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Arakan and Bengal : the rise and decline of the Mrauk U kingdom (Burma) from the fifteenth to the seventeeth century AD

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE EXPANSION OF ARAKANESE POWER IN BENGAL (1612-1622)

In June 1610 Jan van Wesick, the Dutch director of the VOC operations on the Coromandel coast, wrote that Man Raja-kri was at war with his brothers, who were supported by the local Portuguese community.[1] The definitive loss of control over Syriam after 1608 and the campaigns of Islam Khan in eastern Bengal may all have been instrumental in bringing about the succession struggle that erupted amongst three sons of Man Raja-kri at the end of his reign. Man Khamaung (1612-1622) would emerge victorious from this conflict and he would wage an almost continuous campaign to expand Arakanese control over south-eastern Bengal. At the same time the Mughals would try to oppose the expansion of Arakanese influence in south-eastern Bengal.

4.1 The Arakanese war of succession and the struggle for Bhalua 1610-1617

At least from 1610 three sons of Man Raja-kri: Man Nyo, Cakrawate and the future Man Khamaung would fight each other in and around Chittagong in a succession struggle for the Arakanese throne that lasted for almost three years.[2] In the previous Chapter it has already been related how after the Dianga massacre of 1607 the Portuguese *chatin* Tibao and a large group of his countrymen had sought refuge with one of the *Bhara Bhuiyas*, the Raja of Bakla. Tibao had subsequently occupied Sandwip as an independent lord. In this way Tibao became a powerful leader in this south-eastern corner of Bhati, as Daud Khan experienced in 1611. In 1610 Man Nyo, who controlled Chittagong on behalf of his father as the *anauk bhuran*, had allied himself with Tibao against his father and the *uparaja* Man Khamaung. From the *Neue*

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[1] NA VOC 1055, n.f. Letter from Jan van Wesick in Mussilipatan dated 15 June 1610. Van Wesick got his information from an ambassador of Man Raja-kri who was on the Coromandel coast in 1610. See also De Jonge, *Opkomst*, pp.2:342-343 Letter from Jacques l'Hermite to the directors, Bantam 10 November 1610 where he writes: '*Aengaende de saecke van Arrecan wort tegenwoordigh by de coopluijden op de custe liggende van cleynder importantie gehouden, overmits de cleyne proffyten die daer vallen connen ende groote oncosten die de Comp. Vooreerst soude moeten dooen om den Coninck weeder in sijn rijck te bevestighen, dewelck tegenwoordigh gheel in troubel is, gelijck Uwe. By de copye van den brieff van van Wesick ten deele sal connen sien, als oock bij het resolutie boeck, dat goetgevodnen hebben die saecke vooreerst laeten vaeren, alsoo daer sonder een groote macht nyet sonders en is uytterechten. De plaetse van Bengala soude myns bedunckens vanmeerder importantie syn. Alsoo men langs Porto Pequeno den handel van Lahor en Agra daer den anil [indigo] valt ende gemaeckt wort soude connen in treyn brenghen ende darenboven vallender veel schoone witte lynwaeten, die in Nederlandt ongelijck dienstigher souden sijn als die van Masulipatnam.*'

[2] Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, pp. 211-216. Leider estimates that the rebellion of Man Raja-kri's sons started at the end of 1609 or early 1610. It is not clear if Van Wesick's observation about the rebellion of Man Raja-kri's brothers in 1610 refers to the same events.

Relation[3] we learn that he did this apparently with the object of installing himself on the throne of Mrauk U with the help of De Brito and Tibao. Man Nyo, who died on Sandwip after being driven out of Chittagong by Man Khamaung, was succeeded as *anauk bhuran* in 1611 by prince Cakrawate. As the new 'king of the west' Cakrawate in turn sent envoys to Islam Khan promising to keep Tibao away from Mughal forces in Bengal and offering to accept Sandwip as a *jagir,* thereby accepting the Mughal emperor as his lord. The Augustinian monk Manrique however suggests there was a good relationship between Tibao and Cakrawate when he tells the story of a marriage alliance between the two families and the conversion to the Catholic faith of a daughter of Cakrawate.[4]

Cakrawate's planned alliance with the Mughals was prevented by Musa Khan, who was still entrenched in the Brahmaputra delta. Musa Khan prevented Cakrawate's passage to Dhaka and the formal submission of the Arakanese prince to Islam Khan. The rebellion of Cakrawate was however to have a serious effect for the Arakanese during the ensuing struggle for Bhalua.[5]

When after his successes against Musa Khan, Islam Khan sent Haji Shamsuddin Baghdadi to occupy Bhalua, Raja Ananta Manik, the ruler of Bhalua, immediately received assistance from Man Raja-kri. The Mughals brought into the field a force of 4,000 cavalry, 3,000 matchlock-men and 50 elephants. Ananta Manik fortified Bhalua and advanced with his army to the Dakatiya canal where he raised a fortress with the object of denying the imperial army to cross the river. This tactic proved successful and Islam Khan was obliged to send several reinforcements to assist Haji Shamsuddin Baghdadi. The Mughals however persuaded the chief minister of Ananta Manik to defect to their side. The offers of help to the imperial troops by Cakrawate and Tibao may or may not have had any effect on the battle. The fact remains that the Arakanese hastily retreated without giving battle, which surprised the author of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*. The Mughal army thus occupied Bhalua without giving battle. Ananta Manik subsequently sought refuge in Arakan with Man Raja-kri. When we look back at the events of the previous year when Man Nyo and Tibao had fought a hard battle for Chittagong with the future Man Khamaung, it is not hard to imagine that with the Arakanese army in Bengal, Cakrawate and Tibao could have staged another rebellion during the king's absence, prompting him to return in haste to his kingdom.

In January 1612 the Arakanese made a first attempt to take control of Bhalua, and they also attacked Sripur.[6] The outcome of this battle is not clear. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* claims the Arakanese were driven out of the area around Sripur, but Mirza Nathan is silent about the

[3] See for a detailed discussion of the text of the *Neue Relation* the previous Chapter.
[4] Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, p.213.
[5] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1: 86-89. Leider quotes the Arakanese 'old chronicle' as reporting that the *anauk bhuran* had sought an alliance with the rulers of Majjhimadesa, central India – ie. the Mughals. Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, p. 211. The attribution of this event to Man Nyo is from Leider.
[6] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp.1:146-147 Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 270.

state of affairs in Bhalua. He does however report that he himself refused to assist the Mughal officers who were overrun by the Arakanese.[7] From an Arakanese perspective, the death of Man Raja-kri in 1612 saw the final stages of the succession war between Man Khamaung and Cakrawate. This internal struggle probably precluded a sustained presence in the area east of the Feni rivers. In Arakan Man Khamaung emerged victorious after his siege of four months to the fort at Chittagong. Cakrawate died before the new king entered the fort.[8] The next year Man Khamaung probably spent on organizing his new government. Little is known about the events taking place that year in Arakan or Bhalua.

