

# Myanmar Literature Project

မြန်မာစာပေစီမံကိန်း

Hans-Bernd Zöllner (ed.)

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**Material on Thandwe Maung, *Ashoka* and  
Tun Shein, *First Hand Experience of India***

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## About the Contributors

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**Thway Thway Myint** was born 1969 at Myaungmya Township, Delta Zone. She graduated in 1986 from Yangon University with a Bachelor of Science (Mathematics). She now serves as a tour guide for Spanish and Italian visitors. She is keen on learning more languages.

**Soe Naung**, born 1941 in Taung Zun, Bilin Township, Mon State, received his B.A. in English, Modern history, Political Science and Philosophy) as well as a D.J. in Journalism. He worked as a journalist and acts as Adviser to the Union Solidarity & Development Association. He likes books on knowledge and his role models are writers Mg Htin and Daw Khin Myo Chit.

**Tin Hlaing**, born 1941, comes from a rural background, being born in Thakutpinle village, Monywa district. He studied physics in Mandalay University and from 1972 on did graduate work in London University where he got his Ph.D. degree. and did his doctorate there. – Tin Hlaing taught in universities in Burma for 30 years and later became a Director-General in the Ministry of Science and Technology. Since retirement, Tin Hlaing writes books and articles on science, technology, culture, history and education. His translation of Abdul Kalam's book 'Ignited Minds' won the National Literary Award for Translation

**Jan Dreßler** studies Languages and Culture of Mainland Southeast Asia with a focus of the Buddhist countries at Hamburg University.

**Nay Lin**, born 1966 in Yangon, studied at Yangon University and received his B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. there. Until 2006 he worked as Tutor at Yangon University, Department of Myanmar Language & Literature. He was recently transferred to Myeik (Mergui) college in southern Myanmar.

## **I. INTRODUCTION (Hans-Bernd Zöllner)**

### **India Exposed in Comprehensive Eclecticism**

The two books introduced in this volume deal with India in a very different way. Thandwe Maung's (U Tun Kyaing's) biography of the great Ashoka informs us about the king who built the first Indian empire that covered most of the territory of modern India in the third century after the Buddha had passed away. Moreover, and more importantly for a predominantly Buddhist country like Burma, Ashoka had proclaimed Buddhism as his and his subjects' faith. In contrast, Tun Shein's (Bo Let Ya's) book on India deals with contemporary India, as the title – "First Hand Experience of India" – indicates. It mentions Ashoka as the first unifier of India and then very quickly switches to the time of British rule in India and the fight against that rule. Taken together, they inform about two periods of Indian history that could be of interest for a Burmese reader because they portrayed role models for the current political situation. Ashoka, who was praised by eastern and western scholars as an exemplary, just ruler, could be regarded as a man who proved that the Buddhist world did not need to be enlightened by western political concepts. Ashoka had set his remarkable standards at a time when Christianity not yet appeared on the scene of world history. Contemporary India, on the other side, had produced men like Nehru – shown on the title page – and Gandhi – a picture of whom was shown in the book – who were renowned world wide as freedom fighters and could teach the Burmese lessons on how to fight for their independence under the current conditions.

On the other side, this comprehensive approach to India was at the same time an eclectic one guided by the aim of Nagani and its sister enterprise to promote Burmese independence. Thus, the highly complicated question of Burma's separation from British-India that had dominated Burmese politics from the late 1920s until the implementation of the 1935 Government of Burma Act in 1937 is not mentioned. Though it is stated that Nehru visited Burma three times and knew the country well, these visits and that of Gandhi in 1929 were not evaluated as to the travels' impact on strained Burmese-Indian relations.

An analysis of these tensions written by Thein Pe was published shortly after the Burmese-Muslim riots in 1938.<sup>1</sup> According to him, the Indians in Burma are the natural enemies of the Burmese for many reasons. For example: "The Indians in Burma consider the country their colony; they regard it as their own land. Those who, perhaps not encouraging this attitude, yet do nothing to stop it, are

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<sup>1</sup> See Working Paper 12 of this series.

the present Congress.” And with regard to the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose: “We are not in favour of the present Congress which is controlled by right-wingers.”<sup>1</sup> One may conclude that different aspects of the Indian impact on Burma were highlighted by different authors in different contexts held together by their alleged importance for Burma’s fate and, of course, the interest of the readers.

### **The Authors and a Changing Publisher Profile**

The impression that the policy behind the publications of both Nagani as Tun Aye’s enterprise was governed by a variety of factors is underlined by a look at the two authors.

Thandwe Maung was already approaching the age of sixty when his book on Ashoka was published. As the title page (see below p.12) and the advertisement of his other translated works indicate, he was already a well known author whose reputation might have been used by the Nagani publishers. Born in 1880, he was a journalist cum writer who had specialized in translating biographies of famous men and political works into Burmese. Saya Lun (Thakin Kodaw Hmine) had sponsored his position as an assistant editor of the *Thuriya* (Sun) newspaper.<sup>2</sup>

The book under review here came out in August 1939, shortly after Tun Aye had left the publishing house and opened his own company with Ba Hein’s work on capitalism. There are some indications that his departure was accompanied by some changes within the club. The Nagani logo was different from mid 1939 onwards and in September 1939 the first novel, Ba Thoung’s *Pan-tha-ma-sa-u*, was published.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Thandwe Maung’s book neither contains the Nagani logo nor any information about other publications of the club. It is just mentioned that the book was printed by the Nagani press. The book’s title page features the names of the author and the writer of the preface in the English language, thus indicating that this work is worthwhile reading because of reputation of both. Accordingly, at the end of the book, some other books translated by Thandwe Maung are mentioned.

To sum up: It is most probable that the idea to publish the book was conceived in the transition period after Tun Aye’s resignation of the post of Nagani’s manager and the installation of the new managing team. It can be regarded as a “special publication” promoting the author’s work on a subject that dealt with the life and work of the exemplary Buddhist king. Thandwe Maung was able to write Ashoka’s biography because of his writing skills already proven and his scholarship that is

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid: p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> The remark on the title page “late of the Sun Press” indicated that Thandwe Maung had quit the post, maybe after U Saw had taken the newspaper from Ba Pe in 1935.

<sup>3</sup> As reported in vol. 1 of this series, Tun Aye had not accepted Dagon Taya’s novel *May* because he insisted on the publication of exclusively political literature.

underlined by the preface of the much younger but academically renowned Lu Pe Win. Since Nagani had already published another biography translated by the author on the Turk “dictator” Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), he was already introduced to the men running the club.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the printing of the book might have been not only morally but also financially supported by Kyaw Hla, an executive of one of the biggest English companies in Burma, Steel Brothers.<sup>2</sup>

Tun Shein, in contrast, was a student activist. He was born in 1918 and had joined the student movement after entering university. In 1940, he was elected General Secretary of the All Burma Students’ Union (ABSU). In his function as a student leader, he joined the Thakin delegation to India in March 1940 that attended the meeting of the Indian National Congress in Ramgharh. This journey justifies the book’s title “First Hand Experience of India”.

As a student activist, Tun Shein was particularly interested in the organisation of the students’ (para)military organisation (Burmese: *tat*) named *Thanmani Tat* (“Steel Army” or “Steel Corps”). At a meeting of the union on October 1, 1939 after the outbreak of the war in Europe, he sponsored a resolution that such a unit should be built up at every branch of the union and that the already existing units should be reorganised and expanded.<sup>3</sup>

In 1941, Tun Shein was one of the young men who joined Aung San for the military training in Hainan. As one of the Thirty Comrades, he adopted the Name Bo Yan Naing (). He became famous for a battle won by the Burma Independence Army against a British unit and at the end of the war headed the military academy of the young army established in Mingaladon. Like Bo Let Ya (Hla Pe)<sup>4</sup>, Yan Naing became a businessman after independence and in the late 60s joined Nu in his fight against the Ne Win government.<sup>5</sup>

## **Two Dissimilar Role Models for Burma’s Future**

As with many other students, Tun Shein strived for the liberation of Burma by way of revolution. His special inclination to military service made him one of the many fathers of a politicised military. At the time of the publication of his book, apparently the only one he wrote, he could be regarded as one of the promising young generation that could lead a future free Burma and thus a

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<sup>1</sup> In late 1940, a third biography translated by Thandwe Maung – on the tragic hero of the Irish fight for independence, Sir Roger Casement - was published.

<sup>2</sup> Steel Brothers were the leading trading company in Burma dealing with all sorts of goods and investments in the oil business as well as in the rice trade.

<sup>3</sup> For the text of the resolution and an excerpt of the discussion see Hans-Bernd Zöllner (2000), ‘Birma zwischen “Unabhängigkeit Zuerst – Unabhängigkeit Zuletzt”. Die bimanischen Unabhängigkeitsbewegungen und ihre Sicht der zeitgenössischen Welt am Beispiel der birmanisch-deutschen Beziehungen, 1920-1948., Münster, Lit: pp. 368-369.

<sup>4</sup> See Working Paper 13.

<sup>5</sup> For his further biography see below pp.40-42.

representative of a “New Burma” envisaged.

Both Thandwe Maung and Tun Shein were thus prominent, albeit in very different ways. The hero of the former’s book could be regarded as a historic model for Burma’s future. Tun presented his “first hand” experiences of contemporary India and thus offered himself as somebody who could be able to draw conclusions from Indian politics for Burma.

In retrospect, this observation might lead to a rather interesting comparison: How the ideal of a ruler who became a serious Buddhist after having won a war that caused many casualties and the idea to liberate Burma by the use of secular force can be harmonized.

### **Religion, Politics, Violence – and Other Open Questions**

The last reflection opens the door for a number of questions concerning Burma’s political culture then and now. As a starting point, Thandwe Maung’s book on Ashoka may be of interest. In their introduction to the book, both Lu Pe Win and the author emphasise the book’s benefit for Burmese readers who through it can obtain reliable information in their mother tongue on the second most important Buddhist after the Buddha himself as Thandwe Maung puts it. As mentioned by Kyaw Hoe, the book was reprinted often<sup>1</sup> and prescribed as a text book for high schools. One, therefore, may ask about the kind of “benefit” the readers could draw from the book.

As mentioned before, this book came out during a transitional period of Nagani’s publication history and features some special characteristics different from other Nagani publications. In addition to what was mentioned already, the contents of Thandwe Maung’s book can be pointed out. “Asoka” is the only book published by Nagani directly covering a Buddhist topic. All other books are deal with secular themes and might refer to Buddhism only as a means to explain foreign terms and issues for Burmese readers like in Soe’s book on Socialism.<sup>2</sup> A comparison with Thein Pe’s booklet on the Indo-Burmese riots of 1938 is instructive. The pretext of the Burmese attacks on the Indians was an alleged defamation of Buddhism by a Muslim. Moreover, the first protest against the insult started with a meeting presiding over monks. Members of the Sangha participated in the riots and many mosques were damaged. All this is almost not mentioned by Thein Pe. He concentrates on the rational causes of the excesses and justifies them as “unavoidable”.

Thein Pe’s argumentation is in line with the basic creed of the *Dobama Asiayone* that was expressed by the founding documents of the association, the *Dobama Sadan* written by Thakin Ba Thoung

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Library of Congress, the first reprint was published 1947.

<sup>2</sup> See Working Paper 10 of this series.

after the Burman-Indian riots of May 1930<sup>1</sup> and by Aung San in his writings on Buddhism stressing the Ratana Sutta.<sup>2</sup> Here, Buddhism is portrayed as a rational philosophy in line with modern science.

Besides this enlightened approach, other attitudes existed. A special variation of the Burma-Buddhist mainstream was represented by Nu, one of the founders and mentors of Nagani and the first Prime Minister of independent Burma. Tun Aye had left Nagani because he did not share Nu's way of handling the club but could not argue with the co-founder's seniority.<sup>3</sup> Nu was a religious man who in his years as politician used Buddhism for political aims.<sup>4</sup> In his autobiography, he described his friendly relationship with Indian's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. One episode informs about the re-enshrinement of the relics of two disciples of the Buddha, Sariputta and Mogallana, by both statesmen in the town of Sanchi, site of one of Asoka's pillars. Nu compares Nehru and the king who both paid homage to the relics and were venerated by the people and concludes that he was convinced that Nehru was an incarnation of Ashoka.<sup>5</sup>

Nu's remarks clearly show the differences in the perception of the relationship between religion and politics. A comparison with Tun Shein's characterisation of the leading players in India's politics underlines the secular nature of his assessments. Furthermore, there are many indications that Nu tried to follow the Ashokan model himself. He invited the Sixth Buddhist Council to Rangoon, cared for the promotion of Buddhism, ordered the building of 70,000 sand pagodas – the legend tells that Ashoka built 84,000 stupas in one day – and finally made Buddhism Burma's state religion, a move that was strongly criticised by the military and cited as one reason for the coup of 1962.

These observations may be summarised in the question of how the relationship between religion and the mundane sphere was defined by different actors throughout modern Burmese history and how the role of the military was conceptualised and practiced. Asoka as the model Buddhist king may be used as a symbolic figure whose legacy could be interpreted differently and, maybe, even antagonistically. One may ask, for example if the military's subsequent "conversion" to civil rule which happened during the life of Aung San, the transformation of the Revolutionary Council into

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<sup>1</sup> For the Burmese text, see Khin Yi (1988) *The Dobama Movement in Burma*: Appendix, Ithaca, Cornell University Press: pp. 1-9; 13-35. For an English translation of parts of the writings, see Zöllner 2000: pp. 508-513.

<sup>2</sup> Aung San (1935), *Burma and Buddhism*. *The World of Books* vol. 21, 123: p. 132. Reprinted in: *The writings of General Aung San*. (Translation into English by retired Ambassador *Thet Tun*). Rangoon, Universities' Historical Research Centre.

<sup>3</sup> For details, see vol 1 of this series, Section III.2.

<sup>4</sup> For details, see his autobiography: U Nu (1975) *Saturday's Son*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 232-235.

the Burma Socialist Programme Party and the promise of the junta ruling Myanmar after 1988 to arrange for a secure way to a “disciplined democracy” are reverberations of Ashoka’s conversion after the Kalinga war.

Another cluster of questions comes into sight if one takes a look at the Burmese preferences for Indian politicians and the reasons for their judgement. Tun Shein’s pre-war esteem of Nehru – he reported that Nehru most probably would be independent India’s Premier – and of Nu after the war were partly similar and differently substantiated. Furthermore, at the end of the journey of the delegation to India in which Tun Shein participated, Aung San met Subhas Chandra Bose in Calcutta and discussed politics with him.

This meeting, in addition to other arguments show that Bose was Aung San’s political model.<sup>1</sup> Tun Shein on the other hand criticises Bose for his establishment of the “Forward Bloc” that wasted energy in opposing Gandhi and the Congress. This example may show that even within the *Dobama* delegation a variety of opinions about Indian politics and politicians existed that might have had consequences for the rupture of the unity of the *Dobama* after the war.

#### **About this Volume**

The following pages contain some basic information about the two books introduced here. Besides the bibliographical information, both books’ forewords are translated. Some biographical information about the author of the forward of Thandwe Maung’s book and of Tun Shein (Bo Let Ya) is provided. Two book reports inform about their contents. With regard to the book on Asoka, two book reports were compiled by the editor. Since the importance of Jawaharlal Nehru for the pre- and post-war history of Burma, a translation of the sections of Tun Shein’s book dealing with him is added.

At the back of this book, the text of a song entitled “We Students” can be found. The Burmese text is reproduced together with a translation.

