Negotiating cooperation: Shan politics and Burma, 1946-1962

Samara Yatunghwe

Follow this and additional works at: https://digital.car.chula.ac.th/arv

Part of the Asian Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: 10.58837/CHULA.ARV.22.1.3
Available at: https://digital.car.chula.ac.th/arv/vol22/iss1/4

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Chulalongkorn Journal Online (CUJO) at Chula Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Asian Review by an authorized editor of Chula Digital Collections. For more information, please contact ChulaDC@car.chula.ac.th.
Negotiating cooperation: Shan politics and Burma, 1946–1962

Samara Yawngewe

Abstract

This article examines what is required for ethnic unity in Burma/Myanmar by examining the early stages of independence in Burma through the lens of Shan political negotiation. This is to provide insight into what the Shan sought to achieve and why they insisted on constitutional reform in the early 1960s. Juxtaposing the attitudes of the ethnic leadership, prominent Burman politicians and military strongmen of that period can lead to concrete conclusions about how certain points of view encourage debate and cooperation, while other stifle it and result in fragmentation.

The year 1962 in Burma/Myanmar is best remembered for the coup d’état which ushered in a system of military rule that still exists today. What is less well remembered is that the coup interrupted a national conference taking place to discuss the constitution in an attempt to seek political answers to the unrest enveloping the country. The essence of the debate was a proposal called the “Federal Principle” developed during the All States Conference in 1961. The coup truncated this debate on the nature of federalism as a political system in Burma and how it might work in the context of a non-western country (the models borrowed came from Canada, the USA, and Switzerland).

By all accounts, Burma was a country deeply in turmoil during the time of the coup. In particular, Shan State had long been a focus of trouble, beginning with a Kuomintang (KMT) invasion in the early 1950s, in part funded by the USA, and the development of drug cultivation as a source of revenue for various guerrilla forces. Additionally, a strong anti-feudalist movement had worked

to abolish the saopha system by 1959, and groups such as the Shan State People’s Liberation Party maintained that the former saophas, unhappy with their loss of power, were working to secede and promote anti-Burman feeling. The saophas themselves were a diverse group with differing political views but no longer with the legitimate political authority to work for or against the central government. The political atmosphere of 1962 was rife with rumors and propaganda focusing on the alleged secession movement of Shan State and the interference of external, hostile forces.

In discussion of this complex and sensitive political situation, the nature of “nationalism” and its origins with regard to the ethnic nationalities may be raised but often devolves into a debate on the legitimacy of a particular group’s request for recognition. What seems more immediately relevant is the fact that the ethnic groups wanted a certain kind of recognition, had organized, and were united enough to make demands of the central government, and that this was a political problem which needed a political answer.

It is the objective of this paper to examine the nature of Shan politics in Burma between 1946 and 1962, beginning with the first Panglong Conference, in order to understand what the ethnic nationalities, in particular the Shan, were asking from Ministerial Burma, and why. This is an attempt to describe a short period of history in the region as it happened, not in the context of what should or should not have been done to achieve a certain end, but simply to examine what happened and why it happened. Understanding this has direct bearing on understanding why ethnic conflict has persisted in Burma until the present day. This paper will also attempt to briefly address the nature of political organization within the Shan states under the British to highlight the process of de-legitimization of local authority which occurred. A final objective is to examine the goals of Ministerial Burma, to determine whether there were not in fact several kinds of national vision, some more conciliatory to the demands of the ethnic nationalities than others.

My hypothesis is that Shan leaders had their own particular views on how they would have liked to administer their people and territory but were political realists who understood that power rested with the central government. They sought to engage in a
constant negotiation to ensure their rights, while supporting the central government, despite having certain grievances. The failure of democracy in Burma is not due to inherent, primordial ethnic differences but instead due to the termination of political dialogue between the central government and the various ethnic leaders which occurred with Ne Win’s military coup in 1962.

Politics in Burma are no more complicated than anywhere else in the world and simply reflect the negotiation of power between entities that must always occur when one has more power than others in a region. If a group is strong enough to organize and make demands of a more dominant group, this represents the political reality of threat to domination. The problem will not simply go away without compromise unless all members of the challenging group are eliminated. This is a reality which was noted by the British in relation to the Burmese, as Woodrow Wyatt, Labor MP for Aston stated in response to Winston Churchill during the debate on the Burma Independence Bill in the British House of Commons in December 1947:

What does the Rt. Hon. Gentleman want? Does he want us to continue to rule Burma by force? If he wants that, then he must say so quite clearly. We cannot give a country Dominion status if it is not willing to accept it. If a country says, "We want to be free; we don’t want Dominion status as an intermediate stage," the only way we can persuade it to have Dominion status is by force.

I have a strong personal bias in relation to this topic. As one of the granddaughters of the former saopha of Yawnghwe and first president of Burma, Sao Shwe Thaik, I have long had an interest in Burma’s political history. Since he died before I was born, I have only heard and read second-hand accounts of his views and politics and would like to better understand the situation as it was then. As a Canadian citizen, I am also interested in how the federal system functions, especially since I have spent most of my life in Quebec where there are divisions between the French and English. As a result, I do not believe that it is impossible for very different groups of people to coexist non-violently, where there is the political will to do so and where negotiation can occur.

Finally, there is a long, politicized debate surrounding the use
of “Burma” vs. “Myanmar.” The Constitution of 1947 uses the term Burma when giving the name of the country in English, and Myanmar when stating the name of the country in Burmese. Since this paper refers to the country during the period when the 1947 Constitution was in effect and is written in English, the term Burma will be used.

In order to achieve the objectives of this paper I have analyzed primary documents of this era, including the Aung San–Attlee Agreement, the debate on the bill to grant Independence to Burma in the British House of Commons, notes by observers on the Panglong Conferences, the Panglong Agreement, and the 1947 Constitution of Burma, as well as the body of literature which deals with this era, and supplemented it with information gained from a lecture by U Aung Tun, son of U Nu, as well as some discussion with my father, Harn Yawnghwe, who is director of the Euro-Burma office and who works on national reconciliation in Burma.

Political organization within the Shan states under the British

It is necessary to establish what kind of political structure was in place in the area which came to be known as the Shan states under the British occupation, in order to understand what the people of that area were accustomed to in terms of government and what changes were introduced by the British.

The area known as Shan State today was in fact a huge tract of land comprising areas which were mostly inaccessible and where Shan rulership itself had never extended. Perhaps the most extreme example of this were the Wa who lived above Kengtung. When asked by the British Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry in 1947 how they wished to be administered, a representative replied, “We have not thought about that because we are wild people” and furthermore, when pressed about constitutional reforms his people wanted, he answered, “None, only more opium.” It was not until the KMT invasion that the Wa began to care about events outside their own domain, having previously ignored all other forms of political change in the region. Kachin, Chin, Naga, Palaung, and Kokang peoples lived in areas bordering the Shan states or scattered throughout certain areas of the Shan states. These various people
were not under Shan control and generally never had been. In areas heavily populated by Shans, however, the saopha system was an established form of local political organization, though the saophas themselves were often historical rivals who engaged in endless wars against one another.\(^5\)

It has been maintained that the British did not interfere in the internal affairs of the Shan states and left them to govern themselves.\(^6\) Sao Saimong Mangrai, a Shan historian, states that under the British, “[p]eace came as never before and prosperity naturally followed. As far as could be seen, the Shan were left almost severely alone in their old ways, habits and customs.”\(^7\) Nonetheless, the British brought certain changes to the administration of the Shan States which had lasting consequences. First, once the British had persuaded the various Shan saophas and rulers to sign the sanad in the 1880s and 1890s, they began to draw boundaries where there had never been boundaries, depending on what suited their interests.\(^8\) Territory was redistributed. Some of the frontier chiefs gained territory, some lost their rights, and some had their land transferred to foreign powers and “finally even lost the right to choose their own suzerainty.”\(^9\) Yawngewe states that perhaps the greatest injustice was to make the Shan unknowingly re-accept Burmese suzerainty in the late 1880s:

...in fact there was then no Burmese suzerain as Burma had legally become a part of India since 1886. The British, however, squared the circle by placing the Shan saopha under the Governor of India, and put other peripheral areas ... under indirect rule.\(^10\)

In this arrangement, the saophas and other Shan rulers were given full autonomy in internal matters, although they were, in the grand scheme of things, now subject to Burma Proper. The British Foreign Department’s Notification 791E stated explicitly that, with this change, “the whole of Upper Burma, including the Shan States, ... was declared to be part of British India”\(^11\) (emphasis added). In the Upper Burma Laws Act of 1887, the Shan states were demarcated into north, south, the myelat, and states under the supervision of the deputy commissioners of Myitkyina and Upper Chindwin districts.\(^12\) Despite their “full autonomy,” the saophas and Shan rulers had to obey the resident British officers, supervisors, superintendents, residents, and commissioners, all of
whom ranked higher than them in terms of access to the power centre, in this case Britain. The states were supervised by British political agents called Assistant Superintendents who answered to the Superintendents of the northern and southern Shan states. Each assistant superintendent was assigned one big state, or several smaller ones. The assistant superintendents advised the saophas and their advice “was expected to be taken literally and seriously.”

