

BISHOP PAUL AMBROSE BIGANDET (1856-1885)

Aung Myo Tun¹

Abstract

Bishop Paul Ambrose Bigandet was one of the most of the missionary priests on whom King Mindon relied. The primary aim of this research paper is to reveal Bishop Bigandet's contributions in field of education and social affairs. As a result, the western education which he concreted contributes towards the Myanmar society from that time onward to present. In addition, this paper is generally aimed at the evaluation of the Myanmar political process during the reign of King Mindon's period in which he played an active role. This research paper was written on the basic of Myanmar Chronicles like Konbaungset Mahayazawintawgyi (Great Chronicle of Konbaung Dynasty) and other historical sources and contemporary documents and books and papers on Christianity especially National Church History of Myanmar, published by Church Bishops' Conference of Myanmar. In addition, surveying and questionnaire methods were used in writing this paper. This paper highlights Bishop Bigandet's contributions towards the Myanmar society.

Keywords: Bishop Bigandet, education, King Mindon, Myanmar, missionary

Introduction

In 1721, King Taniganwe began to keep touch with the missionary priests who set foot in Myanmar during the Nyaungyan period. In fact, the Roman Catholic missionaries from the European states continually came to Myanmar from that time on to Konbaung period. In subsequent years they are seen coming regularly to Myanmar until now. Their primary aim is to make evangelization of their faith in Myanmar. They carried off the western culture, literature, education with them to the eastern countries where they landed. The national tribes inhabiting in Myanmar such Kayin, Kayah, Kachin, Chin and etc, professed only animism before they arrived. Not only they lacked their literature but also their living standard had very low in comparison with current situation in which they have already possessed their own literature, highly culture after they converted into Christianity. At the same time, the fathers and the priests invented the consonant for these tribes and raised their socio-economy. At now, a majority of Kayin, Kayah, Kachin and Chin became either Roman Catholic or Baptist Christians. It is seen that however they continue to pay worship of traditional animism. Bishop Bigandet of Foreign Missions of Paris propagated his faith, grew up education and raised socio-economy of these tribes. Catholics in Myanmar are known to be *Bayingyis* which derived from the Persian word, '*Feringi*,' meaning foreigner. Most of the Myanmar monarchs allowed Portuguese and other foreigners who professed their faith to carry out propagation of their religion without prohibition.

In response to kings' gratitude, they voluntarily engaged in the state affairs in time of emergency, giving their advice to the crowns. Especially when King Mindon ascended the throne, Fr. Paulo Abbona (Don Paulo) and Fr. Domingo Tarolly (Dondamingu) was enlisted in a Myanmar peace mission in order to discuss with the British for peace and demarcation of boundary between Upper Myanmar and Lower Myanmar in aftermath of the Second Anglo-Myanmar War of 1852.

At the same time, King Mindon and Kanaung, Crown Prince, showed their enthusiasm to create Upper Myanmar into an industrialized state. In addition, King Mindon also aspired to make civil reforms. Therefore, he consulted with not only veteran Myanmar ministers, court officials but

¹ Dr, Professor, Department of History, Lashio University

also French, Armenian and other foreigners including the Christian missionary priests like Bishop Bigandet, Fr. P. Abbona (Don Paulo) and Fr. Domingo Tarolly (Dondamingu) for his reform. Bishop Bigandet was one of those who were giving suggestion to King Mindon. Bishop Bigandet's participation in Myanmar political process resulted in sending the Myanmar state scholars to France and establishing the Franco-Myanmar Diplomatic Relation concretely. It is seen that the credential letters were exchanged between the two countries vice versa through Bishop Bigandet and Fr. Bishop Fr. Lecompt (Don Latkaung). As a result, Franco-Myanmar Commercial Treaty could be signed and the social arena, western education and other social welfare began to develop in Mandalay, the then capital city due to his endless efforts. He also built and opened schools for children; hospitals and dispensaries for the lepers and home for the orphans. As a matter of fact, his enthusiastic activities aimed at the progress of the Myanmar socio-economy. The different kinds of western schools next to the churches are contributing to Myanmar society until now.

Bishop Paul Ambrose Bigandet (1856-1885)

Many of Roman Catholic Missionary Associations were sent to eastern countries including Myanmar under the supervision of Pope at Vatican, Italy. It is seen that these missionaries began to come to Myanmar from Nyaungyan period to Late Konbaung period. The evidences on History of Catholicism say that these missionaries were as follows;

1. Barnabite Period (1721-1830),
2. Propagation of the Faith Missionaries Period (1830-1842),
3. Oblate Period (1842-1852) and
4. Foreign Missions of Paris (Missions Entrangeres De Paris- MEP) Period (1856-1965)

Paul Ambrose Bigandet was one of the missionary priests of Foreign Missions of Paris (Missions Entrangeres De Paris- MEP) at Paris, France. He stayed in Myanmar for over fifty years from 1854 to 1894.¹ Paul Ambrose Bigandet was born on 13 August, 1813 in Besancon, France. He enrolled at seminary at the age of sixteen and continued to Marnay College at nineteen where he had taken the theological subject as a specialized major. Then he also studied the classic literature. He served as a professor of classics at department of the ecclesiastical seminary at Marnay College in France.² On 8 February, 1837, he was admitted as a member of the Seminary of the Foreign Missions of Paris and was ordained there. Then, he was sent to Penang in Malay Peninsula and Lower Myanmar in charge of the Bishop's Pro-Vicar. In 1843, he firstly landed at Dawei and Myeik in Tanintharyi. In Lower Myanmar, he stayed for two years doing the missionary works.