August 2009

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<sup>1</sup> For details see Zöllner 2000: pp. 440-444 and recently Swapna Bhattacharya [Chakraborti] 2007, *India-Myanmar Relations 1886-1948*. Kolkata, K P Baagchi & Company: 301-359. Another Burmese politician who admired Bose was Dr. Ba Maw. He invited him to take part in the celebration of Burma’s independence on August 1, 1943.

## II. MATERIAL ON THANDWE MAUNG, *ASHOKA*

### 1. Kyaw Hoe, **Bibliographical Information**

Translated from his Nagani Bibliography, pp. 46-47 by Uta Gärtner

27) Thandwe Maung: *Biography and Edicts of the Great King Ashoka*. Yangon, Nagani, 1939. 208 pages, 1 map.<sup>1</sup>

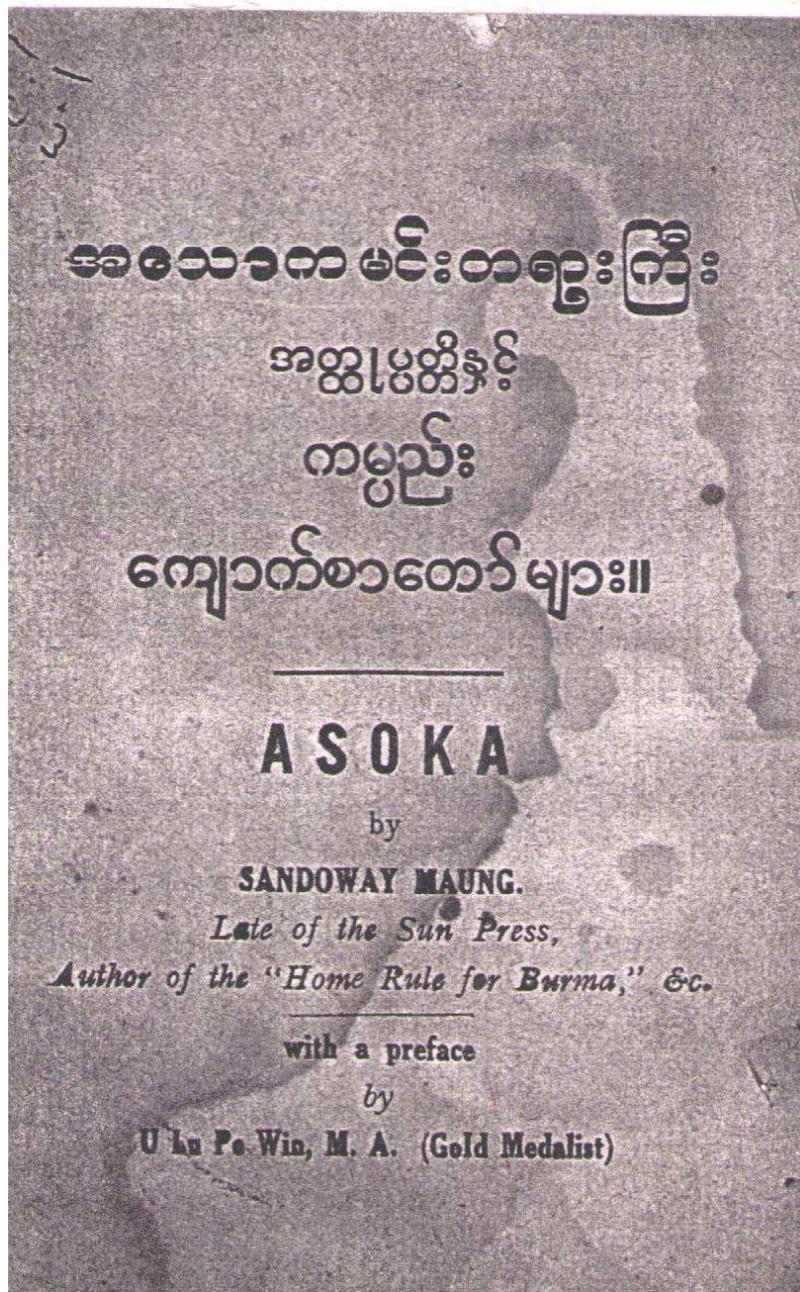
The Department of Education has prescribed this book for the English-Myanmar-examination of the 10<sup>th</sup> standard. It contains a foreword by U Lu Pe Win, It was republished many times, by Nagani on August 1, 1939. 3000 copies were printed then and the price was 12 pè. The content reports the following chapters:

- (1) Grandfather king Chandragupta, foundation of the Maurya Empire, father king Bindusāra;
- (2) About king Ashoka, administration of the country;
- (3) On the genesis of Buddhism, the Dharma;
- (4) On missionary work;
- (5) On Buddhist merit, Asura;<sup>2</sup>
- (6) King Ashoka and world history;
- (7) The edicts translated into Burmese language; bibliography.

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: The copy of the book obtained for his project contains four photos depicting Asoka's pillars, the „lion capital“ and ne inscription.

<sup>2</sup> In Hinduism: demons, in Buddhism: demigods inhabiting the lowest heaven (ed.).



Reproduction of Title Page

## 2. Lu Pe Win, Preface

Translation: Ye Nyunt

At a time when the value of ancient stone inscriptions, rich in historical context, was not appreciated, pursuers of Pali literature were contented only with the knowledge contained in two treatises,- In 400 AD, they studied Dipa Win or Dipavamsa Treatise, compiled in Pali in 800 RE (Religious Era). It deals with the history of Ceylon Island. In 600 AD, they studied Maha Win or Mahavamsa Treatise, also compiled in Pali around 2000 RE. It deals with the life story of King Siri Dhamma Soka (King Ashoka).

In Myanmar, in the region of King Shwe Nan Kyawt Shin of Ava (Innwa) Era, writer Venerable Shin Silavamsa wrote Maha Sammatavamsa, a historical treatise, in which histories of India and Ceylon, translated from the Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa treatises, were included. Shin Silavamsa was one of the four prominent monk-writers of Ava Era. In consequence, Myanmar of Ava Era had already known about the biography of King Siri Dhamma Soka to some extent.

About more than 50 years ago, Venerable Shwedaung Kyeethe Lay Htet translated Mahavamsa Treatise and entitled his work "Maha Win Novel." The monk had authored many treatises including Jinattha Pakasani and a kind of encyclopedia. And so, like Ceylonese and other nationals who knew Pali, Myanmar had become acquainted with the histories of India and Ceylon and the life of King Dhamma Soka.

In India, the British government has encouraged collection, preservation and study of ancient stone inscriptions for more than 100 years. Since 1902, under the physical and mental support of the governor-general Lord Curzon, officials of stone inscriptions led by Secretary of Stone Inscriptions Sir John Marshal performed their duties enthusiastically, and so excavated inscriptions on stone slabs and bronze sheets in addition to boulders, flat rocks and pillars on which King Dhamma Soka had put records.

They scoured 1,540 villages in the Bombay area alone, discovering and collecting 1,600 inscriptions. About 5,400 inscriptions were collected in Madras in Southern India during the past 18 years and the characters have been interpreted and the inscriptions, translated.

Of all the inscriptions recorded by King Siri Dhamma Soka, the one discovered on the Maski Hill in Hyderabad area in 1914-15 was valuable and essential for the study of the history of the Maurya era of India.

In most inscriptions, King Dhamma Soka mentioned his royal title as "Devanam Piyopiya

Dasiraja.” But on a small stone slab, he mentioned two royal titles: “Devanam Piya” and “Ashoka.” Hence, all the inscriptions bearing the title “Devanam Piya” can be regarded as the Dhamma Soka inscriptions.

The royal edicts issued by King Dhamma Soka were recorded not only on boulders at the border but also on stone slabs which were posted on pillars at religiously noble places such as Lumbini forest in which Lord Buddha had been born, Isipatana Migadawon forest where Lord Buddha had preached his first sermon (Migadwon Forest is a deer park near Benares.) and Sankassanagor Kingdom where Buddha had set foot on his descent from Tavatimsa, the second plane of abode for celestial deities. And so, the Ashoka inscriptions serve as indispensable priceless treasures for those who wish to find out the true history of India and those who are interested in Buddhism.

Basing on these inscriptions, Indian scholars and Western researchers wrote books on the history of India, and on the biography of King Dhamma Soka. However, these books did not benefit Myanmar, who knew Myanmar language only, because they were written in English and other Western languages. About five years ago, Venerable Adiccavamsa translated the Dhamma Soka inscriptions into Myanmar.

Now, U Tun Kyaing, with the pen-name “Thandwe Maung,” has translated extracts from books on the biography of Ashoka in English into simple Myanmar. At the end of the Biography, he added the Dhamma Soka inscriptions translated from English into Myanmar.

The publication compiled by Thandwe Maung is welcome literary work for Myanmar. Those who read it will be well informed of the ruling system and religious activities of the king.

This preface has been written at the request of U Kyaw Hla, an executive of Steel Brothers Co. of Mandalay.

U Lu Pe Win, M.A.  
Minister of Myanmar Stone Inscriptions  
Maymyo  
3<sup>rd</sup> Waning Day of Kason, 1301 ME<sup>1</sup>

## 2.1 Biography of Lu Pe Win<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1301 ME = around 1940 AD; ME = Myanmar Era; RE = Religious Era (It is assumed that RE has been counted from the time when Buddha entered Nirvana.) [translator’s note].

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.lib.washington.edu/asp/myanmar/Bio/LuPheWin.htm> [June 10, 2009].

**Sayagyi U Lu Pe Win** was born in 20 June 1900 (Thursday) in Pabedan quarter, Mawlamyaing Town. His parents are U Yan Win and Daw Mi Mi. They are Mon race and his father is the first person of who opened the Buddhist English Burmese School in Mawlamyaing. His original name is Lu Pe and last name "Win" is honour to his father name. In 1906 his father was dead and his family transferred to Thaton and stayed with his grandfather lawyer U Shwe Aoe. He studied in Thaton High School and passed the nine standard and then continuous education in Mawlamyaing state High School. He passed High School examination from this school. In 1<sup>st</sup> June 1917 he first studied in Rangoon College. When he attended in B.A class, specialized on Pali honours and that year Rangoon College students boycotted the British Government. He left Rangoon College and in that year he organized the Ingapu National High School. He passed the B.A Examination held in August 1921 from National College. He got B.A from National College passed with first grade specialized on Pali. At this year he became Pali Lecturer in National College. In 1923 he attended the Yangon University and in 1924 he got B.A degree, passed with distinctions in Pali, Chemistry and English. In 1924 May – October he worked as clerk in Rangoon High court and Rangoon High School teacher. From 1925 – 1936 nearly 11 years, he worked as Lecturer in Rangoon University, Dept. of Oriental Studies. In 1928 he sat the Calcutta University Examination for M.A., Pali Language and passed with distinctions and first grade, he got gold medal. In 1936 he worked as Director in Dept. of Inscriptions, Dept. of Archaeology. In this year he married with Daw Kyi Kyi daughter of U Pho Latt and Daw Aye Khin. During the World War II he worked as Chief editor in Mandalay Aung Si Newspaper. He maintained many precious antiquities from Mandalay to Bagan Anawrahta Library. In 1948 he worked as Vice President in the whole Mandalay Buddhist Association. Specially he assigned duty as President for the "Mandalay Foreign Mission". He got "Thripyanchi" award in 1949. In 1956, he attended the UNESCO conference delegation of the Yangon University Senate member and Dept. of Archaeology, read paper in that conference. In August 1957 Sayagyi U Lu Pe Win retired from the Dept. of Archaeology. From 1958 to 1963 he opened "U Lu Pe Win Private School" and worked as principal. His school teaches 1<sup>st</sup> standard to higher standard. In 1969 he assigned duty for the President of National Day Golden Jubilee. His other social work is patron of "Mon Literature and Culture Committee Yangon" In 1980 Government honoured him for 1<sup>st</sup> grade "Naingnan Gonyi" award. Sayagyi was dead in 31 May 1982, he had two daughters left Dr. Khin Mya Win and Daw Tin Tin Win.

### **3. Author's Foreword**

Translation: Ye Nyunt

This book “The Biography and Stone Inscriptions of King Ashoka” is a combination of extracts from various sources including “The Stone Inscriptions of King Ashoka,” written by Dr. Hultzsch and published by the Government of India, and books on the life story of King Ashoka authored by Dr. Vincent Smith, Dr. McField, Dr. Bhandakar and Dr. Mukerjee. There has not been any publication in Myanmar that comprehensively deals with King Ashoka. There is a Myanmar version of Maha Win (Mahavamsa), but it has a slight trace of King Ashoka and deals at length with missionary trips of son Shin Mahinda and daughter Singha Mitta Their (Nun) to Lankadipa island (Ceylon) and with King Devanampiya Tissa of Ceylon. There are also discrepancies between Maha Win and books written by Western scholars.

This publication fully mentions about the biography and stone inscriptions of King Ashoka and extracts from prescribed textbooks of science schools at Calcutta, (Lekkanoun), and Lahore and also from books published with the recognition from the Department of Stone Inscriptions of India. Hence, it serves as a valid and reliable source or textbook. Relevant to this fact, stone inscriptions recorded by King Ashoka were explored in India during the past 200 years, and a total of 35 inscription - 19 on stone slabs, 13 on stone pillars and 9 in caves - were found.

As they were inscribed over 2000 years ago, the characters were difficult to decipher as they had been dead for a long period. English, France, American, German and Indian experts put their heads together for about 100 years to interpret their meanings. Only afterwards, a myriad of books on King Ashoka appeared.

This publication is a pot-pourri of extracts from these books and the topics about King Ashoka, the area of Maurya Empire, the ruling system of the kingdom’s relations with neighbouring kingdoms and the Greeks, the appearance of Buddhism and Buddhist missionaries are derived from the stone inscriptions.

Translation of the stone inscriptions into Myanmar, added at the end of the book, has been compared and checked with the books written by Dr, Hultzsch, Dr. Bhandakar, Dr. Vincent Smith and Dr Mukerjee. This makes it different from other works of translation in terms of facts which are fine and valid.

In the history of Buddhism, king Ashoka has been regarded as the most prominent person after Gotama Buddha, and was a great benefit or to the Buddhists all over the world. Thanks to King Ashoka, the hues of Buddhism have been bright as the beams of the sun and the moon. So, it is expected that monks and lay-persons alike will be satisfied with this work of translation. My

thanks are due to U Kyaw Hla, representative of Mandalay Steel Bros. Co., who has exhorted me to compile this book.

Thandwe Maung  
Mandalay  
Fullmoon Day of Thadingyunt, 1300 ME

#### 4. Khine Khine Thin / Htway Htway Myint, Book Review of Thandwe Maung, *Biography of King Asoka and Inscriptions*<sup>1</sup>

Translation: Soe Naung / Tin Hlaing

##### Biography of the Author

The book on the biography of King Asoka and his inscriptions was written by Thandwe Maung. The original name of the author was U Tun Kyaing. He was a native of Thandwe.<sup>2</sup> He was born of father U Po and mother Daw Shwe Chein in the month of Tazaungmon 1250 Myanmar Era (1880 Christian Era).