4.2 Man Khamaung

From a letter to the VOC dating from 1614 it is however clear that the new king Man Khamaung (1612-1622) laid claim to sovereignty of some parts of south-eastern Bengal. In the first paragraph of the letter Man Khamaung introduces himself as follows:

> This letter is written by king Sultan Husayn Shah[9] known throughout the world for his strength and fame. I am Emperor of the southern lands, that all know to be the most beautiful lands in the world, and rich with precious stones. This land is the first on which the sun shines, clear and pure as gold, in our tongue known as Hange Sawedijn [Hamsawati], known by the rest of the world as Pegu, king of Aracan and a lot of other cities, duke of the country Denij Awedij [Dhanyawati], Dadawed [Dwarawati?], Beijsalij [Vesali?], Rammapour [Ramu?], Mawathin [Meghawati], Rawathin [Rammawati], Chackanna [Cukkara?], Vettipoura [?], prince of the city and land of Satigan [Chittagong] with all the land belonging to it on the side of Bengal, like Syripoura [Sripur], Bachlebaer [Bakla?], and Kijbrajepour [Khizrpur], and Bakaa [Dhaka?]. I am such a powerful king that I am the chief of all kings of the world, lord of the golden chair and of the white elephant, a lord so valiant that he can conquer the whole world in a short while, lord of the golden umbrella, with a golden palace adorned with precious stones as clear as the stars in heaven, a lord who can rule the whole world. [10]

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[7] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp.1:147-149.
[8] Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, pp. 214-216.
[9] The Muslim name for Man Khamaung. Leider, 'These Buddhist kings with Muslim names', p. 211.
[10] '*Desen brieff sy alle de werelt kennelyck van een seer machtigen Coninck wiens faem alle de werelt sy bekent, genaempt Sultaen Ho=Chentja Keyser van het landt gelegen aende suyt syde, dat alle de werelt is kenbaer, daer oock geen schoonder in de werelt is, dat alle edelgesteente geeft,[Ende] is de beste dat de sonne beschijnen mach, soo claer ende suyver als goudt, in onse spraecke gent. HangeSawedijn ende bij de geheele werelt Pegu, Coninck van Aracan ende veel ander plaetsen, hertoch vant lant Denij=awedy, Dadawed, Beijsalij, Rammapour Mawathin Rawathin Chackanna, Vettipoura, prins van de stat ende plaetse genaempt Satigan, dat alle de werelt is bekent, met alle het landt daer onder gelegen, aende syde van Bengale, als Syripoura,*

[Man Khamaung writing to the Dutch governor-general Pieter Both – 1614]

This letter illustrates which areas were considered to belong to Arakan during the early seventeenth century. According to his letter Arakan covered the area north of Pegu and south of Chittagong. Northwest from Chittagong the kingdom's Bengal domains were situated. Interestingly Mughal notions of Bengal in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century excluded just those areas listed here as part of Arakanese Bengal. For Mughal chroniclers Bengal was formed by the area now more or less covered by West Bengal in India. The south-eastern part of Bengal, today mainly in Bangladesh, was named *Bhati*, and was clearly set apart from what the Mughals considered to belong to Bengal.[11] If we discard the claims to Lower Burma, which had formed only a temporary part of the Arakanese kingdom, the letter from Man Khamaung neatly outlines the boundaries of Arakan and its Bengal dominions.

From 1614 to 1616 Man Khamaung embarked on a series of campaigns to conquer the lower reaches of the Bengal delta, west of the Feni rivers. The first step Man Khamaung took was to enter into an alliance with Tibao. The object of this alliance was to drive the Mughals out of the lower reaches of the delta. Bhalua was the first Mughal stronghold that had to be tackled in this respect. Although it is not clear at exactly what time the first attack on Bhalua did take place we do know that the Arakanese king had chosen an opportune moment to attack. Qasim Khan, the new Mughal governor (1614-1617), had on 6 May 1614 just arrived in Dhaka, and his provincial officers all came from their posts to settle their affairs with the new *subahdar*.[12] This was also true of the *faujdar* of Bhalua, Abdul Wahid, who also came to Dhaka. According to the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* the Mughal *faujdar* first received news of the impending attack when he was at Dhaka waiting on Qasim Khan, in which case the Arakanese had made their attack to coincide with the beginning of the monsoon season, at least later than May 1614.[13]

Qasim Khan acted swiftly and had several rivers bridged with cargo boats, so that the army he was collecting could be transported quickly to Bhalua. Abdul Wahid returned to Bhalua and retreated with his retinue to the Dakatia canal fearing he would not be able to withstand the attack by the Arakanese forces. At the Dakatia canal the Arakanese land forces

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Bachlebaer, wel Kijbrajepour wel Bakaa[s?]. Soo machtigen coninck dat ick het hooft ben van alle de coninh.[en] der werelt, heer vanden gouden setel, van den witten Oliphant, die soo stoudtmoedich is, dat hy in corten tyt de geheele werelt bedwingen can ende vande gouden sombrero, met het gouden huys, met sulcke edel gesteenten beseth, so claer als de sterren die aenden hemel staen ende die de geheele werelt regeren can'. NA VOC 1059, fol. 108-109 Letter from Man Khamaung to Pieter Both, n.d. [1614].

[11] Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 211.

[12] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:270-271; 329.

[13] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:329-330.

waited for the arrival of the fleet. Tibao however reneged on his promises to assist Man Khamaung and did not take part in the ensuing battle between the Arakanese and the Mughals.

The Dutch sources, which provide information that can be firmly dated, suggest that Man Khamaung sent his armies to Bhalua in the middle of 1614 and again early in1615. On 12 May 1614 Andreas Crieck left Pulicat with the yacht *Duijfje* to arrive in Arakan on 9 June 1614.[14] On 1 December 1614 Man Khamaung wrote to Pieter Both that his return from Bengal, where he had been betrayed by Tibao, had coincided with the arrival of the yacht *Duijfje*.[15] The Arakanese king explained that notwithstanding the earlier betrayal he would again seek the alliance of the Portuguese to assist him in his wars with the Mughal the following year.[16] Crieck in his letter to Wemmer van Berchem, the Dutch director on the Coromandel coast, explained how the king had wanted to attack Tibao in November 1614 with assistance of the *Duijfje*. The threat of an alliance with the Dutch had coerced Tibao by December 1614 into offering his assistance to Man Khamaung. At the same time Man Khamaung had given Crieck the income of a piece of land, estimated at 1,000 Tanka a year. Crieck had also been provided with an elephant and a golden betel box and was expected to attend the court every two or three days. In return the king expected VOC assistance and about thirty to forty Dutch soldiers.[17] On 12 February 1615 Crieck reported that Man Khamaung and Tibao were again campaigning together in Bengal. At the end of his letter he wrote that just before he despatched his letters to Coromandel a report reached Mrauk U that Tibao had for the second time betrayed Man Khamaung and had captured the Arakanese fleet. Tibao it was feared would now come down the Arakanese coast and attack the capital.[18]

If we accept this sequence of events, the two first attacks of Man Khamaung reported in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* should be dated to 1614 and 1615. It would also suggest that the events as described by Mirza Nathan for these ‘raids’ cannot be accepted at face value. The author of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* himself admits that at the time different accounts of the causes of the Arakanese retreat circulated at the Mughal court.[19]

A reconstruction of the Bhalua campaigns of Man Khamaung would now suggest that Man Khamaung had to abort his attack on eastern Bengal and Bhalua in June 1614 because Tibao had not kept his promises to assist him with his fleet. This would imply that after recapturing Bhalua the Arakanese king decided to return home with his army. The account in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* would support such a view, as it seems unlikely that Qasim Khan

[14] NA VOC, fol. 94 Letter from Criek, dated 11 December 1614.
[15] NA VOC 1059, fol. 109 Letter from Min Khamaung to Pieter Both 1 December 1614.
[16] Ibidem.
[17] NA VOC 1065, fol. 94-100 Crieck to Van Berchem, dated 11 December 1614.
[18] NA VOC 1065, fol. 114-115 Letter from Andreas Crieck in Arakan to Samuel Kindt, dated 12 February 1615. Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:335. Mirza Nathan mentions that Qasim Khan ascribed the victory to his son Shaykh Farid.

would have been able to regroup his forces that were spread all over Bengal, with some already on their way to Assam, to be ready to face the Arakanese at Dakatia. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* in fact provides evidence that Qasim Khan faced several internal rebellions while collecting an army for Bhalua.[20] The description of the first attack of the Arakanese in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* therefore probably describes the events taking place both in 1614 and 1615. This would also explain a Dutch report written shortly after Man Khamaung's return from Bengal in 1614 which clearly states that the Dutch were at that time under the impression that the Arakanese king had recovered Bhalua from the Mughals. Kortenhoef at least reported that Man Khamaung had brought Bhalua under Arakanese control again. On top of this the king himself used 'lord of Bhalua' as one of his titles in his letter to the VOC. [21]

Man Khamaung's return from Bengal in June 1614 coincided with the arrival of the Dutch yacht *Duijfje*[22] from Coromandel. Man Khamaung had wanted to use the yacht immediately to counter Tibao's raids on his territory, but as already four of the original ten Dutchmen aboard had died from sickness, this idea was deemed not feasible.[23] The threat of an Arakanese-Dutch alliance however reportedly persuaded Tibao to re-establish friendly relations with the Arakanese. In December 1614 Tibao sent an important hostage to Chittagong.[24] The account of Bocarro confirms that this hostage was a nephew of Tibao. In the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* on the other hand the identity of the hostage is described as a nephew of the Portuguese admiral Antonio Carvalho, and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* claims that he was taken hostage rather than given as a security for the comportment of the Portuguese troops of the alliance.[25]

Probably early in 1615 Man Khamaung left Arakan with a force consisting of 80,000 matchlockmen, 10,000 Mon fighting with sword and buckler, and 700 elephants. With this force the Arakanese king marched over land towards Bhalua. The fleet, which was consigned to Tibao, consisted of at least 200 Arakanese boats of the types *ghurabs*, *jelias*, *kusas*, *machwas*[26] with 4,000 men on them. All in all the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* estimated that the

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[20] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:330-332.