During the 1920s, a significant change made to the administration of the Shan states was the introduction of federation. According to Sao Saimong Mangrai, federation was intended to make the British administration pay for itself. The states were officially divided in the following manner (some smaller areas were consolidated): Twenty-six Shan states plus 3 Karenni states comprised the southern Shan states and six Shan states comprised the northern Shan states. The Federated Shan States were formed on 1 October 1922, the first structure of its kind amongst the Shan. The constitution for the federation was framed without consultation with the saophas, who simply had to accept it at a single meeting with Sir Reginald Craddock at Taunggyi. A centralized budget was established for public works, medical administration, forestry, education, agriculture, and police. The states gave a part of their revenues to fund this budget (first 50 percent, later reduced to between 27 and 35 percent), in addition to revenues collected from timber and mineral extraction, which had previously gone into provincial funds. The saophas were joined into an Advisory Council of Chiefs which had no legislative powers and was consulted primarily in connection with the extension of “Acts to the Shan states,” decided by the local governor or when the budget was being discussed.

The Federated Shan States were treated as a sub-province of Burma Proper, with separate finances and a distinct administration. The President of the Advisory Council of Chiefs was also the Commissioner of the Federated Shan States as well as being an Agent of the Governor of Burma. The Commissioner was the head to whom the Superintendents reported, as well as being in charge of central budget of the Federated Shan States. Additionally, the powers of High Court for the Shan states, which had been under the jurisdiction of the Lieutenant-Governor, were now transferred
to the Commissioner.\textsuperscript{22}

In this manner, the autonomy of the Shan saophas and rulers was gradually diminished. Yawnghwe states:

... the Shan chaofa and rulers had only advisory roles in the federal government despite the fact that they had to contribute 50 per cent of their revenue to the central fund. Since they did not enjoy any executive or legislative power in the federation, their status was severely reduced from that of semi-sovereign rulers in the late 1880s, to that of poorly paid but elevated native tax-collectors in 1922.\textsuperscript{23}

They were to collect taxes, maintain law and order and the courts, and could appoint their own officials and control their own subjects, but always under the direction of the superintendents.\textsuperscript{24} Whether or not the saophas then could have done anything to change the state of affairs in the 1880s is uncertain. However, as the years passed they began to recognize their true position within the British Empire and the British-legitimized dominance of the Burmans and Rangoon. The saophas disliked federation, believing they had given up too much power, forced to act according to the sanad which made them subject to the superintendent and governor.\textsuperscript{25} The Shan region was no longer classified as a political entity in its own right but was “an administrative appendage of a colonial set-up, no different from other tribal areas.”\textsuperscript{26} The Shan did try to change this state of affairs several times during the 1930s through discussion with the British in Burma and London, but to no avail.\textsuperscript{27} Before continuing, however, it is worth explaining why the saophas mattered at all and what exactly their role was within the Shan states.

\textbf{Saopha system}

The saopha system was traditionally one of hereditary rule, though not feudal in the European sense. Succession usually descended from father to eldest son, but might pass to uncles, younger sons, or nephews. Shan society was not rigidly stratified, and interactions between the ruler and the ruled were not overly formalized. The kinship system, where in-laws could be related to other in-laws, made the saopha families so extensive that a great
number of people could claim access to some degree.  

The hereditary rights of the saophas, however, did lie in something like the European concept of the “divine right of kings.” The term saopha means “Lord of the Sky,” and the power of the saophas was unquestioned. Sai Aung Tun writes: “The *saohpa* often used their powers firmly and effectively. The feudal administration pivoted around the *saohpa* and for good or bad, they bore the responsibility for their people.”

Shan peasants resembled freemen in Europe. They owned small parcels of land and could move about freely. There were no slaves or serfs, people who had to live and work on the lord’s land, as in Europe. In village and local matters, the peasants governed themselves with their own village headmen. When peasants did not like the rules or taxes administered by their saopha, they could resettle elsewhere, especially since saophas were not landowners, in the sense that all the land did not belong to them. Yawnghwe contends that the saophas “were never landlords in the individual ownership of land” though they did of course use certain lands for their own purposes. Sai Aung Tun takes the opposite point of view:

> All cultivable lands in Shan State were under the control of the Shan Chiefs, the *saohpa*, who were the sole owners of the land. The farmers who worked the land, strictly speaking, did not own the land as their private property. The land was given to them to cultivate: it was not hereditary property, nor was it transferable.

Still, Sai Aung Tun goes on to note, “The *saohpa* took much care to see that all cultivable land remained firmly in the hands of the Shan farmers and peasants.” Perhaps the difference in scholarly opinion relates to different conceptions of land ownership. That is, Yawnghwe is referring to land ownership as it is understood in the European sense of property rights. The saophas never exerted that kind of formal control. However, had you asked the average Shan peasant who the land belonged to, he or she would likely have given the name of the saopha of that district, which is the point Sai Aung Tun makes. Bixler provides the following comparison with India:
Sawbwas have differed; some have been liberal and forward-looking, others far more autocratic. They should not be confused with the wealthy maharajahs of India. They have been instead more like prosperous (sometimes very prosperous) landed gentry in an area largely nonurban.\(^{35}\)

Under the British, the saophas still had more money than the average Shan farmer, since they could keep 10 percent of tax revenue from their kingdoms. However, saophas also had to pay for more customary obligations: monthly salaries for local judges, ministers, officers, clerks, policemen, guards, certain kinds of teachers, the maintenance of religious institutions and buildings, and the maintenance of local administration, jails, and court-houses. A saopha also had to support relatives, maintain his palaces, entertain state guests, be a patron of monasteries, monks, and intelligent students, and maintain local jobs by employing a personal retinue and staff.\(^{36}\) Revenues and accounts were strictly monitored by the British Residents so tax abuse could not occur on a wide scale, if at all.\(^{37}\)

**First Panglong Conference**

Following the experience of Japanese occupation during World War II and the political stirrings ongoing in Burma Proper, the Shan began to review their own position under the British. Sai Aung Tun states:

... they began to feel that the time had come for them to make a political move to free themselves from the British. Politically speaking, the frontier peoples, including the Shan, were still underdeveloped. But the Shan, in comparison, were a bit ahead in their political outlook.\(^{38}\)

The result was that the Shan decided to hold a conference in the town of Panglong in order to discuss their position with other Frontier Area leaders, the Burmans, and the British. The Shan took responsibility for providing a venue and other facilities, and for covering expenses. The conference opened on 26 March 1946, presided over by the Saopha of Tawng Peng, and attended by Shan, Karen, Kachin, and Chin representatives. The British were
represented by Mr. H. N. C. Stevenson, director of the Frontier Areas Administration, who also represented Governor Tin Tut, who could not attend due to illness. Ex-premier U Saw and his men attended, as did U Nu as a member of the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL), along with his faction, at the invitation of the Youth League.  

The concrete results of the Panglong Conference were certain British reforms. Administration of the frontier areas was to remain under the direct control of the Governor until the hill peoples themselves decided to join Burma Proper. The head of the Frontier Areas administration was now to be in direct contact with the governor and residents. Finally, superintendents and assistant superintendents would now simply be “residents” and “assistant residents,” meant to give support and advice but no longer superintend.  

According to Mr. Stevenson’s secret report to his British superiors, the speeches by U Nu and U Saw were very different. U Nu’s speech was a direct attack on the British which insulted the saophas, Chin, and Kachin (who trusted the British more than the Burmese). U Saw’s speech on the second day, however, was reconciliatory to the ethnic leaders, apologizing for the behavior of Burmese soldiers in the Shan states during World War II. U Saw also promised that the Frontier Areas could have local autonomy and that there would be no central government interference with their customs or religion. Stevenson notes: “He also made the first concrete constitutional proposals ever made to the Frontier peoples by a leading Burman.”  

The ethnic groups, meanwhile, although they liked U Saw’s proposals, essentially distrusted Burman promises. They were fully aware of the attitude of many Burman politicians, “that [the Burman] ethnic group was superior to all by virtue of their intelligence, their past conquests and present level of achievements.” Stevenson’s secret report notes:

That was the crux of all the arguments against union. From every side came instances of broken promises and villainous behaviour during the Ba Maw regime. From every side [came the request that the] day of union [be] postponed until the people of the Frontier Areas had built ... a federal organization strong enough
to ensure equitable treatment from Burma. In short the frontier peoples are still very afraid and uncertain about the future.⁴³

In his own speech, Stevenson made the following crucial point:

... unless the Burmese leaders and people alike change their opinion about the Hill people and the treatment to be accorded to them there can be no hope of forming a real Federated Burma. On the other hand, if the Burmese will realize the situation and try to amend their past faults, we see no reason why there cannot be a real united Federated State of Burma.⁴⁴

The conclusion drawn by ethnic leaders at the end of the conference was that union with Burma Proper was not possible at present. However, the leadership also recognized that the possibility of a separate Frontier Areas Administration was dubious. The main issue was one of finance. The Chin and Kachin wondered if the Shan could pay for the deficit in administration which the Burmese government had paid for in pre-war days. The Shan were willing but unsure if they could realistically do so. U Saw challenged them on this point, stating that the British might not want to keep financing the Frontier Areas very long, in which case they could not survive financially. Stevenson wrote: "I was tackled straightly about this and obviously could give no reply but that the matter 'was still under consideration by His Majesty's Government.' The Chins and Kachins asked if there was to be no tangible reward for their past loyalty and service."⁴⁵ It was obvious to the ethnic leadership that they could not assume the British would be accountable for anything.