In 1846, he was appointed as Coadjutor Vicar Apostolic of Malay at the age of thirty-three. In Malaya (Malaysia), he also mastered the Malay language. He began writing Malayan in Roman characters and transcribed in these characters all the books, classical and religious, then in use throughout the Vicariate.³ In Malaya, he built up two schools: the De La Salle Brothers for boys and the Sisters of the Infant Jesus for girls. Later, these schools came to aid the schools, opened in

¹ Aung Nyunt, U, "Catholic *Sasana* in Mandalay and *Bayingyi* Villages," Mandalay, Mandalay Catholic Association, 2014, p.82 (Hereafter cited as Aung Nyunt, "Catholic *Sasana*")

² Evans, E.P, "The Foreign Missions of Paris (1856-1893, National Church History of Myanmar," Yangon, Alpha & Omega Color Printing, 2014 p. 391 (Hereafter cited as Evans, "The Foreign Missions of Paris")

³ Aung Nyunt, "Catholic *Sasana*" p.83

Myanmar.¹ On 30 March, 1856, he was consecrated Bishop at Penang in Malaya (Malaysia) by the Foreign Missions of Paris (MEP).

At the same time, he was also chosen to be the administrator of Bago and Inn Wa. Therefore, he paid a visit to Myanmar again on 4 April, 1856. He performed the missionary works at Malamyine, Pathein, Myaungmya and Yangon before he went to Inn Wa in Upper Myanmar. Then, he went to Ava for his missionary duties. His primary aim was to achieve the success of his works in Myanmar. In addition, he also wanted to raise the socio-economic status of *Bayingyi*² populace. He saw *Bayingyis'* temporal buildings and lay-houses damaged due to the Second Anglo-Myanmar War which broke out in 1852, and disorders in Upper Myanmar. Therefore, he wandered off far and wide to where *Bayingyis* settled; he rebuilt up the damaged ones and helped them on social and religious affairs.

Why did Bishop Bigandet engage in Myanmar's political process and other arenas such as economy and diplomacy besides religion? There were many reasons which persuaded him to engage in Myanmar affairs. The answer is the most suitable to the then current situations prevailing during the reign of King Mindon. And so his concerns in Myanmar were categorized into five subtopics in this research paper. These topics were explained as follows.

His Concern in Myanmar Politics and King Mindon's Reform

In the year 1856, Bishop Bigandet reached Amarapura, the capital city of the Konbaung Dynasty. He experienced two adversary political systems in which one was the British colonial system prevailing in Lower Myanmar and another was traditional monarchism that remained intact in Upper Myanmar. He considered himself that these two different systems were challenging him in doing his missionary works. He could easily carry out his responsibilities in Lower Myanmar as it was ruled under the British Burma Government.

He hoped that his works seemed facing hindrance and difficulty under monarchical rule as his former missionary priests such as Dr. Mark, Fr. P. Abbona and so on were confined in prison, to whom King Sagaing and King Bagan had had doubt on the excuse of the British spies and that he would certainly encounter a very adverse situation in Upper Myanmar. However, his expectations were greatly reversed for King Mindon's religious toleration of the other faiths. On the other hand, King Mindon paid attention to reform and develop his nation with the help of foreigners and missionary priests, temporarily staying in Upper Myanmar. It is possible that King Mindon's reform and the then current political situations prevailing in Myanmar brought about a chance for Bishop Bigandet to disclose his resourcefulness in Myanmar.

When King Mindon moved to Mandalay, the newly capital city from Amarapura, the old one he gave the land to the Christians for building of their churches in Mandalay. Therefore, missionary priests also moved to Mandalay and they continued to do their missionary works without prohibition as before. The foreigners and the missionary priests including Bishop Bigandet seemed to be dragged into the political reforms in Upper Myanmar due to King Mindon's generosity and sagacity placed on them. There is another factor that the unjustness of the British war against Myanmar persuaded them including Bishop Bigandet to engage in Myanmar politics. In addition, the then world political landscape had influenced somehow on Bishop Bigandet and

¹ Evan, "The Foreign Mission of Paris," p. 85

² *Bayingyi* means '*Feringi*,' the Persian word meaning foreigner.

other westerners who were temporarily residing in Myanmar. Some of them were allowed to pay special attendance to King Mindon whenever the king wished to consult about the state's affairs. Among those were included Bishop Bignadet, Dr. Mark, and Fr. Domingo Tarolly and Fr. P. Abbona. They often advised King Mindon concerning political, diplomatic and economic affairs. In this way, Bishop Bigandet and his contemporary priests took part in Myanmar politics and King Mindon's reforms.

Bishop Bigandet frankly told King Mindon that Upper Myanmar had become a sitting duck for the British colonialists since they occupied Bago in 1852 and so he must have transformed the rest part to a newly modernized state with the European Powers' help. His advices reflected King Mindon to reoccupy the lost territories which fell to the British.¹ Accordingly, King Mindon adopted the specific plans if the country was improved. These plans were as follows;

1. to reform the state as early as,
2. to set the new comprehensive foreign policy,
3. to send the royal pages to abroad for further studies,
4. to transform the traditional monastic education into the western education and to emerge schools teaching art and science in his realm and
5. to keep close-eyes to the world political condition and simultaneously to maintain Anglo-Myanmar relation until he challenged the British.

Bishop Bigandet and his contemporary missionary priests gave advice to King Mindon to adopt the above plans. It is clearly seen that King Mindon had to perform the reforms on the basis of their advice. And so in 1872, Myanmar peace mission led by Kinwun Mingyi U Kaung was sent to Europe on the basis of their advice in Europe, Kinwun Mingyi (port officer) and his followers had the right to learn about the political, economic and social infrastructures there. In truth, these rights to learn these infrastructures, seen in England, France, Italy and other nations were created by their advice.

