

Myanmar Literature Project

မြန်မာစာပေစီမံကိန်း

Hans-Bernd Zöllner (ed.)

Working Paper No. 10:2

Material on Thein Pe, *Biography of Saya Lun and Member of Parliament*

Passauer Beiträge zur Südostasienskunde
Working Papers

ISSN 1435-5310

Alle Rechte © Lehrstuhl für Südostasienskunde, Universität Passau 2006

Druck: Universität Passau

Printed in Germany

Contents

About the Contributors.....	3
I. INTRODUCTION (Hans-Bernd Zöllner).....	5
Measuring the Size of a Dragon.....	5
Some Observations and Questions.....	8
About this Volume	11
Drawing of Thakin Kodaw Hmaing.....	14
Front page of <i>Saya Lun's</i> Biography (Reproduction).....	15
II. MATERIAL ON THEIN PE, <i>BIOGRAPHY OF SAYA LUN</i>.....	16
1. Bibliographical Information (Kyaw Hoe, Translation: Frankie Tun).....	16
2. Ko Tar: Book Review on <i>Biography of Saya Lun</i>	17
The Author	17
<i>Saya Lun</i> alias Thakin Kodaw Hmine	18
Thein Pe's Biography of <i>Saya Lun</i>	19
The Editorial Foreword and Introduction	20
3. Commentary on Ko Tar "Thein Pe, Biography of <i>Saya Lun</i> " (Gerhard Köberlin)	26
4. Kyaw Nyunt: Book Review on <i>Biography of Saya Lun</i> (Thakin Kodaw Hmaing).....	28
Brief Biography of the Author, Thein Pe Myint (1914-1978).....	28
Summary of the Book on <i>Saya Lun</i>	33
Aim and Impact of the Book and Assessment	41
References.....	46
5. Critique of the Review by Kyaw Nyunt (Volker Grabowsky)	47
6. Reply to Volker Grabowsky's Critique (Kyaw Nyunt).....	48
7. Some Writings by <i>Saya Lun</i> (Translation: U Tin Htway)	49
Introductory Remarks:	49
a) Poems on the Student Strike of 1920 (University le:-khyui:-kri:).....	49
b) Excerpts from the Thakin Tika	51
III. MATERIAL ON THEIN PE, <i>MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT</i>	53
1. Bibliographical Information (Kyaw Hoe, Translation: Frankie Tun).....	53
2. Nay Lin: Book Report of "Min Taing Pin" (Member of Parliament) (Translation: Tin Hlaing)	55

Brief Biography of the Author	55
Abstract of the Story	56
Remarks	59
3. Commentary on Nay Lin's report (Doerthe Beer)	60
4. Thein Pe, The M.L.A. (Translation: Usha Nagayarma).....	62
IV. APPENDICES	71
SHORT INFORMATION on the MAKING of the BOOK REPORTS	71
INFORMATION about COMMENTARIES on BOOK REPORTS	73

About the Contributors

Kyaw Hoe studied Library Science at Yangon University and obtained his M.A. degree with a work on the Nagani Book Club. He later retired from the library field and became a merchant.

Frankie Tun was born 1964 in Monywa, received a B.A. in Psychology at Yangon University. In 1994, he went to Bangkok and became a teacher and head of the Secondary Department of an International School. In 2001 he moved to Germany and since then is employed in various occupations. In January 2007 he will be teaching at an International school in Bremen.

Ko Tar was born 1950 in Sagaing Division. He studied in Yangon and received a M.B.B.S at Yangon University. He is working as writer and editor.

Tin Hlaing born in 1941, in Thakutpinle village, Monywa district, comes from a rural background. He studied physics at Mandalay University and from 1972 onwards he did graduate work at the London University where he received his Ph.D. degree. Tin Hlaing taught at several universities in Burma for the past 30 years and became later a Director-General in the Ministry of Science and Technology. Since his 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.

Gerhard Köberlin was born 1943 in Marktredwitz, Bavaria (Germany). He finished studies in Protestant theology 1967, various ecumenical assignments with World Student Christian Federation, National Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany, teaching Christian theology in Germany and Thailand (Mahidol University, Bangkok). Retired Director of Studies, Academy of Mission at the University of Hamburg. Founding member of the European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies, chairperson of the Asia-Foundation (Essen, Germany).

Kyaw Nyunt was born 1949 in Monywa District. He studied Physics at Mandalay University (1967-1970), earned M.Phil. (Peace) at Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College, Dublin in Ireland (1992), now serving at Myanmar Council of Churches, Yangon.

Volker Grabowsky was Assistant Professor of Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Passau and at the Department of Thai and Vietnamese Studies, Seminar of Language and Culture of China, University of Hamburg. From 1996 to 1999 he was visiting Lecturer of "Traditional Lao Literature" at the Department of Lao Language and Literature, National University of Laos, Vientiane, under the German Academic Exchange Service. Since 1999 he is Professor of Southeast-Asian History at the Westfälische Wilhelms-University of Münster.

Tin Htway was born 1930 in Monywa. He attended the University of Rangoon from 1947 to 1952 and finished his I.A. and B.A. (English, Burmese Language, Literature, History) there. From 1967 to 1969 he studied at SOAS in London and obtained a M.Phil (Burmese Language and Literature). From 1969 until his retirement in 1995, he was Lecturer for Burmese language at the University of Heidelberg. He now lives in a small town near this city.

Nay Lin was born 1966 in Yangon. He 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.

Doerthe Beer, 33 years old, obtained her M.A. in Anthropology. She is an area specialist for Southeast-Asia. She wrote her final thesis about "Burmese in Exile". In 2005 she worked with PBI (Peace Brigades International) in Papua/Indonesia. Currently, she is working for Cap Anamur a German NGO as Project Coordinator in a Street Children Home in Nairobi, Kenya.

Usha Narayanam was born in Burma. She was known as Ma Tint Tint until she married the Indian diplomat K.R. Narayanam in 1951. She received her B.A. in Burmese Language and Literature from Rangoon University and lectured there. In 1997 her husband became the tenth President of India.

I. INTRODUCTION (Hans-Bernd Zöllner)

This volume contains information about two among approximately one hundred books published by the Nagani Book Club and the Burma Publishing House. The introductory volume of this series of working papers provided an overview of the Nagani Book Club.¹ This volume allows a preliminary look at the material output of the two publishing houses by providing some material on two of the books published.

Furthermore, the two books documented here may supply some more insight into the history of the two related publishing enterprises as well as various ways to assess their output. The two books represent the first and the last book in Kyaw Hoe's bibliography, which provided the basis for our investigation.² They were listed as number 1 ("Biography of Saya Lun") and as number 101 ("Member of Parliament") respectively. Moreover, both books were written by the same well-known Burmese writer, Thein Pe (Myint).³ This introduction, therefore, will first reflect on some general aspects of the Nagani Book Club and will thereby pointing out some special features of the books under review.

Measuring the Size of a Dragon

a) Statistics and Beyond

Kyaw Hoe's bibliography implicitly defined the space spanned by the Nagani Book Club in a statistical way. It lists a sequence of books published under a certain label, namely "Nagani", and adds the books published by Nagani's co-founder Tun Aye after he left the house of the Red Dragon. According to this definition, the two books introduced here marked the beginning and the end of the output of a book-producing enterprise that can be quantified by numbers and summaries of the books' contents.

Such accounting is an essential prerequisite for any inquiry into the subject introduced in this volume and the following working papers. It provided the initial-yardstick for measuring the size of the object under review. 101 books is quite a lot, but "quite a lot" is a rather vague estimation. A closer look at Kyaw Hoe's bibliography tells that these books were published between January 1938 and the first months of 1941. This leads to the conclusion that within the time period of 40 months,

¹ Hans-Bernd Zoellner (ed.), *An Introduction into the Nagani Book Club*. Vol. 1 of this series of working papers.

² The bibliography was submitted in 1975 as a M.A. thesis at the Department of Library Science, Yangon University.

³ "Thein Pe" was the name given to him by his family. After the war, he added "Myint" to honour his mother, Daw Myint. In the literature, he is usually referred to as "Thein Pe Myint". In this paper, which concentrates on his pre-war writings, "Myint" is omitted.

an average of 2.5 books were published per month. This figure seems impressive, considering the fact that Nagani was established by absolute amateurs in the publishing business. This measurement, however, needs to be modified since the given ratio is based on publications from both publishing houses which from June 1939 onwards existed side by side. This leads to the question of how the 101 books listed form a coherent entity. For an answer one has to have a look beyond statistics.

b) Authors, Subjects, and Historical Context

The first and the last book in the bibliography can be regarded as related since both were written by the same author. This assumption is further substantiated by the subject matter of both books. Both reflect on Burma's situation between its loss of independence and its attempt to regain it. Saya Lun, whose life was portrayed in Nagani's first book, as a child had witnessed the deposition of Burma's last king. As a writer as well as a 'political animal' he accompanied and influenced the Burmese nationalist movement. Being a political writer, he personified the nationalist response to the loss of independence. On the other hand, book No. 101, "Member of Parliament" (မင်းတို့ခံဝင်), built a bridge between the old days of the Burmese kings and the situation under colonial rule. The Burmese name of the book, literally translated, means "Royal Advisers" — a term that later was chosen to designate the members of the Legislative Assemblies established by the British, whose function was to co-administer the province under the guidance of the governor residing in Rangoon and his superiors in London. It was the English king who crowned the top of this hierarchy.

To gauge the extent of these publishing activities it is necessary to assess the relevance of the persons involved as well as the pertinence of the subjects covered; both need to be seen in the historical context of the time of publication, which was characterised by Burma's struggle for independence.

c) Open Ends

Before these aspects are discussed in more detail, a third perspective on the two books is needed. It reveals that the nice dual coincidence that apparently binds the two publications together may be only an accidental or even a fabricated one. Thein Pe's "Member of Parliament" was not the last book published by the Burma Publishing House, the second book club that Tun Aye had founded, but a publication which came out even before the establishment of the Nagani Book Club. Even if it were the last book by either publishing house, it is certain that nobody intended to stop releasing books with this particular publication. It was the political and economic situation before the

outbreak of the war in Asia, which caused the production of books in Burma to end. The last books enlisted in the “Catalogue of Books”¹ - two books on Christian religion - were published in March 1941. This month most probably marked the end of the publishing business of Nagani and the Burma Publishing House.² This reflection clearly illustrates the need for a very critical approach towards measuring and assessing the size of Nagani’s output. Even the beginning and the end of the period of publishing cannot be clearly determined.

As one consequence of this observation, a need arises to connect the books documented in this project with books published before 1938 which were parallel to Tun Aye’s two enterprises, as well as what happened after the war when Burma gained independence.

d) Two Kinds of Power

This reflection points to another criterion, which can be applied to assess the impact of Nagani books and which is crucial for understanding the role Nagani books played in Burmese history before and after the war. The date of March 1941, when the issuing of books came to an end in Burma, highlights this crucial point. In this month, Aung San returned from Japan to help with smuggling some other militant young men out of Burma, who were to become famous as the “30 Comrades”. Nu and many other Thakins were imprisoned under the Defence of Burma Rules. The logic of warfare started to dominate Burma’s struggle for independence and overshadowed efforts to reach this goal through intellectual, literary, and political means. Aung San’s only literary contribution to Nagani, besides his close relationship to the Nagani founders and his participation in the discussions at the Club’s headquarters, was a short article about a book entitled “World War and Burma”.³ In retrospect, Aung San personified the turning point of Burma’s fight for independence from using the power of the pen to relying on the force of the gun. The attitude of Burmese literature towards this turning point deserves careful investigation.

e) A Worldwide Traveller

¹ The date of the notification was given is November 11, 1941 and covered the first quarter of that year. Of course, there were some more books published between March 1941 and the Japanese takeover of Burma’s administration in March 1942.

² The last Nagani book mentioned in the British records is book No. 67 in Kyaw Hoe’s list, Thakin Bo’s book on “Karl Marx and his Creed”. The date of release was given was February 7, 1941. After that, apparently, three more books were published. A fourth one and the last in Kyaw Hoe’s list (No. 71), Mya Doung Nyo’s book on “Revolution” could not be traced up to now. Kyaw Hoe did not find the book himself and it could not be found in any catalogue consulted by the editor. Kyaw Hoe listed it in his bibliography because it was mentioned in an editorial of Maung Thit Lwin in the *Hanthawaddy* newspaper after the war.

³ It is book No. 45 in Kyaw Hoe’s list. Besides the article written by Aung San, it contained contributions by Dr. Ba Maw, “Fabian” U Ba Khaing and Thakin Soe.

Thein Pe (1914-1978) - such as Nu, Tun Aye and most of the other founders of Nagani - was never a soldier. However, like Saya Lun, whom he portrayed in his biography, he was by no means a literary figure living and working in an ivory tower. He was clearly a “political writer”. As his life sketches at the beginning of the two book reports will demonstrate, he represented the prerogative of a civil approach towards independence and thus linked the activities of both book clubs in a particular way with Burma’s history between the 1930s and the period of the “Burmese Way of Socialism”. Furthermore, from his early youth on he travelled abroad extensively and conveyed his insights both practically and theoretically through literary means to his fellow countrymen.

Thein Pe’s life and works therefore represent an appropriate and not merely an accidental entry point into this study of Burmese literature as a mediator between the global world and Burmese society. His writings symbolically denote the great project of Nagani to link Burma with the world. Significantly, neither the particularities of this project, nor Thein Pe’s role as a writer cum political activist who was popular and influential through various periods of Burmese history, have been fully assessed yet.¹ This volume does not attempt to present such a full assessment but may suggest incitement for further studies and reflections.

Some Observations and Questions

A preliminary look at the two books introduced gives rise to certain observations and some related questions.

a) Thein Pe and Nagani

The conceptualisation of Thein Pe’s role as a prominent member of Burmese society, who wandered in the fields of literature and politics as well as informing the Burmese public about “the world”, starts with a closer look at his connection with Nagani. He played a role in founding the club² and contributed six books to it - that is, almost ten percent of its whole production.³ This contribution had a strong impact on his reputation as a writer of national significance. The fame he

¹ For his role in the anti-Japanese struggle see: Robert Taylor (1984), *Marxism and Resistance in Burma, 1942-1945 Thein Pe Myint’s Wartime Traveler*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. An essay on his role in Burmese literature along together with a bibliography of his writings can be found in Patricia M. Milne (1973), *Selected Short Stories of Thein Pe Myint*. Translated, with Introduction and Commentary by Patricia M. Milne. Supervised by Mrs. Anna J Allott with the help of Professor Hla Pe, the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. Rangoon, Sarpa Beikman [1975]: pp.:11-57.

² See Working Paper 10:1 of this series: pp.:18-19; 41-42.

³ In addition, he wrote the foreword to book No. 9, written and respectively translated by Thakin Ba Thaug, on People-Power (Democracy) and the French Revolution.

had gained after writing his first novel, the controversial *Thetpongyi* (Modern Monk), which made him a public figure, was rather ambiguous. With the biography of Saya Lun, who was already Burma's *poeta laureatus* in 1938 at the age of 62 as well as a literary promoter of nationalism, Thein Pe diverted some of the reputation acquired by his hero towards himself and Nagani.

Similar to the portrayed poet but in a different style, Thein Pe drew subjects for his writings from current events. For example the students' strike of 1936, which already had brought prominence to Nu and Aung San, served as background for a two-volume novel published by Nagani.¹ After that he wrote a pamphlet on the Indo-Burmese riots of 1938. At least 11,000 copies of this booklet of 24 pages were printed.² Thein Pe later wrote a comment ("Who is Wrong – Hitler or Chamberlain?")³ on the pre-war developments in Europe and another rather short pamphlet ("Our Duty") of 20 pages on the situation of Burma relative to the critical international situation.⁴

Based on the assumption that Thein Pe's later writings were variations and amplifications of his early works published by Nagani, the two books introduced in this volume present an insight into his writing style. Both books contain what he called himself "bio-fiction" and both dealt with the colonial period. He creatively combined fact and fiction. Topics he wrote about were rooted in the anti-colonial experience. Like Saya Lun he tried to revolutionise literature and his readers. The questions of how he performed this task, and how the interplay between the repercussions of contemporary events on his life and the impact of his writings on his readers should be conceptualised, can only be posed here. Answers may become possible only after considering and discussing more material.

