura; and since the present monarch was visited by the English embassy of 1855, he has caused Amarapura to be abandoned, and has built a new city at Mandalay, which is at present the chief city in the empire.

the coast of Tenasserim on the Indian Ocean, and the two important seaports of Mergui and Tavoy.

In 1795 the Burmese were involved in a dispute with the British in India, in consequence of their troops, to the amount of 5000 men, entering the district of Chittagong in pursuit of three robbers who had fled from justice across the frontier. Explanations being made and terms of accommodation offered by General Erskine, the commanding officer, the Burmese commander retired from the British territories, when the fugitives were restored, and all differences for the time amicably arranged.

But it was evident that the gradual extension of the British and Burmese territories would in time bring the two powers into close contact along a more extended line of frontier, and in all probability lead to a war between them. It happened, accordingly, that the Burmese, carrying their arms into Assam and Munnipore, penetrated to the British border near Sylhet, on the N.E. frontier of Bengal, beyond which were the possessions of the chiefs of Cachar, under the protection of the British Government. The Burmese leaders, arrested in their career of conquest, were impatient to measure their strength with their new neighbours. It appears from the evidence of Europeans who resided in Ava, that they were entirely unacquainted with the discipline and resources of the Europeans. They imagined that, like other nations, they would fall before their superior tactics and valour; and their cupidity was inflamed by the prospect of marching to Calcutta and plundering the country. At length their chiefs ventured on the open violation of the British territories. They attacked a party of sepoy within the frontier, and seized and carried off British subjects, while at all points their troops, moving in large bodies, assumed the most menacing positions. In the south encroachments were made upon the British frontier of Chittagong. The island of Shaparee, at the mouth of the Naf river, had been occupied by a small guard of British troops. These were attacked on the 23d September 1823 by the Burmese, and driven from their post with the loss of several lives; and to the repeated demands of the British for redress no answer was returned. Other outrages ensued; and at length, in February 1824, war was declared by the British Government.

Hostilities having commenced, the British rulers in India resolved to carry the war into the enemy's country; an armament, under Commodore Grant and Sir Archibald Campbell, entered the Irawadi River, and anchored off Rangoon on the 10th May 1824. After a feeble resistance this great seaport surrendered, and the troops were landed. The place was entirely deserted by its inhabitants, the provisions were carried off or destroyed, and the invading force took possession of a complete solitude. On the 28th May, Sir A. Campbell ordered an attack on some of the nearest posts, which were all carried after a feeble defence. Another attack was made on the 10th June on the stockades at the village of Kemmendine. Some of these were battered by artillery; and the shot and shells struck such terror into the Burmese that they fled in the utmost precipitation. It soon, however, became apparent that the expedition had been undertaken with very imperfect knowledge of the country, and without adequate provision. The devastation of the country, which was part of the defensive system of the Burmese, was carried out with unrelenting rigour, and the invaders were soon reduced to great difficulties. The health of the men declined, and their ranks were fearfully thinned. The monarch of Ava sent large reinforcements to his dispirited and beaten army; and early in July an attack was commenced on the British line, but proved unsuccessful. On the 8th the British assaulted. The enemy were beaten at all points; and their strongest stockaded works, battered to pieces by a powerful artillery, were, in general