[21] NA VOC 1059, fol. 107-107v. Sketch of Dianga in Bengal and other places under the government of the Arakanese king (1614) .

[22] The *Duijfje* was built in Amsterdam and in service from 1611 to 1617 when it was lost at Surat. The ship was a small yacht or pinnace of 50 tons, approximately 116 feet long, with a crew of approximately 20 and armed with probably 10 cannon. See www.vocsite.nl for a database of VOC ships.

[23] NA VOC 1065, fol. 109 Letter from Man Khamaung; NA VOC 1065, fol. 94-100 Letter from Andreas Crieck in Arakan to Wemmer van Berchem, dated 11 December 1614. Crieck had departed Choromandel 12 May 1614 to arrive 9 June 1614 in Arakan.

[24] NA VOC 1065, fol. 94-100 Letter from Andreas Crieck from Arakan to Wemmer van Berchem, dated 11 December 1614.

[25] Bocarro, *Decada 13* 444; Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp 1:334 speaks of the most dear relation of Durmish Carbalu.

[26] 'Gouropes or Ghurab or Ghrab, even qrab, a large boat with c. 16 guns and 60 men towed by 4 kosses or kusah' as described by F.J. van der Heiden and W. Kunst, *Vervarelyke schip-breuk van 't oost-indisch jacht ter schelling, onder het landt Bengale;...en voorts in 't velt-leger van den Grooten Mogol, tot in 't koningrijk van Assam landewaerts opgevoert zijn. Beneffens een bondige beschrijving der koningrijken van Arrakan, Bengale,*

Arakanese brought an army of 300,000 in the field. The numbers given for the size of the Arakanese army seem extremely large when compared with the numbers given for Man Raja-kri's army during the siege of Thanlyn in 1607, namely 30,000. Andreas Crieck reported that after the departure of the king and his army 'almost everybody had left the country to follow the king to Bengal', which might lend some credibility to the numbers given by Nathan.[27]

In Bengal Man Khamaung marched unopposed through Noakhali. It is quite possible that the revolt of the Tripura king Shyok Mani (1600?-1615?), who had hitherto been a loyal vassal to the Arakanese king, was dealt with during Man Khamaung's 1615 campaign in Bhalua. The Arakanese chronicle by Sandamala mentions a campaign directed at Udaipur in 1615. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* also hints at disturbances in the Tripura area, as Abdul Wahid recalled his son from an expedition to Tripura in order to help him fight off the attack of the Arakanese on his *faujdari*.[28] The expedition to Tripura would also explain the long interval it took the Arakanese to get to Dakatia after the first news of their appearance had arrived at Dhaka. At some point during this campaign the Arakanese confronted the Mughal forces at the Dakatia river. Tibao again betrayed the Arakanese and at this critical juncture he murdered the Arakanese naval commanders and took control over the fleet. Tibao's Portuguese followers brought the news that the Arakanese were left without naval support directly to the Mughal camp. This encouraged the Mughal army to cross the river Dakatia. The Arakanese, who were still waiting for the arrival of their fleet, were so taken by surprise by the advance of the Mughal army across the river that they had to beat a hasty retreat. Following the alarming news of the loss of their fleet, Man Khamaung decided to march for Arakan. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* claims that the Mughals captured 500 Arakanese soldiers and a large number of elephants, which seems trifling in the light of the total size of the Arakanese forces.[29] Bocarro suspected that the Mughals had paid Tibao to withdraw from the battle.[30] A report dated 1614 from the VOC employee Kortenhoef suggests that Tibao at least had a profitable trade in salt and wood going on with the Mughals in Bengal.[31]

It seems that Tibao had planned his attack on Arakan long beforehand. After the capture of the fleet he immediately put it to use and set sail for the Arakanese coast.[32] The

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Martavan. Tanassery, &c. (Amsterdam,1675) translated into English as M. Glanius trans., *A Relation of an Unfortunate Voyage to the Kingdom of Bengala* (London, 1682) quoted in J.M. Foster, 'Note on Ghargaon, Asam', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 41 (1872), pp. 36-37, 57. Sarkar describes the *ghurab* as a floating battery. Sarkar, 'Assam and the Ahoms in 1660 A.D.', *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* 1 (1915) pp.179-95, 191-192.

[27] NA VOC 1065, fol. 114-115 Letter from Andreas Crieck in Arakan to Samuel Kindt, dated 12 February 1615.

[28] Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, pp. 218-219; Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p. 1 :332.

[29] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:334-335; NA VOC 1059, fol. 108-109 Letter from Man Khamaung 1-12-1614 ; Bocarro, *Decada 13*,pp. 441-444.

[30] Bocarro, *Decada 13*, idem.

[31] NA VOC 1059, fol. 107-107v. Sketch of Dianga in Bengal and other places under the government of the Arakenese king , 1614.

[32] As is confirmed by Guedes, *Interferência e Integração* 163-169.

fortresses of Chittagong, Ramu and at the Mayu river were the first to suffer his attacks.[33] Emboldened by his successful attacks he even sailed into the Kaladan estuary where he burned a large number of foreign merchantmen and the king's yacht, a ship of extraordinary size and remarkable beauty.[34] It seems that Man Khamaung arrived with his land forces at a time when Tibao was still carrying on his depredations in the Kaladan and Mayu river delta's. The treacherous acts of Tibao so enraged the Arakanese king that he impaled Tibao's nephew on a stake at a high place overlooking the Kaladan so that his uncle might see him when he left the river.[35]

The reports from the factors in Arakan had persuaded the Dutch directors on the Coromandel coast that it was now opportune to allow the yacht *Duijfe* to participate in an eventual Portuguese-Arakanese conflict. The commander of the yacht, Jan Gaeff, was instructed not only to discover the trading possibilities in Bengal, but also to harm in everyway he could any Portuguese interests he encountered. Andreas Crieck received similar instructions as to allow the yacht and its 21 men personnel to participate in a possible Arakanese-Portuguese conflict.[36]

The Arakanese king hoped to use the newly arrived VOC employees in the same way as he and his predecessors had so successfully done with generations of Portuguese freebooters. This was no doubt done with the object of enlisting their military skills in his battle against Tibao. In 1615 the Arakanese would finally be able to end Portuguese ambitions to sovereignty in south-eastern Bengal in a series of naval battles on the Kaladan and Sandwip.

4.3 The demise of Portuguese power in Arakan and the battle of Urittaung 1615

The last battle of the Portuguese *chatins* in Bengal against Arakanese royal power in 1615 was certainly influenced by he arrival of the Dutch company in Arakan. The VOC was not just a passer by in the naval battles between the Portuguese and the Arakanese. The first contacts between the Dutch and the Arakanese took place in 1608 when the Dutch arrived in Arakan to investigate trading possibilities in the Bay of Bengal.[37] They arrived in Arakan just after Man Raja-kri had returned from his expedition to Lower Burma against Filipe de Brito.

