

# The Role of National Leaders during the Early Anti-Colonial Movements (1885-1895)

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## Abstract

In Myanmar, the people had to face with the British imperialism starting from the three Anglo-Myanmar Wars: the First Anglo-Myanmar War of 1824, the Second Anglo-Myanmar War of 1852, and the Third Anglo-Myanmar War of 1885. In these wars, people actively participated together with Myanmar Royal Army to fight against the British. After the fall of Mandalay, the early armed resistance movements were appeared in Upper Myanmar, Lower Myanmar, Shan Hills, Kachin Hills and Chin Hills. The prominent national leaders who fight against the British imperialism were also appeared there. In Upper Myanmar, the greatest important prominent resistance leaders were mostly the princes of royal blood and the ex-royal officers. Among them, Myinzaing Prince, Saw Yan Naing, Saw Yan Paing, Hteiktin Hmat, Hteiktin Thein, Shwegyobu Prince, Kyimyindaing Prince, and Setkya Prince were royal bloods and prominent leaders. Bo Shwe Yan, Bo Shingyi, Bo Maung Gale, Bo Nga Nyein, Bo Hla U, Singu Myowun Bo Pyan Gyi, U Po Oo, U Tha Gyi, Anaukeindawhmu U Paung, Bo Swe, Bo Ya Nyun, U Ottama, Bo Min Yaung and Bo Hla U were the ex-royal officers. In Lower Myanmar, *Mayanchaung Sayadaw*, Mahn Paw, Bo Mya, and Maung Ni, etc. were the prominent leaders. In the Hilly Regions, namely, Shan Hills, Kachin Hills, and Chin Hills, Prince of Limbin, U Aung Myat, (*Saopha* of Wintho), Sawlapaw, U Po Saw, Bo Swe, and Siyin Chin national leaders, etc. were the greatest prominent leaders during the early anti-colonial movements (1885-1895).

**Keywords:** The falls of Mandalay and its aftermath, resistance in Upper Myanmar, resistance in Lower Myanmar, resistance in Shan Hills, Kachin Hills and Chin Hills

## Introduction

The people of Myanmar had to face with the British imperialism with starting the First Anglo-Myanmar War broke out in 1824 during the reign of King Bagyidaw. Although the First Anglo-Myanmar War was ended in 1826 by the Treaty of *Yandabo*, the anti-imperialist guerrilla wars of the national races were still at many places in Myanmar. In 1852, the Second Anglo-Myanmar War broke out again in the reign of Bagan Min. The British troops fought the ports of Yangon, Mottama, and Patheingyi without declaring war at war. The movements of the anti-British Imperialism were spreading in Lower Myanmar. The most prominent leaders of anti-colonial movements were Bo Gaung Gyi and Bo Gaung Gale and Maing Thaung. The Third Anglo-Myanmar War broke out in 1885 and Myanmar was again defeated. After the annexation of Mandalay Palace and deportation of King Thibaw by the British imperialists, Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy of India, proclaimed the country of Myanmar had been annexed into the British-Indian Empire on 1 January 1886.

## Literature Review

The fall of Mandalay brought about a more favorable military situation for those able and willing to continue the struggle against the British. The armed resistance movements were developed in Upper Myanmar, Lower Myanmar, Shan Hills, Kachin Hills, and Chin Hills. The prominent national patriot leaders have also appeared there.

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### Resistance in Upper Myanmar

Myinzaing Prince was a son of King Mindon and was one of the five sons of Mindon who escaped the massacre of 1879. After the British occupation of Mandalay, he escaped into the hills east of Mandalay and began to harass British outposts near Mandalay. Due to the special suppression of British he moved south to Kyaukse. He contracted fever, and died in August 1886 after a year of relentless struggle against the British. Saw Yan Naing and Saw Yan Paing, sons of Mekkhaya Prince and grandsons of Mindon, started resisting the British from Chaunggywa, Innwa District. Twenty-five of the leaders were sentenced to transportation for life, and Saw Yan Naing was sent away to Rangoon. Saw Yan Paing moved to Hsenwi, the northern Shan States. Hteiktin Hmat and Hteiktin Thein, sons of Kanaung Prince, escaped from Mandalay in early December 1885 and made their way to Shwebo. They captured Shwebo. As the suppression of the British forces they gave up Shwebo. Finally, their movements were dispersed. Hteiktin Thein died in late January 1886. Hteiktin Hmat died of fever in August 1887. Shwegyobu Prince started his activities the British from the southern part of the Chindwin district, however, with increasing British pressure, he moved into the Chin Hills in 1888. Kyimyindaing Prince first became active in Innwa district in early 1886 but he then moved Mahlaing. He fought his last battle at Thayetchan north of Ywangan. Setkya Prince started his activities in Mandalay District in 1887. However, he was forced to withdraw still further east in 1888. But, he was finally forced out and captured by the *Saopha* of Lawksawk and handed over to the British to be executed. In the resistance struggle waged against the invading British, some of the ex-royal officers, local leaders and monks supported the princes. Most notably leaders were Anaukwindawhmu U Paung, U Tha Gyi of Pagyi, Theingon Thugyi, Bo Swe, Bo Ya Nyun, U Ottama, Bo Min Yaung, and Bo Hla U, etc.