But one may at least say that Nagani's commitment to the national cause of Burma's independence helped Thein Pe to become a "national writer", thereby following the footsteps of Saya Lun, whom he portrayed in the club's maiden publication. On the other hand, Nagani's fame as an enterprise, being neither an ordinary political group nor an average book club,⁵ was based to a great extent on the author's literary talent as a writer of "bio-fiction". If one had to choose a person who

¹ Books No.5 and No.15 were published in 1938 and 1939. See Vol. 4 of this series.

² According to the "Catalogue of Books", 10,000 copies were printed by Nagani and 1,000 by another publisher in Bassein (Patheingyi).

³ Published in October 1939.

⁴ Published in late 1940.

⁵ See the characteristic of the club given in the leaflet reproduced in Vol. 1 of this series: p. 72.

represented Nagani best as an institution betwixt and between politics and literature, Thein Pe would be the candidate rather than Nu, who acted mainly in the political field.

b) Personal Relations

Besides these deliberations, the two books stimulate an investigation into the network of personal connections of the Nagani founders. Three persons who directly contributed to the book on *Saya Lun* are mentioned. Besides Thein Pe, Myoma Saya Hein wrote the foreword, thereby introducing the author. Deedok U Ba Choe also contributed one chapter. The former wrote two books for Nagani.¹ Some detailed biographical information about him can be expected from the reviews of his books, which will be presented later in this series. Ba Choe can be regarded as mentor of the Nagani enterprise.² In addition, there were other people working behind the scenes: for example, young Tun Aye, who acted as the manager, or Nu, Than Tun, and Soe, the “triumvirate” who signed the leaflet heralding the new project.³ These men selected books to be published, while others actively distributed already printed books.

Of course, it is one thing to know Nagani’s founding members’ names and roles. However, it is more important to clearly understand of the group’s cohesion and how this cohesion was related to personal and principal differences, which, for example, caused Tun Aye’s split from Nagani. Apart from Thein Pe, there were eleven writers, who contributed manuscripts to both publishing houses. Even Nu did so.⁴ Evidently competition and cooperation co-existed between Nagani and the Burma Publishing House and even with other companies, which also supplied the huge demand for literature on current issues.⁵

c) Publication History

A third array of questions pertains to the publishing history of both books. According to the “Catalogue of Books”, Thein Pe’s biography was published in January 1938 by the Lawkadan Press.⁶ This indicates that “Nagani” first and foremost was an idea and not an institution.¹ The idea

¹ He seemed to specialise in Irish issues. For Nagani, he translated a biography of an Irish revolutionary (book No. 22), wrote about the Irish revolution (book No. 52), and together with Khin Myo Chit he contributed a volume on “Secret Agents of War” published by Tun Aye’s enterprise (No. 76).

² See Vol. 1 of this series, p.: p. 44.

³ See Vol. 1 of this series, p.: 72.

⁴ Book No. 92 in Kyaw Hoe’s list presents a “Political Dictionary” written along with Hla Pe.

⁵ A thorough evaluation of the “Catalogue of Books” kept by the British administration would show that some authors wrote books for various publishing houses whereas others just wrote for one or two of them.

⁶ A copy of the original publication is still missing. According to the notification of July 29, 1938, the address of the publisher was No. 205, 32nd Street, Rangoon. 2,000 copies were printed. The price was 2 Rupies, 8 Annas.

materialised later and did not come to an end even when the production of books was stopped by external circumstances. Nagani's idea survived the war and was revived through reprints of some of its books, through the Nagani Song and through the appraisal attributed to it. The biography of Saya Lun was reprinted at least twice.² It would be certainly interesting to learn about the intellectual climate at the time of the reprint.

Thein Pe's "Member of Parliament", however, raises other questions. Since the book contained three early works of Thein Pe it is a reprint. It was published after August 1937 and therefore must be regarded in technical terms as a "pre-Nagani book". The first of the three reprinted short stories was first published in the *Gandalawka Magazin* in 1934 and was later translated into English.³ The original place of publication of the two other stories or "short novels" is not known yet. Kyaw Hoe connected the collection of these three stories with Nagani. The reason given by him underlines the assumption that the size, impact, and importance of Nagani varied in different times and depended on the reviewer's perspective.

d) A Note on Translation

As mentioned earlier, the phrase ဝင်းတိုင်ဝင်း, being the title of Thein Pe's short story, means, literally translated, "Royal Adviser". Since the central character of the story was a member of the parliament established by the British, it has to be translated "Member of Parliament" or, in Usha Narayanam's more precise term "M.L.A." (Member of the Legislative Assembly), because the story is set before 1936 when the Legislative Council under the Dyarchy system was substituted by a Parliament under the Government of Burma Act passed in 1935. The literal translation, however, should be kept in mind because it carries a special connotation pointing to the Burmese adaptation of the British implementation of democratic institutions in Burma.⁴ Maybe, the ambiguity of the term is a key to the meaning of the story.

The translation of the phrase raises the question of the translation of political terms and concepts into Burmese language and culture. On this issue, see Tin Hlaing's article in Working Paper 100 of

¹ Thein Pe's book is correctly listed as the first publication of Nagani, which was confirmed by the first issue of the "Nagani News" published in January or February 1938, which contained an announcement of the book (p. 38).

² In September 1964, the book was published in the 3rd edition by Maung Tin Hlaing in the Kyoung Pyaw Publishing House.

³ Milne 1973: pp.:58-92.

⁴ The Myanmar-English Dictionary published in 2001 by the Ministry of Education does not contain the phrase.

this series.¹ The first look at the two books introduced gives rise to certain observations and some related questions.

About this Volume

The following pages present some information about the two books covered here. The book reports are framed by a translation of Kyaw Hoe's summary and commentaries by an outsider. These three parts represent assessments of the books at different times by people from inside and outside Myanmar with different levels of knowledge and interest in Burmese literature. Ko Tar is a renowned and experienced writer cum editor in the tradition of the very lively and multifaceted Burmese literary scene. Rev. Kyaw Nyunt, who is working with the Myanmar Council of Churches, provides a different look at the book. Dr. Nay Lin stands for the younger generation of scholars of Burmese literature within the compounds of the University's campus. As for the commentators, Doerthe Beer is one of many young German students attracted by Burmese culture and history, whereas Gerhard Köberlin epitomises the interest of Western scholars in a cultural as well as religious exchange between the West and the East. Finally, Volker Grabowsky is one of Germany's most experienced scholars in the field of Southeast-Asian studies. His critique of Kyaw Nyunt's book report and the reply of the author deserve special attention.

In addition, some translations related to the two books are reproduced here. With regard to *Saya Lun*, some English translations of his writings were included. They were done by Tin Htway, who dared to translate some of *Saya Lun*'s "prose-poetry". The extracts chosen from Tin Htway's M.A. thesis provide a look at his way of commenting on current events at different crucial times in Burmese history. Additionally they provide a parallel to Thein Pe's story about Burmese members of the Legislative Council. A portrait of *Saya Lun* alias Thakin Kodaw Hmine was also included.² With regard to the short novel, the text of Usha Narayanan's translation was reproduced here. Her book, from which the translation is taken, is not easily available. The text invites the reader to come to a decision about the meaning of the story in different contexts and also solicits further commentary.

An invitation to do so can be found at the end of this volume, along with additional information about other publications of this series, thus copying what the Nagani publishers - and others' book

¹ Tin Hlaing, "Translation of Political Terms and Concepts into Burmese with Reference to Nagani Publications", Myanmar Literature Project, Working Paper 10:100, pp. 37-49.

² The drawing was provided by Thakin Hla Kun.

Thein Pe, *Saya Lun* and *Member oif Parliament*

distributors - did. The appendices of this volume present the information, which was handed out to both the reviewers and the commentators.

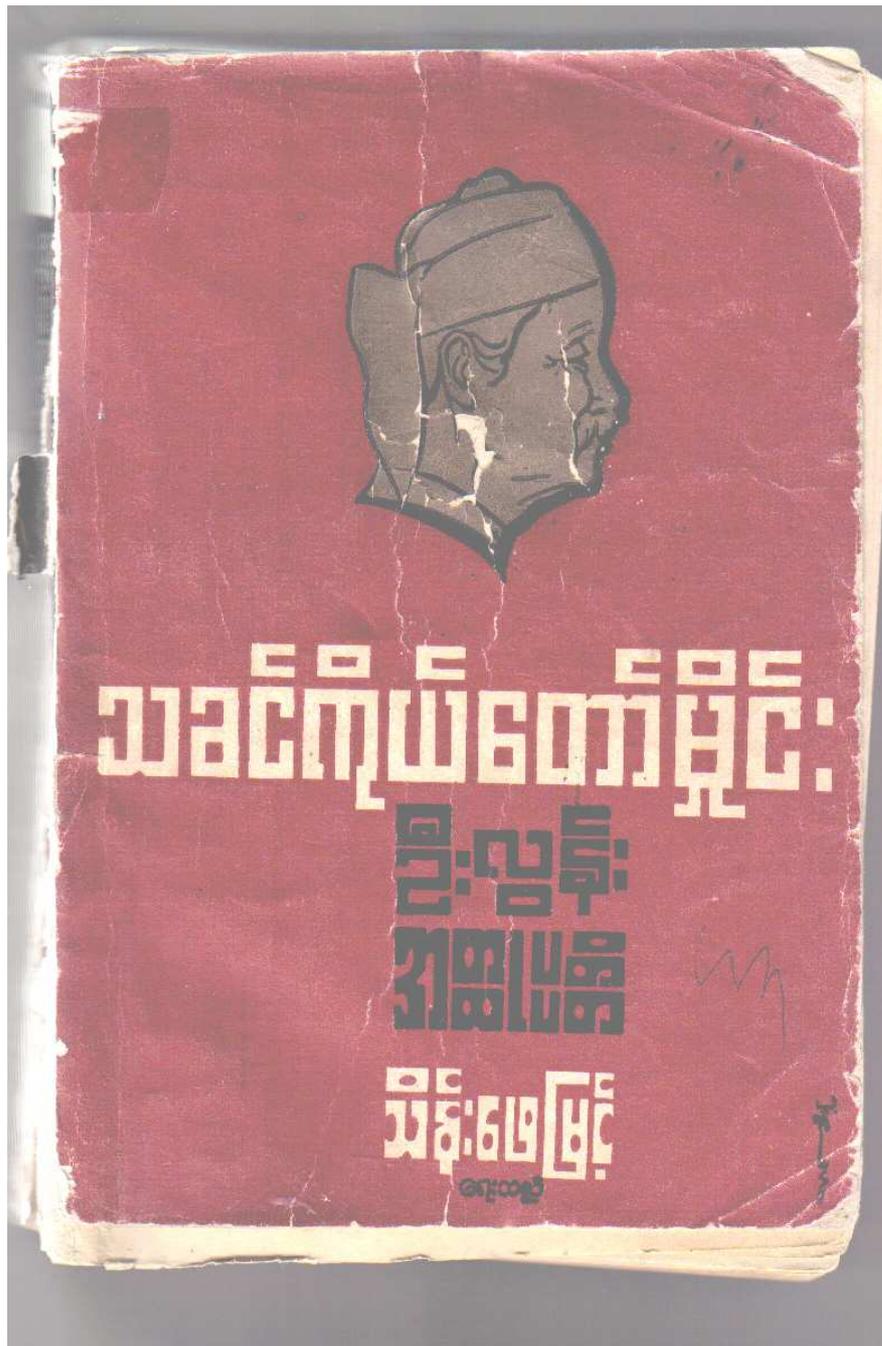
Finally, I would like to thank all those who contributed to this volume.

Hans-Bernd Zöllner

June 2009 (last update)



Thakin Kodaw Hmaing
Drawing (1969)



Front page of the reprint of Thein Pe's

Biography of Saya Lun, 1964

I. MATERIAL ON THEIN PE, *BIOGRAPHY OF SAYA LUN*

1. Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information

Translated from his Nagani-Bibliography, p. 14 by Frankie Tun

Authors: U Thein Pe Myint and U Ba Choe (Deedok U Ba Choe)

Title: U Lun: Nationalistic Hero and Rebellious Writer

Editor: Myoma Saya Hein / Yangon / Nagani 1937

272 Pages, 12 Photos.¹

The Biography of Thakhin Kodaw Hmine is written by Tetpongyi Thein Pe Myint and Deedok U Ba Cho.

In the editor's note, it is written that: "The biography of National Hero, U Lun, a litterateur and poet, now written and published by Ko Thein Pe was about the things happened and done while U Lun was still alive and there is no reason to get a wrong message for the future generation".

In the first part, U Thein Pe Myint described the childhood of U Lun as "Little Boy Maung Lun" and in the second part, as Saya Lun who also was a journalist and a married man.

U Ba Choe wrote the third part and Myoma Saya Hein wrote the fourth part.

This book was published again and again

¹ The reprint obtained for this publication did not contain any photos.

2. Ko Tar: Book Review on *Biography of Saya Lun*

By Thein Pe (Thein Pe Myint)

Published by Nagani Book Club, Rangoon, 1938.

Parts of the Burmese manuscript were translated by Tin Hlaing

This is the biography of Saya Lun, alias Thakin Kodaw Hmine, the Burmese Poet Laureate, nationalist writer and leading political figure in Burma in the twentieth century. It is written by Thein Pe, a celebrated writer cum politician who later became famous as Thein Pe Myint. It is the first publication launched by the Nagani Book Club, a politically motivated nationalist enterprise, which, to some extent, achieved its aim of promoting socialist literature and nationalism.

The Author

Thein Pe, who came from Budalin in Monywa district in Upper Burma, was born in 1914, of parents U Ba and Daw Myint. He was educated first in Saya Nyan's Burmese Middle School in Budalin and then in Buddhist High School, Monywa. He went to Mandalay Intermediate College from where he joined the University of Rangoon. He was active in student politics, becoming an executive member of University Student's Union in 1934-35. At the university he met Ko Nu, Ko Aung San and Ko Kyaw Nyein and worked with them to transform the Union into an intensely nationalist and anti-establishment student body. In 1935-36 when Ko Nu, the future Prime Minister of independent Burma, became Union President, Thein Pe had already graduated. Nevertheless he maintained contact with the Union and took part in the Students' Strike of 1936. From the university he took up his pen as well as politics. He joined the Dobama Ah-si-ah-yone and became a Thakin. He worked closely with Thakin Nu and Thakin (later General) Aung San, who became both national leaders.

Thein Pe did post graduate studies at Calcutta University where he had also been active in student politics in Bengal. One of the founding members of Burma Communist Party, Thein Pe became its Secretary-General after the Second World War. During the war, he was an important member of the anti-Japanese resistance. At the outbreak of war, he left home for India, and for some time to China, where he sought contact with the Allies. After the war, Thein Pe, representing the Communists, became a Member of the British Governor's Executive Council chaired by General Aung San, but he held this the position for only two weeks.

On the threshold of independence, Thein Pe lost his position in the Communist Party; but he remained active in politics. After independence Thein Pe split from the Communists, who revolted against the government as well as opposed the government. He was elected to represent Budalin Township in Parliament and became an important opposition MP.

In 1960, however, he failed to be re-elected. After 1962, when the military government took over, he supported this government. He became a member of the Government Advisory Council. But he never made it to the top of the Burma Socialist Programme Party which the military organized to rule the country until 1988.

As a writer, Thein Pe, who later added Myint to his name, achieved great success. He was considered a great novelist, a newspaper columnist, and a political commentator. He was chief-editor of *Botatung Daily*. *Tet Phongyi* (Modern Monk), 1937, a controversial novel which offended monks and men, brought him national fame. *Thabeik Hmauk Kyaung-thar* (The Strike Student), *Ah-shaye ga Nay-wun Htwet thee-pa-ma* (As the Sun Rises in the East) are his best known novels. Thein Pe Myint has also written satirical plays: *Min Daing Pin* (Member of Parliament) and *U Saw Bi-lat thwar pya-zat* (U Saw Goes to England – a Play). He had been awarded the highest national prizes for literature – the Sarpay Beikman Prize (1958) and the National Literary Prize for novel (1967). An influential writer, Thein Pe Myint had been active, apart from political parties, in many societies and groups such as the World Peace Congress (Burma), China-Burma Friendship Association, etc. He also held the Chairmanship of the Writers' Union in 1962 and sat on the Universities' Council from 1963 to around 1980.

Thein Pe Myint was married to the university academic Daw Khin Kyi Kyi and had three sons and one daughter. He died in 1978.