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[33] Bocarro, *Decada 13*, p. 443.
[34] This would have taken place after 12 February 1615 when Crieck reported news had just reached Mrauk U of the loss of the fleet in Bengal. [34] NA VOC 1065, fol. 114-115 Letter from Andreas Crieck in Arakan to Samuel Kindt, dated 12 February 1615
[35] Bocarro, *Decada 13*, p. 443.
[36] NA VOC 1059, fol. 57-47v. Instructions for Jan Gaeff chief merchant on the yacht *Duijfe* with sailing orders for Arakan and Bengal, dated 5 May 1615 and NA VOC 1059, fol. 58-59 Instructions for Andreas Crieck chief merchant at the Arakan factory.
[37] Report from Arakan, dated Arakan 6-4-1608 by Pieter Willemsz. Elbing, see also his report on trade in the Bay of Bengal and Arakan, Masulipatnam 25-5-1608, VOC 1055 n.f; Another copy VOC 4778 n.f. The latter is printed in De Jonge, *Opkomst*, pp. 3:287-291.

The Arakanese king seemed determined to find new allies in his battle with the Portuguese. The king was faced not only with a hostile Portuguese community on his eastern, but also on his western flank. Here Sebastião Gonçalves Tibao was well under way in becoming a potentially bigger embarrassment for the Arakanese king than de Brito already was.[38] Man Raja-kri was well aware of Dutch successes in their battles with the Portuguese and solicited their assistance in his wars with the Portuguese.[39] After the Arakanese king had sent an embassy to the Dutch in Masulipatnam in 1610 to enquire whether any support was still forthcoming, it was decided by the Dutch Company to sent Jacob Dirksz. Kortenhoef to Arakan, not with any definite promises towards military cooperation but to inform the Arakanese of the possibilities and limitations of any cooperation. The Dutch certainly ruled out any assistance in the event Man Raja-kri would undertake a third attempt to oust Filipe de Brito from Syriam.[40] Kortenhoef was followed by several other employees, not because the trade with Arakan was extremely profitable, but mainly to keep the Company informed about events in the area and to provide a base for VOC ships cruising for Portuguese prizes.[41] To understand this situation we have to take into consideration that at this moment trade meant also war for the VOC; moreover, it was reckoned that with a few good prizes the Company could more than defray its operating costs in the Bay of Bengal area.[42]

In 1615 a large fleet left Goa to assist Tibao in his conflict with Man Khamaung. The importance of the ensuing naval battles between the Portuguese on the one hand and the Arakanese and the Dutch on the other have hitherto been either misinterpreted or not well understood.[43] Arthur Phayre in his *History of Burma* comments on this event as 'There happened to be lying there some Dutch vessels, and they joined the Arakanese flotilla to resist the [Portuguese] attack'.[44] Also in G.E. Harvey's *History of Burma* and in Hall's *History of*

[38] Ibidem and cf. Hall *A History*, pp. 391-392 and Charney, 'Crisis and reformation', pp.194-198.
[39] Letter from Man Raja-kri to the Prince of Orange [1608], three copies in VOC 4778 n.f; ARA Aanwinsten 490, Extracts from Collection Gijsels no. 495, fol. 43 gives a different translation of what appears to be the same letter. The former was printed in De Jonge, *Opkomst*, pp. 3:291-292, while the latter was printed in *Historisch verhaal van het begin, den voortgang en den tegenwoordigen staat des koophandels van de Generale Nederlandsche geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie* 2 vols. (Arnhem, 1768-1772), p. 1:509.
[40] Report from Jan Wesick, Masulipatnam 15-6-1610 VOC 1055 n.f. and Instruction for Kortenhoef [c. June] 1610 VOC 1055 n.f.
[41] Jan Pietersz. Coen to Hans de Haze 30-11-1617. Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, p. 2:296.
[42] *Generale Missive* dated 27-1-1625 in W.Ph. Coolhaas ed., *Generale missiven van gouverneurs-generaal en raden aan Heren XVII der Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* 11 vols. (The Hague, 1960-2004), pp 1:154-159. For a discussion on the impact of Dutch 'agression' on Portuguese shipping see Van Veen, *Decay or defeat?*, pp. 78-81.
[43] The following description of the naval battles between the Portuguese, Arakanese and Dutch is based on N. MacLeod, *De Oost-Indische Compagnie als zeemogendheid in Azië 1602-1650* 3 vols. (Rijswijk, 1927), S. Monteiro, *Batalhas e Combates da Marinha Portuguesa 1580-1668* 8 vols. (Lisbon, 1993-1995) and archival material from the VOC archive.
[44] A.P. Phayre, *History of Burma. Including Burma proper, Pegu, Taungu, Tenasserim and Arakan. From the earliest time to the end of the first war with British India* 2nd. edition (London, 1967), p. 176.

Southeast Asia it has remained an open question just why the Dutch ships had arrived in Arakan at such a critical juncture.[45] The accounts as presented by these authors might lead one to believe that the sudden arrival of the Dutch on the scene came as much as a surprise to the Arakanese as to the Portuguese. There are however important considerations that contradict this view.

It has to be remembered that one of the objectives of the Portuguese expedition was to plunder Mrauk U and to keep the Dutch East India Company out of the coastal waters of Lower Burma. The Portuguese were well aware of the presence of Dutch ships in Arakan and they were cautious about the threat they posed to them. The Portuguese were in fact actively seeking a naval engagement in 1615.[46] Secondly, as we have seen, the Dutch presence in Arakan was not only aimed at commerce but was also meant to help secure access to the trade of the Bay of Bengal, if necessary by using force against their European opponents. The Dutch ships in Arakan had in fact permission to assist the Arakanese in their conflict with the Portuguese.[47] And thirdly, the Arakanese not only expected an attack from Tibao, but they had even requested and obtained Dutch support for an offensive action against Tibao.[48]

The reasons for the *Estado da Índia* to support Tibao seem on the other hand to have also been somewhat personal, for the *viso-rey* Dom Hieronymo de Azevedo hoped to obtain considerable personal gains from the treasury he expected to find in Mrauk U.[49] In any case the *viso-rey* had asked Filipe II to bestow upon Tibao the Habit of Christ in lieu of the service he had rendered the *Estado da Índia* and early in 1615 he received confirmation that the king had bestowed this honour on Tibao.[50]

On 3 October 1615 the Portuguese fleet entered the mouth of the Kaladan river. The fleet consisted of some 20 frigates manned with 700 men. [51] Originally the fleet led by Dom Francisco de Menezes should have united with Gonçalves Tibao's forces before attacking Arakan. At the last moment however the Viso-Rey Dom Jerónimo de Azevedo decided the fleet should not unite with Tibao for the attack on Mrauk U. It seems that the advantages of a surprise attack and the prospect of a large and undivided booty were Dom Jerónimo's main considerations.[52] Manuel Borges Corte-Real headed an abortive reconnoitring-party that was