Political situation for ethnic groups, 1946–7

For the ethnic groups, the period after the first Panglong Conference was confusing since the British seemed to have two internal opposing factions, each advocating a different course for the fate of Burma. This reflected the political divisions between the Labor and Conservative parties in Britain during that time. The Conservatives had been in power in colonial times and so the colonial bureaucracy was often Conservative in view. In Britain, however, the end of the war brought Labor to power, with considerably different views on foreign policy and empire. The
result was a contradictory policy in Burma which Governor Dorman-Smith himself was aware of. The British were ostensibly carrying out the White Paper plan for directed-independence in Burma while simultaneously undermining their position in Burma by granting the AFPFL large freedoms.\textsuperscript{46}

Yawnghwe points to the division between the British within Burma itself and those in London. In the former group, Governor Dorman-Smith and the colonial bureaucracy were acting for slow independence and unification, along the lines of the 1931 Act, which would confer Dominion Status upon Burma. In the latter group, individuals like Lord Mountbatten had London’s attention and were generally sympathetic to the AFPL’s demand for immediate unification and independence.\textsuperscript{47} This attitude was often motivated by political pragmatism underscored by the desire to avoid unnecessary conflict. The following excerpt from the debate in parliament on the Burma Independence Bill of 1947 is illustrative:

\begin{quote}
Whether the Burmese are fit for self-government or not, the point is: Should we continue to govern Burma against the will of the politicians in Burma, against the whole national feeling of Burma which has demanded self-government?\textsuperscript{48}
\end{quote}

The Shan and other Frontier leaders recognized the divide between the policies of the British in Burma and the British in London. Despite being under the direct authority of Governor Dorman-Smith, the ethnic leaders understood that if he was overruled by London, he was powerless. Without a voice in London, the Shan and Frontier leaders had very little with which to bargain. A powerful example is that of the Karen, who sent two delegations to London to try to gain recognition for their cause, but were essentially ignored.\textsuperscript{49} The situation had been much the same during the 1930s. Three saophas, Sir Sao Khe, Sao Khin Mawng, and Sao Shwe Thaike, had attended the Round Table Conference series in London in an attempt to present the Shan case, but there was no change in policy until the Japanese invasion.\textsuperscript{50}

Experiences like this had convinced the Shan leaders that “the British,” whether those in Burma or London, either could not or would not help them. If anything was to be done to allay their fears of subjection to Burman dominance, they would have to achieve it
themselves.

Three of the principle Shan statesmen of the time were Sao Shwe Thaikie, Sao Sam Toon, and Sao Khun Kyi. During this period they attempted to establish inter-ethnic collaboration to determine a political solution to their collective concerns about Burman dominance. They brought together all the Shan saophas, along with Shan administrators, community leaders, tribal chiefs, leading Shan intellectuals and politicians, and Chin and Kachin leaders, who met frequently to discuss the rapidly changing political situation.

Yawnghwe notes that historians like Steinberg and Trager have made the indirect argument that this "politicking" on the part of the saophas was detrimental to building a true sense of nationhood. In history, it is impossible to say what would have happened. It is sometimes difficult enough to know what did happen. It is therefore vital to continue to look at the situation as a whole and to compare, for instance, the outcomes of the first and second Panglong Conferences. The reasons for the success of the second Panglong Agreement go a long way towards explaining what a true sense of nationhood actually entails: not the absence or suppression of dissent, but a forum where dissent can be expressed openly and listened to. Successful nationhood could actually be described as cooperation between different political entities. Whether the will to cooperate was present in the attitudes of the Shan leaders is what must be demonstrated.

**Aung San–Attlee Agreement**

In January 1947, the agreement between Aung San and the British prime minister, Lord Attlee, guaranteed the approval of the British government for Burma's independence, to be achieved as soon as possible. The agreement also finally made clear the British position on what would happen to the Frontier Areas. According to Silverstein, it marked "a turning point in the legal and formal relations between Burma Proper and the Frontier Areas" because it laid down a framework for unification. Clause 8 proposed the early unification of the Frontier Areas with Ministerial Burma. In order to achieve this aim, a Frontier Areas Commission of Enquiry
(FACE) would be established to survey the wishes of non-Burmese ethnic groups, although this primary decision was made without consultation of any kind with any of the Frontier leaders.⁵⁴

Certain British politicians had misgivings on this when the agreement was debated later in parliament. Silverstein notes that two members of the Conservative Party inquired whether the Karen had been consulted at all (they had not).⁵⁵ In fact, the ethnic leaders had already taken steps to voice their position before the agreement was signed. Sao Shwe Thaike, Sao Sam Toon, and Sao Khun Kyi had already drafted and sent a cable to London stating that Aung San did not represent the non-Burmese and therefore could not speak on their behalf.⁵⁶ This action was common knowledge in Burma and did not go unnoticed. Yawnghwe states that afterward, his father Sao Shwe Thaike, who had been the one to physically send the cable, was “frequently branded as unpatriotic by Burmese politicians and the military force” for doing so.⁵⁷

However, official policy was not influenced by these misgivings. Silverstein notes:

... it seems clear that the British government assumed that the frontier peoples would accept some sort of immediate union with Burma Proper because the agreement included no alternatives should the two areas fail to unite. Moreover the whole episode has an air of urgency about it, suggesting that the leaders in Britain were determined to come to some sort of settlement even if it were necessary to work out the details later.⁵⁸

Yawnghwe states that the British position had actually always been for amalgamation, and that in the British view, the amalgamated area was then to receive Dominion Status.⁵⁹ In the context of broader colonial policy, and especially with reference to the much bigger problem of India, Britain did not consider the political concerns of a few ethnic leaders in a small portion of their empire to be pressing. The exception was a few British politicians with personal ties to the ethnic groups. During the debate on the Burmese bill of Independence, the Conservatives were mainly concerned about the fact that Burma has rejected Dominion Status, rather than about the feelings of the minority groups.⁶⁰

Britain was first and foremost a colonial power, acting with its own interests in mind. The urgency Silverstein notes in the
behavior of the AFPFL and Aung San is understandable in the context of a former colonial population seeing a genuine opportunity to be free from their colonizer, without strings attached, and wanting to seize it, with their own interests in mind. It is also understandable that leaders in the Frontier Areas, aware of these more dominant powers and understanding their own place in the hierarchy of power, might seek to negotiate some place for themselves within the new structure.

In response to the Aung San–Attlee agreement, the Shan State Executive Council (SSEC) was formed. It was composed of saophas and representatives of the people and had executive, legislative, and financial powers. Since the British had at no point provided any political solutions which actually addressed Shan concerns, claiming autonomy seemed the next sensible step. This was in essence what the AFPFL had done to the British, with quite successful results. Yawnghwe characterizes this act as a “mini-revolution, an assertion by the Shan of their national identity and independence.”61 It was certainly a dramatic move since, had it been challenged, the outcome might have been war. The SSEC proposed a meeting with Aung San for the discussion of Burma’s future, a second Panglong Conference. It is worth noting that the Shan initiated both the first and second conferences since the agency of the ethnic leaders is often overlooked. This kind of oversight glosses over the fact that so much of political success is actually the result of negotiation between concerned parties. The following excerpt by Donald M. Seekins is typical of this glossing:

During and after the war Aung San had been diligent in forging links with minority leaders, including those of the Karens.... In March [1946] the first Panglong Conference was held, attended by 34 Shan sawbwas and representatives of the Krens, Kachins, and Chins.... The British favored integration of the border areas with Burma Proper following the January 27, 1947, agreement, and a second conference was held at Panglong between February 7 and 12, 1947.62

There is no indication given here that between Aung San and the British, the minority leaders had much of a role to play. Aung San’s response to the formation of the SSEC is integral to understanding the success of the second Panglong Conference.
There were several course of action open to him. First, having already secured the agreement with Attlee, Aung San did not have to recognize the SSEC or the Frontier leaders at all. He could have used the newly created FACE to ignore them and their demands, complete the survey, and use its results to solidify his own position. The result may or may not have been open conflict, which certain British elements possibly hoped for.\(^\text{63}\)

Second, it could be argued that Aung San did not want to risk open conflict, and so only agreed to meet the SSEC and Frontier leaders at Panglong out of necessity. Cady notes the pragmatism of the AFPFL leadership, especially in regard to the concessions they made to the Shan, promising political autonomy and continued financial assistance: “The Burman leaders were obviously prepared to pay a fairly high price to exclude British control and to include within the new Burma the mining, timber, and other resources of the Shan country.”\(^\text{64}\) However, if pragmatism had been Aung San’s only motivator, his attitude towards the saophas and other Shan representatives would have been different, less patient, and less accommodating. It is unlikely the Shan would have liked him as much as they did.

In fact, the course of action Aung San took was to recognize the concerns of the SSEC and Frontier leaders and meet with them, accepting not only their legitimacy in representing their peoples, but treating them as equals. This is the crucial point which made the non-Burmese leaders trust him and decide to work with him. Silverstein notes Shan historian Sao Saimong Mangrai’s account of the Panglong Agreement:

Here at Panglong the Burmese \textit{bilu} unmasked himself, and the Shans, Kachins and Chins found him to be not the \textit{bilu} they were wont to regard him but an ordinary human being as themselves, who regarded them as equals and colleagues.\(^\text{65}\)

Sao Saimong Mangrai recorded that Aung San promised the first president of Burma would be a Shan, that three councillors representing the Frontier Areas would be added to the Executive Council immediately, and that there would be equal financial treatment for Ministerial Burma and the Frontier Areas,\(^\text{66}\) and direct answers to the questions regarding political representation and financial autonomy which the ethnic leaders had long held. For the
first time, someone with direct access to power was not only listening to their concerns but willing to discuss and provide concrete solutions.