Myanmar peace mission led by U Kaung learned Dover fortress,² the British parliament,³ banking system of England,⁴ coinage industry,⁵ organization of the military army and equipment of arms while they had been in London.⁶ In addition, the mission also learned the drainage system,⁷ building of different types of ships,⁸ the establishment of infantry, cavalry and artillery⁹ and building of fort and fortress¹⁰, making of different types of candles¹¹ both in France and Italy. Besides, the mission knew well that their monarchical system was very different in comparison with those of Myanmar. Kinwun Mingyi (port officer) and his ministers learned this system in detail how and why it differed between England, France, Italy and Myanmar.

¹ Ba, Vivian, "Some Papal Correspondence With the King of Burma," *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Rangoon, JBRS, Vol. L,I, June 1967, p. 15 (Hereafter cited as Ba, "Some Papal Correspondence")

² Kaung, London Diary, p.86

³ Kaung, London Diary, p.106

⁴ Kaung, London Diary, p.86

⁵ Kaung, London Diary, p.109

⁶ Kaung, London Diary, pp.112-120

⁷ Kaung, London Diary, p.108

⁸ Kaung, London Diary, p.116

⁹ Kaung, London Diary, p.126

¹⁰ Kaung, London Diary, p.147

¹¹ Kaung, London Diary, p.147

Kinwun Mingyi (port officer) instructed the Myanmar youths to study hard abroad for country. Yaw Mingyi U Pho Hlaing who was in charge of Yaw town had compiled a book named *Rajadhamma Thigaha Kyan* (the righteous monarchism) based the oral notes and evidences told by Kinwun Mingyi (port officer) and his men. Therefore, King Mindon tried to modernize existing absolute monarchy system and adopted the salary system for crown servicemen. However, the king's authority already stood at the top in spite of having not eliminated the feudalism completely.

The parts and instruments of mechanism had been ordered to import to Upper Myanmar from those countries. As a result, the evidences from Kin Wunmigy's London Diary and Paris Diary and Hluttaw (Supreme Council) records say that Christian missionary priests contributed to King Mindon's reform process. The sources of Christian missionaries also add that how the Christian missionary priests did take part in political, economic and social affairs. Especially, Bishop Bigandet's participation in Myanmar political process resulted in international relation during the reign of King Mindon. Fr. P. Abbona (Don Paulo), Fr. Domingo Tarolly (Dodamingu) stood with King Mindon for the peaceful discussion held between Myanmar government and the British government after the Second Anglo-Myanmar War was over in 1852.¹ Thus, Bishop Bigandet engaged in Myanmar politics and King Mindon's reform due to many reasons prevailing in late Konbaung period.

His Concern in Diplomatic Relations

King Mindon had established the diplomatic relations with France, Italy and other European Powers during his reign. Bishop Bigandet played an active role in the role of Franco-Myanmar relation during the reign of King Mindon. The usage 'our great friend,' in crown messages which were sent to French foreign minister referred to Bishop Bigandet. Indeed, Upper Myanmar was a fragile country at that time for the loss of Lower Myanmar. King Mindon who ascended the throne in 1853 set forth three secret schemes as follows

1. to drive back the British and to reoccupy lost Lower Myanmar,
2. to built foreign relations with the world powers and
3. to build an industrialized nation with these powers' aid.

His secret schemes were indeed based not only on the internal elite elements but also on external elements such as Fr. P. Abbona, Fr. Domingo Tarolly, Bishop Bigandet, American Baptist missionary priests; Dr. Mark and Dr. Price. Therefore, their advices were a key factor for his schemes.

In early 1866, French foreign minister sent the letter to King Mindon in which the Myanmar products came to be exhibited at the world fair of 1867, held in Paris. The royal messages were exchanged between the two countries vice versa. Maung Shwe Oo, Maung Mye and Aung Zaw who were the Myanmar state scholars, studying in France and Bishop Bigandet interpreted these messages on the behalf of the two governments. On 20th March, 1866, the French government sent the message to Myanmar king.

Monsieur Perdonnet's letter which was sent to King Mindon states briefly that King Mindon wanted to buy the French warships and offered for help for the internal navigation inside

¹ Than Tun, Dr., "Nehle Yazawin (Peripatetic history)," Yangon, Seikku Cho Cho Press, 2016 pp.334-335 (Hereafter, Than Tun, Nehle Yazawin)

Myanmar and to receive an invitation for World Fairs of 1867 in Paris.¹ Monsieur Perdonnet was also a French official in charge of administration for the Myanmar students. His letter clearly reveals that King Mindon had to rely on France on the military and the civil navigation. The French government invited many countries on the world to attend to Paris Fair which would be held in 1867. Among those invited nations was included Myanmar because of the efforts of Ne-myo-thi-ri-ze-ya General d'Organi, the Myanmar youths and Bishop Bigandet.²

It is seen that some official credentials sent by French government had passed to Myanmar government through Bishop Bigandet. Myanmar did the same too. The French Foreign Minister sent the credential letter dated 23. 3. 1866, to Monsieur Lombard, a French councilor at Calcutta, India. Monsieur Lombard also sent this letter to Bishop Bigandet. The subsequent credentials were sent through Bishop Bigandet between the two nations.