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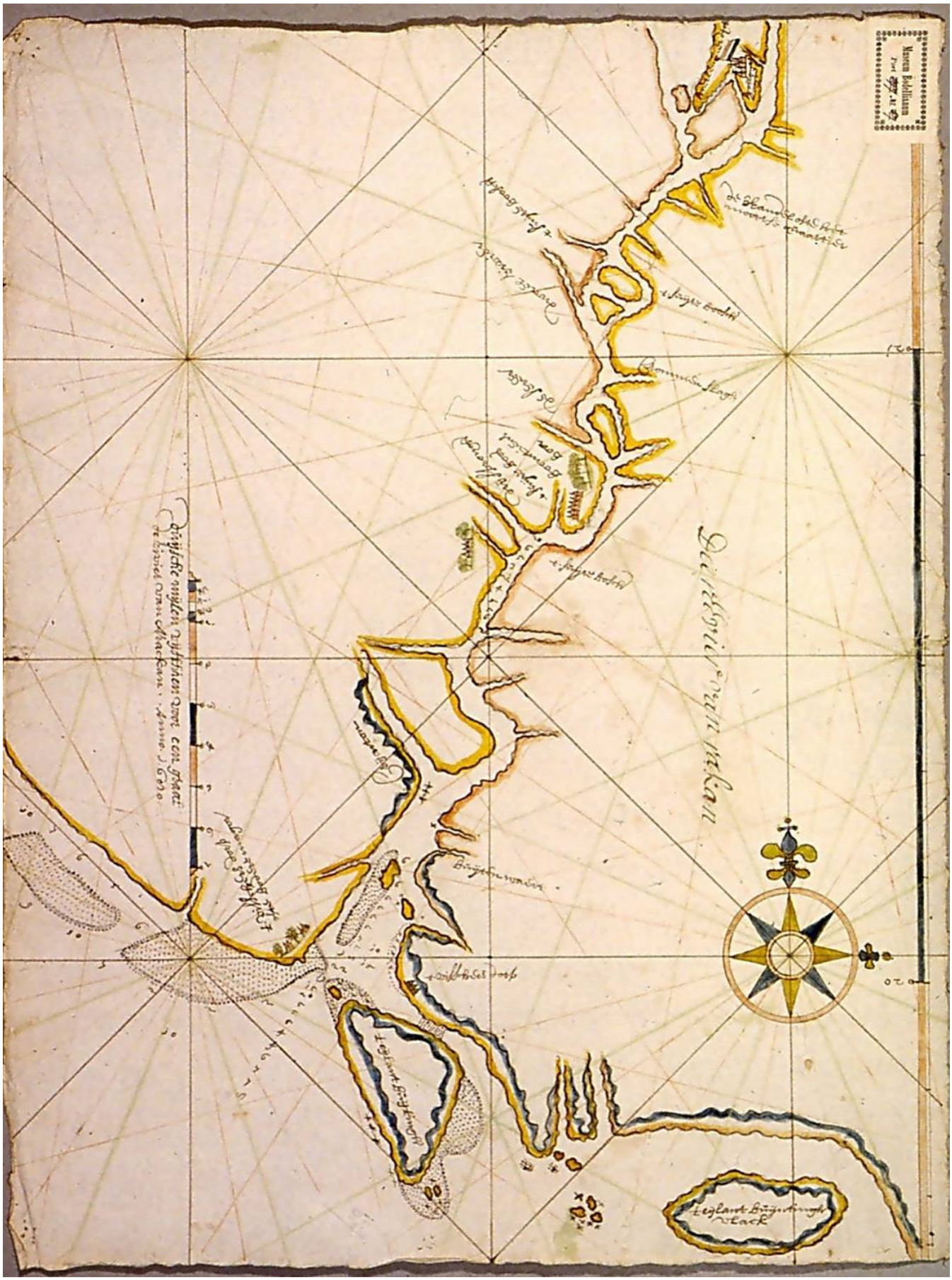
[45] G.E. Harvey, *History of Burma from the Earliest Times to 10 March 1824* (London ,1967), p. 142; Hall, *A History*, pp. 392-393.
[46] Letter from king Filipe II to the *viso-rey* Lourenço de Tavora d.d. 20 February 1610 in De Bulhão Pato, *Documentos Remittidos da India*, pp 2:317-358; Guedes, *Interferência e Integração* , pp. 164-169; Monteiro, *Batalhas e Combates da Marinha Portuguesa*, p. 5:183.
[47] Instruction for Jan Gaeff, dated Masulipatnam 5 May 1615. NA VOC 1059, fol. 57 and 57v.
[48] Letter from Man Khamaung to Pieter Both [1614] NA VOC 1059, fol. 108-109; Report from Jan Gaeff NA VOC 1065, fol. 105 and MacLeod, *De Oost-Indische Compagnie als zeemogendheid*, pp.1:215-220.
[49] Guedes, *Interferência e Integração*, p. 164.
[50] Letter from the king dated 21 February 1615 in De Bulhão Pato, *Documentos Remittidos da India*, pp 3:271.
[51] MacLeod, *De Oost-Indische Compagnie als zeemogendheid*, p.218; Monteiro, *Batalhas e Combates da Marinha Portuguesa* ,p. 5:183.
[52] Monteiro, *Batalhas e Combates da Marinha Portuguesa*, p.5:183-185 and Guedes, *Interferência e integração*, pp. 164-165.

driven off the river by a superior Arakanese force. Francisco de Menezes now waited for nearly two weeks before on 15 October he finally launched a full scale attack.[53] Having left the Arakanese time to prepare for battle the Portuguese commander had lost the element of surprise and was driven off the river by the Arakanese, assisted by the Dutch yacht.[54]

Only after having being defeated did the Portuguese commander decide to set sail to unite with Tibao's forces. The combined fleet of Tibao and De Menezes now planned a second attack on Mrauk U. This attack came on 18 November and took place at Urittaung, when the combined Portuguese forces appeared on the Kaladan river once again. This time the Arakanese were even better prepared. They had constructed six batteries on the eastern bank of the river and in front of these batteries had arranged their ships in a line with their bows facing the river, the whole set-up surrounded by a stockade.[55] The Dutch yacht and the larger Arakanese ships were moored with their broadsides facing the river. After a heavy cannonade from both sides the Arakanese broke the line of the Portuguese and chased them with the tide from the river.[56]

[53] Manuel Borges Corte-Real headed an abortive reconnoitring-party that was driven of the river by a superior Arakanese force Guedes, *Interferência e Integração*, p. 165.
[54] The description in Monteiro, *Batalhas e Combates da Marinha Portuguesa*, pp. 5:183-193 'Perda do Domínio do Mar' gives the most detailed description of these events.
[55] This closely resembles the description of Arakanese tactics in river warfare as discussed in the previous Chapter.
[56] Monteiro, *Batalhas e Combates da Marinha Portuguesa*, pp. 5:183-193.



[VOC map of the Kaladan river from its mouth to the Dutch factory just below Mrauk U. Urittaung is mentioned as 'Orijonton' and situated on the west bank of the river with three little crosses indicating the reefs in front of the hill on which its famous stupa stands – *Dee reevier van Rakan Anno 1680*. Leiden University Library. Collectie Bodel Nijenhuis COLLBN 006-15-013.]

Immediately following this victory Man Khamaung's forces were attacked on the island of Cheduba by the Burmese king Anaukpetlun, this encounter ended in a stand-off and the Burmese were forced to retreat.[57] The attack on Arakan by Anaukpetlun fits in with Burmese military policy after the fall of De Brito in 1613 when the Burmese set out to regain control over Lower Burma. Earlier in 1614 Anaukpetlun had demanded that the Arakanese should return the celebrated white elephant that had been captured after the siege of Pegu in 1599. The refusal to do so may have presented the Burmese *cakravartin* king with a *casus belli*.[58] The failure of the Burmese attack on Arakan allowed Man Khamaung to invite the Dutch to join him in an attack on what was left of Tibao's forces on Sandwip. This attack took place in January 1616. The Allies were once more successful and after a two day battle Tibao was driven off the island and was never heard of again.[59]

The Portuguese that stayed would operate under strong control from Mrauk U. The earlier peace treaties between Goa and Mrauk U dating from the reign of the *Viso-Rey* Aires de Saldanha were followed after the war in 1617 by a general peace between Arakan and Goa. As a result of this treaty the Arakanese king asked for a Catholic priest to be sent to Mrauk U for the 2,300 Christians that still remained in his country.[60] In 1620 the Arakanese finally made a treaty with the *Estado da Índia* in which they promised not to allow the Dutch or English entry in their kingdom.[61] In 1616 the Arakanese had a firm grip on south-eastern Bengal. They controlled the citadel of Chittagong and were masters over Sandwip. This situation would last well into the seventeenth century. Meanwhile the Mughals were gradually expanding their hold over western Bengal in a longstanding war with the local zamindars.