During his childhood, he studied up to seventh standard at the Bilingual school (both English and Myanmar language). However, he was so interested in reading and writing that he learned English by self-study. Thus he was able not only to read classic novels but also to translate these novels into Myanmar language. Thandwe Maung generally spent his life living in Yangon rather than living in Thandwe. While attending the police officers training course in Mandalay, Saya Lun<sup>3</sup> with whom he was very friendly asked him to come to Yangon. Thus he arrived at Yangon. Then he worked as an assistant editor at Thuriya newspaper press. Here are some books he translated into Myanmar language:<sup>4</sup>

- 1) Napoleon Bonaparte
- 2) Turkish Dictator<sup>5</sup>
- 3) Irish Martyr<sup>6</sup>
- 4) Keith, Dominion Home Rule<sup>7</sup>
- 5) R.N. Gilchrist, Political Science<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The editor combined the two reports on the book. – Remarks put in (brackets) were inserted by the translators.

<sup>2</sup> English name: Sandoway in Arakan. (Rhakine) State.

<sup>3</sup> See Working Paper 2 of this series.

<sup>4</sup> The book list was submitted by Maung Zeya. - In July 1940, Tun Aye's Book Club published another book written by the author entitled "Real Leader" (တကယ့်ခေါင်းဆောင်). Up to now, no details about this book could be found. Maybe, the book is identical with Macchiavelli's "Prince" (Italian: *Il Principe*) [this and the following notes are the editor's].

<sup>5</sup> Published by Nagani in February 1939 under the name Tun Kyaing (Nagani book no. 16 according to Kyaw Hoe's list). Most probably, it is a translation of Armstrong's "Grey Wolf. Mustafa Kemal: an intimate study of a dictator"

<sup>6</sup> Published by Nagani in late 1940 or early 1941 (Nagani book no. 60 according to Kyaw Hoe's list). The book informs about the life of the Irish nationalist and poet Roger Casement (1864-1916). – The "standard biography" of that time was Denis Gwynn's "Traitor or Patriot? The Life & Death of Roger Casement".

<sup>7</sup> Arthur B. Keith' *Dominion Home Rule in Practice* was published in 1921.

<sup>8</sup> R.N.Gilchrist's "Principles of Political Science" was first published in 1921. He worked as a Professor in Krishnagar and wrote a book on "Indian Nationality", published in 1920.

- 6) Mazzini, Duties of Man<sup>1</sup>
- 7) Thomas Paine, Rights of Man<sup>2</sup>
- 8) Tolstoy, Evils of Government<sup>3</sup>
- 9) Macchiavelli, The Prince
- 10) Gandhi, Hind Swaraj
- 11) Asoka

He died of old age in January 1949 in Yangon.

### **The Book: Biography of King Asoka and His Inscriptions**

This book written by Thandwe Maung who compiled the biography of King Asoka and inscriptions contains seven main chapters describing the founding of the Maurya Empire by Asoka's grandfather Chandra Gupta, his father King Bandisara, king Asoka and his achievements, the administrative rule of the Kingdom, and the emergence of Buddhism.

**Chapter (1)**<sup>4</sup> described how King Chandra Gupta founded the Maurya Empire and gives facts about his son, king Bindusara.

After the Buddha passed away Asoka, or Ashoka was the first King who took on the task of promoting Buddhism. He was the son of Bindusara and grandson of Chandra Gupta. Chandra Gupta had conquered the whole of Magadha and established the Great Maurya Empire in 323 BC. He died in 299 BC.

In 327 BC, Alexander the Great of Greece, commanding a strong army, invaded the Punjab in north-western India. He sought further conquests, but after reaching the eastern side of the River Indus, he found his troops too tired and turned back. But Alexander left behind his subordinate governors to rule over seven small dominions. About one year after leaving India, Alexander died at Babylon, and the Greek Empire crumbled after his death.

At the time when the Greeks led by Alexander invaded north-west India, Magdha, the largest kingdom in India was ruled by King Nanda. He was assassinated by his queen who put a barber on the throne. She bore him a son. When the barber's son became King, Prince Chandra Gupta, a descendant from the line of King Nanda, had to stay in hiding. The barber's son was not a good

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<sup>1</sup> Giuseppe (in English: Joseph) Mazzini's (1805-1872) *The Duties of Man and other essays* was republished many times.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Paine (1737-1809) was one of the founding fathers of the United States of America.

<sup>3</sup> Maybe, this refers to Tolstoy's book "Government is Violence".

<sup>4</sup> On the titles of the chapters, see Kyaw Hoe's bibliographical information (see above p. ).

king and he did not get people's respect. Chandra Gupta revolted against him and in BC 323 made himself King of Magadha.

After coming to the throne of Magadha, Chandra Gupta drove out the Greek invaders from the north-west of India. He also conquered the vast region from the Arabian Sea in the west to Bengal in the east, from the Himalayas in the north to the Arabian Sea in the west and the Narmada River in the south. This was the Great Maurya Empire over which he reigned as Emperor.

In 305 BC, Seleucus, a Greek King, came back in force to reclaim the dominions in north-west India once conquered by Alexander. Chandra Gupta marched with an army to drive him out. Selucus was defeated and he sought peace by offering Chandra his daughter and four regions out of his domain. The offer was accepted after the additional demand of five hundred elephants as tribute was met. Following the peace agreement, the two states exchanged diplomats and pursued friendly relations. Megasthenes, the first Greek envoy to the court of Patliputra, the capital of Magdha, had made a record of his diary which proves the greatness and grandeur of the Maurya Kingdom. After reigning twenty four years over this great kingdom, Chandra Gupta died in BC 299.

Chandra Gupta was succeeded by his son Bindusara. Although he was not as glamorous as his father the kingdom was secure and his rule was successful. He received at his court a new envoy named Dimarga, sent by King Antioch, the son of Selucus. Ancient Greek historians have preserved diplomatic documents exchanged between Selucus and the Indian Emperors Chandra Gupta and Bindusara. Although they do not contain really important matters, these documents shed light on Indian Kings as sovereigns of equal status as the Greek kings. There was also an Egyptian envoy accredited to Patliputra. These envoys had also left records similar to Megasthenes. Bindusara had sixteen queens and one hundred and one sons. The eldest son was Prince Sumana; Prince Asoka and the youngest Prince Tissa were his sons born of Queen Subhadra, a Brahmin descendent, and also of the Maurya Kshatriya clan. In 274 BC, after 25 years on the throne, Bindusara passed away. He was succeeded by his son Asoka who became the third and greatest Mauryan Emperor.

**Chapter (2)** gives facts about King Asoka and his administrative rule. Before he became King, during his father's time, Asoka was Governor of Ujjini province and his elder brother, Prince Sumana, was the chief ruler of Taxila. About fifty years before Alexander marched in, there was at Taxila, the university town, a famed professor by the name of Panini. Ujjini was prosperous with thriving trade and was a sacred province of Hindhus. While he was Governor of Ujjini, Asoka got married to Devi, from the town of Vedisagiri and a Princess of the Royal Sakkyan clan. From that

marriage he got a son, Mahendra and a daughter, Sanghamitra. As soon as he got the news of the death of his father Bindusara, he marched on to Patliputra and crowned himself Emperor. Prince Sumana came late, and he later fell in the battle with Asoka.

According to Sri Lankan texts of old, Asoka was said to have killed all his brothers except his younger brother Tissa. But according to Asokan Inscription Number 45 and the Queen's Inscription, it is recorded that King Asoka gave salaries and official positions, or feudal lordships to his relatives. Asoka's love was strong; he took care to see that their lives were meritorious not just in the present existences, but also in their future existences.

For four years after becoming King, Asoka was busy with the affairs of the Empire. Only in the year 270 BC did he celebrate a formal Royal Coronation at which he took the title Devanampiya, or Piyadassi. He appointed his brother Tissa Crown Prince and got his assistance in the administration of the Empire. According to lithographic inscriptions, Asoka was known to have many Queens, and concubines chief among whom were Queen Devi, Queen Karuvaki, Queen Asandhimitra, Queen Padamawadi and Queen Tisarekha . Among his children, the most well known were Prince Mahendra and Princess Sanghamitra who later became great supporters of Asoka's Buddhist missionary work.

Asoka gave great attention to politics and religion in ruling the Kingdom. Like the kings of western countries, he was an absolute autocrat, but he had great love for his subjects. He took care of their welfare not only for this life, but also for future life. "Since people in our state were my sons and daughters, I wished them enjoy all benefits not only during present life but also for future of next existence (the period after death)." These words were inscribed on inscriptions by King Asoka.

Before the death of his father, a monk had told that only Prince Asoka was the most suitable and entitled prince to the throne. At a time when Buddha was still alive, king Veinmithaya had a dream that Buddha's cloth and golden staff were cut into eighteen parts. This was mentioned in an ancient record owned by a Chinese traveller. The king named Asoka would rule the entire Jambudipa Island. Buddha in his preordainment of events said that King Asoka would enshrine Buddha's relics in over 84000 stupas.

Asoka toured the Empire, but he was unlike ancient kings who traveled for pleasure. His trips were on inspection, to see for himself the situation of his subjects and the dominions. However, the Empire was too big for him to reach everywhere. To far away regions he delegated the Princes to act on his behalf. Thus, Asoka's rule over the Empire was partly his direct rule and partly by

delegation to governorships and feudal lordships. He made laws and made them obeyed. Laws were inscribed on stone pillars and declared as Royal Edicts. Also to assist him he had appointed a cabinet of ministers.

The capital of the Mauryan Kingdom was run by a council of thirty members, divided into six committees of five members each. The first committee was responsible for industry, the second for the religions of foreigners, the third for revenues and register of births and deaths, the fourth for commerce and standards of weights and measures, the fifth for exports and imports and the sixth for customs and tariffs.

To facilitate trade, roads and waterways were made, and along the routes were grown trees to provide shade for men and animals. The king also built rest houses, water wells and lakes. And irrigation canals for agriculture. For defense, a War Office run by thirty men and six branches of office was set up. The war office divisions were the navy, supplies and procurement, the infantry, the cavalry, war elephants and administration. The chief weapons employed at the time were bow and arrow.

As mentioned, the administration under Asoka was systematic, with government divided into various departments which contributed to the greatness of the Empire.

**Chapter (3)** on how he became a Buddhist. Coming from a Brahmin family, Asoka, like his father and grand father gave daily food to sixty thousand *ahjivakas*. He met Nigrodha *samnera*, whom he liked instantly, and because of him he got to know, and revere Ashin Mahamoggli Puttatisa and other *arahants*. Nigrodha was very much devoted to the Buddhist *Sangha*, and was very clever in solving problems related to it.

Once, brother Tissa had a bad opinion of rahans, members of Sangha. He accused rahans were merely eating good food and finding pleasure and only enjoying life. Asoka, on hearing this wrong view and offensive accusation, consulted with his advisors. Then his brother was accused of trying to usurp the Kingdom and arrested and given the death sentence. Extremely scared of death, Tissa was upset, unable to eat or drink. Then Asoka exhorted his brother the he was grieved at the knowledge of the time to die, whereas the rahans without realizing when they were to die were enjoying pleasure out of meditating and contemplating death. He told him that his accusation against rahans cannot be true. Tissa realized his mistake. Converted, he became a devoted follower and supporter of Sasana, the Buddhist Order of Rahans. Likewise, Asoka's son in law was extremely devoted to the Sasana, and he had to be given permission to leave his family to become a

*rahan*. Asoka's son, Mahendra and daughter, Sangamitra were made *rahans*, and they took on the business of the Sasana.

According to Sri Lankan texts, Asoka was very much devoted to the Sasana. Accordingly, he ordered the excavation of the site where the remains of the Buddha were buried and reburied them in the 84,000 *Cetis*, or stupas throughout his realm.

In BC 262, an event occurred with magnitude great enough to change world history in the East. The state of Kalinga, lying in eastern India was not a part of the Maurya Empire. Asoka waged war to annex Kalinga. One hundred thousand Kalingan soldiers died in battle and one hundred and fifty thousand were taken war-prisoner. An uncountable number of natives perished as they flee from war, and the country in disarray. Although he had conquered, Asoka felt badly and in remorse he sympathized with the people of Kalinga. He became repentant. With great attention to Buddha's *Dhamma*, he renounced war and violence. He forbade killing, not just men, but birds and animals as well. He also banned the sacrifice with the lives of animals. Before the occupation of Kalinga, Asoka was only an *uppasaka*, a supporter of the Buddhist Sasana. After observing the death and disaster of Kalinga, he became a true Buddhist.

Among Indian religions, Buddhism is one which teaches *metta*, love and compassion. However, the *Dhamma*, the principle followed by all Hindus is akin to Buddhism. *Dhamma* represents basically respect for parents and teachers and elders, kindness for all living things etc. Asoka followed the teachings of Buddha's *Dhamma*. One thing special about India was its numerous and diverse faiths and people's freedom of worship which Asoka preserved.

At the time of Asoka, there were in India Hinduism practised by Brahmins, as well as Jainism, Christianity (*sic* ?), Farsi (*sic*?) and Mohamadanism (*sic* ?). Asoka was big hearted; just as he supported Buddhism, he also supported all other faiths and built religious buildings for them too.

**Chapter (4)** is on propagation of *sasana* (religion). Asoka was more than just being devoted to Buddhism; he did missionary work to promote it not only in his own realm, but also abroad. Indeed, he was the greatest missionary monarch the world has known through out history. At the time of the Buddha, the *Sasana* (his teachings) had spread only in the regions in and around Magdha; the outside world had not known about it. After the death of the Buddha, Asoka personally launched the missionary work and Buddhism spread to all parts of India as well as Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, China, Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Tibet etc.

At his capital Patliputra, Asoka built the great *Asokarama* monastery and supported the *Sangha*,

providing them with four types of material requirements. But as time went on the *Sasana* became infiltrated by bad monks who really did not practice the Buddha's teaching. After consultations with the Great Monk *Ashin Maha Moggli Putratissa*, the king disrobed them by force and ordered to leave the *Sasana*.

Asoka organized the Third Council of the Buddhist *Sasana*, which was held in the *Asokarama* monastery. After the council, missionaries were sent to nine foreign countries to propagate the *Sasana*. They were Asian, European and African countries, but Tamil lands in south India was excluded. The reason was because the Sri Lankans did not want to recognize Buddhism which came via the Tamils. In the missions abroad, the most successful was Sri Lanka; the chief missionary there was Mahendra, the King's son. After the conclusion of the Third Buddhist Council at Patliputra, Mahendra brought copies of Tipitaka (the record of full discourses of the Buddha) to Sri Lanka, which he got translated into the Sri Lankan language. Mahendra was accompanied to Sri Lanka by his sister Sengamitra who brought with her a branch from the southern side of the *Great Bodi Tree* at Buddha Gaya and transplanted it in the capital city of Sri Lanka. This *Bodi tree*, now over 2400 years old, and still standing today, is the oldest tree in the world.

King Tissa had great admiration for Asoka and following him he also took the title of *Devanampiya*. At the capital Anuroddha, he built a great stupa, and near by a *Great Vihara*, monastery for the residence of Mahendra and fellow *rahans*. In addition King Tissa built a stone cave, still in existence, as exclusive dwelling for Mahendra.

**Chapter (5)** describes ancient records on meritorious deeds done by King Asoka. For 72 years from BC 304 to 232, Asoka built as donation 84 000 stupas, 53 small stone inscriptions recording the Royal Edicts, 14 large stone inscriptions, 10 stone pillars and 4 smaller ones. The Great Palace at Patliputra has been described by Greek and Egyptian envoys, but after the years the buildings have disappeared. But according to the Chinese monk Yuan Chwang who visited the place after more than two hundred years after Asoka, and then the Bangali P C Mukherjee, Sir Alexander Cunningham and others have said that the old city, covered by the silt of Ganges River, is now under the new city of Patna. Indeed, Asoka's pillar has been discovered near Patna. Destroyed by Mohamadens during the 1809 racial riots between the Hindus and Mohamadens, the broken Asokan pillar is now known as the Lat Bhairo pillar. The ruins of the *Asokarama* monastery have also been discovered at Nalanda, near Rajagraha.