The credential letter which was sent to Monsieur Lombard, the French councilor at Calcutta, India from the French government says as follows;

To

Monsieur Lombard

Council General

Calcutta

21st March 1866

Monsieur,

I have the honour to forward herewith a cover containing a letter written by me to the Prime Minister of the Burmese Empire and different correspondences destined for that Government. I would be most obliged if you forward them to Bishop Bigandet requesting him at the same time to see that they are delivered to the Burmese Minister.³

According to above the credential, the French government requested Bishop Bigandet in establishing diplomatic relations with King Mindon according to this credential letter which was sent to Monsieur Lombard, a French councilor at Calcutta. At that time, Bishop Bigandet was one of the most trusted persons who advised King Mindon. And so, the Franco-Myanmar relation could successfully be established. King Mindon sent his credentials to French government through Bishop Bigandet. In fact, he served a translator besides an advisor for King Mindon. Therefore, King Mindon offered him pension monthly. The French king, Napoleon III also conferred the Order of the Legion of Honour to him.

On 27th July, 1866, Myanmar royal government was sent a royal message to the French foreigner through Bishop Bigandet. He also gave a remark on the exchange of the credential letters between the two countries that he translated these letters into French and Myanmar vice versa. This work gave me very pleasant for the two countries' interest.

¹ Ba, Vivian, "King Mindon and the World Fair of 1867 in Paris," *Journal of Burma Research Society*, Rangoon, JBRS, XLVIII, ii, December, 1965, pp. 17-19 (Hereafter cited as "King Mindon and the World Fair")

² Maung Maung Tin, U, "Konbaungset Maha-ya-za-taw-gyi," (The Great Chronicle of Konbaung Dyanasty)," Yangon, Yar Pyay Press, edited by Department of Universities Historical Research, 2014 p.126 (Hereafter cited as Maung Maung Tin, "Konbaungset")

³ "King Mindon and the World Fair" pp20-21

Kanaung, the Crown Prince who was interested in Paris Fair of 1867 urged King Mindon to exhibit the Myanmar products there. Therefore, while the king was about to send two royal agents to Paris, on 3rd August, 1866, Myingun rebellion broke out at palace in Mandalay. This incident halted not only King Mindon's future procedures but also killed a crown prince who was ambitious for the development of the country. Therefore, the plan of the Myanmar products, exhibiting to Paris was annulled due to this incident. The Ministry of French Foreign Affairs sent condolence message to Myanmar government for the loss of Kanaung, the Crown Prince and a leader of the industrialization project and other prominent ministers. His death came to disturb and hinder the Myanmar youths abroad for further studies, said in this message.¹

In truth, King Mindon had dreamt that the World Fair of Paris would make strong Franco-Myanmar relations. However, in 1964 after the regaining of her independence, the Myanmar products went to be exhibited in Paris, France. On the other hand, King Mindon wanted to conclude diplomatic and commercial treaties with the European Powers such as France, Italy, Prussia (Germany) and so on, depending on these fairs of Paris. King Mindon believed himself that the country benefited from the cordial friendship which was established with these powers. In fact, his thoughts were based on the advices of Bishop Bigandet, Fr. P. Abbona and Dr. Mark.

At the same time, many of the Christian missionaries from the western countries such as France, Italy, and American had the right to obtain closer relations with King Mindon. Bishop Bigandet and Bishop Fr. Lecompt (Don Latkaung)² were the French priests and Fr. P. Abbona (Don Paulo) and Fr. Domingo Tarolly (Dondamingu), the Italians. King Mindon believed himself that their advices were more beneficial to his country in implementing diplomatic relations with France and Italy than did English.

In the years of 1850s, there occurred the growing rivalries for colonial territories, nationalism and armaments among the European nations such as English, French, Prussia (Germany) and Austria-Hungary Empire. The political paradigm shift in Europe had put an impact on them in many ways. It is clearly shown that the missionary priests including Bishop Bigandet played a vital role in the foreign relations during the reign of King Mindon.

King Mindon managed to build an industrialized state in his kingdom with the aid of French and Italy rather than British. Fr. P. Abbona, Dr. Mark and Bishop Bigandet served him as advisers in role of the foreign relations. Therefore, the diplomatic relations could be established between Myanmar and France, Italy. In addition, the state scholars could also be sent to these countries for the building of the industrialization.³

Myanmar state scholars were sent to France under the management of Bishop Bigandet, revealed in the letter sending to the British from Magwe Wungyi (a minister in charge of Magwe town in central Myanmar).⁴ According to Magwe Wungyi's letter, a list of state scholars' names and a supervisor's name were exactly reported to the British. Therefore, Myanmar authorities annually reported to the British about the internal affairs according to this letter and that the British knew well whatever Myanmar kings did. Magwe Wungyi ordered on behalf of King Mindon that

¹ "King Mindon and the World Fair" pp. 23

² Kaung, U, "Kinwunmingyi's Paris Diary," Yangon, Yar Pyay Press, 2008 p.17 (Hereafter cited as Kaung, Paris Diary)

³ Ba, Vivian, "The Burmese Embassy To Italy In 1872," Journal of Burma Research Society (JBRS), Vol: LIII,ii, December, 1970 pp. 65, 67 (Hereafter cited as Ba, "The Burmese Embassy To Italy in 1872)

⁴ Tin, "Catalogue of Hluttaw Records p.87

in response to gratitude back to Bishop Bigandet, his missionary trip to Banmaw and the regions in Kachin State were allowed without prohibition. Thus, Bishop Bigandet also took part in diplomatic relation during the reign of King Mindon.¹

His Concern in Myanmar Economy

In dealing with the economy, there was the letter, exchanged between Magwe Wungyi and Bishop Bigandet shows that the taxes were collected on jade. On 6th June, 1868, King Mindon entrusted precious rubies to him to sell in France and England.² In addition, Bishop Bigandet arranged the Burmese state scholars who had been in France for the accommodation and furthermore, served them as a liable officer between the two countries. On 24th September, 1868, Bishop Bigandet had to order 4000 *kyats* to France for the state scholars' expenditure sent by Pahkan Mingyi (a minister in charge of Pahkan town). Mac Showkaria, a receiver reported to him that he well received the money sent by Myanmar. A bill signed by Mac Showkaria's signature was sent to Bishop Bigandet.³

