

# *Trade, Trust, Transition*

Documentation

of a Workshop on

*Myanmar Perspectives of the  
Social Economics of Myanmar*

Held in Yangon 24-26 November 2011

Edited by Lucas Brandau, Florian Frank, Natalie Gierke, Phuong Le Trong,  
Esther Tenberg and Hans-Bernd Zöllner

Friedrich-Ebert Foundation  
Myanmar Egress  
Myanmar Women Entrepreneur Association

Yangon, July 2012

# Contentts

## Executive Summary

## Part A - Documentation

### 1 Introduction. The History of the Workshop

#### 1.1 The Partners

The Friedrich-Ebert Foundation (FES)

Myanmar Egress

The Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs Association (MWEA)

#### 1.2 The Textbook

#### 1.3 The Workshop

#### 1.4 Fine Tuning

#### 1.5 About this Volume

### 2 Outline of the Workshop

#### 2.1 Basics

#### 2.2 Schedule

#### 2.3 Topics and Sub-Topics of Working Groups

#### 2.4 Structure of Group Sessions

### 3 Summaries of Working Groups

3.1 Working Group 1: *The influence of Buddhism on economic thought and practice in Myanmar.*

3.2 Working Group 2: *Different Business Cultures in Myanmar (Myanmar as a „plural society“)*

3.3 Working Group 3: *The influence of economic change on social relations in Myanmar.*

3.4 Working Group 4: *Different Business Cultures in Myanmar (Myanmar as a „plural society“)*

3.5 Working Group 5: *Livelihood, particularly in the rural areas.*

### 4 Spontaneous Assessments of the Workshop and Some Comments

### 5 Notes of an Evaluation Meeting

## PART B: TEXTBOOK

Introduction (Hans-Bernd Zöllner)

### 1 TODAY

1.1 *The Impact of Economics on (my) Daily Life* – Mini-Essays of Students

1.2 Profiles of Myanmar Economic Actors

1.2.1 Profiles of Today's Actors

1.2.2 Literary Profiles

1.2.2.1 Daw Amah, Economic Actors of Mandalay

1.2.2.1.1 Wealthy U Thet Shay and Son U Kyaw

1.2.2.1.2 Daw Mya Who Sold Crockery

1.2.2.2 Kyaw Yin Myint, Two Economic Portraits

1.2.2.2.1 Mya Gon Yi

1.2.2.2.2 Ngwe Zin Pale

1.3 Three Questions and Answers from a Business Magazine

### 2 YESTERDAY

Motto: “Alas, These Tolls and Taxes!” (16<sup>th</sup> century)

2.1 The Colonial Period

2.1.1 Debate in the Governor’s Council (1921)

2.1.2 Ba Thoung, *Dobama* Exhortation (1930)

2.1.3 The Nagani Song (1938)

2.1.4 Ba Khaing, Political History of Myanma (1938)

2.1.5 Thein Pe, Indo-Burmese Riot (1939)

2.1.6 Aung San on the economic basis of Burmese democracy (May 1947)

2.2 The Parliamentary Period

2.2.1 A PROSPEROUS FUTURE CAN BE OURS BECAUSE ... (1954)

2.2.2 December 1953: Maung Maung, State Socialism in Burma

2.2.3 Editorials from the *Ludu* Daily

2.2.3.1 August 6, 1952: Pyi Daw Tha (Peaceful and pleasant country) Speech

2.2.3.2 August 16, 1952: Plan for Economic Progress

2.2.3.3 March 4, 1957: Farmers and Foreign Currency

2.2.3.4 February 19, 1958: The Finance of the State

2.2.4 Nu, Economic Doctrine (January 1958)

## 2.3 The Caretaker Period

2.3.1 General Ne Win on “Economic Insurgents”

## 2.4 The Socialist Period

2.4.1 Prescription for Prosperity - Editorial in The Guardian (1966)

2.4.2 Definitely Better - Editorial in The Guardian (1967)

2.4.3 Letter to the Editor: Hiring of Private Nurses (1968)

2.4.4 Ne Win on economy at the fourth BSPP Congress, August 1981

2.4.5 Two Short Stories by Nyi Pu Lay

2.4.5.1 The Python (1988)

2.4.5.2 Yadanabon – The Golden City

## 2.5 The SLORC/SPDC Period

2.5.1 SLORC Announcement 1/88

2.5.2 Nay Lin, Articles in Myanmar Dhana Magazine featuring economic views in the 1990s

# 3 TOMORROW

3.1 Tin Soe, Myanmar Economy in the context of Myanmar Culture and Tradition

3.2 Tin Soe, A Summary of the Economics Ideas of Bogyoke (General) Aung San

3.3 Zeya Thu, Pyidawtha: Promise on Development

3.4 Ye Htut, Buddhist Teachings on Economics

3.5 Sayadaw U Eindathiri, Dana and Hope in Myanmar Buddhism

3.6 Yi Yi Myint and Hinn Wai, The Role of the Myanmar Women in Economics

3.7 Bo Bo, Some Remarks on Socio-Cultural Change in Myanmar

3.8 Samuel Ngun Ling, Socio-cultural Values and Economic Options in the Buddhist context of Myanmar

3.9 Nay Yan Oo, Effects brought by Myanmar nationals working abroad on the

Myanmar economy

3.10 Chit Oo Ko Ko, The outlook of Myanma's economy that has for ages been down in the dumps

4 Instead of a Summary: Trust in Institutions – Myanmar's Missing Commodity

## **Executive Summary**

The workshop on Myanmar Perceptions of the Social Economics of Myanmar took place in Yangon on November 25 and 26, 2011. The participants were organised in a Burmese speaking junior session (80 participants) and an English speaking senior session (50 participants). Both sessions were divided into five working groups. Each of them discussed different topics regarding the past, present and future of Myanmar's economics and the impact of the current developments in the country. Background of the discussions was the shift from a military dominated political regime to a more democratic and liberal society. The deliberations focused on changes in the economic realm and how to deal, therefore, with two risks. After the country suffered from a period of self-imposed isolation followed by the infliction of sanctions by Western countries, it will be difficult to achieve economic growth without neglecting the needs of the people. Furthermore, Myanmar's entrepreneurs could not be able to create a counterbalance to the powerful international business community. For a sustainable and reasonable development the social impact of change will be of crucial importance. For steering the developments in Myanmar on the right track policy makers on all sides involved in the transition process face great responsibilities.

After several discussions and the formulating of theses each working group prepared policy and research recommendations. The results of the discussions partially overlapped and complemented each other. The recommendations provided concerned institutions and individuals with some guidance for further actions.

### **A Policy Recommendations**

The main results can be summarised under three headings.

#### **1. Buddhism**

The great role played by Buddhism for Myanmar's economy and society cannot be overestimated. The influence of the Sangha (Buddhist clergy) on the life of Myanmar people is essential and must be taken into consideration. More than any other institution the Sangha shapes the mindset of the people on all aspects of life including the attitudes towards economic and social actions. Furthermore, the members of the Buddhist order receive a great amount of donations (*dana*) on many occasions. This merit making is believed to influence the future life of the donor in the cycle of rebirths and can be seen as a rather self-centered investment in one's own future.

Although some monks care for the social needs of their local communities new ways of disseminating and practicing the Buddha's teaching on wealth, business, everyday life etc. have to be discussed. Such attempts must be undertaken both by the government and civil society groups. This big task will last for at least one generation until tangible results in the changes of the mindset

and the practice of the mass of the people can be observed.

## 2. Trust

Looking on Myanmar from the historical perspective, cycles of euphoric beginnings followed by economic decline occurred. In the face of the present spirit of optimism it will be necessary to concentrate on institutional change towards versatile and transparent administrative mechanisms in order to avoid another backlash. To achieve such changes, trust building in institutions is of utmost importance. A trust building reform commission, provided with executive powers and not just serving as another advisory committee, could help creating an equal playing field among the stakeholders in the economy. Of particular relevance will be the termination of cronyism, nepotism and corruption.

