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Introduction

It is true that Myanmar has their own system of making a Calendar and reckoning time but we prefer using the Julian Calendar until 14th September, 1752 and the Gregorian Calendar afterwards in dating the Myanmar history because we would like to compare events here against developments elsewhere and know or gauge our own progress as to how far we were ahead in some aspects, or how much we lagged behind time in such things like explorations and economic expansions through industrialization. In looking at Myanmar politics in the international context we find the following:

The last decade of Aniruddha's reign coincides with the first decade of William I's rule in England. It means that while Bagan's control over the Myanmar plains was firmly established, the Britons were conquered by foreigners called Normans whose control they never could shake off. The idea that every bit of land in the country belongs to the king prevailed in both countries though in Myanmar the king had no control whatsoever on the religious land. The beginning of the Modern Age was seen in Europe in the 15th century

together with several states asserted their national entity with separation from the Papal Church. In Myanmar more closer contact between the Order of Buddhist Monks in Srilanka was made with that of Ramannadesa to make monastic reorganization on 24th February, 1480 by King Ramadhipati, popularly known as Dhammazedi.

Vasco de Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope on 22nd November, 1496 and that somehow or other brought closer contact with Europe and Southeast Asia. Persian seamen were trading in the Indian Ocean from the 11th century and Myanmar probably got for example Arak (distilled liquor) from them among others, in the 16th century. On 4th March, 1510 Albuquerque annexed Goa for Portugal and mercenaries from Goa found their service under Myanmar kings. Eventually guns and cannons were introduced in battles in Myanmar.

The Chinese knew about using gunpowder for incendiary weapons by the 11th century. The formula for making explosives was brought by Arabs to Europe in the 13th century. At the end of the first quarter of the 14th century, knowledge of guns was fairly widespread. In the middle of the 16th century the musket appeared. The matchlock musket was cheap and easy to make and it required little maintenance. The Portuguese came to India and went further until they reached Japan in 1542. They came with the matchlock guns and soon a village blacksmith in India could fashion a matchlock with ornate native designs for decoration. In China, Thailand and Myanmar, crude hand cannons were manufactured from the 16th to

the 19th century. The wheel lock gun was known from about the end of the 15th century.

King Narapati II (popularly known as Shwe Nan Kyawt Shin) died of a cannon shot on 28th March, 1527. The Shan took Ava and Sohanbwa became King of Ava. It was not a coincidence that Myanmar nationalism was heightened at that time. When Sohanbwa told Min Gyi Yan Naung who was his Myanmar advisor, that he would fight and take Pyay and Taung U, Min Gyi Yan Naung persuaded him to wait for some time, because he thought "Pyay and Taung U might become an easy prey. When they fell Myanmar would have no chance to survive". He sent secretly messengers to Pyay and Taung U to send envoys with plenty of gifts to negotiate peace with Sohanbwa. In the meanwhile he led a conspiracy and Sohanbwa was assassinated on 13th May, 1542. This helped the Myanmar control of the plains later by Tabin Shwe Hti who had his centre in Bago. After Tabin Shwe Hti was assassinated on 21st May, 1551 during a drunken spree with a Portuguese companion, the Portuguese mercenaries helped Bayin Naung to conquer Bago on 12th March, 1552 and later to make expeditions north and conquer Momeik on 10th January 1557, Monhyin on 6th March, 1557 and Mogaung on 26th March, 1557. It was during these expeditions that Bayin Naung (later known as Sin Byu Shin) converted the Shans to Buddhism.

During that year 1557, the Portuguese settled at Macao. In 1579 they started a trading station in Bengal. Subsequently Tanyin (Syriam) became another Portuguese port in the Bay of Bengal from about 1603 until 1613. Between 15th November, 1577 and

30th November, 1580, Francis Drake circumnavigated the world. Potatoes were first introduced into Europe in 1584. Akbar invaded India, annexed Kashmir in 1587, conquered Orissa in 1590 and Sind in 1592. He started campaigns in Deccan in 1599.

The Dutch began to colonize the East Indies and Sunda Islands in 1595. Meanwhile King Nyaung Yan acceded the throne of Ava on 13th February, 1600 and it was the beginning of the consolidation of Myanmar power again. The English East India Company was established on 31st December, 1600, the Dutch East India Company on 20th March, 1602 and the French East India Company in 1604.

The Dutch ejected the Portuguese from Moluccas in 1602. They were also ejected from Tanyin on 28 March 1613 when de Brito, Portuguese chief at Tanyin was executed by order of King Anaukpetlun. Myanmar - English relations were based, perhaps, for Myanmar to get foreign arms and ammunition, because Myanmar was engaged in the throes of war. Supply of arms to both parties of the contest was considered as treachery and perhaps this led to the "Tragedy of Negrais" on 6th October, 1759. All these instances are given here just to make obvious the fact that however Myanmar tried to isolate itself from outside contact from time to time, it was inevitable that it abided with the times more or less by the march of world events.