In Magwe Wungyi's letter sending to Sir Aurthur Phyre, a British minister, Bishop Bigandet took in charge of the liable officer for the Anglo-Myanmar relations. On 23rd April, 1866, Bishop Bigandet sent a letter to Sir Aurthur Phyre that Magwe Wungyi wanted to meet him about the internal affairs. Magwe Wungyi and Sir Aurthur Phyre discussed that the British government was to look after two Myanmar diplomats sent by King Mindon named Kyuntawmyo Harry and Nga Shwe Hla who went to Bengalar town in order to buy the mould of silver coin.⁴

Pahkan Mingyi was an official who took in charge of selling the Myanmar products especially woods and metallurgical gems to France. His letter sending to Bishop Bigandet contained (1) a list of expenditure giving to Phangyetwun (a minister who took in charge of glassware industry) and state scholars and (2) a drawing in which the wood fruits and metallurgical gems and (3) a list of instruments which the state scholars to buy.⁵

On 2nd March, 1872 King Mindon sent the peace mission led by Kinwun Mingyi Mahasithu U Kaung to England and then France, Italy and Prussia and etc. The Franco-Myanmar Commercial Treaty was concluded. King Mindon disliked some articles of Franco-Myanmar Commercial Treaty and that he wanted to amend and add this treaty. And so Kunwun Mingyi (port officer) led a mission to France again in February, 1874. But the French government courteously rejected his demands and that it remained unratified and dormant for nearly ten years until King Thibaw's reign. In 1885, this treaty was suddenly revived which paid for the British to occupy the whole Burma (Myanmar) on the excuse of being preemptive strike against French government.⁶ In addition, the Italian-Myanmar Alliance Treaty was also signed with the support of Fr. P. Abbona and Alberto Racchica, an Italian consular. King Mindon continued to maintain the peaceful relations with the British in accordance with Bishop Bigandet's and Fr. P. Abbona's advices.

¹ Tin, "Catalogue of Hluttaw Records p. 79

² Tin, "Catalogue of Hluttaw Records p.112

³ Tin, "Catalogue of Hluttaw Records p.124

⁴ Tin, "Catalogue of Hluttaw Records p.87

⁵ Tin, "Catalogue of Hluttaw Records p.128

⁶ Maung Htin Aung, "Kingwun Mingyi's Diary," Journal of Burma Research Society, JBRS, LVII, i & ii, December, Rangoon, p.2 (Hereafter cited Maung Htin Aung, "Kingwun Mingyi's Diary,")

His Concern in Spread of Roman Catholic Religion in Myanmar

King Mindon gave the right to free worship to Christians, Muslim and Hindus. In gratitude back to his debts, these aliens contributed to recruit in royal army and to engage in politics. For example, many of the artillery men were foreigners known to us as Muslim and Portuguese soldiers. The primary aim of the missionaries mainly led to the spread of Roman Catholicism and Baptism in eastern countries including Myanmar. At the same time, they could sow and grow art and science called the western education in these countries besides the religion. Indeed, many of the missionary priests studied the secular subjects in their native countries. Their secular arts enabled them to do missionary works effectively in the undeveloped countries.

The trust which was firmly established between them and the rulers vice versa permitted them to take part in politics of the eastern countries including Myanmar. On the contrary, the disorders and change of succession that took place in these countries had affected them. These affects resulted in either killing some or confining some missionary priests in prison. It is seen that some priests performed their works to put up their success under the adversarial circumstances. Therefore, their main tasks were indeed the spread of Christianity in eastern countries.

At now, there have already been many sacred alien religious monuments such as Christian, Islam, Hindu and others in Myanmar as the ancient monarchs like King Mindon adopted the flexible religious toleration upon the foreigners who served as mercenaries, crown servicemen and performed the spread of their faith as missionary priests. These sacred buildings and monuments were recognized as historical and cultural legacies which can earn foreign exchanges for the countries today.

He paid a visit to Taungoo, Yangon, Banmaw with the king's support. At Banmaw, he was able to convert many of Kachin tribes into Roman Catholicism and also raise his living standard. In Banmaw, he discovered a land route connecting with Yunnan southwest China and Myanmar. Therefore, this land route via Banmaw served directly for bilateral commercial interest. The British were also interested in this route in order to make a direct contact with Yunnan the southwest China via Banmaw for their trade. In his record concerning to Kachin region, he noted that Kachin tribes' social life was very simple. And he set his procedures for the improvement of their better living standards as follows;

1. to do better their life than present situation,
2. to teach them to take care themselves of their health
3. to open school for their generation.¹

He came across the national tribes' life style practically while he was doing the missionary works at Banmaw. He learned the sick men infected by the dirty waters drifting from a great ditch, or rather than depression, full of dirty, stagnant water which meanders all around the town. He insisted on the townsmen that the better drainage system should be made so that the dirty water would flow into the river directly. The betterment of drainage system made the inhabitants to be healthy well. He believed himself that the Kachin tribes would be easily converted into Christianity. His record reveals that the circle of Chinese merchants was about to worry that their trade was going to be influenced by foreigners.² On the other hand, King Mindon did not accept the

¹ Evans, "The Foreign Missions of Paris" p.393

² Evans, "The Foreign Missions of Paris" p.393

Italian demands that they wanted to learn a route connecting between Banmaw and Yunnan on excuse of being rough route and the danger of and the tribes' renegade and the bandits there.¹ In October, 1875, King Mindon also gave a land to Don Latkaung to stay in Banmaw for his missionary work like Bishop Bigandet.²

Bishop Bigandet arduously studied Buddhism while he was doing the missionary duties in Myanmar. King Mindon supported him for his missionary works by giving elephants, boat and other transport facilities to him. Bishop Bigandet was able to discuss with King Mindon and the Buddhist monks about Lord Buddha's teachings.³ He wrote a Life of Our Lord and a Prayer Book in Myanmar language after he completed Myanmar and Pali languages due to King Mindon's and Buddhist monks' insistency. Then he also compiled a book named Buddha Gautama at the request of King Mindon. This book was published in 1958 say in Roman Catholic records. It added that this book was translated English to Myanmar in 1964.⁴ Therefore, he was a priest who appreciated Buddhism which Myanmar professes and Myanmar culture and literature.