## 3. Education

The various sectors of the society have to be educated regarding the interaction with the global world. The use of the metric system needs to be introduced. Furthermore, the people have to be educated on topics related to trade and economy. Especially in the agricultural sector there is a lack of information about the interplay of the various levels of economic activities. For providing market information to the farmers, radio stations in different regions could be established.

Furthermore, the government has the responsibility to inform about the sensitive issue of the role of the Chinese and Indian minority business communities which are widely suspected to dominate Myanmar economy. At the same time, it will be necessary to educate the people about the social and environmental risks of economical growth at all costs.

Another aspect are the challenges caused by the increasing number of Myanmar migrant workers. Issues such as brain drain, self protection in face of the danger of being exploited abroad and the transfer of money (exchange rate, bank transactions and regulations of the taxation system) have to be addressed.

## B Research Recommendations

During the working group sessions, several plenary sessions and private discussions it became clear that both local and foreign experts found it extremely difficult to propose reasonable recommendations for Myanmar's problems. Myanmar has been neglected by the international scientific community for many years, particularly with regard to the interrelation between economic and cultural-religious factors.

### 1. Buddhism

Considering that Buddhism is such a relevant factor in Myanmar, it is still unclear to what degree

religious organizations influence economic and social life in Myanmar society. It is also uncertain how monks' activities affect the local communities both in the urban centers and the countryside. The teachings of popular Buddhist monks related to wealth and business are hardly explored as well as the kind of links between sound spiritual and mental health and success in business. Conversely, it should be clarified how the liberalization of the market might affect the Buddhist way of life. Will a society drifting from religious beliefs and practice encourage previously tabooed business practices such as selling alcohol?

Furthermore, the flow of donations and the investment behavior of the Myanmar people are poorly researched. Besides looking at the quantity of material goods invested in religion, it is of greatest interest to investigate into the affects the mindset of the people caused by the tradition of giving donations. Furthermore, similarities and differences between the habits in rural areas, cities and non-Buddhist communities should be investigated.

## 2. Building trust and strengthening reliability

To avoid wrong approaches and any further mismatch between promises and real developments, strategies of social change will have to be reconsidered. Clarification is needed on how the administrative mechanisms practiced throughout the years of various political systems can be changed. It must also be determined what degree of compromise between “old” and “new” would represent the best precondition of establishing a social and economic system accepted by the populace..

## 3. Business cultures

Research must be carried out on the legal framework for business in order to identify the main obstacles to sustainable development. It will be necessary to investigate the various business cultures in different parts of the country and their respective relationship. This applies particularly to the the relation of the the ethnic B'ma majority, the Chinese and Indians in Central Myanmar and the ethnic minorities at the country's fringes. In order to avoid a gap between perceptions and statistics, it will be necessary to take into account the “gray economy” and the border trade as well.

Furthermore, it will be essential to consider the understanding of poverty and quality of life among different groups of society and the motives of migrant workers to go abroad as well as the attitudes of the relatives towards about the benefits of such activities. Finally, the role of Myanmar citizens who lived for years in exile and might consider returning, deserves academic interest.

All in all, the present political climate is believed to open opportunities for researchers from Myanmar and foreign countries to investigate such socio-economic questions.

In terms of the structure of the workshop, the establishment of a platform on which ideas can be

discussed by people from different backgrounds at eye level was very well received. It will be necessary to move away from Myanmar's top-down traditions of teaching as well as the from the Western way of passing expertise which has been successfully tried in other social environments to recipients in Myanmar. One key of promoting change benefiting Myanmar people are methods of mutual exchange strengthening bottom-up structures and flat hierarchies. This aim can only be achieved with a great deal of effort, research, cogency - and time on all sides involved in the transition process.

PART I

DOCUMENTATION

# **1 Introduction: The History of the Workshop**

## 1.1 The Partners

This volume aims at documenting a workshop held in Yangon, Myanmar on 24-26 November 2011 sophisticatedly entitled “Myanmar Perceptions of the Social Economics of Myanmar” and attended by some 130 participants. All of them agreed that the meeting took place at a very auspicious time because the wind, or even a storm, of change had been blowing in Myanmar since the government under President Thein Sein had taken office from the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), the military junta, on 30 March 2011. Reforms in all sectors of society had been announced and national, as well as international, reconciliation seemed to be on the way.

In August, the President and opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi had met for a one hour talk in Naypyidaw, Myanmar's capital. Some months later, the removal of a clause in the country's Election Laws paved the way for Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) to re-register as a legal political party - a status that was lost in early 2010 because of the party's refusal to participate in the elections held on 7 November 2010 under the constitution adopted in 2008. Some days before the workshop, on 18<sup>th</sup> November, the party had decided to apply for registration. A short time later, it became known that US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, would visit Myanmar on 1<sup>st</sup> December.

Two years before, when the idea of the workshop was first conceived, these developments could not have been anticipated. However, many individuals and organisations were engaged in attempts to overcome the many crises that went along with Burma's/Myanmar's long standing stagnation. Some of them were involved in the genesis of the workshop idea and its implementation, first and foremost, the three organisers of the workshop: the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), Myanmar Egress (ME) and the Myanmar Women Entrepreneur Association (MWEA). These organisers will now be briefly introduced.

### The Friedrich Ebert Foundation

The foundation was established in 1925 as the political legacy of Friedrich Ebert, Germany's first democratically elected President. It is affiliated to the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and has offices and projects in over 100 countries. It started in the early 1990s to promote democracy and reconciliation in Myanmar, first by helping to build structures among the exiled community like the Euro-Burma Office (EBO) in Bruxelles. Later, dialogue programmes inside the country were organised, most prominently a series of Track Two seminars conducted together with the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies in 2006 and 2007. Furthermore, the foundation

established contacts with civil society organisations and supported some of their programmes.



Among the smaller initiatives of the foundation was the financial support of the Myanmar Literature p Figure 1 Opening Speech of Sabine Franze (FES) lectuals by documenting the output of the Nagani (Red Dragon) Book Club founded in late 1937 by some young Burmese revolutionaries who later became the core group of the country's independence movement. The most prominent were Nu, Burma's first Prime Minister, together with Than Tun and Soe, who became leaders of two communist parties. The Club intended to assimilate international knowledge and literature into Burmese language and the Burmese cultural-political climate at a crucial period in the anti-colonial struggle and can be regarded as the intellectual centre of the *Dobama Asiayone* (Our-Burma Association), the leading nationalist organisation under the premiership of Aung San. Until the outbreak of World War II, the Club published some 100 books in Burmese on a variety of topics and was propagated by a song that is still popular today.

The work on the project started in January 2005. Burmese scholars were invited to write book reports on single Nagani books. Each report was sent to a foreigner for feedback. Thus, a small dialogue about Myanmar's intellectual legacy of societal ideas was started and some 100 Burmese and about 25 Western, mostly German, writers were involved. Further, additional material on the respective book's topic was collected in order to provide insight into the history of political and intellectual ideas from the late colonial period until today. Until late 2011, 22 Working Papers were published which are available on the net.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The Working Papers are available at the Online Burma Library and the Southeast Asian Department of Passau University.

The documentation was used to discuss the relevance of the issues dealt with in the Nagani books for Myanmar's current situation. This began at the Burma Studies Conference in Singapore in 2006 and continued in Germany with seminars held at German universities. However, Myanmar's political situation did not allow for public discussion of many of the topics covered in the books, for instance, the involvement of students in politics. Therefore, the topic of “economy” was chosen as the theme of a workshop to be organised in Myanmar. A number of Nagani books dealt with this subject and the ruling military junta had declared economic progress one of their central issues.

### Myanmar Egress

The organisation was founded in 2006 and quickly became one of the most prominent – and controversial – agents of civil society in Myanmar. The founders were “committed to state building through positive change in a progressive yet constructive collaboration and working relationship with the government and all interest groups, both local and foreign”.<sup>2</sup> In Yangon's state-owned Thamada Hotel, a school was established and registered with the Ministry for Commerce- This school offers three-month courses on social entrepreneurship and mass communication. Foreign guests are invited to give talks and hold seminars. Furthermore, a think-tank feeds state organs with policy options and media associated with the organisation attempt to shape public opinion and promote democracy. One of the leading people of Myanmar, Egress. Dr. Nay Win Maung (who died in January 2012 from a heart attack) founded a media company, which is situated in the same building.