### Resistance in Lower Myanmar

The first sign of the resistance in Lower Myanmar was led by *Mayanchaung Sayadaw*. With the increasing suppression of British, *Mayanvhaung Sayadaw* and his band moved into the Taungoo lastly and he was captured in March 1886. He was publicly hanged in front of Kyaito police station to die a martyr's death. A week after the start of *Mayanchaung Sayadaw's* resistance, Bo Mya attacked Kawa and set himself up as a minlaung (pretender). He engaged his resistance activities in the area south of Bago until he was shot and killed in an encounter on the Tandawgyi road. In Patheingyi district, Mahn Paw, a Karen of Sabeyon village, organized the neighboring villages to offer strong resistance against the British. In Thayarwady district, U Thuriya, a monk, organized the villagers in a resistance. In the Hinthada district, two strong resistance groups were active: one led by Maung Ni, a former *thugyi*, and another led by a man who styled himself Shwehlan Bo. A great many of the resistance groups operating in Lower Myanmar were known as the "Twante band," "Paukkhang Band," "Teindaw band," "Gyobingauk band," and "Zigon band," etc. With the increasing suppression of the British, larger groups were dispersed and broken into smaller ones. Others took refuge in the hills.

### Resistances in Shan Hills, Kachin Hills and Chin Hills

As news came of the fall of Mandalay, the deportation of King Thibaw, the confederacy headed by Limbin Prince which had started out to challenge the authority of King Thibaw turned into a resistance movement directed the invading British. The Limbin Confederacy started to move in March 1886. The collapse of all support finally forced Limbin Prince to submit. He left Mongnai in May 1887 and was taken to Calcutta. Stubborn resistance

to the British was also put up by Sawlapaw, Chief of Kantarawaddy (eastern Kayinni). The British authority called on Sawlapaw to surrender before 18 January. But Sawlapaw maintained his pride and refused to appear before the British. Early resistance to the invading British developed in the Mogaung area. This was led by U Po Saw. A week after the arrival of the British force, on 22 January 1888, U Po Saw stole away from Mogaung to organize resistance against the British among the surrounding Kachins. A force of Kachin led by Bo Ti gave full support to U Po Saw. Finally, they were suppressed by the British forces. When the British occupied Mandalay, U Aung Myat, *Saopha* of Wuntho, refused to submit and instead made a number of resistance movements. With the instruction of Kinwun Mingyi U Aung Myat refrained from fighting against the British, finally. In the Chin Hills, in spite of the implementation of the Chin Hills Regulations of 1896, the Thlangtlangs rose into open rebellion and the whole area was subdued only after total disarmament around 1900. The resistance struggle lived on in the memory of the people.

### Purposes of the Study

The overall purposes are to examine the role of Myanmar national leaders in early anti-colonial movements during 1885-1895, and the emergence of armed resistance movements in Upper Myanmar, Lower Myanmar and Hilly Regions including Shan Hills, Kachin Hills and Chin Hills. The specific purposes are:

1. To describe the fall of Mandalay and the deportation of King Thibaw.
2. To illustrate how Myanmar national leaders' resistance in Upper Myanmar.
3. To discuss how Myanmar national leaders' resistance in Lower Myanmar.
4. To express how Myanmar national leaders' resistances in Shan, Kachin, and Chin Hills.

This seminar paper is expecting to have the following outcomes. The focus of this seminar paper is made to know about the History of the Role of National Leaders during the Early Anti-Colonial Movements and their activities. The vision of this seminar paper is aimed to know more about the most famous prominent national leaders who had been against British Imperialism from 1885-1895. The mission of this seminar paper is to share the national spirit: "We Love Country, We Love People, and We Love Religion," for the coming generations in the future.

### Conclusion

The British faced with several armed resistance movements throughout the country except for Rakhine and Tanintharyi Provinces. The national patriots fought with volunteers involved considerably self-sacrifices and offer their lives for their country. They stood for a whole generation of men, fighting with slender material resources, fighting with spirit, fighting to the very last "to uphold the religion, to uphold the national honor, to uphold the country's interest." Although unable to unite under a single leadership, these resistance groups were fairly strong at the start. With the increase of British suppression larger groups were dispersed and broken into smaller ones. Others, hardier, retreated north and took refuge in the hills. One and all of the resistance leaders, no doubt, were patriots who had a strong devotion to their own country. They loved their people, religion, and country. They would drive out the British even at the risks of their lives. Thus these early armed resistance movements would be regarded as an early form of the nationalist movements. It was terminated for the moment but the national awakening of Myanmar people would be restarted since 1900.

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