**Second Panglong Conference**

The Second Panglong Conference was attended by a member of the Executive Council of the Governor of Burma (Aung San), all saophas, and representatives of Shan State, the Kachin Hills, and the Chin Hills. The agreement which was reached was that the Shan, Kachin, and Chin would immediately cooperate with the Interim Burmese Government to achieve independence from Britain, with the promise that the hill peoples would be able to administer themselves in the manner they saw fit, without internal interference from Burma. Furthermore (in response to a question from Sao Shwe Thaike), the Shan would be allowed to have their own constitution or accept the present constitution but request alterations, and there would be no interference in their internal affairs. Finally, the ethnic leaders agreed amongst themselves to establish the Supreme Council of the United Hill Peoples (SCOUHP) which would have six Shan representatives (three saopha, and three non-saopha), six Kachin representatives, and six Chin representatives.

**Panglong Agreement, 12 February 1947, “Union Day”**

The basic details of the Panglong Agreement are as follows. A representative of the hill peoples chosen by the Governor and recommended by SCOUHP would be Counsellor to the Governor to deal with Frontier Areas, and have executive authority as well as being a member of the Governor’s Executive Council (the supreme political unit in Burma). Furthermore, the Counsellor would also have two Deputy Counsellors (from two different ethnic groups) who would have joint responsibility and be allowed to attend meetings of the Governor’s Executive Council. In this way, representation of the Frontier Areas at the executive level would be assured, as well as a method of direct access. At the same time, the Governor’s Executive Council would not diminish any of the autonomy in internal administration already in place in the
Frontier Areas. In principle, full autonomy for internal administration was accepted for the Frontier Areas, and the establishment of Kachin state within a unified Burma was deemed possible and acceptable. Citizens of the Frontier Areas would receive the fundamental right and privileges of citizens of democratic countries and it was understood that this agreement would not compromise the existent financial autonomy of the Federated Shan States, nor the financial assistance which the Kachin and Chin Hills were entitled to receive from the revenues of Ministerial Burma. In addition, it was assured that a financial system similar to that of Shan State could be implemented in the Kachin and Chin Hills.

Silverstein explains that the Frontier Areas were all dependent on the Burma government for financial assistance, but as a result of this dependence, they had virtually no say in how much aid they received or how it was actually administered. In the Shan states, the situation was different because a federal fund had been created in 1922. The fund was maintained by contributions from the states and the Burma government, in addition to revenues from the mineral and forest resources of the states. By 1937, the fund was sufficiently successful that contributions from the Burma government were no longer noted as “gifts” but as “a carefully calculated allotment due to the states in consideration of revenue accruing to the central government from taxation of commercial activity in their territories.” As the financial contribution from the central government was no longer “aid” in the case of the Shan states, they had more autonomy in its disposal. This increased autonomy in financial administration was the rationale behind the desire of the other Frontier Area leaders to adopt a similar system.

On 21 April 1947, the Shan State Council was established with sixty-six members, half saophas and half representatives of the people, nominated by government officials and the Shan elite and then elected on a popular basis. The Council was to have legislative, executive, and financial powers. An executive committee of four saophas and four people’s representatives would be selected from the council to head the council and all departments in Shan State. The Shan State government would carry out all the resolutions of the council.
Setbacks to cooperation

The assassination of Aung San and his cabinet on 19 July 1947 was a major setback to the success of independence in Burma, for Burmese and non-Burmese alike. For Shan politics, the impact of the assassination was threefold. First, the loss of Aung San was devastating. Aung San was a politician who had sufficient power to get things done. If he gave his word, he had the ability to keep it. This made negotiation with him a productive process. Furthermore, he was a key Burmese politician who stressed the equality of all races within Burma, which was not the view of all Burmese politicians at the time. The Shan statesman, Sao Sam Toon (sometimes spelt Sao Sam Htun), a member of Burma’s interim cabinet, was assassinated along with Aung San. This was particularly unfortunate since he was meant to be the head of state for the Shan State Council. It could be said that this made the assassination politically twice as devastating.

Second, though SCOUHP could have been a united Shan, Chin, and Kachin political force to negotiate with the Burmese power centre, it was never consolidated, and never mentioned after independence. Among its three key organizers, Sao Sam Toon died with Aung San in 1947, Sao Khun Kyi died of a stroke in 1948, and Sao Shwe Thaike was designated the first President of the Union, a position which prohibited him from taking an active role in politics in Shan State. The Shan State government tried to revive SCOUHP in 1961, but the coup of March 1962 interrupted this process.

Third, at the time of the assassination, the constitution had not been reviewed or adopted. This was crucial because the constitution which was eventually adopted had serious flaws in terms of addressing the concerns of the ethnic leaders and complementing the Panglong Agreement. It is difficult to know what sort of constitution would have emerged had Aung San and his cabinet been alive to finish work on it, but the constitution which did emerge revealed a very different structure for Burma than the one the ethnic leaders might have imagined. This was particularly disappointing given Aung San’s stated thoughts on the subject:
Now when we build our new Burma shall we build it as a Union [federation] or a Unitary State? In my opinion, it will not be feasible to set up a Unitary State. We must set up a Union with properly regulated provisions as should be made to safeguard the rights of National Minorities. We must take care that 'United we stand' not 'United we fall.'

The 1947 Constitution

Time was a key element in how the constitution was drafted. Practically speaking, from the period of the assassination on 19 July until September 1947 when the constitution was supposed to be presented in the British parliament, there was not sufficient time to explain and debate every detail. The draft constitution was put before the Constituent Assembly on 31 July 1947, less than two weeks after Aung San's death, and approved by the British Parliament on 24 September of the same year.

Even when Aung San had been alive, the Constituent Assembly had been working within the timeframe of two or three months for the completion of the constitution. A further hitch was that, in comparison to the leaders from the Frontier Areas, the Burmese elite had the advantages of understanding constitutional matters, being experienced politicians and having received British training and education as civil servants and legal experts. During the National Conference to discuss the Federal Principle, the third speaker for the Federal Principle, U Htun Myint, stated the following:

We, who participated in the work of the Constituent Assembly [during the drafting of the constitution] as representatives from the Shan State, had absolutely no political experience at the time. I also admit, with complete honesty, that we knew absolutely nothing about matters of legislation.

This is not to portray the Frontier Areas leaders as having been incapable of self-representation, only to underline that they were not as expert as their Burman counterparts with regard to complex legal and political matters. While the saopha representatives had had more access to education than the non-saopha representatives, there was still quite a large gap. Norma Bixler states that in
exchange for the tribute the Shan paid the British, the saophas of the larger states were able to send their sons to be educated in England. While this is true in part, this was a development which occurred later in the Shan states. Sao Shwe Thaike was educated at the Shan Chiefs School in Taunggyi, which the British had set up for the sons of saophas, but he had never studied abroad. His first experience abroad occurred when he fought as a soldier for the British in Mesopotamia during World War I. Later, some of his elder children were sent to study in England. While the younger generations in saopha families may have had access to British education, the saophas of Sao Shwe Thaike’s generation had not for the most part, while the non-saophas had received even less formal training. As Sao Saimong Mangrai states:

...if the British had insisted on higher academic accomplishments by the Shan leadership, the Shan States would have been less under-developed than they were when independence found them in union with Burma proper.

John Cady describes the Shan saophas as “politically sophisticated” in comparison with other Frontier Areas leaders and representatives, and capable of recognizing Burman political maneuvering. This view has some merit, as otherwise the Shan would never have instigated the Panglong Conferences or sought a forum for negotiation. However, political savvy and formal training in constitutional law are two separate things.

The constitution which was adopted was colonial in nature. It designed a system of government that was not a union of equal states, but in which Burma Proper represented the “mother state” with subordinate satellite states. Seekins quotes one of its authors describing the constitution as “in theory federal ... in practice unitary.” Power rested with the government of Burma Proper. Although the states could legislate local affairs, state laws could be nullified by the Union government (which Yawnghwe stresses was dominantly Burmese). In any case, states legislatures were composed of members of the union legislature from their respective states, not separately elected. Governors of the states were chosen by the Union prime minister, in consultation with state legislatures, and would be ministers in the Union cabinet. Furthermore, matters related to natural resources (forests, minerals, oil) were
under Union jurisdiction.

In terms of actual state representation in the Upper House of Parliament, Burma Proper had fifty-three representative members. The five component states had only seventy-two representative members between them. Additionally, the Upper House (Chamber of Nationalities) did not have the power to initiate a financial bill or veto any bills passed by the Lower House or Chamber of Deputies.  

Some of the British themselves, during the debate on the Burma Independence Bill, expressed concern regarding the constitution, as the following excerpt from Brigadier Peto highlights:

The Prime Minister today said that there was quite adequate safeguard for minorities. If one reads the Constitution, it gives certain rules for citizenship in Section n, which are completely negatived in the following paragraph. This says that citizenship can be taken away by order of the Burmese Government if and when they think fit. Section n says: Nothing contained in Section 11 shall derogate from the power of the Parliament to make such laws as it thinks fit in respect of citizenship … or for the termination of the citizenship of any existing classes. How that can be considered compatible with safeguarding the interests of minorities, I fail to see.