Before the elections of 2010, Myanmar Egress engaged itself in training courses for members of a variety of, mostly, ethnic parties. In late 2011, members of the organisation's Board of Directors together with Harn Yawngwe, chief of the EBO and youngest son of the first President of Burma, a Shan prince, helped to broker the peace talks before the Shan State Army and the government.

The FES is one of the main foreign partners and financial supporters of the enterprise.

### The Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs' Association

The association was founded in 1995 and is registered under the Ministry of Home Affairs as a non-government, non-profit, non-political and non-religious association. It is one of the members of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) and aims at promoting not just “modern business management” but “social development of the country” as well. The membership came close to 2000 in 2012, among them many young women engaged in small scale business. An FES delegation to Myanmar, headed by the foundation's President Anke Fuchs, visited the MWEA in early 2010.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.myanmaregress.org/about.html> [12.2.2012].

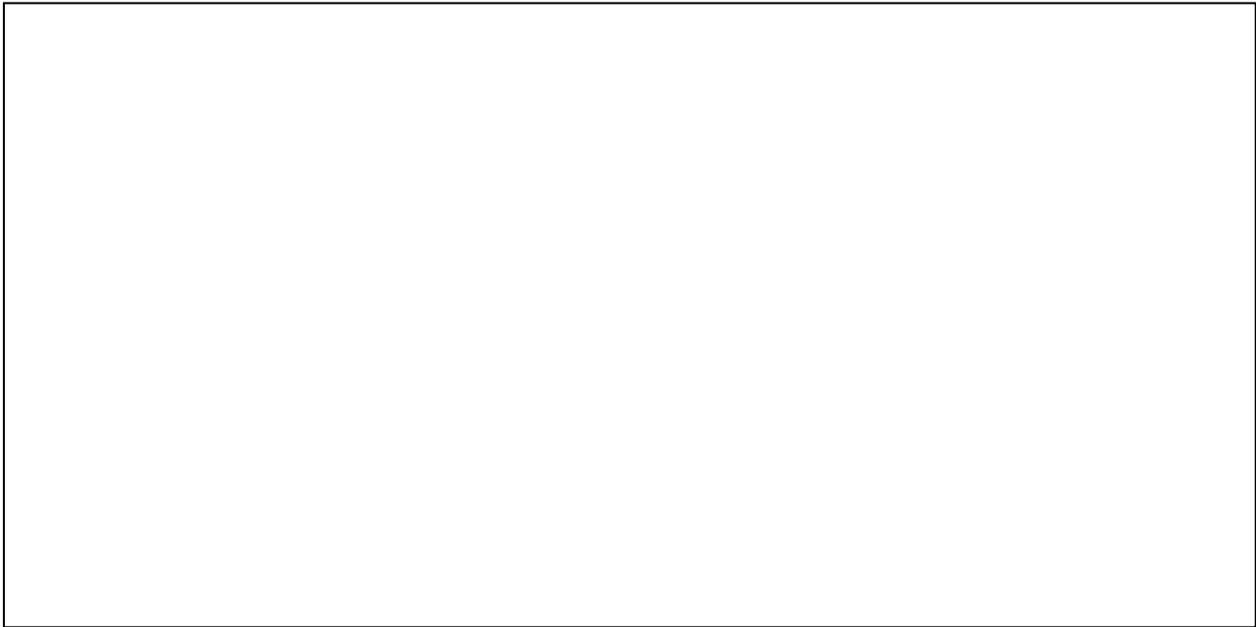


Figure 2: Opening Speech of Daw Yi Yi Myint, Founder of MWEA

## 1.2 The Textbook

The idea of a workshop concentrating on Myanmar's perceptions was in line with the Literature Project's attempt to investigate the Burmese concepts of political and social issues, in addition to considering the degree to which international concepts are implemented in Myanmar. This idea was based on the assumption that, due to a number of factors, the “Burmese view” was not given much attention, either in theory or in practice. As a consequence, material was needed to shed light on such inside perceptions.

To provide a multi-perspective picture, a variety of sources were tapped. At the end of a lecture on Burmese elections at Myanmar Egress since colonial times, the students were asked to write essays on the impact of economy on their daily life. The same task was performed by B.A. students at the Myanmar Institute of Theology (MIT) in order to account for Myanmar's ethnic diversity (see section 1.1 of the textbook). Most students of the MIT are Christians belonging to non-Burmese ethnicities, whereas the majority of Egress students were supposed to belong to the country's dominant ethnic group. Further, MIT students with the assistance of a social science lecturer wrote short profiles of Myanmar economic actors. (textbook, section 1.2).

Another source was literature. The profiles of actual economic actors were supplemented by literary profiles written by well-known Burmese authors Daw Amah (1915-2008) and Kyaw Yin Myint. Dr. Khin San Yee, head of the Management Department in the Economic Department of Yangon University consented to reprinting some of her answers to economically related questions in a business magazine (textbook, section 1.3). Finally, some assessments of Burmese economics,

published by Nagani, were added by findings from libraries in order to provide an overview of how “economy” was perceived in Burmese history from the monarchy until today. It was discovered that there are many existing sources which have not yet been used to write a balanced economic history of Burma/Myanmar. Some of these sources are difficult to access, for example, copies of the famous *Ludu* (People) newspaper, archived in the library of the Ludu Press in Mandalay (textbook, section 2.2.3). Others lie dormant in Western libraries, for instance, the minutes of debates in the parliaments established by the British during the colonial period. These documents still await thorough investigation. Section 2.1.1 of the textbook offers a glimpse of the many debates on economic issues and the rather different assessments of Burmese, Indian, Chinese and British members of this crucial issue, which sometimes seems to reflect today's situation.

The haphazard nature of compiling material was also highlighted by the attempt to include contemporary insights of Myanmar authors into economic issues. Contributors to the Literature Project, as well as those recommended, were asked to write about how “economy” is reflected in various facets of Myanmar culture and religion. Some results of this endeavour are presented in section 3 of the textbook. They fall short, however, of what was striven for in at least two regards. First, it was not possible to obtain essays on the role of economic issues in areas of contemporary Myanmar culture, for instance in pop songs, love stories and in the sermons of popular monks. As a substitute, some cartoons reflecting economic issues are included as a small counterweight to the many texts. Second, most authors for different reasons did not heed the request to summarise their articles with a short comment on the future of Myanmar's economics.

Despite the many shortcomings, it was hoped that the textbook would provide enough material for discussions at the workshop.

### 1.3 The Workshop

Parallel to the compilation of the textbook went deliberations on the conception of the workshop. This process predetermined the topic of the meeting's format. It was decided that the workshop would concentrate on discussions of certain topics regarded as important but without any lectures given or conference papers read. As inputs, the textbook material and, most importantly, the insights of various participants were considered to be sufficient.

This choice was supported by some arguments. First, the topic of the workshop bringing together the world of “hard core” economics and “soft” factors of culture, religion and history was rather innovative. Very little could be expected from experts. Second, Myanmar's situation, characterised by political and social change, called for a participatory approach. The main aim of the workshop

was not to educate the participants but to adopt recommendations for further action. Third, a special feature of Burmese culture should be avoided - the “Saya(ma)-gyi complex”: trust in the wisdom of the great teachers, which calls for respectful and often silent acceptance of authoritative insights and messages. Finally, the textbook which almost exclusively contained material “made in Myanmar”, called for an exchange between Myanmar and foreign participants on equal terms.

As a consequence of the choice of format, the number of participants had to be limited. In the course of talks about the topics to be discussed at the workshop, it was decided that five themes, covered by groups of 10 persons each, would be appropriate. For the selection of such topics, the exchange of views with the ladies of the MWEA played a significant role.