Because the *Cetis* and stupas discovered by Dr Spooner are in remote places away from people they

have been less prone to damage. But the Englishmen, students of archeology, have caused much damage to them.

A *Ceti* is a religious edifice where the relics of the Buddha or *Arahats* (Buddhist Saints) are enshrined. It is usually built on a rather spherical base and topped with a square platform on which are again stacked a series of pinnacles of rock. At the base level is an enclosure of stone railings decorated with carvings or statues depicting scenes from the Buddhist life. They are usually miniatures of the Sanchi Stupa built by Asoka, which has diameter 121 feet at the base; the stupa's diameter is 110 feet and height 77 feet. The pillars supporting the railings stand at 11 feet. The existing stupa is one rebuilt to enclose the old one. Pieces of monument built by King Asoka were found near the southern entrance to this stupa. The lion figurine which was broken into pieces might be the one originally placed on top of that monument.

Emperor Asoka had erected a large number of stone pillars, monoliths of granite. They have bell-shaped tops usually with lion, or bull mounted on top of the bell. Especially, the lion statues are very proportionate and life-like, indicating that during the time of Maurya dynasty sculpture had reached its highest stage. Below the bell top are shown hansas picking food, or lotuses or other flowers. The large granites were known to be mined from the Chuna quarries in Mizzarapur district. It is a great wonder that they were transported over many miles; the engineers of the Maurya kingdom really deserve high praise for their skills.

About 1600 years after the death of Asoka, Feroze Shah, a Mohamaden king relocated two pillars; it is known from the records that tens of thousands of workers toiled with great difficulties. This indicates more clearly the wonderful skills of Asoka's engineers who erected much greater number of pillars, even greater ones. Of the pillars so far discovered, the Seventh Pillar is the most important because it commemorates the visit of King Asoka to the birth place of Buddha in 249 BC. The pillars at Sanchi and Sarnath (near Banares) bear inscriptions which mention the '*Vinaya*', or 'Rules of the Buddhist Order'

The inscriptions on stones or slabs are wonderful and interesting. Although they are not as smooth or beautiful like the pillars they carry Dhamma teachings on them. More inscriptions may be discovered if explorations are made in Afghanistan and beyond the north-west frontier of India. There are three sets so far discovered, the first one at Shahbazgarhi near Peshwar province, north-west India. There are 14 inscriptions but the 12th is a separate inscription on stone. All 14 inscriptions are in good shape, providing excellent material for archeologists.

The second inscription was discovered at Mansehra, also near Peshwar; it is situated in a remote place, but near a pilgrims' route and stands for the pilgrims to see it easily. Both these inscriptions are written in Kharosti, or Aramiac script reading from right to left, the subject being religious teachings.

The third set is at Kalsi village, Dehradun, in United Province; they have been excavated in excellent condition. On the face of a monolith is inscribed a picture of an elephant with the words 'Bull-Elephant' under it; the inscription is in Brahmi script, reading from left to right.

The small inscriptions are the oldest of Asoka monuments, 14 of them found in far away places. The second small inscription contains *Dhamma* and is different from others. Among inscriptions erected by Asoka Rupnath and Bhabru inscriptions are significant.

Rupnath inscription is situated in a deep forest valley, under a tree, by the side of the lowest of three cascaded lakes. Bhabru inscription carries the King's favorite seven sections of the *Dhamma*; it is now on display in the Calcutta museum.

The cave dwelling built by King Asoka and grand children for *Ajivikas* (non-Buddhist monks) is a wonderful structure which witnesses the expertise of builders at the time. They were skillful in building with stone bricks and wood. They had could dig into hard rocks to make caves and also make the walls smooth or adorn them with sculptures on slabs or stones, artful work which today's craftsmen cannot imitate. Sir John Marshall of Indian Archeology Department has highly admired the sitting lions found at Sarnath.

However, despite the thriving art and sculpture at the time of Asoka, we do not find any statues of Buddha; only his Throne, Foot-print, and the Wheel have been found. Arts and crafts have come into India from Egypt and Asia across sea and land; but during the Maurya period, Indian culture was influenced mainly by Persians. The installation of Royal Edicts on stone and slabs were similar to the practice of Persian kings indicating that India at the time had relations with Persia and Greece. But the Indian art of Maurya Empire is unique in history. Of them all, the Asokan Pillar at Sarnath is a masterpiece; it has four lions at the top, sitting back to back, around the Wheel, an art work which craftsmen of twentieth century cannot imitate.

**Chapter (6)** is on King Asoka and world history. It explains about the temperament of King Asoka with reference to excerpts from inscriptions comparing with the attitude and nature of some ancient kings. It tells about measures taken by the king for the benefits of the world and all living creatures.

It explains that King Asoka planted Bo trees and mangoes along the roads so as to enable human beings and animals to take rest under shady trees. The king also dug wells, ponds and lakes as well as constructed wayside public rest houses and buildings on the way to pagodas, for the benefits of the people.

The inscriptions No (2) explained about the arrangements made by King Asoka to provide medical treatment to human beings and animals in his kingdom. The king also made similar programmes in the kingdoms of other four Greek kings including the king called Antiochus.

Just as King Asoka wished his sons and daughters to enjoy well being and benefits during their present and future life of the next existence, he wanted to have similar desire for all human beings. The citizens in the kingdom would keep in mind the fact that the king considered them as his own sons and daughters, it was inscribed in two inscriptions of the Kalinga Kingdom. The above facts thus showed how King Asoka considered not only citizens in his kingdom but also all people in the world as his own sons and daughters.

The western scholars compared King Asoka to ancient Emperors. Rhys Davids and some scholars wrote that the work to propagate the *sasana* (religion) by King Asoka was similar to that of King Constantine of the ancient Roman Empire. However, King Constantine just gave encouragement to the Christian religion which was in progress. For King Asoka, he strived to propagate Buddhist religion which was degrading. With reference to politics, King Constantine had allowed his citizens to have religious belief which they liked. But the permission granted by King Asoka was not concerned with politics. He allowed his citizens to right to enjoy the religious faith they wanted.

When King Asoka was compared with King Marcus Aurelius of Rome Empire, it was found that the king of Rome might have great sympathy for his citizens but he immediately prevented them from worshipping the Christian religion as he thought it was not suitable to the interest of the people in Rome. However, King Asoka would never oppress any race or any religion as he wished all human beings enjoy well beings.

A Western scholar also compared King Asoka with King Alfred and others who all were the kings who ruled their kingdoms after waging battles bravely. But King Asoka was still well known in the world up to now because he was able to bring about benefits to the people for the better of current world and future world of next existence.

Emperor Akbar who founded Moghul Empire in India and King Asoka had the same opinion in permitting different races to enjoy freedom of religion. But Emperor Akbar, unlike King Asoka had

taken special care of not affecting his kingdom due to religion. Regarding those propagating Christian religion, Akbar revoked the freedom of religion due to disturbances caused by some people.

The English author H.G. Wells said that Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon were great Emperors in world history. Though Alexander became the Emperor of great power for his success in battles, he was not able to propagate the art and culture of Greece in the region. Caesar spent his time enjoying sensuality without doing anything for the good of the world. Napoleon was not able to do for the well being of the human beings in the world although he could bring benefits to France. As for King Asoka, he was able to do for the good of living things in the world. So he was more famous and outstanding than other famous emperors in the world. Nowadays, people usually talk about King Asoka rather than King Constantine.

Another scholar said that King Asoka and King Constantine were similar in giving encouragement to religious affairs. Just as King Alexander strived to spread the rule of power to the whole world by the Greeks, King Asoka tried to propagate Buddhist religion across the entire world.

Another author compares Asoka with the Christian Apostle St. Paul who opened the way for every one to hear the sermons of Jesus Christ without any restriction. Similarly, King Asoka made arrangements to enable different races and people of different religions to hear the teachings of Lord Buddha so that Buddhist religion would not be the only religion of Maghada Kingdom. Hence, King Asoka was not only the one who encouraged Buddhist religion but also a pure courier of Lord Buddha.

India is a big country of large areas with different races having different religious faiths. India has many different provinces (states) where different languages are being used. But, when King Asoka strived to spread his religious ideology, the Pali language became the language which was used by majority of people in India. Religious literature and treatises which were originally recorded in Maghada language were translated into Pali language, thanks to King Asoka. Moreover, in ancient time in India, the buildings were constructed with wood carvings. But the buildings built of bricks with stone carvings appeared only in the time of King Asoka. Thanks to King Asoka, the buildings constructed with bricks still existed up to now and they seemed to be the wonder of the world. Because of the concerted efforts by King Asoka, the Buddhism spread not only to the whole of India but to various countries, the whole world.

**Chapter (7)** gives information about king Asoka's inscriptions and their translation into Myanmar language. Of the small five inscriptions, the Brahmagiri Inscriptions No (1) stated that the one whether he was a great man or not could enjoy heavenly well being. "Let those residing in frontier of our state understand this order; long live such kind of efforts". This order had been issued for 256 times.

In Brahmagiri inscription No 2, the king gave an order again in such way "Listen to the words of parents; Obey what the elders said; Have strong sympathy over living beings; Speak true words; Observe religious sermons; Let the pupils pay respects to the teachers; Give better treatment to relatives". "These were traditional practice which would lead to longer life. So obey and practice them".

Bairat Inscription No 3 stated that the king<sup>1</sup>respectfully paid obeisance to members of Sangha (monks) after which he said "It was evident how I had paid respects to Buddha, Dhamma (sermon) and sangha (monk); Buddha's sermons were better teachings; Monks, Buddhist nuns, and Buddhist lay devotees (male and female) should bear in mind Buddha's teachings always; This was my desire to be well known and to inscribe on this inscription".

In Kalinga inscriptions No 4, the king made known the following notification to those who were involved in administration of justice. In the field on administration of justice a dull person could not be successful. In order to be successful, concerted efforts must be made day and night. This was the order given by the King. The one who obeyed this order, would have to enjoy benefits. The one who did not obey the order, would find himself mistaken. This inscription was erected there so that the judicial officials at Weithali city could not imprison and persecute poor people without reason.

In Kalinga Inscription No 5, the king gave an order in such way "Just as I wished my sons and daughters to enjoy benefits during the present day life as well as in future of next existence, I wished all humanbeings enjoy the same benefits. You ministers, must take measures so that the people residing in frontier areas would learn how the King loved them as his own sons and daughters, and how the king acted as their own father. The king loved us just as he loved himself. So we seemed to be the sons and the daughters of the King".

The Shahbazgarhi inscription No.1 urged people not to slaughter animals as a sacrifice to the God within this Padalipok kingdom and not to hold festivals killing animals. In the past, hundreds and

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: The king's titles „Devanampriya Priyadarshi“ (The One who Looks at others with Love, the Beloved of the Gods) are omitted here.

hundreds of animals were killed daily for food and curry in the kitchen of palace. Now at a time when this inscription was being written, two peacocks and a deer altogether three animals were killed daily. The killing of such three animals would not be allowed in future.

The Girna inscription No 2 stated that the king planted medicinal plants, herbal and fruit trees for humanbeings not only in his kingdom but also in the neighbouring kingdoms of the Greek kings. The king also dug wells, lakes and ponds for human beings and animals.

The Girna inscription No 3 stated that the king issued the following order twelve years after he was consecrated as a king. The king urged all service personals to make a tour of townships once in five years individually. Generous and kind offerings to husbands, wives, friends, relatives and monks were good deeds, said the king. The king also said an act of killing no animals was a good deed and fair spending without wasting much money was a good habit in deed.

The Girna inscription No 4 stated that King Devananpiya had beaten the drum of Dhamma (Buddha's teaching) in stead of sounding military bugle. The king had taken measures to promote the habit of killing no animals, not ill-treating all living beings, looking after well the relatives, friends and monks and observing orders and directives of the parents and elders. This inscription was written so that the grandchildren and great grandchildren would never forget to strive to promote and propagate this Dhamma (religious teaching). This inscription was written by king Devananpiya twelve years after being consecrated as a king.

In Manatheyra inscription No 5, king Devananpiya gave an order in such way "In ancient time, there were no judicial supervisory ministers. I appointed those judicial supervisory ministers 13 years after I was consecrated as a king. Those ministers must release the prisoners if they had young children, if they were too old and not strong, and if they suffered diseases. Under these circumstances this inscription was written.

In Girna inscription No 6, king Devananpiya gave an order in such way "The officials concerned were appointed so as to enable to submit applications at any place and at any time. Applications must be submitted to me as quickly as possible if there were any dispute among the council of ministers or if they wanted to put any revised application. I was not satisfied with the present work being carried out for the affairs of the king and kingdom. There was no heaviness duty than the duty for the wellbeing of all humanbeings. This inscription was written for the wellbeing and benefits of sons, grandchildren and all humanbeings.

In Shahbazgarhi inscription No 7, king Devananpiya said that he wished all people of different

ideology and different races to live in any places of the kingdom. If the different races with different ideology had no desire to look after themselves, had no kind heart, did not feel gratitude in return for the others' service and did not have strong desire, they would be useless and low-levelled persons.

In Shahbazgarhi inscription No 8 stated that king Devananpiya went on happy tour of his kingdom in ancient time. He visited the Bodi Bo Tree where Lord Buddha attained enlightenment 10 years after being consecrated. During his tour, the king offered gold and money and told the poor people about the *Dhamma desana* .

In Kalsi inscription No 9, king Devananpiya said in such way “only a few benefits could be obtained from various kinds of offerings but much benefits could be gained through the observing and practice of *Dhamma desana*). Even though benefits which wanted could not be gained in the present life through the practice of *Dhamma desana*, we were sure to get a lot of benefits in the future of next existence after death. If benefits were gained in present life, we would get benefits more than we expected”.

In Kalsi inscription No 10, the king said that except the honour and power which could be brought through practice of *Dhamma desana*, there were no other powers which could bring good results. The one whether he was great in power or in lower level status, would find it different to practice *Dhamma desana* if he could not renounce other desires (*loba* in Pali). Of the two persons, the one who was in great power would find it more difficulty to practice *Dhamma desana*.

In Shahbazgarhi inscription No 11, King Devananpiya said in such way “There was no offering or donation equal to practice of *Dhamma desana*. There was no one more affectionate than lovely and friendly *Dhamma desana*. There was no friend or relative with whom we should have relations rather than *Dhamma desana*. Hence, the one who practiced the *Dhamma desana* in this way would enjoy benefits not only in present life but also would have greater benefits in the next life of existence.

In the Givanara inscription, king Devananpiya offered donations in various forms to the monks as well as to members of households. It was a good deed for persons with different ideologies to pay respects to each other. The king wished those having different ideologies to possess knowledge and pure ideology.

In the Shahbazgarhi inscription No 13, the king wrote about seizing the Kalinga kingdom eight years after being consecrated as a king. When the king occupied the Kalinga Kingdom, a large

number of people were killed. So the king had a great remorse after he successfully seized the Kalinga kingdom. Later the king wrote *Dhamma desana*<sup>1</sup> inscriptions urging his sons, grandchildren, and great grandchildren not to fight against another country. If they unavoidably fought, they must be satisfied with a kind act causing small casualties and the way to correct success was to gain achievement through practice of *Dhamma desana*.