If the constitution was so obviously flawed, why did the ethnic leaders accept it? There are various factors which influenced their acceptance of the constitution, all of which ironically involved the desire to behave in the spirit of cooperation and not cause undue trouble. U Htun Myint recalled that during the early drafting stages in the Constituent Assembly, while Aung San was still alive, the constitutional adviser U Chan Htun presented a series of provisions of the draft constitution, to which Aung San responded that there was no time do go into such details and that “a proposal containing broad principles will suffice.”  

U Htun Myint went on to explain that General Aung San felt that once independence had been gained, changes and adjustments to the constitution could be made “in accordance with the circumstances and the time.” At the same time, Aung San himself stated in a speech to the Constituent Assembly on 17 June 1947 that there should be a seven-point
resolution in the constitution including the provisions that the Union be made up of specific units, which could exercise autonomy, as defined in the constitution, and that the constitution should secure social, economic, and political justice as well as equality of status and opportunity, freedom of thought, expression, belief and worship and finally provide safeguards for minorities. Since the ethnic leaders respected Aung San, they took him at his word. U Htun Myint further stated:

Some Shan State representatives at the time, fearing such an outcome as we are now facing, wanted to engage the services of a foreign constitutional expert. We fought against the proposal because we felt that such an action would be taken to mean that we were suspicious of the motive of the AFPFL.

The constitutional expert that the Shan representatives wished to engage was a foreign barrister called Mr. Dawood. Instead, due to the protests of the other Shan representatives, they selected a Burmese lawyer called U Myint Thein to be their legal adviser. Interestingly, U Maung Maung, made President by General Ne Win and noted for his favorable written portrayals of Ne Win, recounted in *Burmese Political Movements* that upon receiving the post of Chief Justice of Burma, U Myint Thein, whom the Shan Saophas had retained to defend their rights under the constitution, was able to demonstrate to U Nu, the Burman Prime Minister, how to “circumvent the Constitution which he had helped to create, and pass the budget by Presidential Ordinance, instead of going through the Parliament.” It is difficult to know what to make of this account, since an unfavorable representation of U Myint Thein and U Nu would not have been contrary to the accepted military viewpoint, since neither of them cooperated with the military junta after the 1962 coup and were in fact both arrested by Ne Win’s revolutionary government. However, the tone of U Maung Maung’s account seems to indicate that he viewed U Myint Thein’s behavior in this matter favorably. Whatever the meaning of this anecdote, it is perhaps evidence that when it came to constitutional matters, the ethnic leaders were at a disadvantage compared to the Burmese politicians.

After Aung San’s death, when it came time to review and approve the constitution, Yawnghwe states that the Shan accepted it
despite its inequalities and their own feelings “out of respect for the late Aung San who had worked so hard for independence and unity among the different ethnic groups” and because they were told it was an “interim constitution” which could always be changed after independence. The Shan perspective was that it was the “spirit” and not the “letter” of the constitution which mattered.

Unfortunately, the first two to four years after independence involved such immediate internal struggle in Burma that constitutional matters were not given primary importance. The Communist uprising and the PVO rebellion meant that U Nu’s government had to deal with a direct armed threat to the maintenance of the Union.

Setbacks of internal turmoil

The period after independence was gained in January 1948 was rife with struggle including two distinct communist uprisings: the Red Flag, under Thakin Soe, and White Flag, under Thakin Than Tun. Simultaneously, the AFPFL’s own militia, the People’s Volunteer Organization (PVO), which Aung San had helped found, rebelled and began to sympathize with the communists. Next there was a mutiny by the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Burma Rifles as well as two uprisings in Arakan, one led by a Muslim Mujahid and one by the monk U Sein Da. There was also an armed insurrection in 1949 by the Karen National Defence Organization (KNDO), supported by almost all Karen communities and army units, as well as mutiny by some units of the Kachin Rifles sympathetic to the Karen cause. In the Shan state in particular, a rebel group of Kachin mutineers led by war hero Captain Naw Seng, along with Karen rebels and their Pa-O allies, captured various towns in the north of Shan State. As the authorities of both the central government and Shan states worked to contain these elements, the KMT invaded, fleeing Mao’s communist victory in China and supported by US assistance through Taiwan. They stretched along the border which Shan state shared with China, Laos, and Thailand (up to around Chiang Rai). Between the White Flag Communists, the KNDO, and Pa-O allies, the PVO, Captain Naw Seng and the KMT, unrest and armed warfare reached everywhere in Shan State.
During this period the Shan leaders remained loyal to U Nu’s government. At a time when government troops were turning rebel as fast as they were recruited, the cooperation of Shan, Chin, and Kachin leaders was essential for providing both money and soldiers to the central government. Both the earlier rebels and, later, KMT General Li Mi attempted to gain saopha support for their causes. In each instance, the saophas declined. Yawnghwe states that if the saophas had joined the rebels (a possibility since many were sympathetic to the Karen cause, which mirrored their own frustrations), the Kachin and Karenni would have agreed to join.

As it was, the saophas consciously chose not to rebel. Yawnghwe gives four reasons for their loyalty to the central government. First, it was evident that rebel victory could undermine the government position so much that the White Flag Communists would be able to seize power in Shan State, being the most organized insurgent group. Second, the saophas, Kachin, and Chin leaders trusted the prime minister, U Nu, but had no basis of trust with the White Flag Communists. Third, the saophas, Kachin and Chin felt that the constitution, while not what they had imagined, at least provided a basis for some rights with regard to their internal affairs. Once peace and stability were restored, it would only be a matter of time before the constitution could be reworked. Finally, the saophas were by nature conservative and traditional. They were not attracted by the prospect of revolution which the communists promised and were conditioned by their exposure to the British to respect constitutional authority. At that point neither U Nu nor the AFPFL had violated the constitution, so the ethnic leaders felt they should abide by their given word as well.

Not only did the ethnic leaders choose not to rebel, they gave active assistance to U Nu’s government. Chin, Kachin, and Shan recruits joined the Burma Army and the Union Military police. Using their personal revenues and state treasuries, the saophas raised levies of additional soldiers. It was hoped that the levies would fight in Shan state itself, but the Burmese did not approve this, perhaps out of fear that they would mutiny, as had the government’s former recruits.

Part of the desire for Shan troops to fight in Shan state arose from the apparently brutal behavior of Burmese soldiers. Yawnghwe
notes that this point became a contentious issue, given that reports of abuses are hard to verify and since his Burmese friends later stated that the soldiers were equally brutal everywhere. Still, both the Shan government and people, who had first welcomed the Burma Army when it came to fight the KMT, began to see it as “just another foreign occupation force no better than the KMT, especially in the eyes of the rural people.”

The counterargument to this is the contention that the Shan saophas requested government troops to deal with the KMT incursions and then turned around and complained when the army simply did its job. In fact, if the Burmese army truly was the army of the Union, and if Shan State was a member of that Union, it was only sensible that the Union army be called in to protect its own member. The behavior of the troops is arguably what made local populations feel as though they were no different from invaders. Charney writes that when martial law was declared again in 1952 (it was first declared between 1948 and 1950), the saophas’ governments were brought under army administration, police forces integrated into those of the state, and the saophas themselves agreed to replace their own authority with that of democratic government. At face value, this simply confirms the cooperation of the saophas and explains the increased vulnerability of Shan State to the army. In fact, during the initial stages of the KMT invasion in 1950, Shan State had been left to fend for itself without significant support from the central government. For example, the Kokang saopha had to retake the administration of Kokang by himself in 1952 and recruit new soldiers. The Burmese army only arrived and began to fight the KMT in 1953. Given this situation, it is understandable that the Shan government, having asked for help without receiving it and therefore being forced to fend for itself, when finally given help in the form of an army which began to appropriate control, might have a different opinion of the “positive” effects and stability of martial law imposed by the Burma army. Furthermore, part of the Shan State government’s lack of control in these areas was related to their inability to establish roads, schools, medical facilities, or an effective police force since they did not have a sufficient budget to fund such development.

With the cooperation of the Chin, Kachin, and Shan, U Nu’s
government was able to contain the rebels. Furthermore, after the AFPFL sent a delegation to the United Nations to protest the KMT invasion, the UN responded promptly. By 1954, due to the cooperation of Thailand and the UN, over one hundred thousand KMT troops were air-lifted out of the region and into Taiwan. The KMT invasion came to an end.\(^{119}\) It should be noted though, that KMT activity had so weakened the Shan government’s control of its border with China that opium trade continued to thrive. Additionally, those members of the KMT not accepted by Taiwan remained in the region and actively engaged in opium cultivation and trafficking to maintain their small, private armies. The opium trade flourished in the Wa, Kokang, and Kengtung regions.\(^{120}\)

**Breakdown in cooperation, 1954–60**

The end of this particular civil war in Burma did not result in peace and stability. While the external threat diminished after 1954 and rebel forces had been contained, six years of civil war had created a powerful military presence in the country, a military used to an increased budget and great freedom of action. In the parts of southern and eastern Shan State which had been placed under martial law, military men who were positioned there as administrators “enjoyed sweeping powers.”\(^{121}\) The army was able to establish itself as the state presence in areas where the civilian state had not yet been able to extend control.\(^{122}\) Additionally, the military elite was politically affiliated with politicians like Ba Swe and Kyaw Nyein (who would later form “Stable AFPFL” in contrast to U Nu’s “Clean” AFPFL), which gave them a politicized view of themselves. Yawnghwe states that the decisive strength of the military came from General Ne Win’s establishment of an effective controlling body within the military, the MIS, which kept dossiers on all army officers and civilians and answered to no one but him. As the army had extra-legal authority in Shan state and other non-Burmese homelands, the MIS was extremely powerful and acted as a secret police force.\(^{123}\)