Saya Lun alias Thakin Kodaw Hmine

The Burmese poet Laureate and nationalist writer Saya (Master) Lun, or Thakin Kodaw Hmine was born on March 23, 1876, in Wale village in Shwedaung Township. He spent his boyhood mostly in Upper Burma, in the region around Monywa and Mandalay, where he studied in various monasteries. In 1894, he moved to Rangoon where he began his career as a playwright. Later turning to journalism, he published his first article in a newspaper in Moulmein. In 1911, just as the Burmese nationalist movement was gaining strength, he returned to Rangoon to work for the

Thuriya (The Sun) newspaper. Later in 1921, he resigned from Thuriya to become a professor to teach history at the National College, which did not last long.

Maung Hmine, the Burmese equivalent of Casanova, was the name of a notorious character in a well-known contemporary novel. By affixing the English “Mister” to such a disreputable name, Maung Hmine was mocking an affectation common among young Burmese Anglophiles of the day. This was a real snub that retarded the use of Mister by Burmans. In 1935 Maung Hmine became a Thakin, having joined the Dobama Ahsi-ah-yone (We Burmese Association) and subsequently his name became Thakin Kodaw Hmine, Kodaw being a honorific for a religious recluse. As a well-known journalist and a true Burmese intellectual, Thakin Kodaw Hmine brought respectability to this group of young radicals opposed to British rule.

In his old age, after Burma became independent, Saya Hmine became an active leader in seeking national reconciliation and peace. And at the same time, through the period of Cold War, he joined the Leftist Peace Movement. In 1952, Thakin Kodaw Hmine led a delegation to the World Peace Congress, Regional Forum of Asia and Pacific, held in Beijing. He visited China, Mongolia, Hungary, and the Soviet Union in 1953.

He won the Stalin Peace Prize in 1954 and also received the honorary doctorate degree from Hamburg University in 1960.

Thakin Kodaw Hmine wrote forty books and edited another fifteen books. He was also given the *Ah Liga Kyaw Swar* title by the government, the highest award for literature and arts. He passed away on July 23, 1964, in Rangoon.

Thein Pe’s Biography of Saya Lun

Thein Pe Myint professes that his Biography of Saya Lun constitutes a “bio-fiction”, or “novel-like biography”. He explains the nature of such work:

A bio-fiction is a biography containing elements of novel-like content. Being a biography, it has to conform to the usual features, just like other biographies and has to be based on real situations and true events. The hero is a person who actually lived or is still living; he is not a fictional character. For this reason, the presentation has to be faithful and factual.

However, there is content of drama in the presentation; supplementary imaginative descriptions may be desirable. (*Wuttu han attoke-patti* (Bio-fiction) by Thein Pe Myint in *Attoke-patti sarpay* (Biography literature)).

In writing *Saya Lun*, Thein Pe's stretch of imagination is to such an extent that Maung Lun's birth has been given the following description. It seems controversial about a biography going that far:

The sound of the baby's cries "oo-wei" brought great excitement to father U San Dun and produced a shudder in his heart. Sparks splintered as he forgetfully dropped the cheroot he had been puffing, some falling on his ankle. But... unworried, he ran upstairs. He headed for the door of the mee-nay kan (labour-room), but coming back to his senses, he retreated with his tongue between the lips. He peeped through tiny holes in the bamboo wall. Unable to see anything U San Dun became restless. After a while he called out to the mid-wife, "What's the little thing?"

"It's a boy young man" came the reply. Ejected into a jolly mood, he laughed, "Ha ha!". With a stencil he scribbled, on a strip of toddy-palm leaf, the register of birth: "Past one o'clock, Burmese clock, in the morning of Thursday the fourteenth waxing-moon of the month of Tabaung in the year 1237." He resolved to keep fast the next day, a Sabbath day. (pp.: 3-4)

Thorough research is necessary in writing a biography. Information can be retrieved from the following sources:

1. The subject himself
2. His family and relatives
3. His friends
4. His admirers
5. His rivals
6. Documentary evidence including newspapers, journals, magazines, books, records, etc.
7. Persons, who may be referred to as secondary sources
8. Rumors and gossip

Of these, only the information provided by the subject himself amounts to primary evidence, the rest being secondary. Of the four chapters in *Saya Lun's* biography, one is written by Dee-doke U Ba Cho; Thein Pe's work is in only three chapters. He admits that that the first two chapters are based on "What I have heard or discovered", without mentioning the source of his information. "But, *Saya Lun* remarked, not once, 'You are inaccurate here', when I read out to him the first chapter, about his childhood", said Thein Pe Myint at the Symposium on Biographical Literature. (Author's explanation, *Wuttu han attoke patti*, p.:103).

The Editorial Foreword and Introduction

The biography of *Saya Lun* carries an editorial foreword written by Myoma Saya Hein, who introduced the author and also pointed out the importance of truthful facts in a biography. He finds Thein Pe's work truthful.

Thein Pe, in his own introduction, gives Saya Lun the nickname *Thu-bon Gyi* (Great Revolutionary) and justifies it.

Saya Lun, whose pen-name Mr Maung Hmine became famous throughout the country, is really the greatest among 'revolutionary writers'. His style is entirely new in Burmese, and it does not have anything comparable in English or any other languages. It is absolutely his own. Assuming himself to be *Yogi Sayagyi* 'The Great Master Ascetic', he speaks to a number of female disciples. The style is an unusual admixture of verse and prose. Originally prose-like, it carries rhythmic flavor in every sentence. He writes *lay choes gyis*, (poetic long paragraphs), a type of literature already introduced in Burmese, but not popular yet. *Lay choe* is his specialty, and he is unmatched in that. It is indeed a great revolution in Burmese literature, which makes Mr Maung Hmine worthy of the nick-name. (p.: 8)

Thein Pe adds in the introduction: "For me, Saya Lun, the man, is far greater than Mister Maung Hmine, the writer. I mean to say, were Saya Lun to be judged on two grounds, his moral character, and his scholarship, he emerges the greater on the basis of the first." (p.: 10).

The biography actually highlights Saya Lun, the man, more than his work as an author. It stresses on the greatness of his character and patriotism, and this really constitutes the theme of the biography. The work is completely unable to reveal Saya Lun, the writer. It is actually Thein Pe's aim to project, for other writers, an exemplary one: "It is with the spirit to set Saya Lun, who has adopted the name Mr Maung Hmine, as an exemplary one, for progressive writers to emulate, that this biography has been written." (p.: 22)

Part One

This deals with Saya Lun's childhood, his place of birth, his early education (with some description of the famous *Kyee Thae Lay-dat Sayadaw of Shwedaungmyo*) and how he became addicted to alchemy.

It is said, while studying at *Myadaung Kyaung Taik* (Monastery) in Mandalay, *Ko-yin* (novice monk) *Lun*, personally observed how King Theebaw was taken away as a captive by his English conquerors. Thein Pe dramatized this traumatic experience which induced a permanent change in

Saya Lun's character.

Part Two

Here is written about Maung Lun's life after leaving *koyin*-hood, getting married, becoming a playwright and an editor.

Here also is written at some length about *Sayadaw* (Senior Monk) U Ottama, the revered Buddhist monk, who, from today's perspective, may be described as a political activist. Saya Lun had an opinion about U Ottama which differs from others. Thein Pe quotes Saya Lun's assessment of U Ottama: "U Ottama is a glutton, one who eats to excess. And he loves money. It's inappropriate for a money lover to be in politics."

The content is in the form of Thein Pe's dialogue with Saya Lun. Coming from the primary source, such remark about a personality like U Ottama is far from being the author's creation.

Essentially, this chapter describes Saya Lun, the man. His wife, Daw Shin, died in 1277, Burmese era (1915), leaving him with four children to bring up and no one to assist him. He was only forty then, but he never remarried. Saya Lun is quoted to have said: "I'd rather be foolish only once. I will not be foolish again." (p.: 50)

Saya Lun refused all offers of position or title from the government. He declined a lectureship in Rangoon University; he refused to accept the title *Agga Maha Pandita* (The Great Scholar, which every body appreciates). When the Prince of Wales visited Burma, he forfeited the chance of getting Rupees one thousand (a substantial sum in those days) by refusing to write an *Aye-chin* (a welcome verse):

Hey, Maung May Aung, this wouldn't do good. *Shwe-na-daw thwin Aye-chin* (the rhythmic verse of welcome driven into the 'Golden Ear') amounts to praising the glory of the Prince and acknowledging his great status in the Empire. It would have to promote him as an honorable person, and pray that his power over us lasts long and his dominion expands, such and such. It's utterly unsuitable for nationalists like us to write such stuff. Just let me stay away from it; my brain isn't good for such job. I wouldn't comply even for payment of Rupees one hundred thousand", said Saya Lun in reply to U May Aung's request. He had to give up. (p.: 53). (U May Aung was Home Minister at the time.)

Later in the chapter, Thein Pe writes about the University Act and the National College, perhaps to an excessive extent. True, they constitute the background in which Saya Lun became a teacher (a lecturer in Burmese History) at the National College. Also portrayed in it are, apart from Saya Lun,

Deedoke U Ba Cho and M.A. U Maung Gyee.

Part Three

Although part two mainly provides the backdrop, the next part devotes principally to the characterization of Saya Lun. It is said that it all comes from Thein Pe's own experiences. The chapter opens with a meeting of Thein Pe Myint, Thakin Ba Thaug and other Thakins with Saya Lun. The stress is on Saya Lun's patriotism, and reveals his reliance upon youth. "Our involvement in national politics is not to strive for Nirvana, I admire daring deeds. And this thing, the University, is really important; young chaps here will be able to do a lot and carry us far", said Saya Lun. (p.: 125)

Several instances are cited to show Saya Lun's positive qualities – his kindness and love, his courage, his lack of greed, his contentment – and the author brings home the point.

Saya Lun's piety, his reverence for the 'Three Jewels – The Buddha, The Dhamma and The Sangha' is substantial. Spiritual inclination is only natural for a man like Saya Lun, a Burman Buddhist with a rural background. But, such a fellow developing into a modern folk is a bit unusual. Thein Pe draws attention to the man with a moustache, and *yaung don* (asymmetrically placed knot of hair), incessantly chewing *kwan* (betel leaves), but holding advanced views. In one place, he remarks that the rising new generation used to reject advice from older men; but with Saya Lun, they respect and follow his advice (p.: 162). However, in the biography, we find no political advice from Saya Lun.

Because of his patriotism, Saya Lun, an alchemy enthusiast and believer in magic crafts, is only mentioned as practicing the art simply in the hope of freeing the nation from slave status. (Thein Pe remarks years later that this belief in the scientifically unfounded ancient pursuit was one of Saya Lun's rare weaknesses.)

Part Four

This part is a contribution by Deedoke U Ba Cho, supplementing and supporting Thein Pe. U Ba Cho admits that Saya Lun is his mentor and what he writes about him comes from his own experience. He recounts an article he wrote in the *Suria* which drew attention to breaches of rhyme

in one *lay cho* verse Saya Lun had written in the same paper. U Ba Cho says Saya Lun admitted his errors and for that he admires him. U Ba Cho sketches only his personal observations such as Saya Lun's modern method of teaching Burmese History, despite his lack of formal training in the field. U Ba Cho commends Saya Lun as a man of up-to-date ideas: "Saya Lun is a modern man. He understands that Burma was grabbed as an added bonus in the extension of the British Empire, and he hates imperialism bitterly. He laughs at young Anglophiles and would say to them, "You are imagining yourself as a subject of His Majesty in the Great Empire."

Thein Pe's biography covers only the period from Saya Lun's birth to 1937, when he was sixty years old. Later events – the revolutionary struggles of 1938-41, war-time under the Japanese, the independence movement led by the AFPFL, the civil war that erupted in 1948, the World Peace Movement led by Thakin Kodaw Hmine – are not included. These were turbulent times that really mattered for Burma. Accordingly, Thein Pe's work, written in 1937, remains an unfinished biography of Saya Lun. However, it remains to be remarked that, at the time of writing, the author was quite young, only 23 years of age then, and he seems to have been motivated by a lot of reverence for the man in writing the biography. If not consecrating him, the author definitely attempts to bring Saya Lun to the forefront of the national endeavor for independence. (Thein Pe Myint did intend to produce a separate volume to cover these events, but he had not done it.)

Impact

No doubt, the biography promoted Thakin Kodaw Hmine's stature as a great nationalist, writer and scholar in the classical tradition, but modern minded. At the time the book came out, he had yet to establish himself as a political leader. The book appeared to be of some assistance to this end; when the Dobama Asi-ah-yone split a few years later, Thakin Kodaw Hmine became the Patron of one branch, and with him were Thakins Aung San, Nu, Thein Pe and others, formerly student leaders. Within the short span of five years, these men became national leaders. For the young patriotic generation, the biography had been inspiring. Additionally, as Nagani's first publication, it advertised its author as well as the publisher and boosted their fame.

References

- I. *Wuttu han attoke-patti* (Bio-fiction) by Thein Pe Myint in *Attoke-patti sarpay* (Biography literature), Sarpay Beik Hman, 1970.
- II. *Kyaw Nyein*, by Thein Pe Myint, 1999, Sar Oke Zay, Yangon.

3. Commentary on Ko Tar “Thein Pe, Biography of Saya Lun“

Gerhard Köberlin

“For the young patriotic generation, the biography had been inspiring”, says Ko Tar, and he sees the biographers Thein Pe and U Ba Cho “to have been motivated by a lot of reverence” for Saya Lun. The book report describes how this biography was a source of inspiration, even though it does not cover the years of the national struggle after 1937.

How to become a national leader? Ko Tar describes how the “novel-like biography” portrays Saya Lun as “a Burman Buddhist with a rural background”, embodying the traditional Theravada virtues of perfection (including some belief in magic). But at the same time this hero of moral character is a patriot, a “revolutionary writer”, an anti-imperialist, “holding advanced views” (Thein Pe), “a modern man” (U Ba Cho), “modern minded” (Ko Tar).

Ko Tar illustrates well, with delightful detail, the classical cultural setting of his patriotic character (his complex names, critical view of the Senior Monk U Ottama, refusal to praise the Prince of Wales). I can sense the power of this source of inspiration, but I do not yet see the modern man. In which sense was he a modern man? I would love to see how this “modernity” worked in Saya Lun, and how this inspired the youth, and why, and how, this message – “laughing at the Anglophiles” - started the whole series of Nagani-books.

I presume the “traumatic experience” of colonialism is at the core of this modernity (story of the King's arrest). So what was inspiring about modernity – is it the re-assertion of one's own national culture? (I would like to see Saya Lun's inter-cultural exposure after 1937.)

Ko Tar conveys the astonishing literary dimension of a national leader. This is fascinating for me as a German – how a writer, poet, promoter of literature, who knows of the breaches of rhyme, presented by a highly literary biographer, becomes a national leader. Literary capacities of the hero seem to be a necessary part of the virtues of perfection, and the biographer loves the “content of drama in the presentation” of the hero, and uses his dialogue with him. Is it right to say: political inspiration in Burma is part of a literary culture?

In the book report I would like to see more about the meaning of Saya Lun's biography for today. The closing assessment is very succinct. The transformation of society in Burma, and the role of the personalities of the Thakins, including the hero, in this transformation, could be a bigger part of this

Thein Pe, *Saya Lun* and *Member oif Parliament*

report. It is the “clash of civilizations” in overcoming modern colonisation – in spite of being “modern minded”, which is of biographical interest for me. The Burmese way of independence served as a point of projection for not few Germans of the 68-generation. How shall we interpret the colonial traumatization? What does the rupture of modernity mean to the classical context of Buddhism, culture, literature, and its mythological remnants of alchemy?

The additional biographical data about the author, and his hero, are very useful. I find it difficult that most of the Burmese words are not translated into English.

Gerhard Köberlin

Hamburg

May 27, 2006

4. Kyaw Nyunt: Book Review on *Biography of Saya Lun* (Thakin Kodaw Hmaing)

Written by Thein Pe and Deedok U Ba Choe¹

Brief Biography of the Author, Thein Pe Myint (1914-1978)

Thein Pe (a) Thein Pe Myint was originally named Myat Maung by his parents U Ba, a surveyor and Daw Myint Myint. He is the younger one of the two sons of his parents who were neither rich nor poor. He was born on 10th July, 1914 in his native town, Buh-da-lin in Alone Township of Monywa District.

He won a stipend when he passed 4th standard with distinction at State Middle School in his home town. At the age of 12, his name was changed into Thein Pe by his parents as advised by an astrologer. He also passed matriculation class with distinction at the National Buddhist High School run by the YMBA (Young Men's Buddhist Association) School in Monywa (Now B.E.H.S. 1) in 1931-1932. It was the period when Galon (Garuda) Saya San and his followers (armed revolutionaries) were beheaded publicly after having been accused of high treason.