Incidentally, the MWEA building, in which the association occupies some rooms in the 4<sup>th</sup> floor on Shwedagon Pagoda Road, is located close to the Thamada Hotel. Going there by taxi, one cannot avoid passing the building of the ladies' association. This was one reason to contact the office in order to ask for an essay on the economic role of Myanmar women (textbook, 3.X). After a first visit and the dropping of a name card, a meeting was arranged in which four members of the association's Executive Committee participated. Among them were the founder and President, retired professor for economics Daw Yi Yi Myint and Daw Wah Wah , whose biography was submitted for inclusion in the textbook (see 2.1, profile 23).

It turned out that Daw Yi Yi Myint, in particular, liked the idea of bringing culture/religion and economics together. She did not like to be called a professor of economics because she did not like “hard-core economists”. Her main objective was to promote social welfare through many means, economics being only one of them. And Daw Wah Wah Tun, who was elected Daw Yi Yi Myint's successor in early 2011, summarised the top priorities of the association with the catchwords 'culture', 'religion', 'strengthening of the members' self-confidence'. Economic growth, or making profit, was not included in the list. Accordingly, the original title of the workshop “Myanmar Perceptions of Myanmar Economics” was criticised as too narrow and the word “Social” was added as an indication that economics should not be seen as an end in itself, but rather as a means to promote public welfare.

The selection of the five topics of the working groups – impact of religion on economic thought, historical experiences, economics and social change, business cultures, and livelihood in the rural areas – was carried out in a series of talks with various members of the MWEA and with the staff of Myanmar Egress involved in the project. The contacts with the school and its students suggested the idea of organising another workshop for young people as a “Junior Workshop” and comparing the results with those adopted by the “Seniors”. The idea was casually endorsed by the top managers of the institution. It was decided that the language of discussion was to be English in the Senior and

the Burmese in the Junior Workshop.

Thus, in November 2010, around the time of the elections, the contours of the workshop had become visible. The date of the venture was fixed as well: Friday to Sunday, 24-26 November 2011. One year remained for the fine tuning.

#### 1.4 Fine Tuning

The final stage of the preparations included the task of inviting and selecting the participants, preparing the schedule for the proceedings, caring for moderators for both parts of the workshop and looking after the venues and the catering. Since some exchange between the participants of the two workshops was intended, the Parkroyal Hotel was allocated for the Senior - or International Workshop - which was situated next door to the Thamada where the Junior – or National – Workshop took place. Both venues prepared round tables for the working groups in the hotels' ballrooms. It was therefore possible to quickly change between group and plenary sessions.

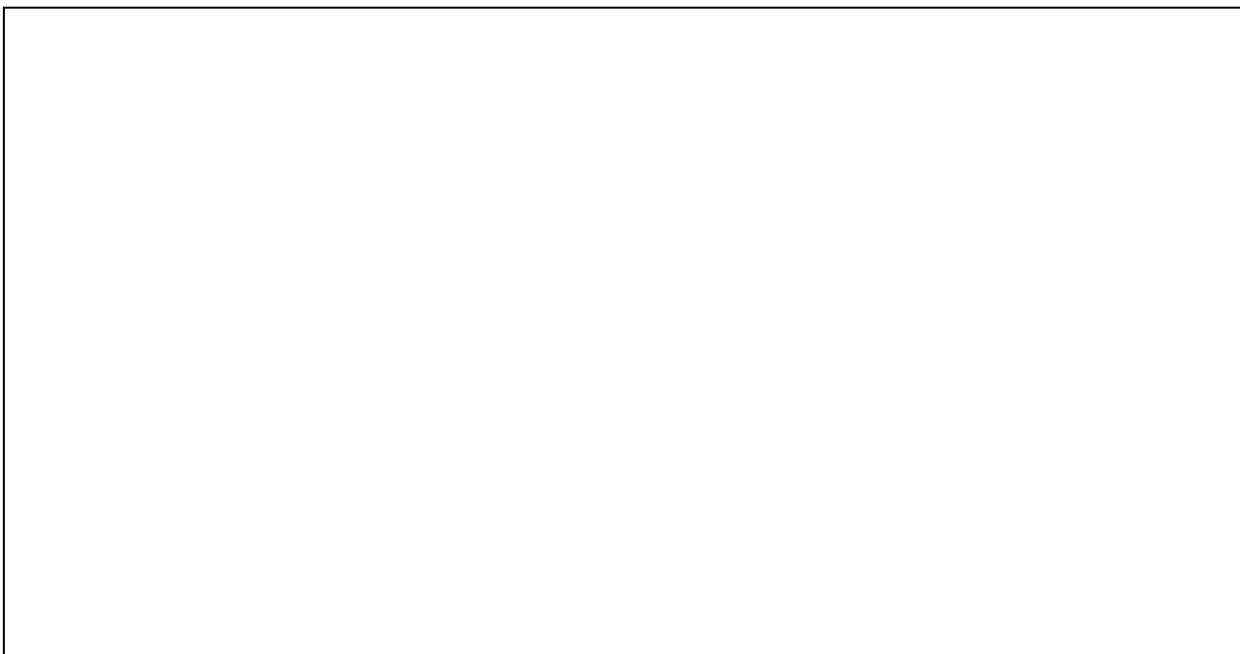


Figure 3: Ballroom in the Park Royal Hotel

With regard to the schedule, it was decided to hold the “core workshop” from Friday morning to Saturday noon, in order to give participants from Yangon the chance to perform family and business duties on Saturday afternoon. At this time, a meeting of members of both workshops was planned in which results between Juniors and seniors should be exchanged. On Sunday morning an evaluation session was scheduled.

The choice of the moderators for the Senior Workshop had taken place some time before the workshop. It was a little bit different with the Junior Workshop because its organisation was carried out by staff members of Myanmar Egress, who had lacked both time and experience for dealing

with such a task. It was quickly decided to find two moderators for each group who should act alternately. The difference in the preparation of the two parts of the workshop became visible in the meetings of the moderators. The meeting for the Senior Workshop took place in the conference room of the MWEA and was attended by all moderators and some of the organisers. Coffee and snacks were served. On the other hand, only half of the moderators of the Junior Workshop were able to attend the gathering in a stark classroom of Myanmar Egress.

The composition of the two workshops underwent changes until the last minute. For the Senior Workshop, a list of some 55 participants had been compiled, one third of them from the MWEA, one third foreigners mostly from NGOs working in Myanmar and one third Myanmar citizens with various background. The academic scene was represented by seven people- six from Germany, three students from Bonn and three staff members of Passau University – and Guy Lubeigt from Bangkok. A call for participation over the Burma Research Group had not provoked much response. There were some last-minute cancellations from participants and some spontaneous registrations. In the end, 48 people participated.

As for the Junior Workshop, half of the eighty plus participants came from Myanmar Egress, 25 from the MIT and some 20 from two other organisations through the mediation of the British Council. Most of them did not have a lot of time to prepare for the workshop and have a thorough look at the designated textbook parts.

In both workshops, people came together for discussion and exchange who had not yet met before.



Figure 4: The Junior Workshop

## 1.5 About this Volume

This publication contains two parts. The first one provides some documents and comments on the

process of the workshop: the second reproduces the edited text of the textbook that was assembled as a basis of the group discussions.

The sections of part I provide an overview of the workshop in chronological order. The guidelines (2) were sent to the participants at the end of October 2011, together with the textbook. For the participants of the Junior Workshop, the guidelines were translated into Burmese. For the Juniors, those parts of the textbook that had been translated into English were reproduced in the original language. Section 3 describes the proceedings of the five work groups of the Senior Workshop. Some of these texts were formulated by participants: others just contain the theses and recommendations adopted. (Follows a note about the recommendations of the Junior Workshop.) Section 4 gives some information about the response of the participants to the workshop. They were asked to write down a short assessment immediately after finishing the “core-meeting” on Saturday noon. The following, section 5, is a text summarising the discussions of the evaluation meeting on Sunday morning, which was attended by about 25 persons, mostly from the Junior Workshop. Finally some assessments of the workshop written some months later are reproduced (6).