The existence of such a powerful, politicized military, makes it vital to understand how the military perceived the political situation in Burma during that time, since it is those who have the most hold
on power whose opinions end up mattering. The perception of many Burmans was that the Frontier Areas were backward¹²⁴ and there were processes of subtle and not-so-subtle Burmanization ongoing throughout the country, notably through the Ministry of Culture whose aim was assimilation.¹²⁵ Cady states:

The Burman majority was quite prepared to acknowledge the political and cultural contributions of minority groups to national independence and welfare and took care to say nothing in disparagement of their customs and aspirations. But a homogenous people was the inevitable goal.¹²⁶

The Burma Army was no exception to this point of view. Its creed was, and still is: “One Blood, One Voice, One Command.” Yawnghwe avers that the thinking behind this motto “precluded the concept of a multi-centred structure for Burma. Such things as autonomy, state rights, federalism, and so forth, were perceived as utter rubbish and tolerated only because Aung San, the father of the army, had decreed them in 1946–47.”¹²⁷

Furthermore, this point of view made Chapter X of the Union constitution seem particularly threatening, since it promised the right of secession for the Shan and Karenni after ten years of Union government. This made 1958 a potentially dangerous year. If the Shan and Karenni did secede, as many assumed they would (despite a lack of concrete indications given by either the Shan or Karenni leadership), it was further assumed that the other ethnic groups would demand to follow suit and all the initial turmoil of 1948–54 would return. Even U Nu considered this possibility so likely that he threatened to fight a war to prevent secession.¹²⁸

Tucker notes that there had long been a significant division between the two philosophies of Burman nationalism. One nationalism was based upon “an idealized Burma ruled by its own king, Theravada Buddhism and the sangha” while the other “drew inspiration, naively, from the new values introduced by the colonial ruler, modern science, modern institutions and humanist rationalism.”¹²⁹ Aung San could perhaps be said to have held the latter view, while the military adopted something like the former. Divisions within the AFPFL and central government were perhaps simply expressions of a basic divide in what the nation was perceived to be about.
The anti-saopha campaign

In an effort to preempt secession, certain elements in Burma Proper, such as the army, began to work towards the de-legitimization of saophas, seen as the traditional leaders of the Shan and therefore rallying points. Yawnghwe states that in newspapers, magazines, journals, short stories, and novels, the saophas were increasingly portrayed as “despotic, indolent, exploitative, disloyal and feudal reactionaries who plotted with KMT opium warlords, SEATO agents, Thai pimps, American war-mongers and British neo-colonists to destroy the Union.”

Writing some years after the coup, U Maung Maung provided the following description of the state of affairs in Shan State after independence:

Their chieftains, the Sawbwas, had their reserved seats in the Chamber of Nationalities and kept their rights to collect revenue at gambling festivals, and their customary pomp and privileges. The socialist professions of the Burmese leaders, however, made the chiefs and the land-owners in the State nervous. The land nationalization law, which was passed soon after independence did not reassure them. The law could not go into operation due to the outbreak of insurrections.

The tension is framed in ideological terms, as though the saophas were privileged conservatives unconcerned with the actual well-being of the rest of the Shan and made nervous at the prospect of a fair Burman socialist redistribution of land.

While the saophas were not the despots they were painted, they were also neither saintly nor universally popular. There were several prominent local anti-saopha politicians such as U (Namkhan) Toon Aye, U Kyaw Zaw, and U Tin Ko Ko who toured Shan State with the support of the army and some members of the AFPL leadership and garnered support. In a somewhat humorous twist, some of the anti-saopha political leaders had received their education and political formation through scholarships paid for by the saophas of the areas in which they lived.

However, the anti-feudal movement in the early 1950s was not simply a creation of the army. After the establishment of the Shan State Council in 1947, as popular representatives could meet and voice their opinions, many reforms were proposed and opposition
arose from certain saophas who would not listen to the Council or do as it asked. Tension between pro-feudal and anti-feudal factions therefore sprang up quite early. However, there was also local understanding of the delicacy of the situation. A veteran Shan administrator named U Htun Aung “suggested gradual change, giving the saopha enough time to think about adaptation, and the introduction of reforms to meet the needs of the times.”

Given this state of affairs, local anti-saopha politicians cannot and should not simply be classed as lackeys of the army, even though some received support from it. For instance, it is notable that in the early 1960s, both U Toon Aye and U Tin Ko Ko supported the federal movement, which surprised many. This indicates legitimate interest in the welfare of Shan State and not a simple acceptance of the army line. U Toon Aye (sometimes spelt Htun Aye) remained vociferous in his attacks on the saopha and suspicious of their motives. Yet his link to the military cannot be totally ignored, given that Ne Win permitted him to be head of Shan State after the coup.

Essentially, it must be accepted that the saopha system of hereditary rule was feudal, which would have been anathema to any of the educated younger generation who had been exposed to concepts like socialism, communism, and democracy. Times had changed and “the world political system would not permit feudalism to survive.”

The general attitude towards the saopha in Shan State, however, was not necessarily antagonistic. Yawnghwe states that in Muang Loen, Kengtung, Muang Nawng and Laikha, where the Shan were the predominant people, or where inhabitants had only encountered the Burmese as invading soldiers, the people deeply resented the Burman-sponsored attacks on the saophas. Elsewhere in Shan State, the anti-saopha campaign was unsuccessful, not because the populations there felt any sympathy for the saophas, but because they felt Burma Proper was interfering too deeply in internal affairs. There was additionally still a basic suspicion and prejudice against one another on both the Burman and Shan sides. For these quite simple reasons, the anti-saopha campaign provoked a strong reaction which alarmed the army and was misinterpreted not as the natural consequence of unsubtle
propagandizing, but as proof that the saophas were plotting revolution. It is important to note that there was a proliferation of arms in Shan State, which arose both because of the recent history of civil war (thus the necessity for self-defense as well as access to weapons) and because of the Shan custom of bearing arms, which the British themselves had never interfered with.\textsuperscript{140} The army found this state of affairs intolerable.

In 1956, the military dispatched its first army columns into Shan State to weed out those they saw as potential rebels and disarm the people. A campaign of terror began amongst the rural Shan. Hundreds of village leaders, the political organization of rural life, were taken away for brutal interrogations where they were beaten, maimed, tortured, and left mentally scarred. As the situation worsened, local Shan authorities found there was little they could do. The army remained under the jurisdiction of the Union government so that the Shan government at Taunggyi, MPs, civil servants, political parties, and the saophas could do nothing themselves to redress the situation. Those who attempted to approach Union ministers or local army commanders “were not only rebuffed, but accused of slandering the army in repeating harmful and seditious gossip, creating disunity, dancing to the tune of American war-mongers and British neo-colonialists, and even of plotting rebellion.”\textsuperscript{141}

To those who felt that the moderate way of dialogue and cooperation employed by the politicians had failed, the alternative of armed rebellion began to seem like the only solution. There was also an inter-generational divide, as the older politicians saw the dangers of rebellion and the up-and-coming generation saw it as the only way forward. In 1959, an illiterate paramilitary officer named Bo Mawng and a Rangoon University student, Sao Kyaw Toon, led a group of Shan, La, and Wa fighters in revolt and captured the town of Tangyan. After ten days of fighting, they were driven out by the army, but the battle provoked armed response throughout Shan State. Armed bands were led by “former village heads, ex-policemen, adventurers, even monks—men who had no connection with the princes or politicians.”\textsuperscript{142} Yawnghwe describes the leadership as mostly peasants who knew how to fight, but did not have the advantage of united strategy. Oddly, if the saophas actually
had been involved in the uprising and been able to supplement the force and strength of numbers of local leaders with centralized planning and additional support, the attempt to drive the army out of Shan State could have succeeded. In a case of damned if you do, damned if you don’t, the saophas had the unenviable position of being criticized on all sides, first by the army, who accused them of fomenting rebellion, and second by local voices, who rebuked them for not actually having supported rebellion.

What should not be overlooked is that the saopha system, which the army claimed was the motivating force of their offensive, had already become a non-issue, before the removal of the KMT in 1954 allowed the army time to change its focus to internal divisions. The saophas themselves had already agreed that they were an outdated institution, not best suited to the running of a modern state. As of 1952 the saophas announced that they would surrender all their remaining power to the Shan government at Taunggyi. This was not a transfer of power to the Union or Burmese government, but to the Shan government and it was completed by 1957, a rapid process in some of the smaller states, but slow in places like Muang Loen and Kengtung.

In 1958 a ceremony was held to formalize this “surrender of power” which Ne Win’s caretaker government used to maximize its own political capital. For example, U Maung Maung writes:

Gen. Ne Win undertook and accomplished two other major tasks in his time as leader of the Caretaker Government: [the first was] the introduction of popular government in the Shan and the Kayah States.... These were tasks which previous governments had undertaken without reaching clear and final decision.