King Mindon supported royal launches, elephants and other transport facilities to him when he wandered around the tribal areas where he propagated his *Sasana*. Consequently he could make his entourage far and wide in Myanmar due to King Mindon's support.⁵

In his records he mentioned about King Mindon's religious toleration as follows;

"It is well to consign in these pages a fact which does honour to King of Burmah (Myanmar). Since his accession to the throne in 1852, the reigning sovereign has shown a real disposition in assisting the missionary resident in the royal city and other places. In addition, the king gave generously me money and other travelling facilities for my missionary works."⁶

It can be assumed that King Minon's religious policy was so flexible on alien (other) religions by viewing his supporting to them. Therefore, Churches, Mosques, Hindu temples and other religious buildings sprang up during his reign. On the other hand, his flexibility affected Myanmar political, economic and social affairs. In turn, Bishop Bigandet like foreigners and other missionary priests contributed towards his internal and external reforms. In 1864 with Bishop Bigandet's help Mandalay got a steam engine printing press that print Pitaka incised on 864 palm leaves by only one impression.⁷ Therefore, he supported King Mindon in engraving the *Tri-pitakas* (Three Baskets of Laws) as the stone pillars numbering in 729 at the foot of Mandalay hill. At now, these stone pillars were acknowledged in the list of the world heritage sites by UNESCO. And so his contribution toward the propagation of Buddha *Sasana* remains in remembrance in the heart of Myanmar people until now.

¹ Ba, Vivian, "Diplomatic Documents Relating to the Burmese Italian Treaty of 1871," Journal of Burma Research Society, Rangoon, JBRS, LIII, ii, December, 1970, p.21 (Hereafter cited as Ba, Diplomatic Documents")

² Tin, "Catalogue of Hluttaw Records p.126

³ Evans, "The Foreign Missions of Paris" p.393

⁴ Evans, "The Foreign Missions of Paris" p.394

⁵ Ba, Vivian, "Some Papal Correspondence With the King of Burma," Journal of Burma Research Society, Rangoon, JBRS, Vol. L,I, June 1967, p. 15 (Hereafter cited as Ba, "Some Papal Correspondence")

⁶ "Some Papal Correspondence", p.15

⁷ Than Tun, Dr., "Royal Order of Burma(A.D.1598-1885)," Part Nine (A.D. 1853-1885), Kyoto, The Center For Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1989 p.xx (Hereafter cited as Than Tun, ROBIX)

His Concern in the Development of Western Education and Social Affairs

In truth, the western education system was sown by Fr. Sigismondo Calchi and Fr. Vittoni, two Barnabite priests in time of King Tanninganwe, one of Nyaungyan Dyanasty. These two Barnabite priests began to teach the native children science, Mathematics, Geography, Astrology and History. Fr. S. Calchi and Fr. Vittoni helped King Tanninganwe in building diplomatic relation with Pope at Papacy, Vertican State. They also opened the Barnabite schools next to the Churches in Thanlyin, Inn Wa, Mawlamyine and Bago. However, in 1750's, the traditional Mon-Myanmar power struggles damaged their schools and churches and some of the priests like Gallizia, Mondelli and Del Conte were killed in the warfare, broke out between two racial conflicts.

It is found that they attempted to bloom the western education in Myanmar in late Konbaung period. In time of Alaungmintaya, founder of Konbaung dynasty, Br. Angelo served as physician to the crown and the royal circles and opened the schools for the orphans in 1753. The western style of schools was more blossomed in Rakhine and Tanintharyi which fell to the hand of the British after the First Anglo-Myanmar War of 1826 than did in Upper Myanmar. The British Indian government enacted the law of education for the natives, inhabiting in those areas and legally opened these schools there.

It is not strange that the blossom of these schools in Lower Myanmar was stirred up by the British education policy and the western missionary priests. However, the progress of the western education was far legged behind in Upper Myanmar under the rule of Myanmar monarchs owing to the influence of traditional monastic education. The Oblate priests wanted to raise the underdeveloped Upper Myanmar, by diffusing the western thought and education there. There is a key factor on receiving not the flourish of western education in Myanmar is probably more concerned with the rulers and the ruled who on one hand, deeply concentrated in the traditional monastic education and on the other, many of the Buddhist monks who influenced Myanmar society did not encourage its development because of having suspicious on the missionary priests.

Fr. Sangermano and Fr. Luigi Grondona were the most prominent Oblate priests who set sowing the western education during the reign of King Badon and King Sagaing. The history of Myanmar written by Fr. Sangermano was the first Myanmar historical book but this book is not published at now. Fr. Luigi Grondona also taught the royal princes and other aristocrats Pali, science and philosophy. Fr. Luigi Grondona was continued to be favourable in charge of teaching the royal princes during the reign of King Sagaing until his death. King Sagaing and his chief queen held the grand funeral ceremony for late Fr. Luigi Grondona. Michael Symes, Captain Canning, Captain Burney and Bishop Bigandet were his pupils who wrote about his missionary works.

