

7. HISTORY OF PEGU.

DEAR SIR, — I herewith send you an extract from a letter I have received from Captain Gerini, at Bangkok, regarding the ancient history of Pegu. When preparing my paper on Takkola, which was read before the Oriental Congress at Paris, I wrote to Burma for information. The Chief Secretary, Mr. Symes, kindly forwarded my letter to the Commissioner of Tenasserim, who, again, forwarded it to a missionary connected with the Talaings (Môñs). That good gentleman merely referred me to the works of Phayre, Forbes, and others standing on my bookshelves, so my labour was in vain. I was, however, informed that Captain Gerini had made some discoveries, and accordingly wrote to him.

Owing to the great emigration of the Môñs to Siam, when fleeing from the sword of Alompra, most of their histories and works were taken there; but, although this is the case, there is still work to be done in Burma. Ancient manuscripts may yet be discovered, old cities overhauled and dug into, and their original names discovered by inquiring into the various Môñ dialects. There can be little doubt that in the earliest years of the Christian era the Môñ family extended as far north as the mouths of the Ganges and Brahmaputra, and that the modern Sandoway (Sada?) was one of their trading stations. Somewhere about A.D. 300, people from the east coast of the Bay of Bengal founded colonies on the coasts of the Gulf of Martaban, of which the principal appears to have been Thatôñ, or Saddhammanagara. There was also a city on the Irrawaddy, called Brôm (Prome) or Srikhetra, inhabited by a tribe called Pru, who were probably of the Môñ family. In 1050 A.D. Anuruddha the Mrammā (Burman) king of Pagan, is said to have swept down on Thatôñ, and carried away its king and a copy of the Tipiṭakam. After that there was an anarchy, till a Shan (?) of the name of Wareru established a monarchy at Martaban (Muttama) in 1287 A.D., and history thenceforward begins

to get clearer. It is, however, to the time previous to this to which attention should be turned in order to solve the questions—

1. When, whence, and by whom was Buddhism introduced into Pegu?
2. Was there ever, prior to 1287 A.D., an important kingdom in South Burma, or were there only a few independent semi-Indian colonies?

French, German, and Italian workers are undoubtedly making their researches; but the Government and Civil Servants of Burma appear to be doing nothing, and are content with the works of Phayre, Mason, Forchhammer, and Forbes, which, though highly important and praiseworthy, are imperfect and out of date.

[Extract from Letter from Captain GERINI. Bangkok, October 21, 1897.]

“ It gives me great pleasure to hear also that five of Gavampati's books are still to be obtained in Burma, two only being lost. All I succeeded in obtaining here are the first three books, and I have little hope of finding the others, though I know the whole work was translated into Siamese some forty or fifty years ago. It would be a good thing if you could induce some scholar in Burma, acquainted with the Talaing language, to prepare and publish a translation of the books existing there. I do not ascribe much historical importance to the work, though no doubt it gives many useful scraps of information not to be found elsewhere. But there is a much more important work, of a purely historical character, dealing with events in Pegu, from the accession of King Wareru [A.D. 1287, St. J.] to the reign of P'hrā: Rām (Binyā Ran of Phayre) [A.D. 1526, St. J.]. It consists of twenty-four large books, of which twenty only are preserved. The missing four books at the end contained, I think, the

narrative from the reign of P'hrā: Rām to the Burmese conquest in A.D. 1603. I have translated nearly all the first twenty books, and am waiting for some fortunate coincidence that will lead me to the discovery of the remaining four. These are, I believe, the Royal Peguan Annals, which have evidently been lost in Pegu, as I do not see them mentioned in any book on that country. Besides the work just named, we have in Siam an abridged history of Pegu from the foundation of Hamsawati (Pegu) to the British conquest of Lower Burma. This must be the work compiled by the Talaing monk Hsayā-dau Athwā, of which Phayre (Preface, "History of Burma," etc., p. vii) says he obtained only a fragment translated into Burmese.¹ I failed, however, to discover as yet any connected narrative of events in Pegu for the famous blank period A.D. 781-1085, though I was able to gather a few facts regarding it from the contemporary chronicles of Lamp'hūn (Labong) and other Lāu or Siamese states. . . . Researches ought, therefore, to be made for the more ancient period preceding the twelfth century. It is indeed a pity that archaeological studies are not encouraged and supported by the British Government in Burma, and that the Talaing language is allowed to sink down into nonentity. Some effort should be made to induce the Government to give more attention to this subject, and to establish a Talaing school, say, in Moulmain, where a library should be formed containing copies of all Talaing works that it will be possible to discover in the monasteries. I think there are many of such works extant; but they are only to be found in the Moulmain and Yay districts, where Burmese domination has not been long. The Mōñ literature was much more extensive than the Burmese: in Siam we have translations of Mōñ treatises on Astronomy, Astrology, Medicine, etc., now in use, while the Siamese Laws were framed on those

¹ Hamsawati is said to have been founded in A.D. 573, but, as it is not mentioned at the time when Anuruddha sacked Thatōñ, the inference is that it did not then exist, or had fallen into decay. Sir A. Phayre does not give the date of the monk Athwā or the periods about which he wrote.—Sr. A. Sr. J.

extant in Pegu before as well as after the time of King Wareru. . . .”¹

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To the Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society.

8. A MUHAMMEDAN ENCYCLOPAEDIA.

DEAR PROFESSOR RHYS DAVIDS,—At the last Congress of Orientalists held in Paris a motion was adopted for the third time regarding the necessity of publishing a Muhammedan Encyclopaedia. The firm of E. J. Brill, at Leyden, has now in preparation a work destined to serve as a basis for all future contributions. Beyond this, however, the scheme has not advanced since a resolution was passed at the Congress in 1892, when a suggestion was made to place Professor Robertson Smith at the head of an International Committee for the furtherance of this object. At the Geneva Congress Professor Goldziher was elected to fill the vacancy left by the demise of Professor Robertson Smith, and in 1897 a resolution was adopted by which it was decided to approach the various governments and learned societies for material support. To wait for State grants would delay the work indefinitely, and much time may thus be wasted and many more resolutions passed without furthering the publication of the Encyclopaedia.

As one greatly interested in the matter, I would venture to submit whether it would not be more to the purpose to secure a publisher who would undertake the work on his own responsibility, say on the lines of Smith's "Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities." This work has paid its way so well that a *third* edition has already been published, and it has proved a success in every sense of the word. I am sure that if the Muhammedan Encyclopaedia were compiled in a similar manner, a sale of 500–600 copies

¹ Mason gives a translation of a Talaing book called Mūlamūli, said to have been translated from the Shan of Lamp'hūn in A.D. 1788.—Sr. A. St. J.