Regarding the Girna inscription No 14, the king wrote this *Dhamma desana* inscription in brief, in length as well as neither in brief nor in length. As some inscriptions contained enlightened facts, people needed to observe these facts which were repeatedly written on inscriptions. However, some inscriptions were not inscribed completely and correctly due to region-wise difficulties, due to some facts which were needed to be omitted and due to mistakes made by inscription writers.

Of the two monuments, this *Dhamma desana* inscriptions which are included in monument No 1, was inscribed 26 years after the king had been consecrated.<sup>2</sup> “Because of my instructions, the number of persons paying attention and respects to *Dhamma desana* was increasing day by day. Just as officials (senior and junior) who were appointed on my behalf obeyed and practiced *Dhamma desana*, it was necessary to urge people to do like this. The order I wanted to give to ministers was to look after the people in accord with *Dhamma desana*.”

The monument No 2 stated that observing and practicing *Dhamma desana* meant better contribution. “I had taken measures for the wellbeing of all living beings including two-legged creatures, four-legged creatures, and creatures in water. Moreover, I had carried out other meritorious deeds. So I inscribed on monuments so as to enable people to obey and practice this *Dhamma desana* and to keep them in existence firmly”.

In the monument No 3, the king said in such way “people use to look forward to wellbeing for themselves only without expecting any bad results. They do not regard it a sin when they do bad things. Temperaments such as cruelty, anger, furiousness and jealousy are evil deeds. With evil deeds people should not damage themselves. By avoiding evil deeds people would enjoy wellbeing during the present time as well as in the life of next existence”.

In the monument No 4, the king said that a verdict was to be delayed for three days before passing the sentence to a person who would face death sentence. During the three-day period, the one who had been sentenced to death would have to make donations and to keep Sabbath for the

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<sup>1</sup> *Desana* can be translated as „reform“. The translator paraphrased the term „*Dhamma desana*“ as „Religious teachings“. Maybe, the term can be rendered as “*Dhamma message*” or “*Dhamma record*” as well [editor’s note].

<sup>2</sup> The following section refers to Ashoka’s pillar edicts [editor’s note].

better life in his next existence after death. “My wish was to make him enjoy better life in his next existence even though he was sentenced to death within the passing of three days.”

In the monument No 5, the king said in such way; “I prevented people from destroying or killing various kinds of animals including birds such as peacock, Brahming duck, Indian grackle, dove and pigeon as well as four-legged animals such as deer, sambur, monitor lizard and rhinoceros, 26 years after I was consecrated a king. I also prevented people from destroying or killing pregnant animals such as goat, sheep and pigs as well as animals having month-old babies. Similarly, I prevented people from feeding animals with meat which was obtained through killing other animals. I ordered people not to castrate oxen and goats on Sabbath day, not to mark on the body of horse and cattle with hot iron plates. I freed prisoners for 25 times within 26 years after being consecrated”.

In the monument No 6, the king said in such way: “I inscribed *Dhamma desana* inscriptions, 12 years after being consecrated as a king, with the aim to enable people to enjoy prosperity and to increasingly practice *Dhamma desana*. I went on inspection tour of my kingdom to know the situations of the people. I regarded this inspection tour as a great duty for me”.

In the monument No 7, the king said in such way: “I erected *Dhamma desana* inscriptions to enable people to observed and practice religious teachings. As long as the sun and the moon exist in the world, I wished my sons, grandchildren and great grandchildren to keep and maintain these inscriptions. I wished them to follow the example which I set”.

Of the four small monuments, the Sarnath monument No 1, the Kausumbi monument No 2 and the Sanchi monument No 3 urged members of the sangha (monks) not to cause a split among the monks in the kingdom. If the monks and nuns were found guilty, they would had to change their robes into clothes worn by laymen.

In the Queen’s monument No 4, the king said that he allowed to record the donations by the second Queen of the king. This was in accord with the desire of the second Queen named Karuvati, mother of Prince Tivala.

Of the five memorial monuments, the Rummindei monument No 1 stated that the king went to the place called Lumbini where Lord Buddha was born. The king erected a monument (pillar) with a figurine of a horse there. The people in this village called Lumbini had to pay one over eight of land revenue because it was a place where Buddha was born.

In the Nigliva monument No 2, it stated that the king reinforced the Zedi (pagoda) of Buddha Konakamana by doubling the layers of the original-sized stupa, 14 years after being consecrated. The king visited there and erected the inscription 20 years after being consecrated.

The Barabar Mountain Cave inscription No 3 stated that the king donated this Banyan Cave to the monks, 12 years after being consecrated.

The Khalatika Mountain Cave No 4 stated that the king donated this Khalatika Mountain Cave to the monks, 12 years after being consecrated.

Regarding the Khalatika Mountain Cave No 5, the king donated this Khalatika Mountain Cave to the monks so that monks would take rest in the cave during rainy season.

### **Assessment**

The book on the biography of king Asoka and inscriptions had been published in 1939 as a book by YMBA (Young Men Buddhist Association). Before publishing this book, there was no book on the biography of King Asoka which was translated into Myanmar language in detail. There were many books on the biography of King Asoka, which were written in English language but Myanmar people found it difficult to read them because they knew Myanmar language only. So, Thandwe Maung who had written this book, extracted excerpts in brief from many books and treatises which were written in English. The book on the biography of King Asoka and inscriptions, written by Thandwe Maung was very important for Myanmar people who only knew Myanmar language. Those who read this book could know in detail how King Asoka, a great benefactor of all Buddhists throughout the world, ruled the kingdom, how the king became Buddhist and the work of propagating *sasana* (religion).

Sri Lankan treatises stated that King Asoka ascended the throne after killing his elder and younger brothers totaling 99 royal members except his younger brother Prince Tissa. The inscriptions written by King Asoka stated that King Asoka had a great worry for the benefits of the relatives. So the author (Thandwe Maung) in his book described King Asoka as a king of no cruelty just as written in other treatises. In view of his report, the year when King Asoka ascended the throne was 270 after his father Bindusara passed away. The year when King Asoka met novice Nijawda and began to have great faith in Buddhism was 265. Hence, King Asoka became a Buddhist four years after he had ascended the throne. Moreover, after the death of his father Bindusara, King Asoka tried to defeat the internal revolt and removed disturbances for four years in his kingdom. He was consecrated the king in the year 270. The inscriptions discovered now were the written words on

stones by King Asoka after he became a Buddhist. So the fact that king Asoka had ascended the throne after killing his royal brothers as described in the treatises of Sri Lanka, may be correct.

As this book on the biography of king Asoka was written on the basis of excerpts extracted from the words of many historians, records, evidences of inscriptions and biographical treatises written in English, the historical researchers and the scholars who studied inscriptions should read and study this book.

Some sentence constructions in this translated book are found to be unsmooth or they may be long sentences because they are the excerpts from the biographical treatises on King Asoka written in English. However, it was found that the author was able to write clearly and distinctly about the good nature of King Asoka and his activities.

The book on the biography of King Asoka and inscriptions is the most invaluable book up to date for those who want to know correctly about the history of India, for the historical researchers and for those who study the inscriptions.

The western scholars in their review said that king Asoka was the second greatest man after Gautama Buddha in the field of Buddha *sasana* (religion). In fact, king Asoka was a great benefactor of all Buddhists in the entire world. The Buddha *sasana* is shining bright like the sun and moon thanks to great activities of King Asoka in the world.

## 5 Jan Dreßler, Commentary on Khine Khine Thin's Book Report

Dear Khine Khine Thin,

Thank you very much for your contribution to the Nagani literature project. I am aware of the fact that this very old book was probably not exactly bedtime reading. It is absolutely obvious that you wrote the summary by supreme effort, yet some of my questions remain unanswered. As this project was intended to become a dialogue between the Myanmar people and the foreigners, I will contribute my questions and critique.

One aspect of the original book that you have highlighted was the comparison made by foreigners about great men of history. This approach to the past is really astonishing to me, as it is so old fashioned and has come out of practice here and now. But taking the mentality of the pre-war era into account, the style of the book fits well into its time. Honestly speaking, I had heard of Suleiman the Magnificent before, but besides his name I did not know anything about him. Finally your summary made me leafing through a book on Ottoman history to catch up with the original author.

What I have realised by reading your summary though, is that the most interesting aspect of this project has not been covered, either not by the original book or the summary. What is important in history in my opinion is not who acted, what happened exactly, and at which time, but WHY things happened in a certain way. And unfortunately your summary offers little answers of the last sort.

Taking the origin and subject of the book into consideration, the so called history of Buddhism under a benevolent emperor, one might accept your very mild judgment of the book's style, content and exposition. But if we look at the Ashoka legend under a critical perspective we find that there was a young, brutal and bloodthirsty prince, who fought many battles and thus extended the borders of his kingdom further and further until, after the defeat of Kalinga, there was no rival of stature left. According to what Ashoka had proclaimed in inscription No. 13 himself, one hundred thousand men were killed during the last battle and more than this number deported from Kalinga.

Only after Ashoka had subdued all formerly independent Indian states and conquered all enemies he accepted to rule by Buddhist principles.

Roughly speaking, this way of action became the guideline for Southeast Asian kingship, which is to become a world conqueror, even if that meant to defend and spread the dhamma by sheer

force. How does Thandwe Maung treat this ambiguity? Does he mention it as a dubious question at all?

You wrote that the expansionist phase in Ashoka's early years was marked by the quelling of just „internal revolt“ to „remove disturbances“. Is that the author's opinion, or yours? Do the good deeds of King Ashoka, those he performed after the final victory in favour of Buddhism, compensate for the hundreds of thousands who died because of his lust for power?

Isn't it a strange coincidence that, at a time when all over the world people chose to follow leading personalities, a book on a famous Buddhist leader is written? I would like to know your opinion on the reason why this book was published at that special moment in time. Was it just to inform the reader about the findings of scientists on Ashoka's life, or have there been political reasons behind this publication as well?

Besides you wrote that this book was very important for the Myanmar audience. What is your evidence for this allegation? Was the book quoted later by other writers? Do people still remember this book? Did you see it in libraries? Or is it still bought and sold in the markets?

At the end of your summary you mention that „western wise men“ considered King Ashoka to be exceeded in his deeds to Buddhism only by the Lord Buddha himself. Do you agree with this assessment? Do you consider the example of Ashoka to be a good example of governance, even for today's leaders in Buddhist countries?

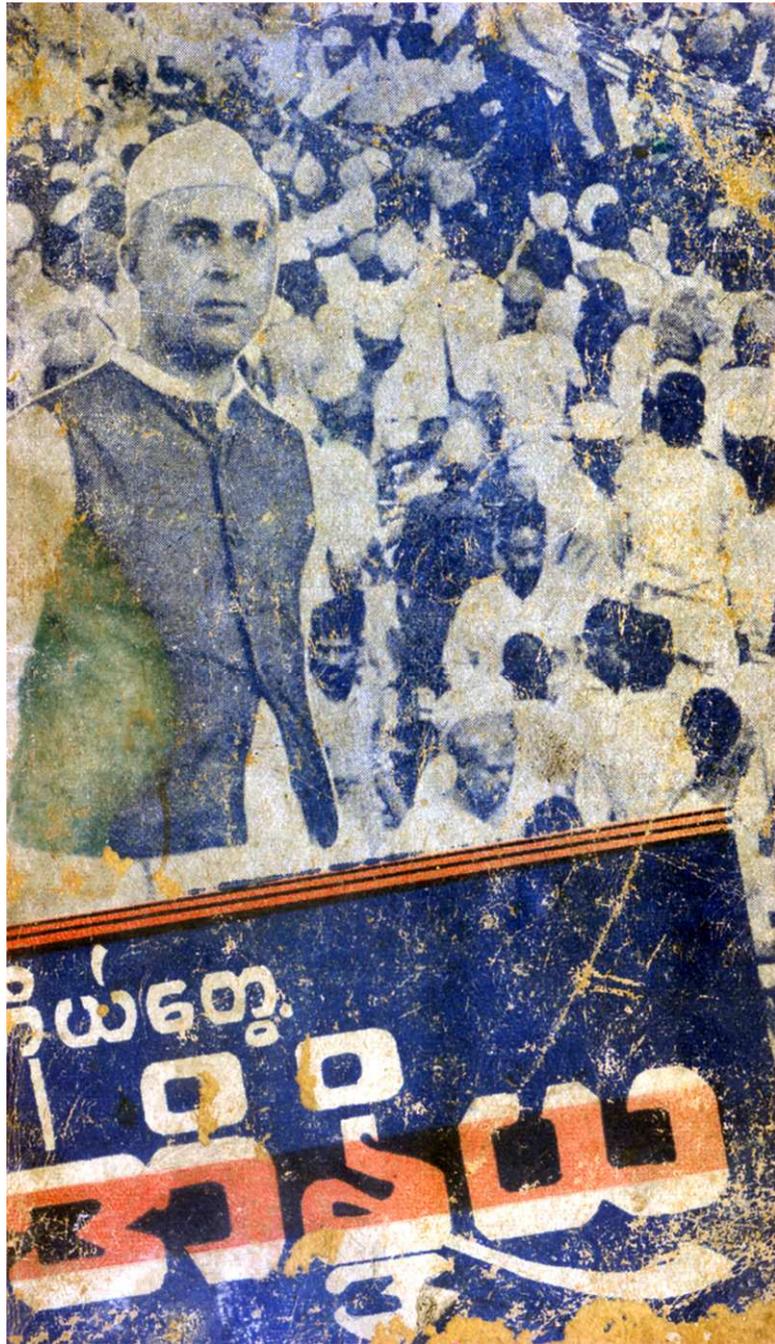
### **III. MATERIAL ON TUN SHEIN, *FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE OF INDIA***

#### **1. Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information**

Translated from his Nagani Bibliography, pp. 116-117 by Uta Gärtner

89) Htun Shein, U: *First-Hand Experience from India*. Myanmar Publishing House, 1940 159 pages, 1 photo of Mahatma Gandhi

Released on June 8, 1940, 2000 copies, price 8 Pè. Htun Aye is named as editor. On the front page is a picture of Nehru and the masses of people. At that time, U Htun Shein alias Boi Yan Naing was General Secretary of the All Burma Students' Union. In his introduction he explains Myanmar's opinion towards India and writes that the Myanmar people who had contacted Indians from young to old age should adopt a new attitude towards the modern India. The book covers India's history from ancient times to the recent political situation. – On the back page the song "We Students" sung by Shwe Nya Maung is printed.



Title Page

## **2. Biography of the Member of the Thirty Comrades: Bo Yan Naing<sup>1</sup>**

(Translation: Ye Nyunt)

Bo Yan Naing's own name was Ko Tun Shein. He was given a Japanese name "Yamashita Teruo" when he was under military training given by the Japanese. When the Thirty Comrades assumed new names with an honorific "bo" (literally, lieutenant) before their names in Bangkok, his name became Bo Yan Naing.

Bo Yan Naing, a Bamar Buddhist, was born of U Khant and Daw Thant in Kammalay Village, Aung Lan Township, on November 2, 1918.

### **Student life and education**

He completed primary education at Indigenous Burmese School founded by Sayagyi U Chan Tha in Kammalay Village, middle education (lower secondary) in Aung Lan Township and high education (upper secondary) at State High School in Pyay. He was arrested for his role as a student leader in the 1936 Student Boycott. He passed the Tenth Grade, the final year in upper secondary in 1937.