The priests of Foreign Missions of Paris (MEP) who reached Myanmar in late Konbaung period were very enthusiastic to transform the existing monastic education into the western education there. Joseph d' Amanto, Mgr. Cao, Fr. De Brito were the Banarbite missionary priests who grow up the western education in mid of the difficulties that were the Anglo-Myanmar War, the internal disorders and lack of the European nations' help. A few of churches, schools, orphanages, lepers' home and seminaries had emerged due to their attempts. Many of these schools usually exist in the churches' compound. Bishop Bigandet also believed himself that the emergence of many Catholic Vernacular Schools, Normal Schools, and Catholic Colleges resulted in the development of the western education in Myanmar. Therefore, he founded these schools in Mawlamyine, Pathein, Yangon and Mandalay with the help of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

The schools named the Christian Brother Schools and Nunnery Schools he founded are still thriving in Myanmar. In truth, these schools receive the enrollment of the Buddhists, the Muslim and Hindus besides the Christians for the progress of their social life. Normal school he opened in Patheingyi aimed at transforming the monastic education on the Buddhism. Therefore, the Christian missionary sources display that there had been some problems between the Buddhist monks and the Roman Catholic missionary priests on the education. However, the religious toleration of many Myanmar kings through ages on the other religions caused the emergence of the western style of schools, the orphan schools and lepers' home in Myanmar. Many of these educational and social buildings such as dispensaries and hospitals for lepers which existed in time of ancient Myanmar kings are still thriving in Myanmar.

There appeared the western style of schools in Upper Myanmar. The western education system was placed under the supervision of Christian priests. King Mindon himself encouraged learning of this new education system and fanned the schools. He requested Bishop Bigandet to teach the royal pages the western education including English at capital city. Thus, Bishop Bigandet was a main priest who enabled to diffuse the western education in Upper and Lower Myanmar. They wanted to transform the existence monastic education into the western education based on art and science including English and Latin literatures which they desired to teach to the Myanmar boys and girls who were seeking for education.

The leprosy affected persons were placed under the administration of *Ayutwun* who was in charge of lepers' affairs in time of Myanmar kings. In those days, they were not permitted to enter into the cities, towns and villages. They lived at outskirts of the towns. The dispensaries and hospitals for them and schools for their offsprings emerged respectively after the arrival of the missionaries in Myanmar. Bishop Bigandet built up a lepers' hospital in Mandalay. It existed on 35th street in east of the town. But it was evacuated to Yaynathar town in district of Pyin Oo Lwin, Mandalay in 1990s owing to the expansion of the town area. At now, the leprosy affected persons are specially curing under the supervision of this Lepers' Hospital of Government. During the years of 1980s, the natives called it the French Lepers' Government. At the same time, Bishop Bigandet gave instruction to the Church authorized persons who were taking the charge of the Churches and schools. They taught the boys and girls writing, reading and praying and gave lecture to them about the Christianity deeply. In 1861, Bishop Bigandet sent Fr. Dumollard to Paris to fetch Myanmar alphabetical book.

In those periods, the missionaries had just been relying on France, Italy and England whenever the books were printed out as there had not been the printer-machines in Myanmar. Thus, the native children had the right to study Geography and Arithmetic. After Fr. Dumollard returned from Paris, he brought a printer-machine to Myanmar. And so the prayer pamphlets and books named epistle and Gospels for every Sunday were printed out respectively in Myanmar. The Myanmar alphabetical books were also printed out simultaneously due to the missionary priests' effort. We are always paying respect to them whenever these earliest books printed out by them, are seen or read or learned today.

In 1859, Bishop Bigandet gave the charge of teaching to the royal pages to Fr. Lecomte (Khingyi Don Lattkaung) at the request of King Mindon. Fr. Lecomte and some priests taught science and English to them. Twenty pages came to study these subjects under the management of Fr. Lecomte. Kanaung, the Crown prince also encouraged the western style of schools to grow in Upper Myanmar. Bishop Bigandet criticized the British who accused of Kanaung, Crown prince

to be a pro-war prince. His remark on the crown prince is that he was a very ambitious prince who wanted art and science developing in Europe to be taught systematically here and to establish an industrialized state on the basis of these subjects. On the other hand, the Myanmar youths were also sent to abroad for further studies in order to speed up the country pet projects.

The Myanmar students received the money and other supports from the Superior General of the French Foreign Mission through Bisop Bigandet. In addition to the fanned support, he also estimated the cost of expenditure for the students in France. The letters sent from Bishop Bigandet to Fr. Albrand, the Superior contained full of instructions on their education and expenses on that. He managed four princesses to be taught at Yangon convent school under the supervision of the Sisters. In palace enclosure, seventy crown servicemen were taught the western education off duty-time.

He rejected the President of the Educational Syndicate for Lower Myanmar offered by the British. However, he served for many years as the post of Vice-President of the Educational Syndicate at the Education Department there. Therefore, the British government held his jubilee ceremony at his age of fifty in grand scale in 1887. He laid foundation known as Bigandet foundation for the development of art and science in Myanmar, making his contribution of his fortunes to it.

He wrote his activities in his record that

This place and region is marked as my native home. I am seeing the flowers and fruits blossoming from a handful of seeds I grow. Of course, my primary duty is to raise tribal races' social life.

Simultaneously, I have a desire to modernize these countries where I set foot. My desire was the West for the East, Europe for the Asia, and France for Burma (Myanmar). It is meant that the developed West is to take care of the underdeveloped Asia, modernized Europe is to give a hand to the legged behind Asia and the industrialized France is to support the industrialization processes of Myanmar.

I feel very happy if my aspirations came true. Therefore, I spent my times for a half of century in the eastern courtiers to serve political and social affairs on the basis of missionary works. I was very enjoyable for that. However, I overcame many difficulties and problems.