Crediting General Ne Win with the achievement of something that had been accomplished with the voluntary cooperation of the saophas and Shan leaders probably did nothing to lessen the feelings of leaders in the Shan community that the central government was not interested in cooperation so much as shoring up its own power. This excerpt from General Ne Win’s speech, as quoted by U Maung Maung, appears exceptionally jarring:
I would like to urge [the saophas] to devote their brains and their financial resources to the promotion of the social, economic and industrial development of the Shan State. To the people of the Shan State also, I would like to say this. The fact that the Saophalongs and Saophas have given up their powers does not mean that you may behave disrespectfully towards them.\textsuperscript{147}

In this context, it is perhaps difficult to hold the saophas responsible for doing nothing in Shan State to prevent army excesses. The 1950s had been a period of power transition in Shan State and it was the Taunggyi state government which needed to come into its own. The existing saophas still retained their titles until their deaths, but beyond prestige or moral authority associated with those titles, they had no formal power and were also under the scrutiny of Ne Win’s MIS.\textsuperscript{148}

The 1959 uprising in Tangyan led the Shan government to realize that defense should be controlled at the state level, since they disagreed with the army’s methods of employing worse violence to combat violence, and wanted to establish a balance of power between the Burmese and non-Burmese. For the rebelling people within Shan state to cease their struggle, they must believe that the Taunggyi government was capable of protecting them, and to establish this, the Shan government needed to re-negotiate the terms of power with the central government. In this manner, the idea of finally amending the constitution was adopted and became popularly known as the Federal Movement.\textsuperscript{149}

\textbf{The Federal Movement}

The Shan government cooperated with prominent individuals, politicians, MPs, and the saophas to establish the Federal Movement. Yawnghwe characterizes the movement as

an act within the legal and constitutional framework undertaken by the responsible and moderate elements in Shan society and politics aimed at circumventing a civil war situation and defusing the armed rebellion. It had nothing to do with alleged secession plots or the discontent of the chaofa over the loss of power.\textsuperscript{150}

Yawnghwe goes on to state that the Federal Movement’s steering committee did not issue an ultimatum to the central
government but merely pointed out the constitutional clauses which made Shan State a subordinate state, in an attempt to stimulate discussion with the central government.\textsuperscript{151} In the time around and after the coup, Sao Shwe Thaike was often characterized as a lead “troublemaker,” working for the breakup of the union, and garnering foreign support for an armed Shan insurrection should Shan demands not be met.\textsuperscript{152} The prime minister U Nu stated “that most people, including himself, suspected that some saopha were, somehow or other, aiding the insurgents.”\textsuperscript{153}

Some have taken this stated position at face value, regardless of whether or not it was true. With regard to Sao Shwe Thaike’s alleged involvement, little effort was made to discover whether these rumors began in the military in an attempt to discredit a man who was, at the time, a recognizable national figure, despite being Shan. Depending on one’s point of view, if the military did have expansionist, chauvinist ideas about what Burma should be, it was sensible to discredit and remove any figure who might have the political stature to rally or consolidate support against this expansionist chauvinism.

The image of Sao Shwe Thaike as a reckless troublemaker in favor of secession should be contrasted with the man who said the following during his first presidential address on 4 January 1948:

\begin{quote}
Today is for us not only a day of freedom but also a day of reunion. For a long time, the principal races of Burma, the Kachins and the Chins have tended to look upon themselves as separate national units. Of late, a nobler vision, the vision of a Union of Burma, has moved our hearts, and we stand united today as one nation determined to work in unity and concord for the advancement of Burma’s interests.... It is unity which has brought our struggle for independence to this early fruition and may unity continue to be the watchword for every member of the Sovereign Independent Republic to be henceforth known as the Union of Burma\textsuperscript{154}
\end{quote}

It was perhaps another case of damned if you do, damned if you don’t. Sao Hkun Hkio expressed this feeling at a press conference given by U Nu on 11 July 1961: “The Shan insurgency did not arise from our activities in respect of the revision of the
constitution but started when Naw Seng occupied Taunggyi in 1949. These days the saohpa are blamed for whatever happens in the Shan State.\textsuperscript{155}

A more concrete indicator of the true nature of the Federal Movement is that it had the support of all the governments, leaders, and politicians of other non-Burmese states. If it had been a purely self-interested Shan grab for special privileges, it is unlikely this would have been the case. The only criticisms of it were raised by three individuals at the Taunggyi Constitutional Conference\textsuperscript{156} in June 1961 (U Aye Soe Myint, a Karen; Samma Duwa Sinwa Maung, a Kachin; and Zahre Lyan, a Chin), out of a combined 226 delegates. Even then, their criticism called for caution in dealing with the central government rather than opposing the movement altogether.\textsuperscript{157}

Prime minister U Nu met with state leaders on multiple occasions to discuss the issue of constitutional reform.\textsuperscript{158} He stressed that the leaders of Burma Proper “did not practice chauvinism, nor did they have expansionist intentions” and that “no problems could not be solved fraternally at a face-to-face meeting.”\textsuperscript{159} Sao Htun E, the saopha of Hsa Mong Hkam, reminded the prime minister of the “timely help given by the Shan State to the Union during the critical period of insurgency in 1948–49” and asked the prime minister not to believe the rumors being spread, since the Shan State would never try to break up the Union.\textsuperscript{160} At a later meeting between Shan politicians and the AFPFL leadership, Minister Dr. E. Maung stated that Shan State had no intention of seceding and that if it had wished to, it could have done so in 1948, 1949, or 1950 when the central government was almost overrun.\textsuperscript{161}

Time gives us the benefit of realizing that while both U Nu and Sao Htun E might have been stating what they thought to be true, they might still have been wrong. Just as some might claim Sao Htun E’s statement was naive, it could also be argued that Ne Win’s revolutionary government embodied the expansionist chauvinism which U Nu claimed did not exist in Burma Proper’s leadership.

Perhaps it is not a case of strictly right or wrong. U Nu’s leadership did not contain expansionist chauvinist elements, but the leadership of the military did. While some Shan factions wanted
secession, Sao Htun E and his associates represented Shan leadership who did not. Yawnghwe provides an illustrative anecdote. At one point in 1961 he smuggled a leader of the SSIA insurgents, Sai Kyaw Sein, into Rangoon and suggested to the saopha of Hsipaw, Chao Kya Seng, that he meet with this SSIA representative. Cha Kya Seng responded by handing him a copy of the Union Constitution and said: "Please read the oath we have sworn as MPs." Prime minister U Nu himself later stated, "No one in authority in the Shan State has ever said that they would fight if the constitution was not amended in accordance with the Shan proposal." While existent Shan rebel groups definitely wanted to secede, this might have changed had negotiations between the Shan and central government succeeded. Politics, it seems, is never quite so much about what things are, but rather what things are made to become.

The proposals of the Shan regarding constitutional reform related nine grievances, mostly about the fact that there was little to no consultation between Union ministers and officials and state governments. Further, the Shan felt the constitution was always legally interpreted in favor of the Union government on matters of administration and finance. A government advisory committee reviewed the grievances and concluded that most of them could be addressed through dialogue and did not require constitutional reform. A crucial point was the nature of the federal system in Burma. The committee presented a report on the constitutions of the United States, Australia, Canada, South Africa, India, and Switzerland and concluded that there was no "true" type of federalism. The committee also noted that it seemed the Shan desired a federal system akin to that of the United States, but made the argument that when civil war erupted in the US, the northern states took power by force to prevent secession and gradually, all forms of federalism become unitary.

The committee finally stated that what was perhaps the most basic issue was not to do with political systems at all:

In fact, what the Shan State government and its people and what other State governments and their people feel most sore about is their own helplessness in relation to their own land, their own forests, their own mines, their own minerals, and their inability to
start to work any industry in their own state. All they know and feel is that they are not allowed to participate in the distribution of their own land and in the working, regulating, and developing of their own forests and mines. In this respect their feelings are real and intense.\textsuperscript{167}

On 20 January 1962, the States Unity Organization submitted a document to prime minister U Nu which encapsulated all their thoughts and feelings based on all the discussion which had taken place. In turn, U Nu told them that the document would be discussed at a national conference, to be held in March. The document clearly stated that the desire of the ethnic leadership for a federal constitution had been present even during the time of the struggle for independence, and that they accepted the present constitution for the reasons already detailed in this essay, not because they felt it adequately represented their wishes.\textsuperscript{168} In their view, the basic problem of the constitution was that, instead of having separate governments, the central government of Burma acted as both the government for Burma Proper and that of the whole Union.\textsuperscript{169} In essence, there was no higher authority which could assess or regulate the state of Burma Proper, thus Burma Proper essentially ran the other states. For this fundamental reason, the Shan and other ethnic leaders desired constitutional reform.

The national conference, the forum in which all of these various attitudes and positions were to be debated, began at 6 p.m. on 4 February 1962. Prime minister U Nu and members of the Government Advisory Committee, Dr. Ba U, U Thein Maung, U San Nyunt, and U Chit Thaung were present, as were members of the AFPFL and the National United Front along with representatives from the states. The national conference lasted for two days before it was interrupted by the coup which took place in the early hours of 2 March 1962.