He pursued higher education at Rangoon University. He was an executive committee member of the RU Students Union in 1938-39. As a university student, he stayed in Thaton Hostel. He was again a leader in the third Student Boycott.

He founded the All-Burma Students' Steel Force, and took charge as its first commander. Since then, he had become well-known as Thanmani Tun Shein (Thamani=steel). In 1939-40, he was the general secretary of both Rangoon University Students' Union and All-Burma Students' Union.

As a student representative, he attended the India National Congress at Ramga in India on March 29, 1940/

In 1941 while he was studying in the second year for a bachelor's degree in arts, he had to leave for military training in Japan, and so suspended the study. When he was back in 1946, he resumed the pursuit of higher education, and got Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degree in 1947. Then he continued to study law.

### **Performance for national politics**

With other members in first batch of patriotic youths, who were sent for military training, he left

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<sup>1</sup> Source: The Thirty Comrades, Yangon (in Burmese)

Yangon on M.V Ryuntin Maru on March 10, 1941 and arrived in Tokyo on March 27, 1941. In April, he, together with other members went to Hainan Island via Taiwan. In Hainan, the youths underwent military training.

The youth, as members of the Burma Independence Army (BIA), cruised into Burma in a column (Myeik Column) and fought back the British. The Shwedaung Battle, in which the patriots were led by Bo Yan Naing in March 1942, has remained historic.

### **Party politics**

Bo Yan Naing was arrested under Section 5 of law of the AFPEL government at the time when Bogyoke Aung San and other leaders were assassinated. Released from jail in 1951, he joined Dr. Ba Maw's Maha Bamar Party and was engaged in politics. Then, he took part in the Tripartite Alliance, the All Opposition Alliances and the Patriotic Alliance.

At the first parliamentary elections in 1951, he stood election as a candidate of Maha Bamar Party from the Northern Theinbyu constituency. At the second elections in 1956, he was a candidate of the National Group from the Yamethin (North) constituency. At the third elections, he entered them as a candidate of the National Alliance (party) from the Eastern Thayet constituency.

On March 12, 1965, Bo Yan Naing, together with former Brigadier-General Saw Kya Doh, Zarli Maw and Mr. Pat, secretly left for Thailand. In March, 1966, they formed the National Liberation Army at Thai-Burmese border. In October, 1966, they formed the National Liberation Council.

He was an Executive Committee member in the Parliamentary Democracy Party formed by U Nu on August 29, 1969. When U Nu resigned from the party, he joined People's Patriotic Party led by Bo Letya (Chairman) as an EC member. He was expelled from PPP on July 18, 1975.

He returned to Burma on August 18, 1980 when the State Council of the Union of the Socialist Republic of Burma issued Amnesty order 2/80.

### **Other activities**

In March, 1960, he went to India as a member of the State's Agricultural Produce Trading Association. In April, 1960, he visited England and other European countries on private business affairs. In June, 1961, he visited Japan. At the invitation of Mr. Hara, of Tokyo Industrial Research Institute, he visit Japan again on December 16, 1987. He took part in the demonstrations calling for democracy in 1988.

## **General**

He did not take part in the anti-Japanese fight during the anti-Fascist resistance period as he did not believe it a proper way. When the Burmese government led by Dr. Ba Maw retreated to Mawlamyine, he came along with it up to Mudon. At the end of World War II, the British arrested him in Bangkok, and repatriated him to Burma.

## **Literary**

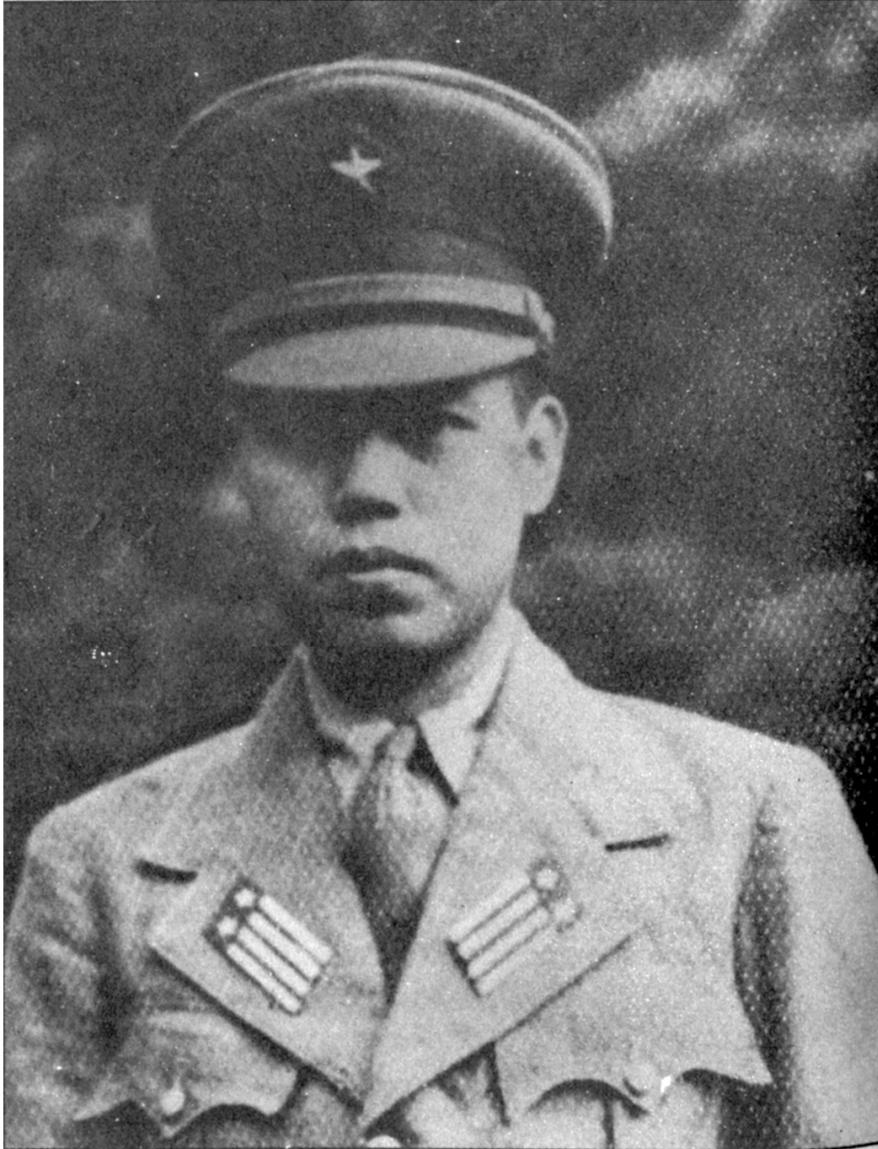
He compiled “The Record of Thirty Comrades.”

## **Awards and Medals**

1. Medal of Gallantry (2<sup>nd</sup> Grade): awarded at the end of Shwedaung Battle of Burma Independence Army in March, 1942.
2. Independence Mawgun Medal (Grade 2): The State conferred the Medal on him on March 27, 1959, in recognition of his selfless endeavors made without regard to life for the independence of the nation and race.
3. Naing-ngant Gon-yi Award (Grade 1): Awarded on January 4, 1981, for his leading role in the cause of national benefits.

## **Conclusion of life**

He passed away on January 28, 1989, in Yangon.



**Bo Yan Naing**

### **3. Preface by the author**

(Translation: Ye Nyunt)

I, native to Upper Myanmar, have paid particular attention to immigrant Indians since I was young. I have seen good-natured as well as bad-natured Indians. In my opinion, most of the Indians in Burma seek self-interest rather than serve the interests of the country in which they reside. Under the British rule, Chettiars and Indian capitalists associate with the British with intent to augment their welfare. But, in consequence, they were used by the British government.

In fact, farmers and workers in India were waging battles against the colonialists. The native patriotic Indians help the Burmese in the latter's causes. Hence, the Burmese should imitate the endeavors made by the native Indian for their race. As Burma lies at an economically and politically crucial place between India and China, Burma should attentively observe the anti-colonialist movements of Indians. India and Burma since they fell under the British had been ruled by the British who exercised the same law. Only in 1935, was Burma allowed to stand separately. It is expected that the political affairs in India would invariably have reverberating effects on Burma. By placing Burma and Aden (on the Arabian Peninsula to the West of India) under separate rules from India, India might succeed in its resistance against the British. In that case, British may take a strong hold in Burma and Aden to obstruct India from the two sides. Thus, Burmese youths observed the situation in India, attending the Congress conference in Ramgarh. I, one of the Burmese youths delegates, recount my first-hand experiences of what has been taking place in India. This compilation is based on books I read in India, especially "The Secrets of Asia" by John Gunther.

#### 4. Nay Lin, Book Report on Tun Shein, First-hand experiences of India (“Ko-dweit Eindiya”)

Translation by Ye Nyunt (Mair)

“Ko-dweit Eindiya” (First-hand experiences of India), brought out by Nagani Publishing House in 1940-41, is a book that describes political activities and struggle for regaining independence in India, then a colonial nation.

#### **Brief biography of the author**

Tun Shein, the author, was secretary of the All-Myanmar Students Union, and attended as a Myanmar youth delegate a congress at Ramghar in India in 1940. Tun Shein recounts movements of Indians who were striving to liberate India from the British rule as he witnessed them while in India.

#### **All that should be known**

India, part of Asia, is a country as large as Europe. Numerous Indian races, the number of which is too large as to count, reside in India, professing different religious faiths. Of the total population of 350 million, over 300 million are poor farmers living in more than 700,000 villages. Hindustani is the most spoken language in the country.

Aryans have settled on the plains by the Ganges for over 3,500 years after coming across the northern Afghan valleys. Having their own written language, Aryans are a civilized race. Aryans displaced Dravidians, who were the aborigines with dark complexion, to southern India. Aryans who professed Hinduism developed a caste system so that their people did not mingle with wild Dravidians. However, their cultures intermingled later. Hindu beliefs also spread to all parts of the country while Greek and Roman culture permeated into the country.

In 264 BC, King Siri Dhamma Soka (Ashoka) unified the entire country which had disintegrated into parts. In his region, arts and handicrafts flourished. Buddhism came to dominate, causing Hinduism to fade. After the death of King Ashoka, Hinduism reared its head again. Huns, Persians, Mongolians, Muslims and Moguls invaded India. The entire India was re-unified under the Moghul kings. After the entry of the Moghuls, the British followed suit. It was a time when Europeans were seeking new colonies through trade, and the British, French and Dutch came into India. But in 1761, the British could dislodge the French and Dutch from India, and appointed a

governor-general in 1798. The British also established the East India Company. In 1857, the entire country fell under the British.

The administration of India was partitioned into three regions: the region under direct rule of the British, the region ruled by the Maha Rajas who were under the influence of the British and the region ruled by people's representatives. The British directly controlled 11 provinces, which constituted three-fifths of the total number of provinces. Bombay, Madras and Bengal were the most important provinces. Bombay where there were farmers with sharp political outlook was the root of Gandhi's fight to oppose unjust powers. Madras, with a population of 47 million, was the poorest province and its residents had to rely on farming. Most complaints about peasant affairs came up from Madras and Bengal. Landlords dominated United Provinces (UP). Jawaharlal Nehru was born in UP, and launched his political activities there. UP had a population of more than 500 million. Mahatma Gandhi lived in Wadah village in Central Province (CP), where wild tribal groups lived in thick forests and on mountains with waterfalls.

Bihar Province lies between UP and Bengal. It was a politically crucial province where protests of farmers started. Bengal had the largest population (50 million) and was the richest province. The majority of the population were Muslims and terrorism reigned in it.

Wild hill-tribes inhabited Assam to the east of Bengal, and were engaged in producing dried tea. Muslims also resided in the extreme west of India, in Singh Province, that did not have a strong force in the Congress. The province that the British annexed last was Punjab with a population of 24 million, and most residents were Muslims. Punjabees occupied 54 percent of the British military service in India. The Province was ruled by a coalition government with Muslims in the majority. Included in the provinces ruled by Maha Rajas were 562 states under sultans.

The sultans controlled the lives and personal effects of the people. There were legislative bodies in 30 provinces. Members of the parliament (MPs) were hand-picked by the sultans, and were just consultants to the sultans. To administer the sultanates, a political centre had been opened in Delhi. The centre was placed direct under the governor-general. Representatives of the British government were assigned to the sultanates. There were no such representatives in regions which secured the trust of the British. The government representatives did not interfere in the administrative affairs of the sultans.

"Excepted regions" were regions entrusted to the governor or governor-general under the 1935 Act, and were ruled of their own will without any advice obtained from others. Included in the Excepted Regions were those of tribal races who did not know the administrative laws.

It was Gandhi who inspired the poor Indian mass to oppose unjust authority. His full name was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Gandhi was born in Porbandar, a princely state, on Kathiawar peninsula at the western coast of India. His father was Prime Minister to the Maha Raja of the region. Gandhi once ate mutton, prohibited by religion. He skimped on food so that he could control his lust. At age 31, he completely abstained from sexual practice. On completion of his studies at Amidabad University, he continued pursuit of law studies in London for three years. Afterwards, he came back to India with intent to enter law profession. However, in his first experience of a case trial, he failed to put questions to the accused because of his extreme shyness.

For failing in India, he moved to South Africa where he became well-known because India residents sought his service. As he worked there as a barrister for 20 years, India leaders considered him their master. At that time, India was striving to demand Home Rule, and politics began to tempt Gandhi.

Gandhi gave up his legal profession on arrival back in India, and became a political leader who wore loin-cloth only. After observing the affairs in India for one year, he built a small hut-school, called Sajagraha,<sup>1</sup> near Ahmedabad to disseminate his ideology. Indians came to rely on, trust and revere Gandhi as a God. Because his political outlook and behavior were unique his beliefs were termed Gandhism. He employed a benign, non-violent technique based on loving kindness, called Sajagraha, to respond to the violent acts of the enemy. In 1919, Gandhi became a leader accepted by the entire mass of India.

With expectation that they would be granted dominium administration, India fought from the British side during the war. However, they were dissatisfied when the British granted them diarchy administration only. Moreover, buffeted by the war, the entire world suffered economic recession with the emergence of peasants' and workers' strikes. In India, too, riots and uprisings broke out. Gandhi led the Congress, and awoke the poor India mass with political instigations. As Gandhi's influence grew in the Congress, the government came to realize that he was formidable and at once respectable personality.

While the first-time anti-authority fights were raging, the situation became so violent as to killing policemen, setting them on fire, at a village, called Chauri Chaura. Gandhi suddenly ceased his resistance, which constituted a great error for him. The poor people under Gandhi's orders faltered, and the forces went topsy-turvy. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the British arrested Gandhi and put him in prison in 1922. He was released two years later.

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<sup>1</sup> Burmese: Thit-sa-ja-ha. The term was coined by Gandhi to denote his non-cooperation movement mentioned later in the text. The ashram is known as "Sabarmati", "Harijan" or "Gandhi"-Ashram as well.

The resistance fighters had to reorganize the disintegrated forces between 1924 and 1930. To satisfy the indigenous capitalists, the British arranged to grant dominion administration by sending the Simon Commission. The Congress demanded complete independence. As the negotiations between the government and the Congress collapsed, the second-time resistance to authority broke out. At the start of the battle, the resistance-fighters made for Dandi, a place at the mouth of the sea, to make salt in their opposition against the Salt Law. This signaled the launch of the anti-government fights, stoking the entire country to rise up. Like the first time, the resistance ended up in the imprisonment of thousands of people and the bludgeoning of the police. It led to the situation in which Gandhi could select the person he favored to be appointed to the chairmanship of the Congress a position that had the right to determine the life-and-death affairs of more than 350 million Indians.