Therefore, Bishop Bigandet's remark is showing his wish of being spreading his faith and progressive for their natives' social life in Myanmar and eastern countries. According to his wish, he demanded the developed western countries needed to help the eastern countries so that the relations between them would be better before. In addition, he deeply rejected the colonialism of the west to which based on they were invading the eastern countries. He insisted on King Mindon to set the plan in order to recover the lost territories of Lower Myanmar but this plan was never materialized. However, his advices pushed him to engage in the rebuilding of the state and foreign relations. It can be analyzed that the good relation between them resulted in the development of the Upper Myanmar's political, economic and social affairs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the missionary priests including Bishop Bigandet were found engaging in the political, diplomatic and social affairs on the basis of the current situation prevailing in Myanmar. The time in which he reached Myanmar was the late Konbaung period in which the political condition was under the turmoil concededly. King Mindon began to encounter such problems as the lost of economy, loss of natural resources and the lack of sea outlet due to the British occupation of Bago after the Second Anglo-Myanmar War of 1852.

King Mindon set the plans that were how to protect Upper Myanmar against the British in future, how to recover Lower Myanmar by what methods, how to develop Upper Myanmar by what policy and principles and how to take the help of the industrialized nations by what paths. Finally as he decided to solve these difficulties he became dependent upon not the Myanmar ministers but also the foreign diplomats and missionary priests like Bishop Bigandet who had been in Upper Myanmar.

Bishop Bigandet, Fr. P. Abbona, Fr. Don Lattkaung and Fr. Don Dameinku were the expert missionary priests who skillfully assessed the Myanmar political process on the basis of the world politics. As a result, not only Treaty of Franco-Myanmar Alliance was signed but also the royal pages could be sent to France for further studies. In addition, France had to help the project of the industrialization led by Prince Kanaung. During the reign of King Mindon, some of his advice had been materialized and his activities were clearly seen. However, Bishop Bigandet's dreams on Upper Myanmar were sapped due to the Myingun rebellion of 1866 in which Prince Kanaung, leader of the industrialization, was assassinated.

Bishop Bigandet said King Mindon that the Franco-Myanmar Diplomatic Relation was quickly established as the Upper Myanmar was imminent to fall of the British pushed by the political instability and nearly stop of the industrialization process after the assassination of Prince Kanaung. Therefore, King Mindon sent the Myanmar peace mission led by Kin Wun Mingyi U Kaung to England, France, Italy and other European nations. Then the commercial and diplomatic treaties were signed with these powers respectively. However, the palace intrigues were confused and the Anglo-Myanmar relations deteriorated day by day during the reign of King Thibaw who succeeded King Mindon after he passed away in 1878. Finally, as Bishop Bigandet's assumption, Upper Myanmar in 1885 had fallen to the British hands.

During the British period, as a Vice-President of the Educational Syndicate, he served at the education department and founded his foundation known as Bishop Bigandet foundation for the development of the western education in Myanmar. In 1894, he passed away in France. Roman Catholic Churches, Catholic Vernacular Schools, Catholic Colleges and Seminaries he founded are contributing to Myanmar society from the late Konbaung period to present. However, these institutions' contributions rise and fall on the basic of the Myanmar political process. Nevertheless, Myanmar society is remembering him for his contributions.

Acknowledgement

I owe my special thanks to Dr. Nay Win Oo, Rector, Lashio University and Pro-rectors; Dr. Htay Lwin and Dr. Khin Kay Khine for allowing and encouraging this research work. I would like to express my heart-felt thank to Dr. Moe Cherry (Professor, Head), Dr. Tin Maung Kyi (Cultural researcher), Fr. Joe Du and Fr. U Sein Hlaing Oo. Above all, to all who encouraged and helped me in doing this research I owe much gratitude.

References

Myanmar

- Dr. Than Tun, "Nehle Yazawin (Peripatetic history)," Yangon, Seikku Cho Cho Press, 2016
- Dr. Than Tun, "Royal Order of Burma, Part Nine," Kyoto, The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1989
- U Aung Nyunt, "Catholic *Sasana* in Mandalay and *Bayingyi* Villages," Mandalay, Mandalay Catholic Association, 2014
- U Maung Maung Tin, "Konbaungset Maha-ya-za-taw-gyi," (The Great Chronicle of Konbaung Dyanasty)," Yangon, Yar Pyay Press, edited by Department of Universities Historical Research,
- U Tin, "Catalogue of the Hluttaw Records," Vol. I, II, Yangon, Yar Pyae Press,

English

- E.P. Evans, "The Foreign Missions of Paris (1856-1893, National Church History of Myanmar," Yangon, Alpha & Omega Color Printing, 2014
- Maung Htin Aung, "Kingwun Mingyi's Diary," Journal of Burma Research Society, JBRS, LVII, i & ii, December, Rangoon
- U Kaung, "Kinwunmingyi's Paris Diary," Yangon, Yar Pyay Press, 2008
- Vivian Ba, "The Burmese Embassy To Italy In 1872," Journal of Burma Research Society (JBRS), Vol: LIII,ii, December, 1970
- Vivian Ba, "Diplomatic Documents Relating To the Burmese Italian Treaty of 1871," Journal of Burma Research Society, Rangoon, JBRS, LIII,ii, December, 1970,
- Vivian Ba, "Some Papal Correspondence with the King of Burma," Journal of Burma Research Society, Rangoon, JBRS, Vol. L, I, June 1967,
- Vivian Ba, "King Mindon and the World Fair of 1867 in Paris," Journal of Burma Research Society, Rangoon, JBRS, XLVIII, ii, December, 1965