The young student Thein Pe and his friend Thein Tin (O Wai Nyo Mya) shaved their heads demonstrating their strong will against the cruel punishment of the nationalists by the British Colonial Government. They could not do anything significant. They did not have even enough pocket money to organize other fellow students. The only option was to shave away their "Bo-kay" (British hair-style) to show their strong nationalism. Amazingly, nearly all the male students followed their move and did away their British hair-style. Then they marched into the streets reviling the British government for executing farmers. Though Thein Pe was deeply involved in the nationalist movement and raised funds for his school he passed all examinations with credit jumping ahead of others.

He matriculated with distinction in 1931-32 and passed both intermediate examinations (A and B) in 1932-33 at Mandalay Intermediate College within one academic year. Then he came down to Yangon with his friend Ko Kyaw Nyein (retired Home Minister²) to study for his B.A. in 1933. At Yangon University in 1933 Ko Kyaw Nyein and Ko Thein Pe pushed the pro-British student leaders out of the Student Union and helped the progressive student leaders to lead the Student Union, thus

¹ Footnotes were added by Hans-Bernd Zöllner.

² Kyaw Nyein (born March 8, 1915 in Pinyinana) was minister for Home and Judicial Affairs in Nu's first cabinet of 1947 and later headed other ministries (Foreign Affairs, Co-operatives, Economy) and became Deputy Prime Minister twice. After the split of the AFPFL in 1957, he became U Nu's rival.

paving the way for Thakin (master) students for dominating the Student Union. His nationalistic spirit which began to arouse in Monywa high school and was demonstrated by his activities against the Colonial Government along with Kyaw Nyein and Tun Lwin now became mature.

Thein Pe joined "Thakin Association" which headed by Thakin Ba Thaung came into prominent in 1933; thus taking the title "Thakin" before his name. So he was Thakin Thein Pe: and came into close contact with the Thakin leaders - Thakin Ba Sein, Thakin Lay Maung, Thakin Thein Maung, Thakin Hla Baw, YMB Thakin Tin, and then later Thakin Aung San (The Martyr). This Thakin Association or "Doh-Bamar-Association" or "We Burman Association" was none other than "the spear head" of "Burma Independent Struggle".

While Thakin Thein Pe was studying the final year for his BA, the "Doh-Bamar-Association" was to hold its first Assembly at Ye-nan-gyaung (one centre of the Burmese oil industry) from March 30 to April 4, 1935. Thein Pe was ordered to accompany Saya Gyi U Lun to the Assembly. It was at this first assembly when U Lun joined the Association and was named Thakin Ko-daw Hmaing. U Lun lovingly said that "I became a Thakin at Ye-nan-gyaung because of this son-of dog, Thein Pe." U Lun became the main leader and veteran of the Association.

Thein Pe got into a more and more intimate relation with Saya Lun when he accompanied Saya Gyi in giving homage to ancient pagodas in Pagan and Nyaung Oo area after the Thakin Assembly. He began to know more about Saya Lun's life and teaching and his deep aspiration for national liberation. The inspiration gained from U Lun drove Thein Pe to write the biography of U Lun in a series of articles in the Deedok Journal of Saya U Ba Cho.

Thein Pe worked for the Deedok Journal after finishing his BA from Yangon University in the later part of 1935. There in the office he met Thakin Nu (former Prime Minister) and Thakin Aung San. They worked together for Deedok. Referring the trio Maung Suan Yie writes "Three flowers from the Seminary of Deedok U Ba Cho, the Martyr³..."

Thein Pe very frequently visited publishing houses, such as Dagon Magazine of U Hla Pe, Deedok Journal, New Light of Burma (Daily Paper) etc... He successively sent his articles and stories to these publishing houses. He frequently visited especially Dagon publishing house of Dagon U Hla Pe because there he got into contact with various people and heard various news. People of literature, lawyers, politicians, news-men, nationalists, i.e. various people of different walks of life were his out-door classes. He never wasted time. He studied very hard both in-door at the University and out-door in the city.

³ Ba Cho was assassinated together with Aung San on July 19, 1947.

He earnestly helped the Student Union of Yangon University when the second student strike broke out in 1936 while he was working for the Deedok Journal. He went to Calcutta University for post graduate studies after the student strike in the same year. He worked for Myanmar-Alin (New Light of Burma) as its correspondent and as advertisement agent for Dagon Magazine to earn money for his educational expenses. At the same time he studied socialism and communism from the communist party of India. In 1936, while in India he wrote "Tet-phone-gyi" (Modern Monk and Myanmar-Alin published it. It may be true that he wrote that story remembering the advice his friend Ko Thein Tin had given to him.

The publication of "Tet-phone-gyi" was very popular among young people and caused angry mass reactions by young Buddhist Monks. Mass-meetings of Buddhist Monks demanded that office of Myanmar-Alin, Thein Pe, the author and Thakin Nu, the introduction writer must make a religious apology. Ko Tun Aye, a close associate of Thakin Nu and Thakin Thein Pe was also a victim of Buddhist Monks. But they had no wish to apologise because they know that they were right in publishing such a book in line with their aspiration of nationalism for the country.

So, Thakin Nu and Ko Tun Aye went to India under the cover of paying homage to Buddha's historical places in order to keep out of the way of the mass protest of the Sangha. There they studied communism, socialist liberation and publication for the liberation movement. This constituted the source of beginning of Nagani (Red Dragon) Book Club, as explained by Nagani Tun Aye.⁴

The Nagani Book Club was established by Thakin Nu and Ko Tun Aye when they got back from India. The first publication of Nagani was the biography of Saya Lun, putting together the articles successively published in Deedok Journal a few years ago. It was written by Thakin Thein Pe.

Then there was the Oil Field Strike in 1938 (commonly known as the 1300 BE Uprising) when Thakin Thein Pe came back from India. Thein Pe was deeply involved in it. Majority members of the Thakin Association were, in the beginning, University students. But at its first Assembly in Yen-nan-gyaung in 1935, workers came into the Association. During the 1938 Oil Field Strike, farmers came into contact with the Association. So it was a good opportunity for Thein Pe because here three main forces; students, workers and farmers joined hand in hand. At this occasion, he introduced communism for the first time to all three forces.

Thein Pe was sent to India by General Aung San to contact the British forces and the revolutionary forces of India and of China in preparation to drive the Fascist Japan out of the

⁴ See Vol. 1 of this series, pp.: 42-44.

country during World War II. The strategy for the liberation of Burma was that they would try to get arms from anyone by hook or by crook to arm themselves to fight against the British Colonialists. They knew that Japan as a Fascist country was crueller than the British, but they needed Japan's arms for the moment. And they knew that the Fascists would loose the War in the end. Then they would drive out Japan and finally they would fight back the British again for independence.

Then Pe with Thakin Tin Shwe went to India on foot and with the help of the British government they continued their journey to China according to the plan. They tried to get help from Kuomintan (Chinese nationalists) and also from the Communist Party of China. But they failed and returned to India. Then, the British government in India, by the order of Lord Mountbatten, provided them all they needed to equip the young revolutionaries of Burma to defeat the Japanese.

So, Thein Pe got an old big house in the quarter of Bihalal, at the outskirts of Calcutta in India to open an underground office and a training camp for an Anti-Fascist Organization. He recruited some of the Burmese living in India and young revolutionaries and nationalists from Burma as trainees in his camp.

Mahn Win Maung (former President of the Union⁵), Ko Nyo Tun (former Minister from Rakhine), Ko Ba Saw, Ko Kyaw Yin (late Professor), Ko Chit Kaung (major rtd.)... etc. were some of his trainees. Thein Pe as Principal of the Training camp taught on military affairs and politics, whereas Goshal (fallen⁶) was Secretary and Thakin Mya Thwin took the office of Treasurer.

Unfortunately Thein Pe got infected of T.B. in his back-bone. He had to be applied POP (Plaster of Paris) beginning above his knee up to his chest and had to lie on his back on the table around the clock for a year. There was no choice but lying on the table but he continued to do all his duties very effectively, giving lectures, writing every day, managing the house and giving instructions with a smile on his face. He did his best with great enthusiasm because of his country. Then he sent his men back to Burma by Air-borne for the fight.

It is said that Thein Pe was the main actor after General Aung San in the history of the Resistant Movement of Burma against the Fascists. U Nyo Mya said that Thein Pe was the key figure in the international relations for the Anti-Fascist Movement. Thein Pe was at his top in carrying out his responsibilities. He did his best without any fault within three years (1942-1945) and did 100%

⁵ Win Maung, a Karen, was the last President of the Union of Burma under the constitution of 1948 from 1957 to 1962.

⁶ Goshal (a Thakin Ba Tin) was a Burmese Indian, who co-founded the Burmese Communist Party (BCP) and later became one of its ideological leaders was executed on June 18, 1967, for his "revisionist" ideas after a summary trial in the jungle headquarters of the BCP.

well.

He came back with Mahn Win Maung to Yangon in October 1945. They were welcomed and honoured. But he was no more popular in the political scene since then. He was appointed as the General Secretary of the Communist Party for the first time in the life of the party (1946). He was honoured by this post because he did very well for the nation as a communist.

He did his best again in organizing political parties such as Socialists, Communists and Anti-Fascist and People's Freedom League (AFPFL) because he believed that national independence could be achieved if they are united. But he failed because of political tension between the parties. Then he tried to unite all the left-parties forming a "United National Front for the Union (UNFU) (Pa-Ma-Nya-Ta in Burmese).

He had no place in party-politics though he tried very hard for the political development of the nation. But his nationalistic spirit never faded away. His spirit was so strong that he used to continue his efforts in the task of Nation building without receiving the honour due to him.

He established a daily paper named "Bo-Ta-Htaung" (A Thousand Vanguard). After the Revolutionary Council headed by General Ne Win took power in 1962, he published this paper as one of the Socialist pillars and wrote successive articles on Socialism. He threw his lot in literature in this way.

He started writing at the age of nineteen. He never stopped writing in any condition at anytime. He wrote about 500 articles out of which roughly 100 articles are on literature. Most of the sixty books he wrote are on Politics. He was writing on the biography of Maha Gandaron Sayadaw (Abbot of Maha Gandaron) when he fell unconscious at his writing table in 1978.

He was famous as a political leader in the front line up to 1945. He got the top position of the Burma Communist Party in 1946 due to his unfailing endeavour in the past. Then he suffered from the attacks of political rivalries, floating in waves of party-politics with uncertain future, but holding his pen steadfastly guiding himself to a certain direction.

He was more popular with his pen name "Thein Pe Myint" since 1949. He was a famous writer, editor, script writer, director of films, University Councillor, member of the Higher Education Curriculum Committee. He was a man of talents and a placid one. But his perpetual enthusiastic interest and talent was writing. He wrote many articles on national politics. He loved reading and writing. He passed away on 15th January 1978. He could not finish the biography of Maha Gandaron Sayadaw.

Summary of the Book on Saya Lun

Saya Lun known as Thakin Kodaw Hmaing was born of U San Dun, villager of Maungdaunggyi, Buda-lin Township in Mon-ywa District in Upper Burma and Daw Ohn of Wah-ler village in Shwe-daung Township in Lower Burma on 14th March 1876 (1237 BE).

Saya Lun learnt Min-ga-la Sutta (rules of bliss) from his mother. Then he studied further Buddhist literature under the instruction of Shwe-Daung Kyi-the' Sayadaw (Kyi-The' Abbot) who was famous for his cleverness in composing poetic literatures. That was why Maung Lun became a famous poet. Maung Lun went back to his abbot whenever he returned to his village after visiting other places, mostly to Upper Burma.

He felt bitterly sorry when he saw King Thi-Baw, the last king of Burma, with his family and court people was taken away as captives by the British conquerors passing by Mya-daung monastery where he was studying at the age of ten, in 1886 (1247 BE). He never forgot the scene in his life. The tragic memory was the main source for his nationalistic literature. He prayed on the spot not to be born again in a defeated nation in Samsara (cycle of rebirth).

He studied literature and history from place to place such as Mon-yway, Kyay-mon, Chaung-oo, Mongwa, Alone, Bu-da-lin, Kani, Kane', Maung-daung, in Upper Burma. As a young novice he went to study to Kani, Kane' and Shwe-bo where the strict sect of Buddhism was flourishing. Moreover, he got addicted to the practice of alchemy from his uncle who was a Buddhist monk and alchemist. He learned Buddhist literature on practicing alchemy at the same time. Then he wrote long poems, short stories and scripts and gave away his right of authorship to others. He did not love money.

Saya Lun loved a saintly life in the monastery but he left the monastic life at the age of 19 to look after his mother when his father died. Saya Lun came down to Yangon to earn money by literary work because he loved literature. He got a job at the press of U Maung Maung Kha and Daw Ma Ma Lay. He worked at the printing press as compositor first, then as proof reader and as editor. He was promoted step by step because the owners loved him for his knowledge and goodness. He studied drama shows at night when he was working at the press at day time and then he wrote dramas taking a pen name "Maung Luan" to earn extra income. Saya Lun got married to a certain lady called "Ma Shin", the daughter of a friend of U Maung Maung Kha and Daw Ma Ma Lay advised by them. It was said that they were an exemplary couple.

Saya Lun worked for "Yangon Times Daily Press" when "Zabu Kyet-tha-yay Press" of U Maung Maung Kha was contracted to "Government Daily Limited". He was offered government office to work as translator. He did not want to work for the British government. He hated it.

After a time, he went down to Maulmyaing to work as an editor for Myanmar Times Daily. Myanmar Time copied international news from daily papers like "Myanmar-ah-swe" and "Han-tha-waddy," since there was no one of good English language abilities at the Myanmar Times.

Saya Lun wrote many articles on various subjects but mostly on Burmese culture. There were no political trends in his articles yet because he was writing for pleasure and for money. One day, U Ottama, an educated monk, came back from Japan where he had served as a visiting professor for some time. He began to preach on national politics and nationalism. He was shadowed by government police. There were only very few monasteries to house the monk as a guest. Saya Lun may have heard the messages delivered by U Ottama.

"Thurya Daily" (Sun Daily) was established in 1911 by U Ba Pe and U Hla Pe to support and propagate the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) for other than political reasons. Saya Lun was offered the editorship for the newly founded paper. He earned 75 Rupees per month at Thurya Daily. A certain abbot of Koe Saung (Nine buildings) in Myin-chan died of old age at that time. The funeral ceremony for the dead abbot was grandly prepared. Then Saya Lun composed a long poem on the abbot's funeral saying it was not appropriate to waste so much money on it.

At that time Sayadaw U Ottama came back from Japan for the second time after visiting Java on his way back home. He was invited to stay at Thurya Press. The Sayadaw exalted on nationalism to all the press workers including Saya Lun and the owners at night. The Sayadaw also gave talks on the liberation from the yoke of British colonialism. He was preaching to them to cherish nationalism and not to rely on the colonial education system. Saya Lun was interested in the preaching on national liberation by U Ottama. He loved it. He was enlightened to put it into practice. But the political preacher was not faithful to himself. U Ottama loved money. He lived for money later and came to nothing in the political scene. But Saya Lun was different. He became politically more mature day by day and became a glorious nationalist to lead young students into the national liberation movement. At the outbreak of the farmers' uprising led by Galon Saya San, U Ottama slipped away to India and ignored the Galon forces. Saya Lun never believed in U Ottama any more but he cherished nationalism preached by the Sayadaw and kept it on practice. He loved it.

When Saya Lun was at the age of 40, his wife Daw Shin passed away in 1915 (1277 BE) leaving four children with Saya Lun. The youngest daughter was eleven months old when her mother died. It was a little difficult for him to keep his children properly. He was suggested to marry a proper lady to keep his household. But he said it would be very unwise to do it again.

Saya Lun had good friends such as U May Aung, U Ba Pe and U Khin Maung, all of them

regarded Saya Lun as their respected teacher. They persuaded Saya Lun to take a professorship of Burmese Literature at the University since they were influential officers of the government. But U Lun refused it instantly because he did not want to serve the colonial government. U May Aung persuaded Saya Lun to receive an honourable title of "Agga-maha Pandita" (The great Pandit) for two times: firstly when he was in the office of Prosecution Officer of the government and secondly when he was in the office of Home Minister. But Saya Lun's response was "I don't want to be popular; they are not my government and not my Lord; I don't want to be honoured by the foreigners who made us slaves in our own land."