Bonn, March 2012

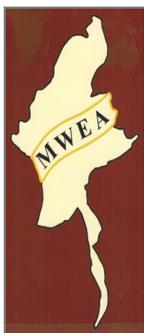
The Editors

## 2 Outline of the Workshop

Editor's note: In this section, the material forwarded to the participants before the workshop in English and Burmese is presented without further comments.

### 2.1 Basics

- The event is a joint venture of the Myanmar Women Entrepreneur Association (MWEA), Myanmar Egress (ME), and the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation (FES).
- Two parallel workshops for “Seniors” (50 participants) and “Juniors” (about 80 participants) will take place at the Parkroyal Hotel (Seniors) and Myanmar Egress/Thamada Hotel (Juniors).
- Both groups will discuss the same topics in Working Groups of about 10 participants each. The discussions will be based on the experience of the participants and the textbook compiled for the workshop.
- At the end of the group sessions, each Working Group draws up recommendations for practitioners and academics inside and outside Myanmar, i.e. a total of four sets of recommendations:
  - 1 and 2: policy recommendations for Myanmar / foreign actors;
  - 3 and 4: research recommendations for Myanmar / foreign scholars
- The results/recommendations of the Working Groups of both workshops will be exchanged in joint group sessions on Saturday afternoon.
- The language of discussion will be English at the Senior and Myanmar at the Junior Workshop. Joint sessions will be in English.
- On Sunday, participants are invited to discuss the possibilities of holding future seminars, workshops and other initiatives as follow-ups of the Workshop.



## 2.2 Schedule

### **A Separate meetings of the two workshops at Parkroyal and Thamada Hotel respectively**

#### ***Friday, November 25***

8.30 a.m. Registration

9 a.m. Opening Ceremonies

Welcome addresses (15 min.) - MWEA & ME & FES

Introduction of the topics of the five Working Groups by the moderators (20 min)

The five topics are the following:

- *The influence of Buddhism on economic thought and practice in Myanmar.*
- *Historical experiences and their lessons.*
- *The influence of economic change on social relations in Myanmar.*
- *Different Business Cultures in Myanmar (Myanmar as a „plural society“).*
- *Livelihood, particularly in the rural areas.*

Each participant is asked to choose two topics in advance, and inform the organisers before the meeting about two Working Groups he or she would like to attend.

Participants' choice of Working Groups

10. a.m. First group sessions (Mapping of the topic)

10.15 a.m. Coffee break

10.30 a.m. Second group sessions (Deepening the understanding of the topic)

12.00 p.m. Plenary session: Exchange of group discussions

12.30 p.m. Lunch Break

1.30 p.m. Plenary sessions: Input : Developing propositions/theses

2.00 p.m. Third group sessions (Formulating propositions/theses)

3.30 p.m. Coffee break

5.00 p.m. Plenary session: Introducing and discussing the propositions/theses formulated; outlook on formulating resolutions/recommendations

6 p.m. Dinner Reception for participants of the two workshops  
at J.S. Furnivall Hall, Thamada Hotel

#### ***Saturday, 26. November***

9 a.m. Plenary Session: Input – On the way to adopting resolutions/recommendations

9.30 a.m. Fourth group sessions (Discussing and drawing up resolutions & recommendations)

11.00 a.m. Coffee break

11.30 a.m. Plenary sessions: Short introduction of the resolutions & recommendations

### **B Joint sessions (Thamada Hotel / Myanmar Egress)**

12.00 p.m. Lunch break

1.00 p.m. Plenary meeting of the members of both workshops

1.30 p.m. Joint group sessions: Exchange of results of the “Seniors” and the “Juniors”

3.00 p.m. Coffee break

3.30 p.m. Plenary meeting of the members of both workshops: Evaluation

5.00 p.m. Closing ceremony - End of Workshop

***Saturday evening and Sunday, November 27***

Meeting of moderators, conference organisers and other interested participants. Topic: How to deal with the outcome of the conference (publication, forwarding the recommendations, further workshops/initiatives etc.)

## 2.3 Topics, sub-topics of Working Groups & reference material

For the time being, five topics are identified to be discussed in the Working Groups at both the “Senior” and the “Junior” Workshop. To facilitate the proceedings, some guidelines might be helpful both in terms of the procedure and the content of the discussions. In what follows, some suggestions on the latter are presented. For each of the five main topics, some sub-topics are identified. Reference to material assembled in the textbook is added. The sub-topics are listed in alphabetical order of a **keyword** and do not suggest any order of priority.

Participants in the workshop are invited to modify the suggested sub-topics, propose new ones, and to add more references.

### **Working Group 1:** *The influence of Buddhism on economic thought and practice in Myanmar.*

- How do the Buddhist concepts of wealth and *kamma* influence the **mindset** of Myanmar people in terms of economic activities, working ethics and the re-investment of profits?
- The **practical impact** of *dana* (giving) on Myanmar economics. – How much of the GNP is related to the “*dana-business*”? Do any empirical studies on this issue exist? Difference between rural areas and the cities?
- *Dana* and **social welfare**. – How the practice of giving to monks does or does not benefit the community? How are ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ forms of giving related to each other?

**Related textbook material:** 1.1 - Mini-Essays No. 2, 3, 4, 8, 12 – 1.21. Profile No. 17; 1.2.2 Literary Profiles – “Wealthy U Thet Shay and son U Kyaw; 1.3 – Questions and Answers No 2 “Ethics”; 2.1.3 – The Nagani Song; 2.2.1 – The *Pyidawtha*-Programme; 2.2.4 – Nu on the foundation of economics; 2.4.5.2 – Yadanabon; 2.5.2 - Maung Khaing Mar, Taking a Look Back at Bagan; 3.1 - Myanmar Economy in the context of Myanmar Culture and Tradition; 3.4 - Buddhist Teachings on Economics; 3.5 - Dāna and Hope in Myanmar Buddhism; 3.8 - Work-Related Socio-cultural Values and Economic Options in the Buddhist context of Myanmar (Burma).

### **Working Group 2:** *Historical experiences and their lessons.*

- ⤴ The present impact of the **colonial heritage** of anti-capitalist and “xenophobic” attitudes.
- ⤴ Reasons for **comprehensive** and government controlled **planning** in the economic sector. (Influence of the idea of *loka nibbein*?)
- ⤴ The roots of economic **isolation** and self-sufficiency.
- ⤴ The influence of the traditional **people’s attitude** towards government activities.

**Related textbook material:** Section 2 – YESTERDAY (complete); 3.2 - A Summary of the Economics Ideas of Bogyoke Aung San; 3.3 - Pyidawtha: Promise of Development; 3.10 The outlook of Myanmar’s economy that has, for ages, been down in the dumps

### **Working Group 3:** *The influence of economic change on social relations in Myanmar.*

- Which **changes in social relations** came into being after the introduction of the new economic policies after 1988, and following the increase of Myanmar workers going abroad?
- The impact of **poverty** (growing gap between rich and poor, respectively) and of urbanisation.

- The impact of new economic opportunities on the **young generation** and their family ties.

**Related textbook material:** 1.1 – Mini essays No. 6, 9, 10, 11; 3.7 - Socio-Cultural Change in Myanmar; 3.8 - Work-Related Socio-cultural Values and Economic Options in the Buddhist context of Myanmar (Burma); 3.9 - Effects brought by Myanmar nationals working abroad on the Myanmar economy.

**Working Group 4:** *Different Business Cultures in Myanmar (Myanmar as a „plural society“)*

- In which sectors of the economy can we find **competition**?
- What are the **differences** in the ways of doing business by the B'ma, the Chinese (and other East Asians), the Indians, the ethnic nationalities and Western merchants?
- What could happen if Myanmar was opened up to the **global markets**?

**Related textbook material:** 1.1 – Mini essays No. 5, 7, 11; 1.2 – Profiles of economic actors; 2.1.6 – Indo-Burmese Riot; 2.4.5.1 – The Python; 3.1 - Myanmar Economy in the context of Myanmar Culture and Tradition; 3.8 - Socio-cultural Values and Economic Options in the Buddhist context of Myanmar;.