After the eviction of Tibao from Sandwip according to Jan Gaeff Man Khamaung received an embassy from the Mughals.[62] It is not clear what the objective or the outcome of this embassy was. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* does not mention the embassy. The arrival of the

[57]On the basis of U Kala, Charney in 'Crisis and reformation in a maritime kingdom of Southeast Asia', p. 198, mentions a Burmese advance not further than Sandoway.
[58] NA VOC 1057, fol. 127-140 Letter from Wemmer van Berchem to Pieter Both in Batavia, dated Masulipatnam 16 August 1614, fol. 129v-130.
[59]MacLeod *De Oost-Indische Compagnie als zeemogendheid*, pp. 1:215-220 and De Bulhão Pato, *Documentos Remittidos da India*, p 4:140. Hall erroneously gave the date as 1617, 'Studies in Dutch relations with Arakan', p. 3.
[60]Josson, *La mission du Bengal Occidental*, p. 68.
[61]E. van Veen, *Decay or Defeat?*, p. 209.
[62] NA VOC 1061, fol. 171r Letter from Jan Gaeff in Masulipatnam to Samuel Kint, dated 27 April1616.

ambassador did in any case not prevent the Arakanese king to push his troops further into the Bengal delta. Although Man Khamaung had asked for their assistance in his Bengal campaign the Dutch at this point left for Coromandel again. Crieck wrote to his superiors that on 9 January 1616 the yacht *Duijfje* under the command of Jan Gaeff had sailed with the Arakanese fleet from Urittaung to Bengal.[63] Jan Gaeff, after his return from Arakan, described how the king in 1616 had succeeded in ousting Tibao from Sandwip, removing a large part of the island's population to Dianga. Jan Gaeff had returned to Coromandel and had been unable to proceed to Bengal in 1616 because of the onset of the monsoon.[64] Hans de Haze reported in June 1616 from Masulipatnam that the yacht *Duijfje* arrived in Coromandel badly battered by the monsoon with only one rope, but with rubies and gold worth approximately 10,000 Tanka and a Portuguese prize[65] estimated with its cargo at 6,000 Tanka. These were not the profits of trade but the spoils of war. The *Duijfje* returned with her cargo unsold.[66] Because of the incessant warfare in this corner of Bengal trade had come to a complete standstill.[67] The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* provides evidence that Man Khamaung did not stop at Sandwip. According to the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* the Arakanese king attacked again after he had 'finished an engagement with a great enemy of his belonging to a tribe called Baharma who lived on the other side of Rakhang'.[68] According to Dutch sources the Avan king had invaded Arakan early in 1616. Jan Gaeff reported on 27 April 1616 that on 10 January 1616 a battle near Cheduba took place between the Arakanese and Avan king.[69] Although the Arakanese chronicles are silent about the war with Ava, U Kala mentions the 1616 invasion of Anaukpetlun.[70] Dutch sources suggest that a state of war between Arakan and Ava had existed from at least 1614.[71] The evidence from the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* combined with the letters from Jan Gaeff suggests that Man Khamaung did indeed proceed from Sandwip to Bhalua

[63] NA VOC 1062, fol. 75. Letter from Andreas Crieck from Arakan to Samuel Kindt at Masulipatnam, dated 9 February 1616 [Missive van Andreas Crieck uijt Arracan aen Samuel Kindt tot Masulipatnam in dato 9 februari 1616]..

[64] NA VOC 1065, fol. 105-105v. Letter from Jan Gaeff on board the ship Goes at the Coromandel coast to the Amsterdam chamber, dated 1 June 1617 [Originele missive van Jan Gaeff ujit 't schip Goes op de custe van Chormandel aen de camer Amsterdam in dato 1 juni 1617].

[65] NA VOC 11514 nr. 81 Accounts of transactions regarding prizes between the VOC and the Admiralty. The Portuguese ship is recorded to have had on board rice, butter, red yarn, opium, *larijns* (coins).

[66] Letter from Hans de Haze in Masulipatnam to J.P. Coen dated 5 June 1616, printed in *JP Coen bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrij*, pp. 2:100-101.

[67] Jan Gaeff reported that the state of war in Bengal had destroyed all the commerce: *'De oorloochs haen heeft in die quartieren soo geweldigh gecrait dat geen coopman conde vernemen. En tot leetwesen ons cleijn penninck niet kunnen besteden.'* NA VOC 1061, fol. 171r Letter from Jan Gaeff to Samuel Kint from Masulipatnam d.d. 27-4-1616 and Letter from Hans de Haze in Masulipatnam to J.P. Coen dated 5 June 1616, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf*, pp. 2:100-101

[68] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p. 1:383.

[69] NA VOC 1061, fol. 171r Letter from Jan Gaeff to Samuel Kint from Masulipatnam d.d. 27-4-1616.

[70] Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, p. 223

[71] NA VOC 1065, fol. 94-95 Letter from Andreas Crieck in Arakan tot the director Wemmer van Berchem dated 11 December 1614 and NA VOC 1062, fol. 37v. Letter from Samuel Kindt from Masulitpatnam to the Directors in Rotterdam dated 12 June 1615.

around February 1616. The Mughal governor of Bhalua, Sarhad Khan, abandoned Bhalua without a fight, moved behind the relative security of the Dakatia river and asked Qasim Khan for help. Qasim Khan now constructed with his boats a bridge over the rivers near Khizrpur and sent Abdu'n-N'abi with 2,000 horsemen, 3,000 musketeers, 700 war-boats and 100 elephants to aid Sarhad Khan. Faced with this new force the Arakanese king was forced to return to Arakan, but during his retreat a large part of his army became trapped in a swamp. In the ensuing battle the Arakanese lost about 500 men. Man Khamaung was only allowed to return to Arakan after leaving the soldiers who were trapped in the swamp as war captives in the hands of Sarhad Khan. Mirza Nathan in his account of the events severely censured Sarhad Khan for allowing the Arakanese king to escape.[72]. Mughal reports on the 'defeat' of Man Khamaung in Bhalua should be used with caution as we have seen earlier that the account of Nathan is prone to embellishments with regards to Mughal-Arakanese battles. Although throughout the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* Arakanese kings can be seen advancing ever further into Bengal, Mirza Nathan always ends his accounts of Mughal-Arakanese battles by claiming that the rebellious *Maghs* were defeated.[73] In 1615 and 1616 the Arakanese thus confirmed their hold over south-eastern Bengal with the removal of Tibao from Sandwip and the attack on Mughal positions in Bhalua.

4.4 First Mughal invasion of Arakan

Early in 1617 Qasim Khan decided to attack Arakan.[74] The threat the Arakanese posed to Mughal control in Bengal might have been the reason behind this attack, but the motives are not clear. From Dhaka Qasim Khan marched to Khizrpur, where he was joined by several of his officers. The river Lakhiya was crossed at Bandar, and from there the army took several days to reach Bhalua. From Bhalua Abdu'n-N'abi was sent ahead as commander of the vanguard with 5,000 horsemen, 5,000 matchlockmen, 200 elephants, and 1,000 boats. Qasim Khan with the rest of the army followed in the rear and encamped at the river Feni.

From the Feni there are two possible routes to Chittagong. Crossing into Tripura territory one could try to enter the broad plain west of the Chittagong Hills. This plain rises in the west to a final chain of low coastal hills, mostly below 200 meters, that attain a maximum

[72] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:383-387.
[73] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, vide in voice Arakan.
[74] J. Sarkar has dated the invasion to 1616. This seems improbable as in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* the invasion of Arakan immediately follows the disastrous Assam campaign (1615-1616) and is followed by Qasim Khan's removal as governor of Bengal in 1617. This also rules out 1619 which is given as the date of Abdu'n-N'abi's invasion by Manrique. As Sarkar also dates Min Khamaung's entrapment in the Bhulua swamp to early 1616, which date, as was argued earlier is confirmed by the letters of Jan Gaeff and Burmese sources, it seems probable that the invasion of Arakan should have taken place in 1617 and not in 1616 or 1619. J. Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. l 292-298 and Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 1:383-387, 404-408, and 419-420; Manrique, *Itinerario*, pp.1:146-147; 285.

elevation of 350 meters. west of these hills is a narrow, wet coastal plain with the main road skirting the low hills. It is this road the Mughals chose for their attack on Chittagong.