And again U May Aung finally suggested Saya Lun very earnestly to receive a thousand rupee award by composing a "Poem of Praise" for the Prince of Wales, son of King George when he paid a visit to Burma. To the disappointment of U May Aung, Saya Lun's response was negative, saying "Being a nationalist it is not good for me to compose a poem of praise for someone who rules us without our consent; saying let him rule us longer ; glory be to him; ... oh no, this I will never do." Then the boycott by the students in 1920 against the University Act promulgated by the British Government happened. The Act intended to undermine the progress of the Burmese youth and to degrade the standard of education of Burmese majority. So the Burmese university students called for a meeting and decided to reject the Act. They put up their rejection of the Act to the Council of Legislature. But the British government ignored the students' rejection, and promulgated the Act on December 1, 1920, establishing the University of Rangoon.

Everybody knew that the Act was not to allow the majority of Burmese students to have access to University education. Only a few rich students who were well acquainted with the English could go to the University according to this Act. There were certain points that the students hated most.

1. Numbers of students to attend the University are limited and all the students must stay in boarding house in the campus. (Boarding fees are so high that the poor majority cannot afford it.)
2. Students must have a good knowledge of English language. (Most of the Burmese students were not good in English.)
3. Students must take a preliminary course of English language for a year. (One more year to spend money for is too much.)
4. Viva exam be included in every examination in the University. (Not necessary)
5. Ordinary degree (1st degree) holder has no right of access to Masters' classes.
6. No repeater is allowed in Honoured classes.
7. There must be three years to earn Honoured degree after Intermediate Exam. (Not necessary to

spend one more year)

8. Honoured Science classes must take English composition.

9. Majority of the Burmese people in the University Council or Senate must not be government officers. (Limited influence)

10. Deputy Chancellor (Rector) and Professors must be appointed directly by the Chancellor (Governor).

11. No students from private schools have access to sit for University examinations.

All these facts show that only a handful of students who have acquired a good standard in English and could afford to spend money might go to the University. The majority of Burmese had no chance to get higher education. That is why the students decided to boycott the University Act and left the campus. *Saya Lun* encouraged the students by saying that it was the best action taken since the time of Buddha. The honourable U Maung Gyi (MA) stood on the side the students and left his office which earned him a salary of more than a thousand rupee.

The students and U Maung Gyi requested *Saya Lun* to teach Burmese and Burmese History at the National Collage to be opened at a certain monastery in Bahan quarter at the base of the Shwe-da-gon Pagoda. *Saya Lun* was overjoyed seeing the high national spirit of the university students. He left the *Thurya Daily* of U Ba Pe for the students of the National College. The students had successfully done what they decided to do by the enthusiastic help of *Saya Lun* and *Saya U Ba Cho* of *Deedok* journal.

Then the next step was taken. The senior students went through the whole country preaching nationalism and encouraging to establish national schools all over the country. They also offered themselves to be teachers for the national schools without minding to get a salary. Thus the whole country was awakening to the national spirit by the energetic movement of the student boycotters. *Saya Lun* decided to dedicate all his property and his life to the cause of national education. He said before the students, "My life is for you. I will use all my possessions for the national education. The knowledge and wisdom I acquired; my property and integrity I gained; all is yours; you may use as you want."

The national education movement faced a lot of difficulties and obstacles but it did not fail. There were some government officers who left their office for teaching at national schools. *Thein-gyi Bazaar* (named after big Buddhist Ordination Hall), the General Council of Buddhist Association (GCBA) and some Indians were great supporters of national schools.

It was true that there were some people and institutions which did not appreciate national

education and did stand as obstacles for the movement. They did not belong to national ethnic groups. They were foreigners, the mixed bloods, government officers, the *Thurya Daily* and the *Myanmar Observer Daily* etc... But the national education system stood still like a pillar of rock that stands against storm.

Saya Lun disgraced those who stood as obstacles before his students. He strongly criticized negatively those who were unfaithful to the national cause. He was a great teacher without undergoing "teachers' training". He taught exalting national spirit among the students. He taught about the glory of Burmese kings of various dynasties; Ta-gaung Dynasty (50), Sri Ksetra Dynasty (27); Pagan Dynasty (55), Pinya Dynasty (6), Ava Dynasty (29), Toungoo Dynasty (35), Pyi Dynasty (17), Kone-baoung Dynasty (11) etc; explaining the national culture and national practice of Burmese kings in ruling the country justly and properly. He could inspire his students to appreciate Burmese literature as national literature while the majority of the students were very much impressive of English. Saya Lun taught so much lively that he could impart national aspirations to the minds of his students. He was able to raise his students to take pride in their national education against the British colonial education.

The first anniversary of the students' boycott was celebrated at Kyaung-daw-yar monastery in Bahan vally near Shwe-da-gon Pagoda on the 10th waning day Ta-saung-mone in 1921 (1283 BE). It was marked by the Burmese date and commemorated later as National Day of the nation (from 1284 BE onward). The students and some nationalists went into the streets of the whole city to demonstrate national spirit on the day of the annual celebration. Then they assembled at Kyaung-daw-yar monastery to hear the speech delivered by U Maung Gyi (MA), chairman of the National Education Council. There were great contributions of the Sangha for the assembly - U Maung Gyi delivered a strong message on the promotion of the National Education System.

Saya Lun and Saya Ba Cho worked hard very actively and happily for the National College living with austerity for the sake of the school. They lived on the love of Buddhist monks and students. The salary of Saya Lun was two hundred rupees but he drew one hundred fifty rupees only. He walked daily to school from his home at Bar Street, a distance of about a mile.

Then there came a time when some of the teachers who had to care for their families could not stand the pressure of poorness and left the college. There were also some students who were not mature enough to stand for the college and left it for Yangon University. They knew that the future of National College was uncertain. Saya Lun encouraged Saya Ba Cho, his junior, "Anyone may feel discouraged; and anyone may abandon the college; but we will try our best to cling to our

National College to the last of our breath.”

At that time the editor of Myanmar-alin Daily (Light of Myanmar Daily) wrote an article attacking Saya Lun's integrity. The students decided that they had no faith in the editor of the paper. Saya Lun said to the students to lessen their hatred and to broaden their love; and the editor of Myanmar-alin was glorifying their maturity, he said.

Then Saya Lun composed a poem reflecting the waning conditions of National College. "Our beloved oh Bahan College; growing weak and fade; ebb is its glow; as the difficulties grow; single meal we daily eat; in open house we teach; ..."

Thus National College became weaker day by day as the teachers left it due to insufficient pay which they did not get regularly. The glorious teachers faithful to the end of National College were U San Nyunt, U Lu Pe Win, U Ba Cho, Mr. Barnajee, Mr. Ahyah and Saya Lun.

One day, U Maung Gyi, the chairman of the National Education Council accepted an honourable office of high salary (5000 rupees) offered by the British Government and left the Bahan National College completely. This was a fateful blow to the college. The great supporters of the National College U Poe Tet and U Poe Khaing who regularly collected funds for the college were discouraged by this fact.

The National College which Saya Lun loved as his life came to an end when U Maung Gyi, who became Minister for Education and Ko Ba Oo, one of the student leaders of the boycott accepted government service. They betrayed not only to their comrades but also to the national cause. A certain U Chit Hlaing, a leader of the GCBA who wanted to establish his own organization as a hero, did not wish to help the National College. There was no more future for the College.

Saya Lun and U Ba Cho actively nursed the National College with all their possessions, with all their heart and mind, with all their wisdom and courage. But it lasted four years only. The immediate cause might be the unfaithfulness of some nationals like U Maung Gyi, Ko Ba Oo and others but the real cause were the systematic suppressive measures of the experienced colonial government. Then Saya Lun wrote a funeral poem for National College, beginning, "coming down from Upper Land..."

Saya Lun was called to her presence by Her Majesty Queen Su-phaya Latt to appoint him as her secretary when the National College came to an end. He politely refused her offer because, he said, he did not want to be a woman's courtier. Then the queen persuaded U Lun to work for Yawnghwe Saopha. U Lun refused her offer again explaining that he did not want, as a nationalist, to kneel

down before a Shan Saopha. At last U Lun got a job at the Dagon Magazine of his friend U Ba Nyunt. He worked there as editor of the magazine for a certain period. Then he withdrew from the job when U Ba Nyunt wanted U Lun to work for his magazine alone. U Lun wanted to work freely for everyone as much as he could. He was a man for everyone.. That's why he withdrew from the job when U Ba Nyunt wanted U Lun to work solely for his magazine. U Lun wanted to work freely for everyone as much as he could. He hated to listen to the voice of money. He was a man who loved freedom more than money or others. He wanted to write for the good of the country freely.

The above account was written, as Thein Pe Myint said, according to the stories about Saya Lun as they were told by others. The following account is a direct or personal experience of the author about his loved Saya (teacher) as he knew him.

In 1933 Thakin Ba Thaug, Thakin Thein Maung, Thakin Ba Sein and Thakin Tun Shwe went together to the resident of Saya Lun to pay homage to him as soon as they were released from prison where they were kept because of their preaching national politics in Shwebo. Thein Pe accompanied them to see the Sayagyi. Then Thein Pe loved Sayagyi with deep respect for U Lun's strong national spirit and also for his stand on the side of the students. U Lun used to encourage Thein Pe and the students to sustain national spirit for the future of the country. Sayagyi always said that the future is in the hands of the students who dare to do anything for the country. He did not believe neither in the group of twenty-one, a pro-government political group, nor in the GCBA. He believed only in the students. He used to say that the University was very important for the life of the country. National liberation could be achieved only when the University students took part actively in liberation movement.

Saya Lun had a great pity for the poor, the downtrodden and the children. He used to help the needy. Thein Pe noticed Saya Lun's generosity toward the needy when he travelled with him. Thein Pe knew that the national spirit of U Lun was more exalted when he saw Burmese people becoming poorer and poorer. But he had no concern for those who were disloyal to the national cause. He hated traitors and oppressors. He was a good man and had good attitude toward others. His face was always clean and pleasant. One day Thein Pe took a friend with him when he paid a visit to Saya Lun. The stranger did not know about Saya Lun before. On their way back the stranger exclaimed, "O such a glorious face. It reveals his heart." Thein Pe never forgot this account. The purity of a heart was reflected in the face.

Saya Lun was courageous. Saya Lun and U Kay Tu, a Buddhist monk who was a honorary executive of the Sangha went to the first assembly of "Doh Bama Asi-a-yone" held in Ye-nan-

gyaung. They went there knowing that they could be arrested but the two were prepared to face their fate. U Lun was straightforward to tell the truth and to do the right thing. These was a case of San Pe' in his time. San Pe' (Bo San Pe') was a misfit in his time. He was a leader of a revolutionary group in Tharzi Township. They were given capital punishment for high treason. Then Saya Lun chaired a petition council for the case. He went to Myingyan Prison to see San Pe'. He was very pleased to see a courageous face well prepared to face death. Saya Lun himself was full of courage. He loved courageous spirit. He was not afraid of worldly conditions (Law-ka-dhamma).

Saya Lun did not love money and had no craving for anything except reading and writing. He wrote a lot of books but never kept the copy-right for profit. He was not in debt though he loved giving and helping the poor and needy. He got what he needed because he led a frugal life. He was satisfied with what he got and what he had. There are many people who are generous and love giving. But they are not happy because they are in debt. They said they are in debt because they are generous and love in giving but they may be craving for other things and may be wasting money on such cravings. They may be hypocrites but Saya Lun was conscientious in every action. He had no craving for anything so he had no anxiety.

He is like a clock. He did rightly, truthfully and punctually what he had to do. He never bent left or right and he had no fear of all worldly conditions from which no one can escape. He refused to work for government. He did not love the award of the Prince of Wales. He hated all controls of the rich and the powerful. He said, "I cannot enjoy the comfort of a slave."

There was no one like him in generosity. Saya Lun covered Thein Pe's expenses for their trip to Ye-nan-gyaung when Thein Pe could not get any pence from anywhere. He shared half of his money of thirty rupees. He helped some needy people and children on their way without being anxious for their own return journey. He did not love fame and popularity and did not like to be photographed. He loathed worldly pleasures. He turned away in disdain from those who love worldly pleasures too much. Someone said, "I respected Saya Lun very much for not marrying anyone again." He was very religious. He gave homage's to the shrines of Buddha wherever he went. He did not waste time. He said prayers with rosary whenever he was free.

He lived like an old man of the recent past but he went along with youths and students of the day. His thinking and his ideas were always fresh. He was ahead of his generation in national politics. This was the main reason why university students looked up to him for guidance and discussed with him with great respect. Thein Pe never forgot what Saya Lun replied to the university students, "Negative criticism is also important in national politics," and he continued,

"You may abandon religion for the sake of your nation. Religion will flourish when a nation is free and prospers."

But Saya Lun never left away the practice of alchemy. He loved alchemy as much as Saya U Ba Cho believed in astrology. It was true that he was always trying to find a way for the liberation of his people. Then he found alchemy as a way out to help his people, when he saw no other way. He might have thought that when the mercury was changed into gold by alchemy, then people would become rich. But he was a man who could leave the wrong for the right. He was easy to put himself on the right.

There were some people who just read some of the Saya Lun's works but did not know him personally. They criticized that he thought too much of himself and was very proud of himself. Actually they did not read all the works of Saya Lun and they did neither know the nature of poetic literature nor fully understood the poems.

Saya Lun had a strong will to work for national independence. Anyone who has a strong desire to free his people from slavery is a noble man. He was a man who neither depended on the rich nor bowed down before the authorities for his life and work. He never advanced for self interest by favouring the rich and the authorities. He was so noble that biased people who could not stand before him accused him of thinking of himself too much.

A closer look at Saya Lun will reveal that he was a noble man who loved freedom and lived freely. A nation will achieve freedom only when its people has a strong will to live freely without depending on others, has unflinching courage and conscience, has noble mind and unflinching national spirit that leads to a life of unflinching effort for the fellow citizens. Saya Lun was always trying to find means and ways for freedom with all his mind and heart.

Saya Lun was living in an age when people gave high respect to the educated in English language. It was an age when money could buy high degrees and a Doctorate. Saya Lun was not recognized by the British government. But the progressive students gave him high respect and looked toward him for the future. He was honest, austere, straightforward and a man of Burmese literature. He had a strong will for national liberation. He knew how to teach each individual effectively. He hated the Empire. He hated those who betrayed the nation. He lived a saintly life. Thus U Ba Cho records that Saya Lun was an example for others.

Aim and Impact of the Book and Assessment

The main objective and aim of Nagani Book Club, said U Tun Aye in an interview, was to broaden the political vision of the masses and to raise the political awareness and then to impart

revolutionary spirit in them.

The first University boycott of 1920 gave birth to the National College, to national schools all over the country and to the National Education Council to run the schools. The National College and national schools could able to impart nation spirit in the minds of students at various levels. But after ten years, the national spirit and the national movement became wane and fade. The GCBA which was at the fore front with the students in supporting to establish national schools disintegrated into sects. It was divided into two since 1922 when Diarchy system was introduced by the British government which was one of the main causes of the division of GCBA. In 1929 the GCBA became divided into four groups and later into six.

While the national spirit was waning in the hearts of the people, there came the global economic crisis which severely affected the lifes of the farmers. This led to the up-rising headed by Saya San (known as Galon Saya San). Saya San organized the farmers into a rebellion. The British government executed Saya San and his followers cruelly on a public place. At the same time there was an outbreak of clashes between Indians and Burmans in Yangon. All these facts created a good climate for gradual elevation of nationalism in the minds of students.

A certain Ko Ba Thaung, a young staff of the Rangoon (Yangon) University began to organize some nationalistic students. They established an organization known as "Doh Bama Asi-ayone" or "We Burman Association" on May 30th, 1930. These young people called themselves "Thakin" meaning "Master". They were to upgrade their dignity by calling themselves "Thakin". They decided to struggle for complete liberation of the nation from the British yoke. To achieve their aim of great vision they had to nurture the national spirit and political awareness among the youth, especially university students. They had to find means and ways to gain total independence. To materialize their vision Thakin Ba Thaung and his friends organized a group known popularly as "Thakin Association".

Ko Nu and Ko Tun Aye, members of the Thakin Association established the Nagani Book Club to help the people finding a way out from the oppressive colonial system, to raise the national spirit of and to awaken the nerves of people politically drugged. The two young men might remember the words of Saya Lun, "You students should try to find new ways and new thoughts for the nation."