**Working Group 5:** *Livelihood, particularly in the rural areas.*

- The double function of **rice growing**: basic staple food and export commodity.
- **Tenure** of farmland and land rights.

**Related textbook material:** 1.1 – Mini-essays No. 4, 11; 2.1.1 – Debate in the Governor's Council; 3.6 - The Role of the Myanmar Women in Economics;

## **2.4 Group Sessions' Structure**

(Recommendations)

### **1<sup>st</sup> Group Session (1h 30min.)**

#### **Mapping the Topic According to the Experiences of the Participants, with Reference to Texts from the Textbook**

12. Each participant introduces her/himself with a short comment on his interest in the group's topic and briefly comments on one of the texts (30 min.)
13. Free group discussion on the various statements (40 min.)
14. Identifying common as well as disputed positions (20 min.)

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Group Session (1h 30min.)**

#### **Deepening the Understanding of the Topic**

- Identifying (tentative) relations between the common and disputed positions (30 min.)
- Identifying the two most disputed positions (10 min.)
- Discussing the two issues (30 min.)
- Preparing for the presentations of the interim results in the plenary session (20 min.)

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Group Session (1h 30min.)**

#### **Formulation of Propositions/Theses**

- Each group member notes down his personal summary of the two previous group sessions. (20 min.)
- Exchange of results (30 min.)
- Wording of propositions/theses (if decided upon, in small sub-groups) (40 min.)

### **4<sup>th</sup> Group Session (1h 30min.)**

#### **Drafting of Resolutions and Recommendations**

- Separation into two parts:
  - a) Resolutions and recommendations for further research (to be done in Myanmar and abroad)
  - b) Policy recommendations (for Myanmar and abroad) (45 min.)
- Exchange and discussion of the sub groups results (45 min.)

### 3 Summary of Working Groups

#### 3.1 Summary Working Group 1: The influence of Buddhism on economic thought and practice in Myanmar

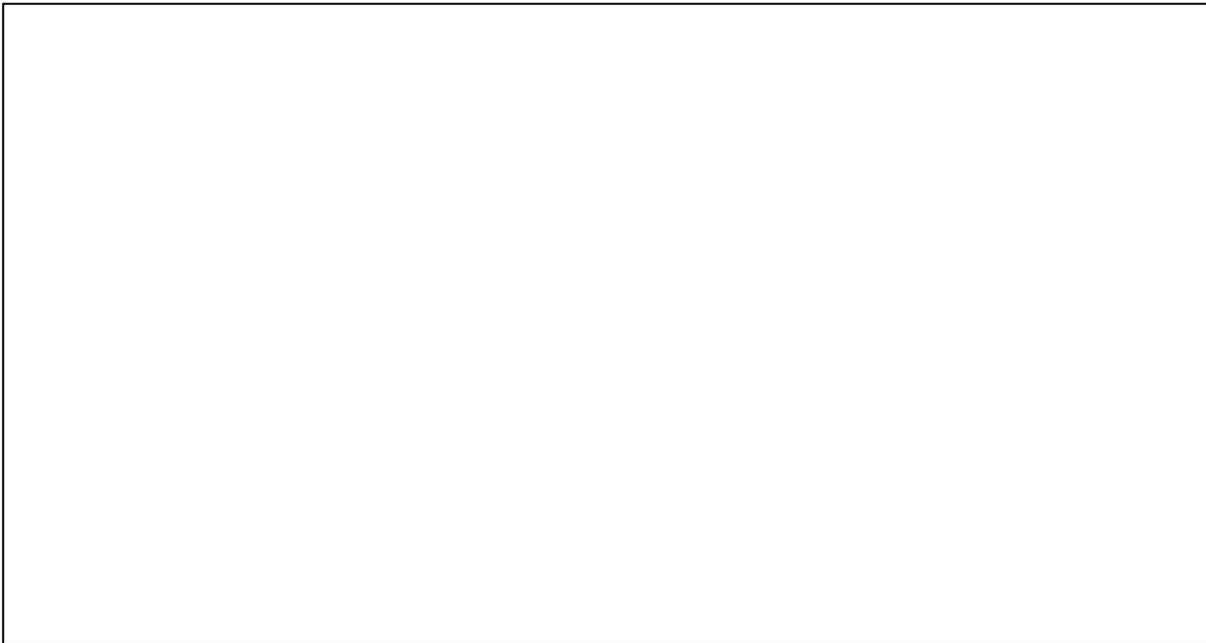


Figure 6: Working Group 1

Thesis:

While Buddhism cannot be considered the sole reason for the current situation of economic development in Myanmar, there seems to be a gap between the real essence of Buddha philosophy and the implementation of it in reality, as understood by the majority of Myanmar people. The following shows what is actually happening.

#### **The actual practices**

- ✦ Donation is for merit and Karma as well as for acquiring wealth in this life and next life (Contradiction between giving and acquiring wealth according to western perspective)
- ✦ Donation is carried out as investment for next life, due to impermanence and insecurity in this life
- ✦ (Does it prevent the investment in economy? – research)
- ✦ People expect to gain returns on, or be paid back as a result of, donating
- ✦ Idea of reincarnation gives reasons for current inequalities
- ✦ There are conservative perceptions on current inequalities
- ✦ Wealth is considered the harvest of the good deeds in a previous existence
- ✦ There is resistance from attachment to worldly possession, fame and lust

#### **Impacts**

- ✦ Enhanced cooperation and social integration by reducing one's self-centeredness, self-manipulation and greed
- ✦ Peace of mind and strong morality

- ✧ Inequalities do not create dissatisfaction. The idea of redistribution to the poor by donation cools down the inequalities
- ✧ Less active and innovative in acquiring wealth
- ✧ Exploitation of economically passive victims - locally and globally
- ✧ Incomplete application of Buddha teachings that are relevant to doing business (e.g. just honesty without mindfulness and effort) that might lead to low competition and less entrepreneurial spirit
- ✧ Donation goes more to Sangha and religious buildings rather than to the poor and needy

## Recommendations

### To religious organisations

- Practical Buddha teaching on wealth/business/everyday issues/attitudes
- Transparency/accountability of donations
- (Famous) monks should not get involved in Business (Patron-client networks)
- Religious education should be taught by academics (qualification/ standard curriculum)
- Development-orientated Buddhism concepts (sustainability/ economics etc)
- Continue encouraging social responsibility of monks
- Peaceful coexistence with other religions (after opening up)

### To the government

- Understand the role of Sangha in the life of Myanmar people (some examples)
  - ✧ Conducting Dhamma talks
  - ✧ Enhancing good morality
  - ✧ Teaching people how to meditate
  - ✧ Caring for social services and schools especially in rural areas
- Curriculum development
  - ✧ Social responsibility in primary schools
  - ✧ Interactive learning in schools
- Government support for practical Buddha teaching on wealth, business, everyday life
- Encourage monks to learn from other countries/ ideas

(Remarks: If both the government and leading monks in the society take the active role in implementing these facts, the development will be rapid (large scale) and last for, at least, one generation. If there is a shortage of encouragement from these two main players and just of community effort alone, long-term development status will be relatively slow and it will be difficult to estimate the time frame for reaching the goal.

## Research Recommendations

- Flow of donations
- Donations and investment behaviour
- What do monks teach on wealth/business? What can they extract from Buddhist literature

to teach about wealth/business? How to link sound spiritual/ mental health and success in business?

- Effectiveness of monk's activities on local communications
- What do religious organisations do?

## 3.2 Summary Working Group 2: Historical experiences and their lessons

A Senior Workshop



Figure 7: Working Group 2

### I Course of Discussion

A The eras under discussion for the **first plenary session** were:

- pre – colonial period
- colonial period
- struggle for independence and
- parliamentary democracy period

The following aspects were discussed in terms of the **impact of the colonial heritage of anti-capitalism**:

#### Political factors

The observation made for this aspect was that anti-capitalism has been the political inspiration of the Myanmar political elites under the rule of the kings and under colonialism. This was followed by the struggle for independence, which led to the parliamentary democracy system and, eventually, towards the socialist period.