### **Jawaharlal Nehru**

Nehru, age 51, was handsome and comely among Indian leaders. Having been to Myanmar three times, he had thorough knowledge about the country. After Gandhi, he was a person most revered by the Indians. He was born on November 14, 1889 in Allahabad. His father, Motilal Nehru, was one of the brilliant barristers, and also a wealthy person. His ancestors were relatives of the royalty and high-class rich persons. His goodwill and sacrifices made by lowering pride and prestige in the interest of the nation were worthy of praise. He pursued law, beginning at age 16, at Harrow and Cambridge Universities in England. At that time, he was not interested in politics. At 23, he became a member of the Congress, and met and got acquainted with Gandhi.

While residing in Masuri, he opposed the order not to speak with Afghan representatives, and was sent into exile. He was imprisoned for the first time for taking part in the boycott not to have relations with the British. He was sent to jail seven times in striving for regaining national independence. He studied socialist literature in prison, and believed that anti-imperialist struggle should be based on socialist system. However, he did not like communism.

Although he and Gandhi grasped different conceptions, they had strong attachment to each other. Though Gandhi was generous towards poor peasants and had pity on them, Nehru believed that he was indirectly showing support to the British ideology while he understood that Gandhi was indispensable in Indian politics. Nehru did not believe in non-violent method. He respected Gandhi because he could raise the political standard of India.

Nehru served the post of Executive Secretary in India Congress for 11 years. It was him only

who held the post of President of the Congress for 3 terms. He strove to table a motion on socialism before the left-wing Executive Committee. In the 1937 election, he traveled many miles for 22 months just to deny a Congress post. For his endeavors, the entire nation lauded him.

He was generous about politics. After the death of Motilal Nehru, his situation became so bad that he had to sell furniture for buying his daily meals, and had to stand on honorariums from writing books which the global audience liked. All members of the Congress loved and respected him. It was estimated that Nehru would be the first president on regaining national independence.

### **The birth of the Congress**

The Congress: The person who first formed the Indian National Congress (INC) was Mr. A. O. Hume, an English ICS. On its formation in 1885, its members comprised the British and the educated Indians. The Congress was aimed at facilitating the rule of India and modernizing the Indians who had lagged behind the times. Governor-General Lord Dufferin assisted them. The person served as the chairman at the first conference of the Congress was Mr. Bonnerjee, an Indian leader. The history of the Congress can be studied in three parts.

In the period between 1885 and 1915, the Congress devoted its activities just to voluntary services without the involvement of politics. Between 1915 and 1919, it began to make demands to upgrade the present administrative system, to amend the Forestry Law, to ban alcoholic drinks, to eradicate prostitution, to modernize Indian ladies, and to attend to the affairs of the low castes. In fact, it was an association not for organizing the Indians but only for educated, well-socialized Indians to discuss politics at leisure. The Congress had the nature of being dependent on the government. So, during the First World War, it took part on the British side. The Indians expected that they would enjoy autonomy at the end of the war.

Indian leaders such as Mrs Anni Besant and B.K. Tilak strove for Home Rule, the Congress began to accept Gandhi's non-violent anti-authority means in 1917. The British issued the Montagu-Chelmsford Report in 1918 that promised an upgrade of the administrative system at the end of the war. What was mentioned in the report was diarchy administration, and the grievances of the entire Indian mass grew. The economic depression caused the impoverished class to rise up. The government cruelly suppressed them. Up to 1929, the INC had aimed at the level of dominion administration while the British were not willing to upgrade the diarchy level. Moreover, workers' strikes were breaking out in all parts of Europe and the proletariat uprising in Russia had met with success. So, the British feared that similar strikes might appear in India, and were keeping all riots

under control. The most scandalous event took place in Punjab where a general, under order of the Punjab governor-general, shot about 20,000 persons dead. These persons were actually coming to a church to say prayers. It was then that Gandhi launched the first anti-authority resistance, leading the poor Indians.

All the poor Indians came into the shade of the Congress that had become the organization of the impoverished masses. Moreover, Indian capitalists with strong political outlook also joined INC to demand compensation for their losses. Thus, the Congress had become the leader or the representative of Indians of all strata. At the height of the protests, Hasrat Mohani tabled a motion at the Ahmedabad conference, calling for complete independence free of foreign rule. Gandhi protested against the motion without any sound reason. While the riots were at their most feverous rage at the beginning of 1922, Indian leaders arranged negotiations with the government. The Conference of All-parties, held in January, 1922, decided to make demands to withdraw government's crackdowns, to cease the Congress's anti-authority protests, to upgrade the level of administration, and for the British government to convene a plenary meeting in London.

According to these decisions, the Congress postponed anti-authority resistance for one month, pending the response of the government. Yet, the government bided its time as it did not want riots while the Prince of Wales was in India. When the time came it announced that it denied all the demands. Since then, the people began to avoid tax. Villagers who refused to pay tax were suppressed more. In February, 1922, Gandhi wrote a long letter to the governor-general, saying that the anti-authority resistance would be put to a stop if the government ceased suppressions within seven days. The governor-general did not give in. While the entire nation was watching the steps of the Congress, the Congress executive led by Gandhi halted all the anti-authority movements. Included in those dissatisfied with Gandhi's act were Motilal Nehru and Lala Lajpat Rai.

At the All-India Congress Conference in February, 1922, a motion denouncing Gandhi was tabled. While the people's reverence of Gandhi was waning, the government arrested Gandhi, and later other leaders. Taking advantage of the false step taken by the Congress, the government increased its suppressions. Gandhi was sentenced to six years' imprisonment with hard labour. While the Congress was embroiled in difficulties for future tasks, an Inquiry Committee led by Motilal Nehru and Dr Ansari was formed. The committee submitted an eight-point report which briefly put forward to cease anti-authority resistance, and to stand for elections in the regional and parliamentary levels. When these points were presented at a meeting in Gaya in 1922, the proposal to cease anti-authority movement was endorsed. Congress leaders were divided over the point to

stand for parliamentary elections. However, it was approved at a special conference in Delhi in 1923.

Gandhi was released from prison in 1924, and bridged all the divisions of opinion. The Congress meeting at the end of 1924 elected Gandhi to presidency of the Congress. Beginning in 1929, peasants' and workers' strikes became widespread. Workers' organizations and peasants' organizations emerged. The government, too, chose to crack down on them, using weapons. At that time, a case that shocked India and the world emerged. In Bombay, Punjab and the UP provinces thousands of people were arrested for conspiring to resist the government in an armed revolution. Two persons who threw had-grenades into the parliamentary meeting in protest against the government's cruelties were hanged. Action was taken against workers' leaders. Even then, martyrs who scarified their lives appeared more.

Just before a Congress conference in Lahore in 1929, the India's governor-general announced that the administrative system would be upgraded to dominium. Then the problem whether to accept dominium or not came up. The conference chairman was Nehru. Finally, the Lahore conference decided to wrest back independence. The leaders called for announcing January 26, 1930 the National Independence Day, and commemorate it with celebrations. On that day, any people marched in procession and at the same time, Gandhi sent an 11-point letter to the governor-general. Gandhi made demands only for the indigenious capitalists without including the affairs of peasants and workers. The public just waited for the time to launch anti-authority movements. When the governor-general rejected Gandhi's demands, the Congress Executive Committee announced to start anti-authority movements.

On the morning of March 12, 1930, Gandhi, accompanied by 75 persons, left for Dandi, a sea beach village, to make salt. (Against the Salt Law). Thus he launched the anti-authority movements in the entire country. The government arrested and persecuted the resistance leaders, at last shooting them to death. After doing cruelties, the government released Gandhi and 26 followers. Pundit Motilal Nehru was released from jail ahead of Gandhi. Motilal fell ill in prison, and after his release, his health gradually-worsened and passed away.

At that time, Congress executives led by Gandhi arranged for reconciliation with the government. After Gandhi had met with the governor-general on January 17, 1931, Gandhi-Erwin Agreement was issued and announced. According to the agreement, the Congress was to stop its, anti-authority movement, and the government was to withdraw its crackdowns. A meeting to upgrade the administrative level was held in Britain between the representatives of the Congress

and the government. Gandhi attended it. On his arrival back from London in December, 1931, he found India still lacking peace. The government issued an ultimatum to Bengal, UP and the north-west border area, and was violently cracking down on the protestors. Nehru and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan were detained. As Gandhi's request to withdraw suppressions was rejected, he announced to the entire country to resume anti-authority movements. The government declared the Congress an unlawful association. It also announced that those involved in the anti-government cases would be tried at special courts and judgments passed. Then, Gandhi and Congress president Patel were arrested. At the same time, the National Schools, the Nation College and University, established in parallel to the government institutions were declared unlawful. People all over the country resorted to all available means they could think of to rise up against the British.

In drawing up the administrative system which would be adopted in 1935, members of low Hindu castes were excluded as a minority. In protest against this Gandhi staged hunger strike in prison. Fearing that a great political upheaval might surface if Gandhi had died, the British complied with Gandhi's demand.

As the strength of workers, peasants and students having sharp political outlooks grew stronger, grievances against Gandhi for his mild, ineffective actions grew larger. Having realized this, Gandhi, at the Bombay meeting in October, 1934, announced his resignation from presidency of the Congress. Yet, he was still manipulating the members from behind the scene.

In September 1939, Britain declared war on Germany. Two days after the declaration, Gandhi met with the governor-general, followed by an announcement by Gandhi, wishing success for the British and the French. The entire country protested against the announcement. The Congress said Gandhi's announcement had nothing to do with the association. Then, to carry out important tasks related to war, a sub committee comprising Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as members were formed. When the Congress asked the government about its attitude towards India the governor-general issued an announcement which mentioned that a consultancy body, with the governor-general himself acting as chairman, would be formed to see to war affairs and the administrative system would be upgraded to dominium.

Though the announcement did not come up to its expectation of total independence, the Congress had to accept it as it did not wish to go to the situation of testing strength against the British. Congress members in the government of the seven states resigned as they did not see any concession from the government. As the entire country was anxious and preparing to resume anti-authority movements, the Congress decided to do the same also to please its members. The

Executive Committee led by Gandhi felt burdened to enter into anti-authority actions. There was little hope to regain independence even when anti-authority movement was announced as long as Gandhi was at the helm.

### **Actors in the congress**

Apart from Gandhi and Nehru, there were also other leaders in the congress. Subhas Chandra Bose, who had served in Congress presidency twice, was born in Cuttack, a town near Calcutta, in 1897. His father, a lawyer, was rich. After matriculation, he pursued higher studies at Presidency College in Calcutta. He was dismissed from the college for kicking a White professor, who insulted Indians, down the stairs. His parents sent him to Canberra University in England where he passed the ICS (Indian Civil Service) qualification examination. At first, he entered the government service, and later, quite the post to join others in Gandhi's anti-authority movement. In 1930, he was sent to Mandalay Jail in Myanmar. Considering him a rebel who would resort to violent means, the government seriously suppressed him. Bose possessed strong physique. He was single and a good speaker.

Next to Bose, another person who played a crucial role in the Congress was Govind Ballabh Pant, who formed the Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh. As he entered politics, he renounced his legal career. Another personality was Jayaprakash Narayan, who was born in a rural village. At the age of 13, he ventured to go to America. He pursued studies at five Universities within on year. While in America, he espoused Marxism. Back in India, he was sent jail while working as a supervisor at the labour section of the Congress. He advocated Congress socialism when he was released from prison.

Another personality in the Congress was M. N. Roy, a communist, who founded a "Royist Party Chapter" within the Congress. Contesting against current president Maulana Abul Kalam Azad for Congress presidency, he suffered a great defeat. A person who was the leader of the Gandhi gang or the Leftist gang and who carried out whatever Gandhi conceived was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Patel, 61, renounced the career of barrister, and took part in the anti-authority movements. Though a Muslim, current president Azak was willing to effect reform. Azak, who was 52, has studied at Al Azar University in Cairo, Egypt. He had been zealously engaged in politics since before the appearance of Gandhi.

Another important person was Babu Rajendra Prasad, who knew even language and was the

greatest barrister in India. In 1934, he became Congress president, and resigned the post in 1935. He was re-elected to presidency.

Other leaders in the Congress were Jammalal Bajaj (treasurer), Gan Shyan Bala<sup>1</sup> (who generously donated money to the Congress when the occasion arose), Mrs. Sarojini Naidu (sole women EC member), Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (a Pathan Muslim, a Congress leader from the north-west border), Bulbai Desai (an opposition leader in the Indian Parliament), C. Rajaopalachari (who was known as Tamil Gandhi whose child and Gandhi's child were married) and B.G Kher (Congress' Chief Minister in Bombay Province).

### **The secrets of Congress**

In India, people of all strata were taking part in the combat against colonialism so that they would be liberated from the suppressive British rule. People in the capitalist and workers' classes joined the Congress to strive to regain independence. However, as there were various parties, there was an issue as to whose method should be employed in resistance fighting. If an analysis was made of parties within the Congress from the class political outlook, there included the Leftist Gang that espoused Gandhism, and socialist and communist parties.

Gandhism embraces ancient beliefs that a political change should be effected through religious teachings and techniques invented in the anti-colonialist combat. In 1920, Gandhi's ideology ignited the impoverished mass with spirits of politics and brought about changes in the formation of the Congress. Thus, Gandhism was regarded as an ideology directed towards progress of the nation. In the first-time anti-authority movement, it was said that people breached the principle of "non-violence," and so that movement was suspended. Afterwards, indigenous capitalist joined the Congress in a bid to use it. Economic depression affected the world in 1929, and the British raised taxes, causing workers to stage strikes and form unions. Leftist gangs also emerged.

Gandhi submitted demands to the governor-general before the 1930 anti-authority movements, but the demands were in the interests of the indigenous capitalists. In the second movements, people sacrificed their lives while the indigenous capitalists with Gandhi as their leader betrayed the people by making negotiations with the government. As grievances over Gandhi grew, Gandhi had to resign from the Congress in 1934. The situation made the people consider which party they should choose for leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> The name of this sponsor could not be confirmed [editor's note].

Though the Congress's Socialist Party was in a position to do politics openly, it merged with pro-Gandhi men resulting in collapse of its stance. Roy's political acts were worse than those of pro-Gandhi members. He was completely against the idea of resistance. Instead he believed that helping the British, who were fighting Hitlerism, would strengthen human rights, peace and democracy. Roy's conceptions, it was believed, showed support to Gandhism, which was going backward. Bose was popular as a person representing all those who opposed the leadership of Gandhi. He organized a separate party "Forward Bloc," which was actually a mistake. The step taken by the party was topsy-turvy without any effect. It just wasted its time by protesting against the tasks of the Congress Executive Committee.

The Congress Party, declared unlawful, could not do politics openly. In the leftist gang, the Communist Party was the most influential over workers, peasants and students. Its political principle was to expose the steps of pro-Gandhi gang members, denounce them in public and instigate the public to resume anti-authority movements.

As the Congress Socialists and Bose had taken wrong steps, the public confidence had waned. The strength of the Communists grew larger. The communists aimed at instigating resistance against the British and regaining absolute independence after toppling the leadership of the pro-Gandhi gang.