The life and literature of Saya Lun was in line with the aim and purpose of Nagani. He was a straightforward man and never bent to the right or left; never bent to the rich and powerful. He always wanted to be free. He was free from fear and worldly cravings. He lived a saintly life. He loved the nation. He gave guidance to the young people and students. He did hate any traitor and the

unfaithful. He was at the forefront with the students in his time. Looking back briefly into the history of Burmese literature, Thein Pe Myint writes that *Saya Lun* was one of a few revolutionary writers. He was morally high. He lived truly according to what he had written. Thein Pe Myint wrote that as a man *Saya Lun* was nobler than the writer Mr. Maung Hmaing (Thakin Kodaw Hmaing).

At the end of his introduction to the book Thein Pe Myint explained that "The reason of writing the biography of Thakin Kodaw Hmaing called *Saya Lun* is to show a living example that should be followed by the young progressive writers who have a lot of responsibilities to carry on their shoulders for the people."

Saya Lun writings are mostly helpful for the building of the nation. He himself was also a man for the nation. He was a guide for the youths and students who were deeply involved in the national liberation movement. His life was an example to be followed by anyone who wants a life of dignity, especially for those of youths who were struggling for the nation. His life was an inspiration for the Thakins. This might be the real fact that made Nagani to publish the book of *Saya Lun*'s biography in the first place.

The publisher and the writer met their expectations and aims. The life of *Saya Lun* and some of his literatures are still a reference today. People are studying *Saya Lun* for inspiration. He was faithful to himself and the nation up to the grave. He is an exemplary revolutionary writer. After independence, he was involved in the peace movement on both the national and the international level. He had many friends and fans both in the light and in underground. Both groups asked for his advice. He was awarded the Stalin peace prize by the Soviet Union. He never wanted to be rich or powerful for his own. They had to go to him. His life is still a guide and an inspiration for the new generations too. This can be seen here below.

Colonial education given by the British government was a tool to assist British Administration. It was called slave education because it made students to look up at the British and to look down to the nationals. The Burmese language taught at the British Rangoon University was not standard Burmese. A student might pass the University examination even though he or she failed in Burmese language, it was said. Teaching of Burmese language was up-graded only when U Pe Maung Tin came back from Britain in 1924, in the year the National College came to an end. Professor Pe Maung Tin, a Burmese national separated the Department of Burmese from the Department of Oriental Studies and he lovingly nursed it. A new and modern trend of Burmese literature came out (commonly known *Khit-san-sar-pay*). Under the new professor's nurture a group of new blood,

testing on a new way came out (e.g. Min Thu Won, Zawgyi, Theippan Maung Wa, Maung Po Kyar).

Then new progressive writers were born in the university under such a condition created by national schools and Prof. Pe Maung Tin (eg. Ko Nu, Thein Pe, Nyo Mya, Aung San). Farmers' rebellion led by Saya San, Indian - Burman clashes and the birth of the Thakin Association in 1930 were a good background for the development of progressive literature. A national spirit arose in Saya Lun. He wrote "Boh Tika, Galon Tika, Thakin Tika" reflecting the period. We can trace the spirit of nationalism in all these Tikas.

The rise of nationalism in Saya Lun was earlier than this period. He wrote long poems and articles on national movement since the first University Boycott in 1920. He taught on national heroes of the past at National College. He joined the newly established Thakin Association led by Thakin Ba Thaug; got a new name "Thakin Kodaw Hmaing". "Doh Bama Asi-ayone" official name of Thakin association was originally based on nationalism. But beginning from 1935, its guiding philosophy was changed and based on socialism, a leftist ideology, writes Mya Han.

One thing is sure for the spread of socialism. There was the second boycott of the university students in 1936 after the expulsion of Ko Nu and Ko Aung San from the Rangoon University. The student leader Ko Nu considered to design a National University again after the strike. He sent Ko Thein Pe to India not only for further study but also to study how to run a university. Then Ko Thein Pe got into contact with the revolutionary leftist group in India. He studied socialism. He was in touch with his friends in Burma. In the same year Pandit J. Nehru (former Prime Minister of India) and his daughter young Indira Gandhi (former Prime Minister of India) came to Rangoon to attend the first All Burma Student Union (ABSU) Assembly held in Jubilee Hall. He said to the student leaders (Aung San and others) that Soviet Communism was a guide to all the colonial states for their liberation. Nehru and his daughter came again to attend the second ABSU assembly to be held in Mandalay in 1937. He advised the students' leaders of the Union again that Soviet Union was the star to follow by all the liberation movements all over the world. Thakin Ohn Myint, who told this account, was one of the students participating in the assemblies.

U Ohn Myint said that all the students who had heard about leftist ideology from Nehru came to the Nagani Book Club when the Club was opened in 1937. Even Ko Ohn (former Ambassador) who was known "Lu Phonegyi" (a monk in layman dress) for his pacifism came to Nagani and showed his interest in armed revolution. Therefore, said Thakin Ohn Myint the three bodies, student Union, Nagani and Thakins were not separable. They were three in one.

In an interview with three old men of the Nagani period, Col. Maung Maung Aye (Rtd.), Lt. Col. Maung Maung Myint (Rtd.) and Thakin Ohn Myint, all said that many of the books published by Nagani were progressive literature in which many of the students took interest. Nagani was for the revolutionary students who wanted to overthrow the British government and the students supported Nagani for its existence. Most of the books from Nagani were a great help for the liberation struggle. Col. Maung Maung Aye said that the students of the time looked up at the Irish revolution. And again the third ABSU assembly was held in Patheingyi in 1938. Thakin Ohn Myint was there at the assembly. After the assembly that student leaders went to Cape Mawtin (Cape Negarais) for a workshop. Logistic arrangements at Mawtin for the workshop was done by a Rakhine student called Tha Tun Oo. Group discussions for the liberation struggle were very lively at the workshop. Student leaders, Thakin Aung San, Thakin Ba Hein, Thakin Hla Shwe (lovingly called Dictator Hla Shwe) and a teacher Thakin Than Tun said that they were going to prepare for armed struggle. So the students decided to take the way of armed struggle in the near future. To prepare for the armed revolution, Thakin Aung San instructed all the students to contact all the Thakin Associations throughout the country. One can see the influence of Nagani in all these undertakings, remarked Thakin Ohn Myint.

It was true that students, Thakins and Nagani are three in one. They were in the same movement with the same spirit. Nagani helped the students and Thakins to take a leading role in the struggle. Again at the Cape Mawtin workshop Ko Ohn, so called "Lu Phonegyi", suggested that it would be suitable to contact "Revolutionaries in Bengal" for help. Thakin Ohn Myint said that he would never forget Ko Ohn's suggestion.

Nagani played a great role in Burma's independent struggle; it helped raising the national spirit, it helped to raise the political awakening of the masses; it helped getting a political vision for the future; it helped guiding and finding new ways for national liberation.

There is almost none of such literature produced here in the 21st century. There is no publisher like Nagani which circulated revolutionary literature against the ruling government. It is true that there are some publications raising the national spirit. All such books were policy guides published by the government press. Youth and students are not interested in the policy books because they stand for the present ruling government. Most of the books published now are books on technology and technical guides. Books on economic development, on personal skills, on income generation are everywhere in the country.

Many of the bright, energetic and affordable students and youths went abroad to study and some

for good. Brain drain is the phenomenon of the day.

We need men like Thakin Kodaw Hmaing in such a situation. We need progressive literature for students and youths. We need both literature and leadership that can guide us; help us; nurture us and encourage us to take the right way at the right time without minding rich or power. We need some people wholly dedicated for the national cause. We need literatures that guides us to get the right political strategy and that encourages us dare to take risks at the right time and space exalting our spirit to love our fellow citizens. If no such books are available here then Nagani books can be reprinted.

If it is possible someone can import such kind of literature into the country as Thakin Nu, Thakin Thein Pe and Nagani Tun Aye had done in the past. It would be fruitful in the long run but risk is everywhere. We really need such kind of literature for the permanent revolution in the present and the future. People and literature which can point out the right and the wrong and can guide to the right path are always needed in the world. The biography is Thakin Kodaw Hmaing is always needed and the story will be living in the heart of all nationalists. It is a precious book not only for the Burmese but for everybody. The Nagani Book Club borne in September in 1937 had done a great thing for the nation.

References

1. A History of Burma - Htin Aung
2. Thein Pe Myint Yoppon Hlwa - Mahn Nyunt Maung
3. Sit-ahtwin Kha yee thei - Thein Pe Myint
4. Sarpay Journal - March + April 1996
5. Hsee pwa yay Tetkatho Magazine - 1976-77
6. Koloni Hkit Myanmar Thamaing - Mya Han
7. Thudo Hnin Kyun daw - Maung Suan Yee

5. Critique of the Review by Kyaw Nyunt

Volker Grabowsky

This book review is written with great enthusiasm and sympathy with both Saya Lun and Thein Pe Myint, the author of the *Saya Lun* biography. As the book under review was the first book published by the Nagani Book Club, it certainly deserves great attention. Kyaw Nyunt divides his review, running over 22 pages, into three parts. First he provides a detailed biography of the biographer, then he gives a long summary of the biography itself and in the final section he discusses the impact of the *Saya Lun* biography on the anti-colonial struggle of the Burmese people as well as its impact on the present generation of Burmese nationalists. Though Kyaw Nyunt has done, in general, a good job, there are several shortcomings which should be addressed. First, he writes that Thein Pe was appointed General Secretary of the Communist Party of Burma (p. 5) and got the top position in 1946 (p. 6). But how does this go along with the statement that Thein Pe “had no place in party-politics” (p. 6)? Secondly, it is stated that several student leaders who accepted government service “betrayed the nation” (p. 13) but the nature of their “treason” is not specified. Thirdly, the mention that *Saya Lun* was awarded the Stalin prize is very important. The readers, however, might like to know more about the circumstances for this dubious honour and also when and in which political context this prize was awarded. Lastly, though the content of the biography is retold in considerable detail, one is not really informed about the structure of the book and how its various sections are related to one another.

6. Kyaw Nyunt: Response to the Critique of Volker Grabowsky

Dear Mr. Volker

Thank you for your kind and helpful critique. Here is my response to your questions related to my weakness.

(1) Thein Pe was appointed GS of CPB in 1946. Later, he was accused of holding Browderism which he brought from India and was forced into a six-month leave from CPB for self-study and re-thinking his line of thought. But he was never appointed again in any party post of importance. He was a victim of leadership struggle in Burmese politics.

(2) U Maung Gyi, Ba Oo and some student leaders left the national schools and national college to accept the government services which is instated to suppress Nationalism, they were once nationalists but now they became instruments of British government in suppressing the nationalism; e.g U Maung Gyi was appointed Minister for Education and ordered him to create policy to eliminate National College which Sayagyi U Lun loved as his life.

(3) Saya Lun was awarded Stalin Peace Prize for the year 1954 on his 80th Birthday in 1955 in Yangon. It is good here to quote "The Times (25.7.1964)"

... Thakhin Kodaw Haming was awarded the title "Alingakyawzwa" for his services to Burmese literature. He became a member of the Burmese committee of the World Peace Congress and received the Stalin Peace prize in 1954. Throughout his life he was devoted to the cause of freedom....." It was in the early years of Cold War when the prize was given for his persistent labours encouraging peaceful coexistence between sovereign states.

(4) I am not qualified to make a review. It was forgotten to show the structure and content of the book. I did it just because I love to do it to satisfy my curiosity and for those who need it.

Appreciations for your critique.



Kyaw Nyunt
Yangon

7. Some Writings by Saya Lun

Translation: U Tin Htway

Introductory Remarks:

The works of Saya Lun have not yet been published for Western readers. This is partly due to their special style. The following texts are excerpts from the unpublished M.A. Thesis submitted in 1968 at the SOAS in London by Tin Htway. The title of the thesis is “The Emergence and Development of Political Writing in Burmese Literature, 1914-1942, with Special Reference to U Lun”.

In this thesis, Tin Htway provides detailed information about the life of the writer and politician and translated some of his writings. Interestingly, the biography of Thein Pe is not mentioned – most likely because it is not regarded “political” but “biographical”.¹ The following extracts provide a view into his appreciation of the young Burmese nationalists and his own feelings.

a) Poems on the Student Strike of 1920 (University le:-khyui:-kri:)

The student strike that started in December 1920 marks the beginning of the nationalist movement in Burma. Until today, the first day of the strike is a national holiday.

Oh ! students are boycotting the authorities,
my sympathy and support for you all is great,
But, because at the moment, I am far away from you,
There is little in practice that, I, Mr. Maung Hmaing,
can do to support or encourage you.
But since I know that blood is thicker than water,
as a fellow Burman, for the sake of our future,
I shall remain always in touch with you all.
Though I am far. away,
When the time comes for important matters,
Blood is always thicker than water.
When I was young, before the Burmese Kingdom collapsed, I was just like you - a student,

¹Tin Htway used the “Catalogue of Books” compiled by the British administration and apparently adopted the classification of that record.

A student who feared nothing, with a future full of promise.

Therefore, write my name at the head of the list of those who support your boycott.

I am on your side.

May the Lord Buddha and the angels

Send their blessings on all people in the world.

Would that my prayer could be added also.

In the past, there was Saya Aung of Sa-re-khetta-ra period,

who turned lead into silver by magic.

There were also Rhan Ana-go-no and Khan Ma-thi: of the

Pagan period, the brightest chapter in our history.

Like them, I, the great wanderer,

Will always do my best to work my magic wherever I am.

Yes, what I am attempting and trying to do is not for myself

It is for the sake of my people and my country.

I wish I could really help my country.

To achieve this aim, the only ray I know is to become a successful alchemist,

and that is why I am so interested in alchemy and experimenting as much as I can.

If only I could succeed in that magic

People would then live longer - hundreds and thousands of years

Throughout the country, there would be plenty of gold and silver

and all kinds of material wealth pouring down on everyone like rain.

People would be happy, they would love and be kind to each other,

because they would enjoy everything they wanted and have no more worries

And they would draw closer to their religion.

Then I would say very proudly "Here comes Maung Hmaing."

I, the great yogi, the very wise man, who loved and practised meditation

Famous and well known all over the country,

With numerous followers and disciples.

I tell you this - remember, if ...

I succeed in my magic of making gold and silver

As once happened in the Pagan and Sa-re-khetta-ra

I, who love my people and my country eternally,

Will build, will erect, will sponsor many many universities
Throughout the country, even in the remotest place,
There will be standards of education as great as Western ones
So that we can be equal with them.
So that we can be proud of ourselves.²

b) Excerpts from the Thakin Tika

The Thakin Tika was the last of U Lun's *tikas* (commentaries) on sociopolitical events in the colonial period. It was written in 1938.

Poem

"Now, our Lord Buddha's Era is nearly halfway through,
And as for us Burmese,
Nobody can oppress us, nobody can overrule us.
We can be really proud of ourselves,
and our Star will be as bright as ever" ...
that is how I foresee our future
because of all your (Thakhins) achievements.
Yes, I, Master of you all, who come down from Upper Burma,
thought
That our Lord Buddha's sasana, in going to have
another bright chapter in your time.
.....
The so-called leaders of the imperialist stooges,
who want to exercise their undeserved powers,
That is, the coalition government authorities,
They treated us like criminals
like petty thieves, like robbers.
This happened not only once, not only twice,
but frequently now here, now there, all the time.
So, in our country, Burma, the land of historically

²Tin Htway 1969.

civilized people,

The Dobama Thakhins have to face all these ridiculous charges
and unfair treatment — and all sorts of obstructions.

(My dear fellow Thakhins) Let them do whatever they can.

It is just nothing. Do stand firmly, with patience and perseverance.

Let the opposition say to us, ' Go to hell ',

Never mind. They will stop, when they get tired, we just don't care.

[The following is Tin Htway's transition; editor] Saya Lun also wanted to put on record his criticism of the behaviour of the coalition government, which he substantiated. He inserted a passage from .the November 18, 1937 issue of the Sun Daily in his Tika. It reads as follows:

U PAW TUN REVEALS COALITION SUCCESS

He said they had to go and fetch some M.P.s from the brothels to get enough votes to be able to form the coalition government and also said that the M.P.s are demanding a very high price for their votes.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT)³

³ Tin Htway 1969: 303-306.

III. MATERIAL ON THEIN PE, *ROYAL ADVISORS*

1. **Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information**

Translated from his Nagani-Bibliography, pp.125-127 by Frankie Tun.

101: Thein Pe Myint * U * Member of Parliament: Author ° Thein Pe; Yangon: Tun Aye * 1937.

The book was published in September 1937, just before the Nagani Book Club was founded.