The Arakanese did not wait for the Mughal army to reach the heavily fortified city of Chittagong. Man Khamaung sent his Ko-ran-krì, with according to Nathan, 100,000 infantry, 1,000 war-boats, and 400 elephants to Kathgar, a village 20 miles north-west of Chittagong near Sitakunda. At Kathgar the Arakanese constructed a new and strong fort. The Kathgar fort commanded the route the Mughal army had to take to get to Chittagong. Man Khamaung himself led an army of, according to Mughal sources: 10,000 horsemen, 300,000 infantry, and innumerable boats and elephants, which were all meant for the protection of Chittagong. The Mughal general Abdu'n-N'abi now moved fast to prevent the Arakanese to complete their defences at Kathgar, and with the objective of making a surprise attack on Chittagong before Man Khamaung could arrive with his army. Sarhad Khan and Shaykh Kamal reached Kathgar first because the *faujdar* of Bhalua apparently had a better knowledge of the roads in Chittagong. Aiming for a quick success they immediately attacked the fortress, which was still under construction. The Mughals were however unable to take the Arakanese fort by surprise and a siege followed. Mughal forces were now separated, with the main body of the army still with Qasim Khan's at the frontier, near the Feni river, and Abdu'n-N'abi at Kathgar. The Arakanese Ko-ran-kri now had a stockade made between the main Mughal camp at the river Feni and the besieged fort at Kathgar. In this way the Arakanese effectively blockaded their besiegers and as a result no food or supplies reached the Mughals at Kathgar. With the approach of the monsoon the Mughals officers at Kathgar feared that they would be trapped in hostile territory during the rains, without any prospects of new supplies. Sarhad Khan and Shaykh Kamal who were in charge of supplying the Mughals at the siege were unable to break through the Arakanese stockades. As a consequence the siege was lifted and the Mughal army took flight and escaped to Bhalua, having to destroy their cannon and powder. The Arakanese had effectively obstructed Mughal logistics and so the first Mughal invasion of Chittagong ended in failure. It seems that the road to Chittagong on the wet coastal plains west of the mountains could not be used by an invading army that did not control the waterways as well. Without maritime superiority supply lines were too vulnerable to enemy attack on this road. The expedition to Chittagong, which reportedly cost the Mughal government 700,000 Rupees, and the earlier failure of the Assam expedition meant the end of Qasim Khan's period as governor of Bengal. In November 1617 the new governor Ibrahim Khan Fath-i Jang took charge at Dhaka.[75]

The new *subahdar* embarked on a reconciliatory policy with regard to the former leaders of the *Bhara Bhuiya* coalition. Ibrahim Khan restored people like Musa Khan and Raja

[75] Sarkar, *History* of Bengal, p. 298.

Pratapaditya to their former possessions and incorporated them into the imperial fold. This policy soon proved successful and Musa Khan for instance provided invaluable assistance in the first major operation of the Khan, the conquest of Tripura in 1618. The conquest of Tripura was probably meant as a first step towards the conquest of Arakan. [76]

4.5 Man Khamaung attacks Bhati

In July 1618 the VOC director on the Coromandel coast decided to send out two frigates with 300 men on board from Pulicat to attack Portuguese shipping in the Bay of Bengal. Their sailing orders directed them to the Burmese, Arakanese and Bengal coasts. They were to anchor in the Kaladan to pick up the Dutch merchant Van der Meer from Mrauk U, as the VOC at that moment did not want to continue their presence in Arakan.[77] Van der Meer however was unwilling or unable to leave Arakan, and so in April 1619 two *galjoten, Jager* and *Haas*, on 15 April 1619 were sent from Masulipatnam to Arakan with the same orders. [78] The *Jager* arrived in Arakan long before the *Haas*.[79] The Arakanese king asked the captain of the *Jager* to accompany him to Bengal to fight the Mughal. After being paid 1,000 Tanka the ships company consented, but later ran away, this time with Van der Meer on board. They left the merchant Pieter Reijersz. Crook in Arakan. Crook was of course detained by the king, as was the *Haas* when it called into port. The *Haas* was made to take the place of the *Jager* in the king's armada and was reported to be still fighting in the king's service in Bengal in September 1619.[80]

From these sources it is clear that Man Khamaung at least in 1619, and probably also in 1618 continued his campaigns aimed at Bengal perhaps strengthened by the failure of the Mughal expedition to Chittagong in 1617. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* interestingly does not record any conflict with the Arakanese between 1617 and 1619. The absence of comments from Nathan in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* about Arakanese inroads in Bengal could be explained by the author's campaigns on the Assam frontier during this period. [81]

In 1620 Man Khamaung appeared with his fleet before the island of Baghchar near

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[76] Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 300-302

[77] NA VOC 1068, folia 331-336 Missive van Hans de Haze uit Masulipatnam aan Jan Pietersz.Coen, dated 1 July 1618 f. 333. Van der Meer was left behind as VOC representative by Kortenhoef on 17 February 1616 at Dianga. NA VOC 1061, fol. 192.

[78] Also described as *yachts or frigates* . These must have been ships drawing little water equipped with oars. NA VOC 1069 452-457 Letter from Hans de Haze to Jan Pietersz. Coen from Masulipatnam, dated 21 June 1619.

[79] The captain of the *Haas* was killed in a fight with natives on the Andaman islands. Letter from Hans de Haze to Coen, dated Masulipatnam 21 June 1619, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn* bedrijf, pp. 7:422-423.

[80] Letter from Andries Soury to Coen, dated Visagapatam 16 September 1619, Colenbrander, *Coen. Bescheiden omtrent zijn* bedrijf, pp. 7:470.

[81] Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, p. 302.

Dhaka apparently with the intention to attack the Mughal capital.[82] As the author of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* was at that time near Dhaka this time an account of the confrontation between the Arakanese and the Mughals has survived.

The Arakanese king had brought 700 *ghurabs*, and 4,000 *jaliya* boats into the river Meghna. The attack on Dhaka surprised the Mughals so much that the governor Ibrahim Khan only had 30 boats at his disposal when he heard of the attack. But within a few days the Mughal fleet grew to a force consisting of 5,000 boats. The speedy built-up of the Mughal fleet resulted in a stalemate. The Arakanese as a result probably extended their control over the area southeast of Dhaka while retracing their steps to Arakan. Ibrahim Khan followed them at a distance as far as Bhalua, strengthening the Mughal *thanas* that lay between Dhaka and Bhalua. All the Mughal officers however returned to Dhaka afterwards. The Arakanese left a fleet of 2,000 *jaliya* at the frontier which meant that from a Mughal perspective Bhalua was not deemed safe.[83] Man Khamaung had succeeded in extending Arakanese control over south-eastern Bengal beyond the areas brought under control by his predecessors.

The Portuguese from Goa meanwhile had tried to establish friendly relations with Arakan. In 1617 Dom João Coutinho sent an embassy to Arakan, which resulted in an Arakanese embassy to Goa in 1619 and a peace accord in 1620. According to Leider, the Arakanese were willing to negotiate with the Portuguese because they were well aware that at the same time Goa conducted negotiations with Ava, prompting Arakanese fears of a Portuguese-Burmese alliance. On the one hand the Portuguese from Goa were desperate for a local ally against the growing power of the Dutch VOC in Asia. On the other hand the events of 1615-1616 had clearly brought home to the Arakanese the threat of Portuguese and Burmese invasions. The Arakanese could use the assistance of the Portuguese to secure their borders with the Mughals. A peace with Goa was perhaps understood by Man Khamaung as an extra means to secure the help of the Portuguese renegades in south-eastern Bengal. Leider has suggested that the 1620 agreement between the Portuguese and Arakan should be seen in the light of the attempted invasion of Arakan by Ibrahim Khan Fath-i Jang in c. March 1621.[84] In 1623 however the VOC reported that the Arakanese still, or again, had to fend off Portuguese from Goa and Cochin with ships blockading the Arakanese coast.[85]

[82] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 2:629-630.
[83] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 2:630-631.
[84] Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, pp. 226-229.
[85] NA VOC 1083.