### **Assessment**

Tun Shein factually describes in his books internal affairs and conflicts in the Indian political world during the anti-colonialist era. The author attended a meeting of the Congress Party at Ramghar in 1940. After studying Indian politics, he recounts beliefs of the political leaders and their strategies to regain independence.

This book was compiled in 1940-41 when both India and Myanmar were under British rule. The British were applying the same administrative system for both countries. Independence movements and political changes in India were believed to affect Myanmar. With this belief, the author seemed to have contributed to Myanmar resistance efforts by writing "Ko-dwei Eindiya." The author, himself a leader in GCBA, seemed to believe that Indian political changes should take into consideration in Myanmar.

The manners of anti-colonialist movements in India and Myanmar looked identical. Just as the Congress was the first association to incite the Indians politically, so also GCBA did the same in Myanmar. As the Congress, led by Gandhi, spawned resistance forces led by Nehru, GCBA gave

birth to associations like Doh Bamar Asi-ayone (We, Burmese, Association), and resistance forces led by General Aung San.

Political aims, too, assumed the same nature. In India, there were divisions over the choice of separate rule or joint rule with Myanmar and the supreme aim became fighting for absolute independence. In GCBA too, its members were divided over separate or joint rule with India, and the eventual, common aim was to wrest back independence.

Hence, it can be said that “Ko-daw Eindiya” is a book that gave lessons for the Myanmar independence movement. It also drew the attention of resistance fighters and the entire public to the history of Indian independence struggle. In the present era too, the book will be a source of study for those who wish to know Indian history.

## 5. Translation of some Passages of the Book<sup>1</sup>

(Translation: Ye Nyunt)

### **Jawaharlal Nehru**

Only if anyone who does not know him happens to see his photo, he will certainly mistake him for a handsome Indian movie actor. Although he has attained age 51, his appearance looks still youthful, with white complexion, attractive eyes and eyebrows and a straight, well-shaped nose. He stands five feet and ten inches. If Nehru is dressed in a Western suit, no one will say that he is an Indian.

At Ramghar conference, we met a number of Indian leaders, but none of them had features as unique as Nehru. When Subat Bose resigned chairmanship, Rajindra Prasad succeeded. When I met the new chairman, I suddenly remembered the Indians in Burma who work as water carriers.

Among the Indian leaders, Nehru is the only person who is well-versed in the affairs of Burma. He has been to Burma three times and is now an old friend of us. Later we came to know that it was Nehru who urged the executives to invite members of Doh Bamar Asi-ayone to the conference as honorary guests of the Congress.

In the eye of Indians, Nehru is the most important and revered leader of the entire country after Gandhi. He was born in Alahabad on November 14, 1889. His father, Motilal Nehru, was a barrister and one of the richest men in India. His relatives, from ancestors, are members of the royalty and nobility and affluent society. In the reign of the moguls, the last dynasty in India, Nehru's ancestors were ministers. One of his uncles was the chief minister.

Nehru, who descended from the Keshmeri Brahmin race, affluent class and nobility, has abandoned his pride and wealth to serve the well being of the entire Indian race. His good-will and sacrifice invariably deserve praise.

When he was young, his parents made him learn English from a teacher at home. When he turned 16 in 1905, his father sent him to Britain for pursuit of education. He studied law at Herow and Cambridge Universities. In student life, he did not give serious thought to politics. At 23, he came back to India.

Back in India, prevailing situations pushed him closer to politics. In 1916, Motilal presided over the first meeting to bring together the Congress and the Moslem Association. Nehru's house was the venue, hosting the meeting. Decidedly, Nehru enlisted his name as member of the national

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<sup>1</sup> Pp. 47-53.

organization. From the onwards, he had the opportunity to meet and be acquainted with Gandhi.

### **The first-time going against the government**

An incident experienced by Nehru in his young political life was memorable. He was travelling in a night train from Amritsa to Delhi. The entire train was full, and so he took a seat left vacant. Except him, the passengers around him were military officers. Their chatting was audible. The most talkative of them was a captain whom he later knew was Captain Diah, the main actor in the Jalieb Walabed massacre. He heard Diah say that in the case of killing a mass of people my machine guns in Kelien Walabad, it was because of his mercy that the entire town had not been burnt down. Captain Diah was the person who proclaimed Martial Law and ordered his men to gun down the people who had converged to take part in religious festival. He did not even leave the women and children, and still worse, he ordered the wounded persons to crawl under the showers of bullets to safe place.

Nehru heard all his words spoken with all enthusiasm about cruelly killing the persons of his race. He could not stand to hear them. His words were not only upsetting, he and his behaviour were also an unfavorable sight.

Not long after wards, he brought his mother and wife, who were ill, to Masuri. It was a time when the 1919 Afghan war came to an end and Britain and Afghanistan were engaged in negotiations. One month later, the police gave Nehru a hush order, forbidding him from talking to Afghan representatives. At first, he did not intend to speak with Afghans, but this order was not based on reason, and so felt like going against the government. He did go to the Afghans and spoke with them. The consequence was that he received another order to leave Masuri immediately.

His departure from Masuri itself changed his mind greatly. He abhorred colonialism more. The Masuri incident was the first time he disobeyed the government.

At that time, the views of farmers had become broad. He went to various regions to meet farmers, witness their suffering and ask them about their losses. In a book he wrote, "Farmers always believe with trust and love that we will bring them welfare. When I realize that they are poor and place great expectations in us, I feel sad and embarrassed, recalling my comfortable life and negligence of politics. A new image of India in poverty, deficient in food and clothing, has appeared in my mind's eye."

Nehru was sent to jail for the first time in 1921 for taking part in the strike of non-association with the British. Later, he was imprisoned seven times.

### III. The Book's Back Page: We-Students Song

#### 1. Burmese Text

## ဒို့ကျောင်းသား သီချင်း

စီရေးသူ ရွှေညာမောင်

(ဒို့ဗမာပြည်တွင်-ဆန်ရေစပါးရယ်-ကျောက်သံပတ္တမြားရယ်-ပေါများပါလျက်၊ လွတ်လပ်ရေးနဲ့  
 ဝေးခဲ့လေတယ်၊ မွန် မြန်မာများရယ်-လွန်စွာများတယ်၊ မချမ်းသာနိုင်တော့တယ်)  
 (မိဘများဆင်းရဲလို့ကွယ်-ဒို့ကျောင်းသားတွေ-လူတန်းစေ့ အောင်မနေနိုင်ကြတယ်)  
 (ကျွန်ုပ်ညာသင်ရရင်ဖြင့်-ကျောင်းထွက်ရင် အလုပ်မဲ့မယ်)၊ ဒို့တစ်တွေထမင်း ဝအောင်  
 မစွမ်းဆောင်ဘူးတကယ် (သခင်ပညာကို သင်လျင် ဗမာ များ လွတ်လပ်စေဘွယ်)၊ ကျောင်းသားတွေ  
 ကြိုးစားနိုင်တယ်။

သံပြိုင် ။ ။ (ကျောင်းသား သမဂ္ဂအသင်းကြီးရယ် (ဒို့) ကျောင်းသားများတို့ စည်းရုံးရာ၊  
 စုဝေးရာ-အားစုရာ အောင်မြေမှန်ပေတယ်)၊ (ကျောင်းသားတို့ရယ်)၊ သခင်ပညာရအောင်-  
 သမဂ္ဂရှေ့ဆောင်ချက်ကိုမပယ် \* \* \* ညီညွတ်စွာ အမှန်တကယ်-မရှောင်တမ်း  
 အောင်ပန်းဆွတ်ဆိုရွယ်။

(ဒို့ဗမာများ အရေးဆိုလျှင် တကယ်- ကျောင်းသားများရှေ့ကနေ၍ အသေခံခဲ့ တယ်)၊  
 (ရင်ကိုမြေကတုတ်-အရိုကြေကြေ - အရေစုတ်စုတ်)-မဆုတ်မတွန့်ကာကွယ်-ပလိပ်တုတ်ကို မဖြိုတယ်  
 (စက်) သေနပ်ကို မကြောက်တယ်) ဒို့ကျောင်းသားရဲဘော် (ဗိုလ်) အောင်ကျော်နဲ့ (ရတနာပုံ)  
 ရွှေမန်းမြို့ရယ်က- အာဇာနည်များ (အရေးတော်ပုံကြီးဝယ်-တပ်ဦးက ကျဆုံးခဲ့တယ်) ၊  
 ဒို့ကျောင်းသားများရယ်-အမျိုးအတွက်ကွယ်- ဒို့အသက် ကို ဖက်ရွက်လောက်ပင် မမှုခဲ့ပါတော့တယ်။

(ရဲဘော်တို့... အရေးကြီးလေပြီ- သွေးစည်းကြပါစို့-အချိန်ကျဘက်မျှော်ထောက်ဖွယ် -  
 သမဂ္ဂအလံတော် အောက်ဝယ်)၊ (တကဲ့လွတ်လပ်ရေးကို-ဒို့တစ်တွေတည်ဆောက်မယ်၊  
 ကြန့်ကြန့်ခိုင်ခိုင် မယိုင်မယိမ်းဘဲ ဒို့စိတ် ဖွဲ့စည်းမယ်)၊ သခင် ပညာကို မရလျှင် ရအောင်ယူစို့ကွယ်။

## 2. English Translation

### We, Students!

(Translation: Ye Nyunt)

*Lyrics: Shwe Nyar Maung*

Despite her abundance in rice and precious metals, Burma has been flung away from independence, large numbers of Mons and Bamar remaining ever poor. We, students cannot live up to standards because parents are poor. If we pursue “servant” education, we’d be jobless when we leave school. We lack our ability to fill our stomachs full. It is possible that we’ll get free if we pursue “master” education. Students can strive more.

**Chorus:** The Students’ Union is the true place of victory where students get united, assemble and rally strength. Oh, students! Don’t ignore the Union so that we can grab the “master” education. With unity, we’re certain to win the laurels.

For the cause of the Burmese, students sacrificed their lives in the forefront. Our breasts are our shields. Let our bones be crushed and our skin be torn. We’ll fend ourselves without cowering. We don’t care the billy club.<sup>1</sup> We’re not frightened by the machinegun. Our fellow student Bo Aung Kyaw and martyrs of Yadanabon Shwe Man fell at the front of our strike. If it’s for the race we don’t regard our lives as worthy as a leaf.

Comrades! Let’s be united at this time of urgency. Let’s wait for the time under the flag of the Union. We’ll build the real independence. Let’s rally our minds, fit and unflagging. Let’s grasp the “master” education.

#### **Translator’s notes:**

*servant education:* low education given to the rules, the poor Burmese, under British

*master education:* education pursued by British families and high-class Burmese families

*Yadanabon:* Old name of Mandalay

*Shwe Man:* Golden Mandalay (Shwe means gold)

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<sup>1</sup> A short stick or club, especially a police officer's club.

## V. Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### **SHORT INFORMATION on the MAKING of the BOOK REPORTS**

CHOSEN BOOKS from the bibliography will be provided on a lending basis by the manager [or for people in Myanmar through the Myanmar Book Centre in Yangon (55 Baho Road; telephone 221-TWO REPORTS on each book by different persons are accepted.

LENGHT: 8,000 to 12,000 words (plus special space, if desired);

LANGUAGE of PUBLICATION: English; manuscripts in Myanmar language will be translated;

CRITERIA (must not slavishly be observed):

1. Biographical information about the author/translator, and other contributors;
2. Information about the non-Myanmar sources used in the book; (if the book is a translation, the original English version will be provided, too, if possible;)
3. Summary of the book's contents;
4. Information about the special aim and intended impact of the book at the time of publication;
5. How are foreign terms and concepts translated or transformed into the Myanmar language and the Myanmar context? (May be omitted!)
6. Personal assessment by the reviewer of the book, its impact on later times and its meaning for today

DEADLINE of DELIVERY of the REPORT: December 31, 2005 (the deadline can be extended);

DELIVERY of the REPORTS DRAFTED: Directly to the manager of the project by email or through the Myanmar Book Centre.

COMMENTS and EDITING: The reports will be commented upon by another person. The reviewer may react on the comments and answer the questions as he or she likes. The responsibility for the final editing of the reports is with the project manager.

REWARD: As a financial reward, each reviewer will receive 50 US \$ at the time of submitting the book report and 30 US \$ after the final editing.

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS like recollections of elder people, who remember the impact of Nagani on their life, and essays on subjects related to the club (Nagani Song, Nagani Magazine, the role of literature in disseminating knowledge in Myanmar, etc.) are very much appreciated.

Appendix 2

**INFORMATION about COMMENTARIES on BOOK REPORTS**

1. The commentaries asked for shall serve two aims

First (and most important): To start a dialogue on Myanmar's intellectual and literary heritage between interested people inside and outside of Myanmar.

Second (and important, too): To check the clarity of the report with regard to the intended publication.

Therefore, the commentator should be interested in Burma affairs and in the general topic of the respective book, but must not know anything about its specific content.

2. Length of each commentary: Must not exceed the space of this paper.

3. Some hints that may be useful to observe in writing a commentary:

Are there any questions that are brought up by reading the report?

If yes, what kind of questions do arise?

Are the criteria listed in the “Short information on the making of book reports” (see attachment) met by the book report?

What information on the book report do I find interesting/exciting or unnecessary/redundant?

Is there anything that I would recommend to the author of the report?

Delivery of the commentary: It would be appreciated if the commentaries could be sent by email to the above mentioned email address. If the author of the report chooses to react on the commentary, the commentator will be informed.

Affairs to come: All participants will be informed about the development of the publishing process of the reports and are invited to participate in future deliberations and activities. - Questions and recommendations are very much appreciated.

MYANMAR LITERATURE PROJECT



Starting with an investigation into the NAGANI BOOK CLUB

The project's  
**Working Papers**  
are published by  
the **Department of Southeast Asian Studies of Passau University**

Already Published:

- No. 10:1, An Introduction into the Nagani Book Club
  - No. 10:1.1, Additional Material on Nagani
- No. 10:2, Thein Pe, *Saya Lun* and *Member of Parliament*
- No. 10:3, Ba Hein and Hla Shwe on Capitalism
- No. 10:4, Thein Pe, *Student Boycotters* (Two Volumes)
  - No. 10:4.1, Additional Material on Students, Society and Politics
- No. 10:5, Ba Khaing, *Political History of Myanma*
- No. 10:6, Nu, *Gandalarit*
- No. 10:7, Mogyo, *José Rizal*
- No. 10:8, Three Books on World War and Burma
- No. 10:9, Two Works on the History of the Russian Revolution
- No. 10:10, Soe, *Socialism* and Chit Hlaing, *Memories*
- No. 10:11, Ba Hein, *Students' Revolution*
- No. 10:12, Thein Pe, *Indo-Burman Riot*
- No. 10:13, Two Political Dictionaries
- No. 10:100, Papers Presented at the Burma Studies Conference, Singapore 2006

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Some Nagani Books  
were scanned and are available on CD.  
For details contact  
habezett@t-online.de  
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All Working Papers published until now are available  
at  
**<http://www.zoellner-online.org/mlp.htm>**  
and at the Online Burma Library  
**<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=2083>**

## INVITATION

Readers are invited to participate in the project by

- writing **comments and criticisms** on the contents of this and other volumes of this series;
- contributing **essays** on Burmese/Myanmar literature as a medium between the international world and Burmese society;
- providing **material** that sheds more light on the Nagani Book Club, its context and impact on Burmese intellectual and literary life;
- offering **assistance** as translators and commentators of book reports.

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For contributions and questions, please contact:

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