Since the imperial period, Myanmar has been under a subsistence economy where the key has been survival through self-sufficiency. Capitalism was introduced during the colonial period, where commercial trading became eminent throughout the colony. However, the capitalist economy continued until a parliamentary democracy period after independence.

#### Social factors

Myanmar people traditionally accepted the concepts of rulers throughout the imperial royal system but, after colonization, the concept of being ruled by a foreign master became unacceptable: the roles of *Thakhin* (master) and *Kyun* (slave) became unbearable.

One question considered here was that, during the capitalist period, the economy started to prosper. The question remained, however, “Why do we want to change?”. The answer came back to the fact that Myanmar always had two tiers of prosperity - the big gap between the rich and the

poor had always persisted, even during the Imperial days. This did not change with the introduction of capitalism; it may even have become worse because capitalism was regarded as “foreign”.

Another social aspect that has arisen since the beginning of the discussion is the ideology of the leaders. However, when these leaders fail to measure up to the expectations of the people, trust and confidence of the masses are lost. Thus, when the going gets too tough, the culturally contented people want change, for prosperity to trickle down to the masses.

### Economic factors

Socialism and the concept of a ‘welfare state’ was a dream because it gave hope of equality for all. *Pyitawthar* (“Happy Land”)<sup>3</sup> became a guiding star as “every man would possess a house, a car and a monthly income of about \$200”.

Insufficient funding was one of the factors cited for the failure of the program as Myanmar could not comply with all the demands of the United States, which initially assisted in building up the country's economy after the war. The group agreed that the failure may be connected to the fact that we, as Myanmar people, like to decide for ourselves rather than take instructions from foreigners. This may be a result of continuing anti-colonist sentiment.

But the failure of the *Pyitawthar* was not only from planning but also from the lack of effective program administration and management of the individual operations. It appears that such preconditions were assumed rather than established. Again there was a mismatch between what was promised and the actual reality.

B The afternoon discussions on the roots of economic isolation and self-sufficiency are as follows:

In this respect, along with economic isolation, the reasons for comprehensive and government controlled planning of the economic factors were considered as analogue.

The group concluded again that “Socialism was a dream” of the people at that time. Thus, according to the ideology of Socialism, the government needed to carry out a planned economy which focused on self sufficiency and was geared towards import substitution, which would, in turn, lead to isolation from other countries. From time immemorial, Myanmar had been self-sufficient, and that idea has been there all along in the heads of Myanmar people, which was, again, in line with the concept of planned economy and self sufficiency.

In considering the political isolation after the colonial period, Myanmar thinking was on non-alliance, which seemed to be the right approach at that time but the scenario is, now, different as the world focuses on globalization and integration of economies eg. the ASEAN, EU, etc.

After 1988, the Government was sanctioned, and this added more to the impact of political and economic isolation in itself for Myanmar. On the other hand, there is pressure on Myanmar to be part of the global community again.

## **II The Resolutions / Theses**

### **1. Reduce the gap between the two tiers of prosperity**

In order to achieve this, Myanmar needs to find its own unique value as a country first and create additional value for the country as well as for the people. One factor to be considered is that, since Myanmar is still predominantly an agriculture economy with the masses still involved in the agriculture sector, one possible question is “How can we play a role in sustaining the Global Food Sufficiency?” As an example: Recently Myanmar rice won the first price in a competition, but the

---

<sup>3</sup> The program was introduced by the first Prime Minister Nu in the 1950s. It combined planning and free market elements.

question here again is, what are we going to do about this, how can this be used to the country's – and not just to the global market's - advantage etc.

## **2. Improve the capacity, particularly for the young people, in education and skills**

One of the hypotheses raised from the beginning was: If we had maintained the educational standards of the colonial and post-independent era throughout all these political systems, we would have a different scenario”.

The key issue of education and skill training of the youth is always at the core of any discussion when talking about the development of Myanmar. But again another hypothesis here is “How do we carry out social-reengineering of the mindset of Myanmar people?” Can it be done and how long would it take? Can it be in time for 2015 Asean Economic Community, 2013 SEA Games etc.?

## **3. Enhance management capability in terms of efficiency and governance**

This refers particularly to the need for the training and awareness of the concept of “Governance” for the public as well as for the corporate sector of society.

## **4. Increase economic development**

One of the hypotheses derived is “If tomorrow sanctions are lifted, are we ready?”. The consensus observation is that the political changes are currently happening very quickly. The institutional change, which covers the administrative mechanism of the government, infrastructure development, the issue of good governance etc. is not, however, keeping pace with this rapid political change.

So the question again here is “Can we keep up with the economic changes of the liberalization of open market forces?” For example, Who is going to spearhead and implement these changes?, What are the practical “Hows”? Still bureaucracy is operating according to the old dormant model and has not yet morphed. Thus the key to success for all these issues is to critically achieve synergy.

Thus, based on Historical experiences and their lessons, the last hypothesis is:

**“Will history repeat itself for Myanmar?”**

**“How can we avoid from history repeating itself for Myanmar?”**

### **Key Recommendation:**

**Institutional change is a MUST with an administrative mechanism which is versatile and yet transparent. These changes must be congruent with the political changes so that national synergy can be achieved.**

The main **Critical Success Factors** for this are:

A **Reform Commission** which is given executive power and not an advisory role.

- sub-committees should be formed which also include professionals;
- capacity building of all the stakeholders of the administrative mechanism is recommended as a pre-requisite for institutional change;
- platforms are to be established for interactions, such as having more workshops and dialogues between the stakeholders, who consist of policy makers, administrators, and those who would eventually be affected by the changes;
- the dialogues needs to be truthfully interactive, formulating the practicability of the

“Hows”, and beyond just unilaterally presenting papers;

- attention must be drawn to the linkages within and between inter and intra Ministries and Regional Government, so that initiatives or changes are not implemented in isolation;
- institutional change must create an enabling environment for economic development with strong integration of agriculture and other sectors of the economy.

### Research recommendation

Can the administrative mechanism, dormant throughout the eras of various political systems, be changed? What degree of balance between “old” and “new” is the compromising point to be used as a spring board leading to the the success of political aspirations?

The final thought, based on historical experiences and their lessons, is that **Myanmar cannot afford another mismatch of promise and reality**. To quote President Barack Obama, he said in one of his speeches that “You can’t let your failures define you – you have to let your failures teach you. You have to let them show you what to do differently the next time”.

### B Junior Workshop

#### Questions

- 1.The present impact of the colonial heritage and anti-capitalist and xenophobic attitudes
- 2.Reasons for comprehensive and government controlled planning in the economic sector (who will bring Lawka Nibbein)
- 3.The roots of economic isolation and self-sufficiency
- 4.The influence of the traditional people’s attitude towards government activities

#### General Introduction

-It was found that there were repeated policy mistakes throughout the eras while working for the development of Myanmar economy. It is crucial to take lessons from the past in order to move further for the better future.

-Without knowing the complete picture of the economics, the policies which were not well-thought-through and not well-prepared were formulated by giving certain popular reasons that they are for the nationalism or the defence of the country. In fact they were done for the sake of personal interests.

-The country always has to suffer because these policies can neither be implemented nor accomplished.

-One major factor is that the policy makers just talk about the positive consequences of the economic plans but never take into account the possible negative effects.

-They also never take into account the administrative efficiency in implementing the policies, appropriate plans for the rule of law, environmental protection, possible flaws, corruptions, waste of resources, etc.

-There are two deeply-rooted symptoms in the development of Myanmar economy

○Tendency to centralized control

▪Lack of people’s participation in developing economic policies and plans

▪No effective evaluation by the people in the success/failure of the economic policies and plans

▪No transparency enough to let the people informed and involved

▪People are in the passive mode in the development of Myanmar economy : no education is available and no empowerment is done for the participation of the people; people think the one who will bring the Lawka Nibbein is the government.