It was the combination of the three novels from Thein Pe Myint which were “My Husband and My Money” written in 1934 and “The Member of Parliament and the Soldier” a combination of two short novels published in 1935. The three short novels were put together in one volume and published with the title of “Member of Parliament”. In that book, Maung Nu (U Nu) wrote an introduction dated 20-8-1937 and in that introduction he said: As there is a saying “Many Women but few Wives”, there are very few good novels in Burma although many love novels were written and they were more popular than ever. He also wrote critically about the figures in Western novels.

U Nu wrote about how he came to get Thein Pe's book and Western books and that he liked the former one because it is full of words used in Middle Burma.

The “Member of Parliament” was written mockingly about a rich village man who also was a member of the Parliament during the colonial period. The personalities of the members of Parliament and how they shouted and argued for nothing at the Parliament were characterised distinctly and vividly. The author told how in the end the man eloped a half prostitute girl, fell into difficulties and died.

“My Husband and My Money” was a novel filled with middle Burma practices and customs. It told the story of a widow who loved money too much and got married with another widower. When the robbers came, in the situation of a choice between the money and husband, she was more for the money and died for that. It was a well written story in such a funny way to make the reader laugh.

“The Soldier” is a novel with a historical background. A villager got married with a wife who

already had a relationship with the son of Bandula.¹ Even though the child was not from him, he hoped that the kid would fight the English since it had a hero's bloodline. But to the contrary the youngster was not brave. This was written to show that patriotism could be born in any class of society.

Even though the “The Member of Parliament” book was not published from the Nagani publishing organization, the publisher, U Tun Aye was also the founder of the Nagani book club and he published this book just before the founding of the club. Since the books written by Thein Pe Myint, this collection was advertised later in the book “Hitler and Chamberlain, who is wrong?” together with other books written by Thein Pe and published by the Nagani book club. It was thus documented as one of the Nagani books.

¹ The famous Burmese general who fought the British in the First Anglo-Burmese War.

2. Nay Lin: Book Report of “Min Taing Pin” (Member of Parliament)

by **Thein Pe Myint (Thein Pe)**

Reviewer: Dr. Nay Lin

Tutor in Myanmar Language

Department of Myanmar Language and Literature

Yangon University

Review translated into English by Dr. Tin Hlaing

“Min Taing Pin” – a Short Novel by Thein Pe (Thein Pe Myint)

Min Taing Pin (whose English equivalent is Member of Parliament) is a short novel based on the political outlook in Burma during the colonial period and reflecting the nature and behaviour of certain members of parliament. The author is Thein Pe (later Thein Pe Myint) and the story was published in the 1935 (sic) Nagani Journal. It is an original story by the author, based on the status of government employees under the British government and the nature of political organizations

Brief Biography of the Author

Thein Pe Myint was born on July 10, 1914 in the town of Budalin. His father U Ba was a surveyor clerk in the land records office, and his mother was Daw Myint. He started his education in U Po Nyan’s school in Budalin. He passed the Intermediate Class (i.e. the second year university) in Mandalay College in 1932-33. Then he got his B.A. degree in 1935 from Rangoon University. In 1933 he ventured into the world of letters using the pen-name ‘Wa-nay Nga Pe’. He was an executive member of the Student’s Union in 1934-35 and he also became a member of Dobamar Asi-ah-yone. He became a member of the Education Sub-committee of Nagani Book Club in 1937-38, and an organizer of the anti-Japanese movement during 1941-42. He became the Secretary-General of Burma Communist Party in 1945-46 and in 1946 the Joint Secretary of Anti Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL). Then in 1952 he became active as member of the People’s Unity Party. He also participated in the activities of World Peace Congress, Burma-China Friendship Association. He has also been elected to the Deputy-Chairmanship and Chairmanship of the Writer’s Association. He established the BO Ta Taung Daily in 1958 and was its Editor-in-

Chief as well as the Executive Director.

Thein Pe visited India the first time in 1936, and in 1942 he went to India and China as a war-time traveler. He took part in the Afro-Asian Peace Conference Preparatory Meeting in China in 1952. He had visited many countries both East and West on missions of literature, culture, and peace.

Among Thein Pe's well known works are *Tet Phongyi* (1937), *Saya Lun's Biography* (1938), *Tet khit Nat Soe*, *Nay Yit Taw Khit Haung* (1952), *Sit Twin Khayee Thae* (1953), *Ah-shay Ga Nay Wun Htwet Thee Pa-mar* (1958), *Kyaw Nyein* (1961), *Wi-thay Tha Taing Thamaing Ah-sa* (1967), *Thidar Pyone* (1968).

Abstract of the Story

U Po Ku was a rich peasant. Being not contented with his status as a rich man of the village, he wanted to become politically influential. He sought connections and after spending about Rupees three thousand, he became a Member of Parliament (MP), a designation that was comparable to that of a Deputy Commissioner. He was very pleased with his success. In preparation to attend the parliamentary meeting, he bought a yellow top jacket of silk, a greenish-yellow long *Bangkok-lungyi* (a sarong-like long piece skirt of silk), a pair of royal pattern velvet slippers. Having put himself in new attire he traveled First Class by train to Rangoon.

It was the time of the meeting of Burma Parliament. The building did not look very grand from the outside, but inside, the meeting hall was decently decorated. U Po Ku was one among the MPs proudly wearing their *gaung-baungs* (head-dress of silk with a flag-like protruding piece). The meeting was attended by the House Speaker, all Ministers and Secretaries of Government. As the meeting began, the MPs from various political parties and factions moved motions, debated vigorously; it was a noisy affair. A new comer to parliament, U Po Ku had no knowledge of the national affairs or politics. He wanted to revenge the party he disliked and voted for the other party. For the privilege of chatting with such educated men like Sir J A Maung Gyi, Dr Tha Gyaw and others he was felt elated and was very proud of himself. He was easily swayed by eloquent persuasions of great politicians.

After the meeting, Maung Ba Tin, a crook in town came to see U Po Ku while he was having

dinner.

He was a man whose business used to be guiding the MPs who had come to Rangoon and to introduce them to the good life of the capital. U Po Ku had known Maung Ba Tin after he was introduced by another MP. Maung Ba Tin took U Po Ku in a car to city centre to make him acquainted with the fun of city life. They came to a brick building in a narrow street and went upstairs. That was a whore-house. U Po Ku was given the choice of the lady he liked best. Being a bull which liked tender grass, the MP selected an eighteen year old girl of great figure, a fair lady named Lucy Khin Khin. With Lucy Khin Khin beside him U Po Ku enjoyed great pleasure, so great to the extent of forgetting the world and unable to see the rain or sky. He picked the girl up and took her to Play Hotel, the two having a night of love together. Unaccustomed to the company of young women, the man got infatuated with her and became influenced by her sweet words.

In that way, U Po Ku, the MP, got involved with the girl so much as to get 'from fun to a bleeding nose.' He had begun the affair just for pleasure, but now he sympathized with the girl and became too attached to her. In the coming nights couldn't stay away from the girl. For the period U Po Ku spent in Rangoon, he took Lucy to the hotel and to cinemas. He spent all the money he got and had to tell his village to send him money. Having spent so much money U Po Ku hit on the idea of marrying Lucy. The girl, on the other hand was keen on the prospect of becoming a *Mingadaw* (a Madam of the ruling class) and to get a life of pleasure by squeezing money from U Po Ku. Eventually, when he returned to the village, he loped with the girl taking her along.

Back home, U Po Ku redecorated his house. He installed the sofas, tea table with cups and spoons and a gramophone and records, everything he bought in Rangoon. He had become modernized. As the house changed, U Po Ku also changed. He would always wear new clothes and spent time with the new young wife, frequently uttering Kin, Khin as he spoke to her. He had changed tremendously. Because of his young wife, the villagers used to peep into their private life, and he became the subject of their gossip. Daw Shwe Toke, his Gadaw, i.e. the elder wife, was a good natured and quiet lady. Although she was unhappy with her husband, she did not protest nor do anything because she was afraid of him. Lucy Khin, however was spending money like water, indulging in food and dress and beauty. When asked about the origin of the girl, U Po Ku boasted that being an MP he had been able to marry a girl educated in a Convent school.

After about two months with Lucy, U Po Ku became afflicted with a strange disease. His whole body ached as if it had been hit in all places with a stick. He considered taking treatment from the village physician using folk medicines. But Lucy Khin told him about the ailment; he had contracted venereal disease. He tried all available Burmese medicines but it only got worse.

But there was Tauk Tun the pimp, who took care of the women. He was unhappy for the disappearance of Lucy Khin who had been taking them good income. He went out in search of the girl. U Po Ku had spent a lot of money since he became an MP. He had spent for the election, for his expenses in Rangoon and for the purchase of jewelry for Lucy. In addition, he had been idling, only spending and not looking after his business which all depleted his fortune. His financial situation got worse. Being confined to bed and ailing, he became very depressed. Although he had had no sense of shame when he had happy time with Lucy, he now realized that all his boastings and the nature of his disease were every body's knowledge. He felt let down and he became down hearted even more. U Po Ku's home was now quite unlike what it used to be; it is only a place of distress. He was so oppressed by disgrace that he could not dare to meet visitors who came to cheer him up. Yet, he was unwilling to put the blame upon Lucy Khin Khin. His love for, and attachment to her had grown so strong that he could not bear to get separated from her.

Having married U Po Ku, the rich peasant, and come to the village only for the sake of money, Lucy Khin Khin was now unhappy with the situation. The old man had no money and he was now a sick man. Things had changed since she arrived in the village, no more easy spending and no more good eating. Nor was the sick man able to satisfy her strong sexual urge. She became weary and decided to leave the old man.

One afternoon, as U Po Ku strolled unsteadily with the aid of a walking stick, Lucy kept watching in an unhappy mood. That instant, there abruptly appeared Tauk Tun from among the trees, and with all his force hit U Po Ku on the head. As U Po Ku fell, Lucy and Tauk Tun made an appointment and agreement to run away during the night after Lucy had taken all her treasures. U Po Ku became unconscious after being hit by Tauk Tun, only to come to himself the next morning. As he recovered his senses, U Po Ku uttered Lucy's name. Being annoyed and angry, Madam Shwe Toke told the man in a loud voice that Lucy Khin Khin had taken away all the treasures and had run away. Once again U Po Ku lost consciousness, this time never to breathe again.

After U Po Ku's death, there arose the need for a bye-election and the people were left to search for a better representative.

Remarks

The novel had been written in 1935 when the British Government were running Burma on a parliamentary system. According, the novel was set against the background of intrigues among various political groups. It was a satire making a mockery of such members of parliament who were politically ignorant, but got elected by spending money and who made blunders of speech and action when they were unduly influenced by pro-government activists. *Min Daing Pin* is a novel which represents the administrative situation and highlights the nature of the ruling classes of the time.

3. Commentary on Nay Lin's report (Doerthe Beer)

Dear Dr. Nay Lin,

Reading the book report was a great pleasure and I'm glad that I got the chance to know the contents of the short novel "Min Taing Pin" in English.

To me the book report was very interesting; it gave me the chance to glimpse into Burmese society but also left me with a few questions. Despite the fact that it is a satire and knowing that the story is exaggerating: Did the author, in your perspective, reflect the common attitude of society towards the parliamentary system and parliamentarians during this time? What do you think were the reasons for this attitude besides the fact that obviously some people were misusing their positions? The fact that the whole system was implemented by the nation who colonized Burma or maybe even the way the Burmese Society adapted the concept of Parliamentary Democracy?

It was remarkable to read that U Po Ku despite his wealth and his good life in the village was no longer satisfied being a peasant but longed for more – that is political status. Would you say that being "politically influential" meant a new step in the social status? Was there an equivalent to this change of status before the parliamentary system? And would you say that the idea of having a parliamentary system was linked to money right from the beginning, at least in people's perception and also reality?

Besides that I realized that the connotations which accompanied U Po Ku's going to town were quite negative. Town seemed to be a place where people showed off, people coming from the countryside were betrayed by crooks, and the commonplace moral was very low. Giving in this way of life and falling in love with a girl with low moral values had set the beginning of U Po Ku's fall. For me is the turning point of the story, would you agree on this or do you have a different opinion? Would you say that there was a negative perception about town and all that was associated with urban lifestyle?

The moment U Po Ku came home, back to the life he left, it became obvious how much he had

changed. The villagers started gossiping about him (did he lose his reputation through this?), he is no longer interested in his former wife but only in entertaining the new one and finally his downfall is incontrovertible when he gets sick because of a venereal disease that he brought “back from town” and that the new wife gave to him. I found it very interesting that he gets infected by a disease transmitted by a woman. Can you say anything about the role of women during this time? To me it seems that at the end she is the final cause of his death and not his loss of values? Or is all that only visualized by “a woman”?

Do you think that this perception of the parliamentary system, parliamentarians and the way of life in town influenced the later developments in Burma, especially after World War Two and in the new democracy? Did the author ever reflect about this story in his later days?

Doerthe Beer,
Nairobi

4. Thein Pe, The M.L.A.

(Translation: Usha Nagayarma)¹

"Oh! how quickly my world has changed! Within a month I have become the great M.L.A., U Po Koo, and not an unknown villager any more. I had to spend Rs 3000 and I have suddenly become a Member of the Legislative Assembly which is much higher than the District Commissioner! Now I am a famous person after all." The newly elected M.L.A., U Po Koo, was thinking thus while waiting on the platform with his followers for the train to Rangoon - his eyes not wavering from the first class ticket in hand. He looked at himself, very elegantly dressed in a pale yellow formal silk jacket and a silk longyi in light olive green. Also wearing a pair of velvet slippers, he thought of himself as a handsome gentleman.

Tin Pe, a young graduate lawyer, came near him and whispered, "Oh! great Uncle, you look so different now - so grand and so... elegant. We can make out that you are the great M.L.A., U Po Koo!" This flattery bloated U Po Koo, producing a smile on his face as he replied: "You see, now that I have become an M.L.A., I have to be dressed like a gentleman. After all, I have to sit with the other Honourable members of the Assembly." Meanwhile, the President of the Regional Sangha, the Rev. U Thumana, who was responsible for his success in the election, came near him. U Po Koo took off his slippers and knelt down before him. The Reverend felt elated to have such respectful attention paid to him by the M.L.A., a rich man of the village.

"Hon'ble M.L.A." said the Reverend. "When you reach Rangoon, do not forget us here. You must work for this constituency and, remember, you have to ask questions about our monastery land here."

"When Your Grace has given me an errand to do, how can I forget it? Anything else I can do?"

"Nothing else. Please give my regards to H.E. the President of Burma. By the way, you look entirely different today, like royalty. After all you are now the M.L.A.!"

"Yes. Thank you, Your Worship", U Po Koo said, his face lighting up with pleasure.

Then he turned around to Tin Pe and said, "Look after my household and my affairs, Tin Pe. I rely upon you." He nodded towards his wife, Daw Shwe Toke, to come near and said, "Do look after yourself. Supervise all the sales at home. By the way, has that astrologer come again? The one who predicted that I would win the elections? If he turns up, give him three rupees. Also send food

¹ Thein Pe Myint (1999), *Sweet and Sour. Burmese Short Stories*. Translated by Usha Narayanan. New Delhi, Sterling Publishers: 11-21.

to the Eastern Monastery regularly". Madame M.L.A. was a fat lady wearing a flower - patterned satin longyi and diamond earrings — she cut quite an impressive figure. She told him not to worry about anything.

The M.L.A. turned around and asked his wife to light a cheroot for him. At this Tin Pe sidled up to him and whispered, "Uncle, please forget your village habit. You are dressed up like a gentleman now. You are traveling First Class. How can you possibly smoke a cheroot? Here, please take this cigarette."

Thus, U Po Koo tried to get rid of his village habits and airs and began to breathe the city air and to follow city manners. Soon the train came into the station with a rattling sound. He kowtowed to the Buddhist priest and got on to the carriage. From the door he said goodbye to all, and the rest of the passengers were very impressed. With the eyes of the crowd on him, U Po Koo felt like the solo danseuse on stage. He felt like dancing himself saying, "Me — the one and only Po Koo." U Po Koo closed the door of the compartment and sat down on the plush sofa seat. He looked round the First Class compartment observing how the wooden panel was well-polished, how all the sofas and their velvet covers looked very grand. Oh yes — U Po Koo had started enjoying the comforts of being an M.L.A., feeling the smooth texture of the velvet seat-cover.

He thought of taking off his silk jacket —but with the whirling breeze of the fan above he felt cool and decided not to take it off. Then he thought he should change into an ordinary longyi to be more comfortable. But he decided not to change it either as the flattering words at the station about his dress came back to him. Then he wondered if he should take off the silk *gaungbaung* (headgear) with its small piece fluttering in the breeze. This too he decided not to change as he thought he looked handsome with it. Thus U Po Koo travelled the whole rail journey to Rangoon in full formal gear.