4.6 Second Mughal invasion of Arakan

The conquest of Tripura had opened another possible road to Chittagong for the Mughal army. In 1621 according to Mirza Nathan Tripura chieftains offered the Mughal governor of Udaipur their help in a second invasion of Chittagong.[86] This time the Mughal forces would try to make their way from the Feni rivers to the broad plain west of the Chittagong Hills. If they could cross the hilly jungles on the Chittagong-Tripura border the road to Chittagong would be open. The *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah* of Shihab ud-Din Talish describes how the Mughals for over two years carefully prepared the attack. Ibrahim Khan, perhaps with the main reasons of the failure of the last venture into Chittagong in his mind, started stacking provisions for the army in Bhalua. He took charge of the expedition himself and with a force of 2,000 war-boats, 40,000 cavalry and infantry, 1,000 elephants and large equipments of war set out to attack the fortress of Chittagong. Moving into the hilly jungle area on the Chittagong border the Mughals soon had to leave their boats behind and not much later their cavalry could not proceed any further. The huge Mughal army had become stuck in the jungles of the Chittagong hills. Even the elephants could only proceed with great difficulty. The Tripura guides apparently had a different concept of an army marching into battle than their Mughal lords. The Khan had finally to admit defeat without giving battle. Food eventually became scarce and the prices of oil, rice and poppy-seed rose sharply. The army had to return home. Mirza Nathan in the end concluded that this jungly route was 'impassable even for an ant'.[87] Although Mughal supply lines this time did not come under attack from the Arakanese, the logistics of warfare in southeastern Bengal and Chittagong proved to be too difficult a task for Ibrahim Khan to solve.[88] The dense jungles of the Chittagong hills prevented a steady flow of food and other supplies to be brought to the main body of the army. No other Mughal army after 1621 would attempt an invasion of Chittagong via this arduous route.[89]

4.7 Man Khamaung attacks Jessore

After this second failed attempt at an invasion of Chittagong by the Mughals the Arakanese attacked Mughal territory as far as Jessore.[90] The Mughal army was subsequently unable to counter Arakanese progress in Bengal effectively. The Arakanese campaign in Bengal was

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[86] Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 303-304. Manrique dates this invasion of Ibrahim Khan to 1623. This seems improbable as at that time the *subahdar* was busy fighting the rebellious prince Shah Jahan (vide infra) Manrique, *Itinerario*, pp. 1:146-147, 285.

[87] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 2:632-633. Talish, *Fatiyyah-i-ibriyyah*, fol. 166a about sixty years later wrongly assumes that the invasion was a success.

[88] Arakanese chronicles do not even mention this attempted invasion. Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, p. 230.

[89] The two routes from Bhalua to Chittagong were also recognized by Manrique.Although Manrique wrongly attributes the land route to Qasim Khan and Abdu'n-N'abi' and the coastal route to Ibrahim Khan. Manrique, *Itinerario*, pp. 1:146-147, 285.

[90] Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 304-205.

probably aided by the fact that in 1621 Bahadur Khan, the *zamindar* of Hijli, openly revolted against Ibrahim Khan. From the report of Mirza Nathan in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* an interesting picture appears with regard to the extent to which the Mughals were able to control the lower reaches of the Ganges delta around Jessore. It was reported that on a daily basis the Arakanese with their Portuguese allies carried out raids and had taken away some 1,500 hundred men and women.[91] In order to reach the rebellious Bahadur Khan and to disperse the Arakanese:

> [Ibrahim Khan] proceeded to Jessore. After traversing a large part of the straight route, he took the route by the side of the swamps (*ab-i-shur*), and proceeded under the guidance of experienced *Zamindars*. The *Amirs* and all the other *Mansabdars* followed the Khan Fath-i-jang one after another. But as there were many streams and *nalahs* (canals) on the way, very few men except the Maghs and the Firingis were familiar with that route. Ibrahim Khan, himself, for a period of five days wandered from one stream to another and from one *nalah* to another by losing his way and suffered great trouble. There was neither any inhabited place nor any traffic of merchants. He was put to great distress through dearth of food-stuff. After a great deal of trouble he reached his destination and pitched his camp at a place named Kagraghata, three *kos* off from Jessore towards Hijli… The Amirs who left Jahangirnagar [ie. Dhaka] for Jessore, following the Khan, reached near the Khan after suffering untold miseries… Mirza Nathan also arrived after eight days of the arrival of the Khan.[92]

The Mughals apparently had great difficulties controlling these parts of the delta. They did not know the routes nor were they used to travel around these parts of their dominion. The Arakanese on the other hand are portrayed as masters of the terrain. The description of the Jessore campaign of Man Khamaung therefore suggests that this area was considered by the Arakanese to fall under the control of Mrauk U.

Soon after Ibrahim Khan had quelled the rebellion of Bahadur Khan news reached Dhaka that the Arakanese were at the island of Dakhin Shahbazpur (c. August 1621).[93] This time the Mughals had a fleet of 4,000 to 5,000 armed boats ready stationed in Dhaka. But like a few years before an all out battle between Arakanese forces and the Mughals did not

[91] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, p 2: 635.
[92] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 2:635-636.
[93] Following the narrative in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* this invasion dates from before the revolt of Shah Jahan at the end of 1622. The paragraph immediately following the description of the attack on Dakhin Shahbazpur is situated towards the end of the Ramadan, ie September/October. The attack should therefore be dated as having taken place immediately before September 1621. Leider on the authority of Arakanese sources has 1622. On the basis of the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* I would prefer 1621 as the more probable date. Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 2:639-641; Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, pp. 304-306 and Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, p. 256.

materialize. According to Nathan the Arakanese hastily withdrew from the river after hearing that Arakan was under attack from the Burmese. Ibrahim Khan left his *bakhshi* with a fleet of 600 war-boats to patrol the Meghna. [94] The Mughals apparently felt unable to attack Arakanese fleets operating, so to speak on, the doorsteps of the imperial headquarters in Dhaka.

Conclusion

Somewhere in 1622 Man Khamaung died under unknown circumstances. Although short, the reign of Man Khamaung, saw several significant victories for the Arakanese. The Arakanese king was able to minimize the influence of the Portuguese in the Arakan-Bengal continuum. During his reign the Portuguese would be reduced from allies to mercenaries in the service of the Mrauk U kingdom. After 1615 Portuguese ambitions to territorial dominion in this part of the Bay of Bengal were squashed.

In the ten years of his reign Man Khamaung had been campaigning in Bengal practically every year. Between 1612 and 1622 there is hardly a year for which we do not have primary evidence of the Arakanese king's continual wars with Mughal, Burmese or Tripura armies. The war with Ava meant that the overland trade with Upper Burma had come to a complete stop. VOC factors in Arakan reported that in 1614 several ships had left Arakan with their merchandise unsold because of the war.[95] Likewise merchants from Bengal had ceased to come to Arakan. In 1616 Jan Gaeff reported that because of the wars he had been unable to spend his money in Arakan or Bengal.[96]

In his offensive Man Khamaung extended Arakanese control towards Hijli and stopped the Mughal advance at Bhalua. At the same time Man Khamaung's reign saw two Mughal attempts to invade Chittagong. Both attacks failed. The first invasion was stopped by Arakanese arms, the second by the failure of Mughal logistics. The Mughals on the other hand managed to hold on to their post at Bhalua. From the middle of Man Khamaung's reign a Mughal *faujdar* would be in charge of the fort at Bhalua. In theory Arakan's border with the Mughal empire would from this period be established at the Feni river. But the events on the ground clearly show that large parts of south-eastern Bengal were contested territory. The Arakanese wielded considerable influence in and around Jessore and Hijli on the western side

[94] Nathan, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, pp. 2:639-641. Neither Arakanese nor Burmese sources have been found to corroborate this statement. Leider, *Le royaume, d'Arakan*, p. 256.
[95] NA VOC 1065, fol. 94-100 Letter from Andreas Crieck to Wemmer van Berchem in Coromandel, dated Arakan 11 December 1614 and NA VOC 1057, fol. 127-140 Letter from Wemmer van Berchem to Pieter Both in Batavia, dated Masulipatnam 16 August 1614, fol. 129v-130.
[96] NA VOC 1061, fol. 171-171v. Letter from Jan Gaeff to Samuel Kint, dated Bimilipatnam 27 april 1616. *De oorloochshaen heeft in die quartieren soo geweldigh gecrait dat geen coopman conde vernemen en tot leetwesen ons cleijn penniinck niet connen besteden*.

of the Brahmaputra. As a result the Mughals were forced to build a string of forts around Dhaka and Hugli.[97] In years to come Sirisudhammaraja, Man Khamaung's successor, would also prove to be a serious opponent for any Mughal governor in Bengal.

[97] Atul Chandra Roy, *A history of Mughal navy and naval warfares* (Calcutta: World Press, 1972), pp. 77-78.