The coup

The coup delivered the final blow to all hope of cooperation. All members of U Nu’s government were arrested as were all the saophas, several of whom, including Sao Shwe Thaikhe, were never seen alive again. The explanation offered by Ne Win’s revolutionary
government was that the coup dealt a deathblow to unrest across the country and was intended to maintain the integrity of the union in the face of Shan secessionist threats (perceived as a form of blackmail to ensure the changing of the constitution).\textsuperscript{170} Donnison maintains that disintegration was no idle fear and that all the major minority communities in Burma were in open revolt.\textsuperscript{171} From the point of view of many Westerners who were not participating in the National Conference, it may have seemed that political solutions were a pipe dream, but this should not be blamed on the actions of the ethnic leaders. U Aung, U Nu's son, recalled that on the evening before the coup, members of the Shan delegation approached his father after the day's meeting and humbly asked him not to believe all the rumors he was hearing because they had no intention of seceding and still held him in respect, believing in the process they were engaged in.\textsuperscript{172}

It is difficult to know the moods and thoughts of the actors of that period because so few of the ethnic leaders who were actually there are still alive, and of those who are, few have spoken clearly or at length on the subject. While some might say that outside scholars have a better chance of maintaining objectivity, it is sometimes difficult to obtain information when one is an outsider, or to know what one can believe.

A simple example of this is the coup, sometimes described in the literature as "bloodless" except for one casualty.\textsuperscript{173} No account of Sao Shwe Thaik's arrest tallies with the personal accounts related by his family members who were there. Accounts written by outsiders without reference to the Yawnghwe family tend to reproduce the official version which the revolutionary government provided.\textsuperscript{174}

Based on this observation of how false information can be disseminated and propagated, it is difficult to ascribe motives to the Shan and other ethnic politicians without written records of their own thoughts and agenda. All that is really available to us is their actions. The last concerted actions of the representative Shan and ethnic leaders before the coup did not involve armed rebellion. On the contrary, their actions underscore their acceptance of constitutional authority and therefore the attempt to achieve legal, constitutional reform through debate and dialogue with the central
government in a forum proposed by the central government, the National Conference.

Conclusion

The history of Shan politics in Burma during the period 1946–62 involves a variety of different actors and different approaches to attaining the ideal of peace and stability, which are the ideals of most people everywhere. After the experiences of British colonial rule and especially Japanese invasion during World War Two, leaders in the Frontier Areas found themselves confronted with a political reality in which they could not afford to simply ask to be left alone. The political structure globally had been changed and groups began to realize they could not exist in isolation from one another. The differences and suspicions which existed among ethnic groups within the Frontier Areas and also between them and Burma Proper did not mean, however, that unity was impossible.

For those leaders who had received some education and for those leaders who had experienced the war years, it became evident that cooperation of some form was necessary, due to strength in numbers vis-à-vis other, more dominant powers. Differences between groups did not have to impede common struggle, so long as political objectives were the same. Bixler quotes Maran La Raw, a Kachin anthropologist writing in 1965: “a lack of complete cultural integration becomes a problem only if complete integration is the expressed objective of the majority.”

Under the leadership of Aung San and several other AFPFL politicians like U Nu, a culture of political pluralism was deemed acceptable. From the perspective of the military and other factions within the AFPFL, enforced cultural integration seemed to be the objective. These different strategies gained different responses from the ethnic leaders, with the former style being conducive to cooperative negotiation and building trust and the latter style provoking armed rebellion.

Despite various factors which worked to undermine trust and cooperation, until the 1962 military coup which effectively and decisively ended all dialogue, Shan and other non-Burmese leaders continued to attempt to deal with the central government,
requesting political participation and political solutions. The problem therefore cannot be ascribed to a lack of will for cooperation or the impossibility of cooperation between such different groups. The problem was rooted in the conflict between two opposing viewpoints held by the dominant group in Burma. When both the majority and minority have an interest in cooperation, even a region as complex and divided as Burma can function as a union, as it did for about a decade. When the majority group, or those who control it, decide that cooperation is unnecessary, the result is that minority groups will also decide not to cooperate. Whatever legitimate and necessary criticisms may be leveled at civilian government in Burma between 1948–58 and 1960–2, that period can in no way compare to the state of Burma now, after almost fifty years of military rule.

Still, politics are never static. As the Shan and other frontier leaders recognized in the pre-independence years, sometimes pragmatism requires working with what one has. Politics is, and always has been, a negotiation of power.

Notes

1 Debate on the Bill for Burmese Independence, p. 12.
4 Tucker, Burma, pp. 17–22.
7 Mangrai, The Shan States and the British Annexation, p. 299.
10 Yawnghwe, The Shan of Burma, p. 78.
Negotiating cooperation: Shan politics and Burma, 1946–1962

13 Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, p. 78.
14 Mangrai, *The Shan States and the British Annexation*, p. 301.
17 Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, p. 79.
18 Here, a case of semantics is worth noting. The British titled the saophas “chiefs,” while their own translation of the word might approximate something more like “princes” in English. This is a simple illustration of the difference in how the Shan viewed themselves and how they were viewed by the British.
21 Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, p. 79.
22 Mangrai, *The Shan States and the British Annexation*, p. 305.
23 Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, p. 79.
31 Unlike in Europe, where the concept of property was fundamental to the development of the capitalist system, in the Shan states, land boundaries only came into existence after the arrival of the British.
33 Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, p. 44.
34 Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, p. 44.
37 Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, p. 82.


Shan State, Appendix 29, p. 573.

46 Tucker, Burma, p. 117.

47 Yawnghwe, The Shan of Burma, p. 97.

48 Labor MP Mr. Thomas Reid, HC Deb 05 November 1947 vol 443 cc1836–961, p. 30.

49 Yawnghwe, The Shan of Burma, p. 87; Tucker, Burma, p. 121.

50 Yawnghwe, The Shan of Burma, p. 81.

51 Yawnghwe, The Shan of Burma, p. 98.

52 Yawnghwe, The Shan of Burma, p. 98.


54 Yawnghwe, The Shan of Burma, p. 99.

55 Silverstein, Burmese Politics, p. 102.

56 Yawnghwe, The Shan of Burma, p. 230

57 Yawnghwe, The Shan of Burma, p. 144.

58 Silverstein, Burmese Politics, p. 103.

59 Yawnghwe, The Shan of Burma, p. 81.

60 HC Deb 05 November 1947 vol 443 cc1836–961


62 Seekins, Burma: A Country Study, p. 44.


65 Silverstein, Burmese Politics, p. 106.

66 Silverstein, Burmese Politics, p. 106.

67 See article 5 of the Panglong Agreement, Appendix A; Sai Aung Tun, History of the Shan State, p. 295; Yawnghwe, The Shan of Burma, p. 100;

68 Panglong Agreement, article 1.

69 Panglong Agreement, article 2.

70 Panglong Agreement, article 3.

71 Panglong Agreement, article 5.

72 Panglong Agreement, article 6.

73 Panglong Agreement, article 7.

74 Panglong Agreement, articles 8 and 9.

75 Silverstein, Burmese Politics, p. 105.

76 Sai Aung Tun, History of the Shan State, p. 327.

77 Sai Aung Tun, History of the Shan State, p. 327.

78 Yawnghwe, The Shan of Burma, p. 100.

79 Sai Aung Tun, History of the Shan State, p. 328.


81 Yawnghwe, The Shan of Burma, p. 100.


83 Charney, A History of Modern Burma, p. 70.

84 Yawnghwe, The Shan of Burma, p. 111.
Negotiating cooperation: Shan politics and Burma, 1946–1962

87 For example, Sao Sanda who has described her in experience in *The Moon Princess*, 2008.
88 Mangrai, *The Shan States and the British Annexation*, p. 300.
90 Seekins, *Burma*, p. 46.
92 Seekins, *Burma*, p. 46.
98 That is, the Saopha representatives.
112 Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, p. 112.
117 The issue of administration in Kokang, between the saopha and the Shan state government, is quite complex and interesting, since the saopha does not appear to have been particularly helpful at first. Mong, *Kokang and Kachin in the Shan State (1945–1960)*, pp. 85–87.
121 Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, p. 106.

Bixler cites an article written by Burman U Htin Fatt proposing that "prejudice arose in Burma Proper not because of past history but because of chauvinism in the Burmese nationalist movement, whose student leaders ignored or downgraded those who were not Burman-Buddhist." Bixler, *Burma*, p. 228.


Tucker, *Burma*, p. 73.


According to Harn Yawnghwe, this was certainly true in the principality of Yawnghwe where a number of students that Sao Shwe Thaikhe had sponsored for university education returned determined to dismantle the saopha system. Henri-Andre Aye, the son of U (Namkhan) Toon Aye, has written a book called *The Shan Conundrum* which would undoubtedly provide more insight into this period but I have unfortunately been unable to obtain a copy anywhere.


Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, p. 117.


It should be noted that the saophas were given a pension by the central government in exchange for having given up power. This was similar to the stipend they had received under the British when their authority was reduced in 1922. Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, p. 117.


Yawnghwe, *The Shan State*, p. 117.


Sao Shwe Thaikhe, First Presidential Address, 4 January 1948,
Negotiating cooperation: Shan politics and Burma, 1946–1962

www.irrawaddy.org/ind/01.php
156 Also referred to as the All States Conference at Taunggyi.
158 Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, p. 402
162 While Chao Tzang was pro-secession as a youth, his father Sao Shwe Thaike was not. This was actually a source of disagreement between them.
163 Nevertheless, the army was not fond of Sao Kya Seng. On the day of the coup he was one of the saophas arrested and never seen alive again. Yawnghwe, *The Shan of Burma*, footnote 19, p. 146.
165 For the full list of these grievances, see Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, pp. 433–435.
172 U Aung, lecture at Chulalongkorn University, Southeast Asian Studies Program, 4 February 2010.
173 Sao Shwe Thaike’s son Myee.
174 For example, Donnison, *Burma*, p. 163 or Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State*, p. 484.