To him the Assembly Building did not look very impressive from outside, but the Hall looked impressive and comfortable. The whirling fans from the ceiling brought cool air and the silk pieces of the headgear of the Members fluttered in the breeze. In the bright lights the Assembly Hall looked grand with all the Members and Ministers seated in their places and the Speaker of the Assembly dressed in his formal robes. There were questions from Members and answers by Ministers. U Po Koo was not interested in these goings-on.

During the lunch hour break, he went to the restaurant to have his meal. Though he had never had an opportunity to eat with spoon and fork before, he managed it quite well. Meanwhile the Government Party members came and thanked him for his support. The Opposition leader who also

appeared before him sat at the table. He was very friendly and invited U Po Koo to come and stay in his house, but the invitation was politely declined. U Po Koo was so pleased with all this attention that he invited the Opposition leader to his constituency.

In the evening after dinner, while relaxing in a deck chair, Maung Ba Tin came and saw him. Maung Ba Tin was an ex-hotel manager and a man about town in Rangoon. Whenever the new M.L.A.s from the districts came, he would befriend them and introduce them to the Capital city.

As he entered, he asked, "Hon. Member Sir, are you feeling all right sitting here alone?"

"I have just finished my dinner. I had been to the Shwe Dagon Pagoda. They say Rangoon is delightful. But I am quite bored all alone here."

"Of course, if you don't know Rangoon, you will feel lonely and dream of Madame M.L.A. left at home. But if you know Rangoon, there are lots of things one can do. You just have to ask me, Sir. You know our Burmese saying: "If you don't know, just ask — If you get dirty, just wash."

"All right, Ba Tin. Perhaps I have been a little shy. Tell me where shall I go and what shall I do to be a little happy?"

"If I just tell you, it won't be any use. Why don't we drive around the city and see for ourselves. Come Mr M.L.A., there's nothing to be shy about," said Ba Tin.

A private taxi arrived, Ba Tin called U Po Koo and got into it. Sitting in the back of the taxi, he felt swank. His heart palpitated with excitement. The bright lights, the rattling of the tram cars, the noise of the car horns and the busy traffic all thrilled him. Soon the taxi entered a lane and stopped in front of a building. Ba Tin said, "Hon. Mr. Member Sir, please get out and come into the building." "What for?" he asked. "Sir, you will know when we get there. Just climb up the stairs, Sir."

Like a blind elephant following the voice of a frog in the hope there would be water, U Po Koo followed Ba Tin, looking forward to whatever lay in store for him. Soon he was seated in a reception room with a lot of pictures of young women hanging on the walls. Meanwhile Ba Tin was talking to a fat man with unruly hair. Within a few moments, a fashionably dressed woman with thanakha on her face and made up with rouge and lipstick came and sat in a chair in front of U Po Koo. She looked to be around twenty-five years of age. U Po Koo stared at her and murmured to himself and sighed, "Hm! she looks quite nice but she is a little fat." Then another younger girl with her hair loose on her shoulder wearing a pretty flower - patterned satin longyi came and sat in front of him. She must have been about eighteen. U Po Koo scrutinised her and said to himself— "Oh! how pretty she looks with lovely rosy cheeks and a small straight nose and curved eye lashes! Oh -

that pretty eye lashes. "I have just finished my dinner. I had been to the Shwe Dagone Pagoda. They say Rangoon is delightful. But I am quite bored all alone here."

"Of course, if you don't know Rangoon, you will feel lonely and dream of Madame M.L.A. left at home. But if you know Rangoon, there are lots of things one can do. You just have to ask me, Sir. You know our Burmese saying: "If you don't know, just ask — If you get dirty, just wash."

"All right, Ba Tin. Perhaps I have been a little shy. Tell me where shall I go and what shall I do to be a little happy?"

"If I just tell you, it won't be any use. Why don't we drive around the city and see for ourselves. Come Mr M.L.A., there's nothing to be shy about," said Ba Tin.

A private taxi arrived, Ba Tin called U Po Koo and got into it. Sitting in the back of the taxi, he felt swank. His heart palpitated with excitement. The bright lights, the rattling of the tram cars, the noise of the car horns and the busy traffic all thrilled him. Soon the taxi entered a lane and stopped in front of a building. Ba Tin said, "Hon. Mr. Member Sir, please get out and come into the building." "What for?" he asked. "Sir, you will know when we get there. Just climb up the stairs, Sir."

Like a blind elephant following the voice of a frog in the hope there would be water, U Po Koo followed Ba Tin, looking forward to whatever lay in store for him. Soon he was seated in a reception room with a lot of pictures of young women hanging on the walls. Meanwhile Ba Tin was talking to a fat man with unruly hair. Within a few moments, a fashionably dressed woman with *thanakha* on her face and made up with rouge and lipstick came and sat in a chair in front of U Po Koo. She looked to be around twenty-five years of age. U Po Koo stared at her and murmured to himself and sighed, "Hm! she looks quite nice but she is a little fat." Then another younger girl with her hair loose on her shoulder wearing a pretty flower - patterned satin *longyi* came and sat in front of him. She must have been about eighteen. U Po Koo scrutinised her and said to himself - "Oh! how pretty she looks with lovely rosy cheeks and a small straight nose and curved eye lashes! Oh - that pretty narrow mouth, how lovely she is. The slim waist and a beautiful figure!" U Po Koo swallowed his saliva while enjoying the beauty of this lovely girl.

Then Ba Tin said, "Well, Sir, just choose the one you like and put a garland around her neck." "You mean I can choose any one like the royal princes of days of yore? Well, I can find older ones anywhere, but little one, come near me. After all an old ox loves tender grass, they say. You look so young, just the age of my grandchildren. Come, let's go and play hide and seek," U Po Koo said.

"Oh! what a frightful man you are." The young lady said, bowing her head and covered her toes

with her *longyi*, smiling coyly.

"Come here. What's your name?" he asked. Ba Tin answered for her, "It's Lucy Khin Khin."

"Oh! So you are an Anglo-Burmese girl." The great M.L.A., who could not speak fluently in the House, was now speaking so well with rhyme and rhythm. "Come on. Let's go. What are we waiting for?" So they went down to the car, and the taxi went through the city, the stars shining in the sky and little Lucy snuggling close to him.

Soon the taxi reached a hotel. Ba Tin and the driver sat in the reception room and enjoyed themselves with fried noodles and pork salad and beer. U Po Koo then took Lucy into a room. Lucy sat sideways on the bed and played with the mosquito net.

"Don't you know some songs, Lucy?" U Po Koo asked. "No, grandpa, I don't know any song."

"What! don't you call me grandpa - instead you should have called me — you dirty old dog! Now call me darling Ko Ko (brother)."

"Oh, no. I can't call you that and if I do what will you give me?"

"I will give you this," he said as he moved nearer and embraced her and asked her to sing a song. U Po Koo was quite impressed with her. He wondered if she were a brand new innocent girl in this profession.

He asked Khin Khin if she loved him and when she answered in the affirmative demurely, he asked how long ago had she joined this "madame's" household. She answered that it was only a few months ago and that she accompanied only M.L.A.s and lawyers and District Commissioners. "I never even went out with University students," she said.

U Po Koo believed every word and offered more beer to Lucy Khin Khin. Soon she became drunk and U Po Koo asked her why she wanted to be in this profession. If she loved him as she said, why not accompany him back to his village?

Khin Khin said, "Do you really mean it, Ko Ko? If I come with you, the Hon. Madame M.L.A. will kick me out of the House."

"Oh! No! On that point there's nothing to worry about. My old woman is very docile. She always dances the way I pull the strings. There's nothing to worry about."

"Oh! really? Then I am ready to come with you. The people with whom I am are very cruel to me."

When dawn came they had to leave the hotel and Khin Khin had to be dropped on the way. As she was getting out she reminded U Po Koo with the sign of thumb and forefinger joining. Then he remembered that he had to pay her something. Oh! yes, he said. He took out a small bundle of dirty handkerchief and counted 15 rupee coins and gave them to her. She asked for eight annas for dry-

cleaning payment and so he had to add it on.

Taking Khin Khin out was at first just a pleasant car ride. At the second stage he promised to take her as his wife. When it reached the third stage he believed every word she said and felt sorry for her when she revealed that the people at home were cruel to her.

The next night after dinner he felt very restless. The cigarette did not help. Neither did the cup of tea. He felt empty inside and felt he had lost something precious. Friends came to visit him and kept him company. But he hardly heard what they were saying. All he could see in his mind's eye was Khin Khin, her hair falling all over her shoulders, telling him how much she loved him.

He wanted to see her again. He became more and more restless, wondering whether to go and see her again.

Next day, he went to the Assembly. All he could see before his eyes was the picture of Khin Khin. After the end of the day after dinner, he called a taxi and picked up Khin Khin and went to a hotel.

"Why didn't you come last night?" Khin Khin asked. He said he was a little busy and asked her if she also went out. "Yes", she answered, "I had to go out with a lawyer."

U Po Koo felt as if his heart had been poked by a spear and hated the so-called lawyer. He felt jealous. On Sunday there was no Assembly. He felt so lonely. He missed Lucy Khin Khin. He picked her up and went to an afternoon movie.

"Where were you last night, Ko Ko?" Khin Khin asked. "Oh! some friends came and I was just talking with them," U Po Koo said. Khin Khin replied, "Oh! Is it so? As for me I was waiting for you all evening." U Po Koo said, "You do love me then, don't you". "Of course I do, I swear," Khin Khin said. Suddenly U Po Koo felt full of joy and said, "That's my little wife!" When the movie started, she had to explain everything. When he answered `aye, aye', Khin Khin asked what it meant. This is M.L.A.'s language. So Khin said, "Oh! then it means, `Yes' I suppose!"

U Po Koo had been enjoying himself thoroughly with Khin Khin. He spent quite a lot of money and had to send for more from home. Now he wanted to keep Khin Khin to himself only. He thought that if he should marry her, there would be no expenditure on taxis and hotels. As for Lucy Khin Khin, she was also thinking the same way. "If I marry this old rich rogue, I would not have to go out with others. He would give me everything I want. He is quite crazy about me. If I marry him I will be called Madame M.L.A. I can put on *Thanakha* from top to toe and have nothing to do the whole day long." So she was also ready to marry him. Thus Khin Khin was taken to the village of the M.L.A. When they reached the village, U Po Koo found that his house had changed a lot. The

old furniture had been sent off and stored by Khin Khin and new sofas bought. A *mandap* had been built permanently in the garden to receive guests. Tea with sugar and milk was served instead of plain tea. Noises of spoons and forks were heard at the dining table. Instead of Buddhist sutras and prayers in the mornings the house was filled with foreign songs on gramophone. U Po Koo now moved into a new house. He had changed a lot himself— the way he dressed and the way he talked. He forgot to visit neighbours but stayed at home only with his Khin Khin. The news of U Po Koo arriving with a young wife had spread around and people would come to have a look at the newcomer. "Oh! she is so young — fit to be a granddaughter," was the comment. "How will the Hon. M.L.A. manage to do his duty?" was another jocular remark. Some said they would take over the widow when the old man popped off.

The senior Madam M.L.A., Daw Shwe Toke, was angry with her husband and wanted to abuse him. But being a mature person, she just kept quiet. A good natured person, she did not say a word against Khin Khin. Maybe she was also afraid of her husband.

Now that she had become a respectable married woman, Khin Khin stopped using ribbons in her hair and used a different hairstyle. Her daily routine would be having a bath, followed by patting on fragrant *thanakha* all over her body and dressing up prettily and then lying down to read novels — behaving like a lady of leisure. She would have only coffee and tea with biscuits followed by chocolates. For meals she had chicken *biryani* and *parathas*. And she spent money like water. When U Po Koo was asked about who his new wife was and where her native place could be, he would answer that as her parents were looking for her, he could not reveal the details but only that she was a convent school girl who could speak English, etc. He boasted shamelessly about his wife. Thus days became months and time flew very quickly. One evening, while enjoying the breeze in the garden on a deck chair, he felt his whole body aching. Khin Khin was reading a romance nearby. When he could not stand it any longer, he told her he was feeling sick with aches all over. So Khin Khin called their servant and sent for a doctor and a massage man.

Soon the doctor who examined U Po Koo bluffed away as he could not guess the real reason for the complaint. Finally, Khin Khin, the experienced one, whispered in the doctor's ears and enlightened him. They put their heads together and tried all kinds of medicines. But U Po Koo's illness only became worse.

Meanwhile, Khin Khin's pimp, Tauk Tun, was very annoyed at the disappearance of Khin Khin. He could not stand the fact that someone had cheated him, the great leader of the mafia. First he thought Khin Khin, being the most popular prostitute and a major income earner had been stolen by

the rival gang. It disturbed him all the more.

After U Po Koo became an M.L.A., he had only expenses, hardly any income. He had to spend a lot on the election and in Rangoon he lavished money over Khin Khin. Now, back at home, Khin Khin's expenditure increased. Soon U Po Koo was bedridden and could hardly walk. He did not realise he was suffering from venereal disease. Soon people in the neighbourhood came to hear of his illness and when the rumour went round that his wife was a prostitute who gave him syphilis, he could not face anyone. He was so ashamed of himself. He wanted to blame Khin Khin for his illness and kick her out, but he just could not hate her. After all she was such a pretty girl! What a lovely time they had together. After I get rid of this illness, we can be happy together again, U Po Koo hoped against hope. He was worried for Khin Khin. What would she do and how would she live if he sent her away? Showering all his sympathy on her, he loved her more and more.

As for Khin Khin, it was a different story. She had planned to live in luxury with the M.L.A. Now she realised that the old M.L.A. was broken and sick. She had to ask for money from Daw Shwe Toke who did not believe in wasting money. She started missing her life in Rangoon and got tired of being cooped up at home in the village. She wanted to play the gramophone but Daw Shwe Toke scolded her: how she could think of playing music when U Po Koo was seriously ill? After all, Khin Khin was at such a young age wanting fun and music and a good time. How could she be happy with a sick old man? Now she wanted to leave him and started to think of getting away somehow.

One evening, U Po Koo was walking in the garden with the help of a walking stick. Khin Khin was sitting on a log nearby, looking at the weak old man trying to walk back and forth.

Suddenly Tauk Tun, the pimp, appeared from behind the bushes. He had a stick in his hand and hit U Po Koo on his head so hard that the old man fell flat on the ground, like a puppet with a broken string. Khin Khin was so surprised to see him that she nearly cried out. But she controlled herself and asked, "When did you come here, darling?"

"Come with me, don't talk now," Tauk Tun told her seeing the servant running towards them. "You go away now, Ko Ko," she answered, "I shall be waiting for you with all the jewellery in the evening when the sun sets." Then she saw the servant coming up. So she shouted out. "Oh! please help! Some man came and hit my husband." She wept holding U Po Koo's head on her lap. U Po Koo became conscious only next morning. "Please help me darling Lucy," he cried out.

Daw Shwe Toke, who was sitting nearby, got angry hearing him cry out for Khin Khin. She abused the old man saying that he had not learned the lesson yet.

"Shwe Toke, where is Khin Khin?" U Po Koo asked. "Your Khin Khin has eloped with her husband," Daw Shwe Toke answered. U Po Koo thought the old lady was saying thus out of spite and jealousy. He just could not believe her and repeated the question.

"You don't believe that your young wife has not only run away but has also taken all the jewellery!" When U Po Koo heard this, he said, "Oh! my God," and fainted. He never regained consciousness but everyone in the house could hear Daw Shwe Toke's wailing, "Are you leaving me for good now?"

After U Po Koo's death there was a declaration that there would be a by-election. People in the region tried to look for a better M.L.A. candidate. Whether they would succeed or not would be known after the next election.

IV. 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 221-271, 212-409)].

TWO REPORTS on each book by different persons are accepted.

LENGTH: 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!

Thein Pe, *Saya Lun* and *Member of Parliament*
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

Forthcoming:

No. 10:3, Ba Hein, *The World of Capitalists*

No 10:4, Thein Pe, *Student Boycotters* (Two Volumes)

No. 10:5, Ba Khaing, *Political History of Burma*

Some Nagani Books
were scanned and are available on CD.
For details contact
habezett@t-online.de

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.

For contributions and questions, please contact:

Dr. Hans-Bernd Zöllner
University of Passau
Phone: +49-40-8317961
Fax: +49-40-84051735
Email: habezett@t-online.de