○Serious rent-seeking

▪The policies and the projects which are not transparent lead to government failure instead of

supporting the market economic system

- Market economy can be successful only when there is quality competition. However due to the rent-seeking practice of the government - practising favoritism without looking at the quality, there are only few quality manufacturers and service providers in the country.
- Those who cannot become rent-seekers become frail despite their quality goods/services.
- Our group discussed on taking lessons from the mistakes in the past, finding ways to correct those mistakes and brainstorming better ideas for improvement.

### **Question 1: the present impact of the colonial heritage and anti-capitalist and xenophobic attitudes**

Anti-capitalist and xenophobic attitudes: The degree and extent of it will be different by generations.

We recognized 4 generations --→ if we are around 30 years old people

-Our grandparents

○Survivors

○They witnessed and survived wars

○They hold survival policies (self sufficiency, saving and minimal needs → to survive

-Our parents (grew up in around socialist era)

○Socialists

○The education system, public ideology trend constructed this generation

○They go for equity, anti-capitalist, bureaucratic, technicians, and somewhat conservatives

-We (grew up after 8888)

○Reformers

○Liberalists

○Developers

-Our next growing up generation

○Wishfully prosperous

○

To answer the question on whether Myanmar people have the spirit of anti-capitalism, we have to say that the intensity of that spirit vary from generations to generations. Nowadays, the youth believe that the wealth depends on how much one puts afford on work. If one works hard enough and opens eyes to find opportunities for business, one can be successful in life. The youth nowadays are taking an independent view and don't seem to stick on any ideology in creating wealth.

### **Doing business together:**

-Trust in relation, trust to do business together – due to different culture and different historical backgrounds, doing business can vary depending on geographical region, ethnic group, developed or developing status of Asia and the Western countries.

-As people in the West are more professional, they may have stronger belief in the process of turning their efficiency to the tangible results.

-For the Myanmar people, we don't think our intelligent level and interpersonal skills are under par.

-However, we are concerned about the following. Examples

○Language barrier

○Technical know-how

○Socially, culturally different decision making/ management style

▪Feeling hesitant, personal relation, family style business corporation, personal involvement, rent-seeking, favoritism)

▪The above habits might negatively affect the efficiency in doing business

### **Reasons for comprehensive and government controlled planning in economic sector**

-Trust with foreign business actors

- Trust with domestic business actors, market → to control the market failure
- Trust in private sectors' capacity for competitive market
- Nationalism, ideology trend, traditional and conservative policy makers
- Formerly, to secure their role as power holder – to create rent

### **Roots of isolation (Self)**

- Availability of natural resources
- National security → trust among Myanmar ethnics, ethnic conflict
- Administrative capacity

### **Traditional people's attitude towards government activities**

- Nationalistic, ideological traditions, trust toward business actors → through the traditional people in bureaucratic mechanism
- The generation of our parents → For the general population at that age, they are used to standing on their own feet while struggling to strengthen their education and wealth. They might have witnessed the results of own performance and perseverance in life.
- However, the decisional-maker level officials in the government departments are supposed to have traditional ideas mentioned above and it is a very important factor to be counted in formulating good/bad economic policies.

### 3.3 Summary Working Group 3: The influence of economic change on social relations in Myanmar.

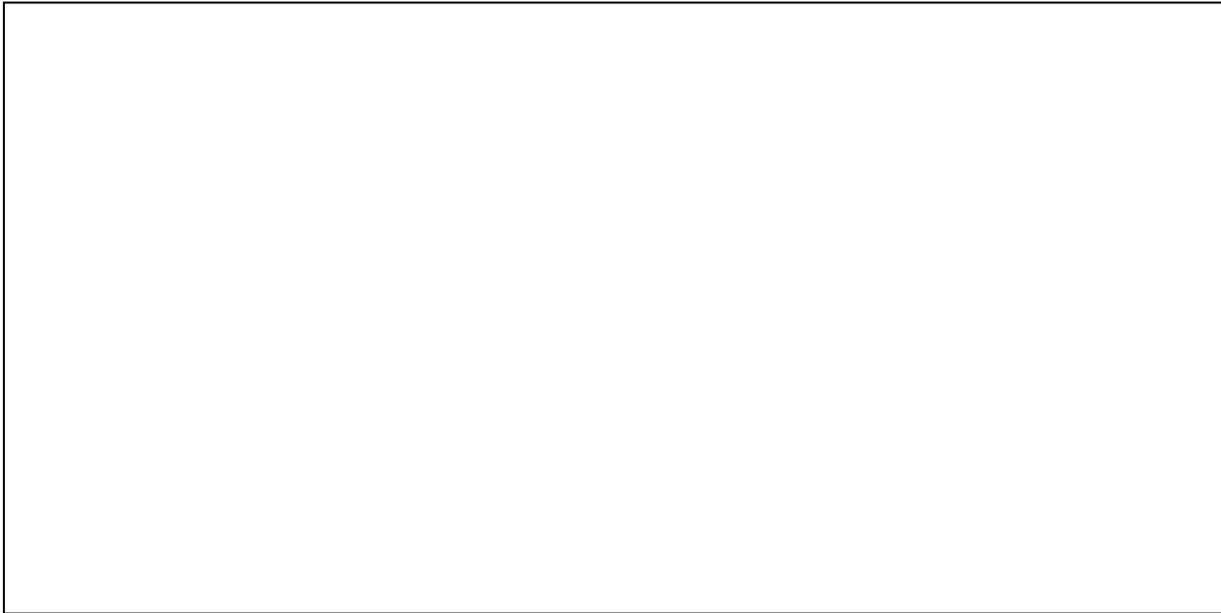


Figure 8: Working Group 3

## Theses and Recommendations

### A Migrations

#### A.1 Remittances

**Thesis:** Social and economic impact of the remittances in Myanmar economy is huge but has not been captured and analyzed. As a consequence, the economic role of the incomes of those working abroad remains unknown.

**Research recommendations:** What is the value of the remittances in Myanmar and how are they used? How to make these opportunities in the future by opening up the country (with official exchange rate and banks in country, mobile phone technology to wire funds, etc.)

**Policy recommendation:** Harmonization of exchange rate policy and bank transactions, regulation of taxation system (migrants pay only in 1 place)

#### A.2 Migrant workers

**Thesis:** With migration comes brain drain from the country. Migration has positive and negatives impacts on the country, on its economy and on social relations for those who are left behind. Women are more vulnerable to exploitation.

**Research recommendations:** How to avoid brain drain? What are the incentive schemes for welcoming and accommodating returning migrants? Will we see a higher level of migration in the future with the changing economic and political situation? Will rural exodus accelerate? What are the factors of vulnerability for women?

**Policy recommendations:** Awareness raising and information, particularly for women, labour rights/ labour conditions agreements and protection abroad, harmonization of the financial system (exchange rate policy and bank transactions), literacy and adequate education, especially in rural areas, development of: income generation opportunities, of infrastructure, of poverty alleviation and of credit/cash saving opportunities. More options should be provided to rural inhabitants.

### B Special Economic Zones (SEZ)

**Thesis:** SEZ may have some positive, economic impacts but they also have negative, social impacts

**Research recommendations:** What are the social and environmental impacts of the SEZ? Projections of the tentative consequences, according to examples in other countries (i.e. China)

**Policy recommendations:** Raising awareness of the rural, uneducated populations, laws have been passed but don't take into account the social and environment dimensions

### **C The development of the new culture of the beer station**

**Thesis:** The number of beer stations increased within the last decade. While previously socially stigmatized, the practice of going to the beer station is now more widely accepted. As well as other harmful practices, they shall be avoided as Buddhist culture dictates. Because of the nature of business, there are huge profits and less competition (as running this type of business is not good for karma)

**Research recommendations:** How did the beer stations develop over the last 10 years? How did the social stigma attached to this business and its consumers evolve? What is the evolution of harmful practices? What are the tensions between sangha and beer publicity? Comparison with the situation in Thailand.

**Policy recommendations:** Prohibition of alcohol seems to make the practice of drinking more problematic without addressing the root causes.

### **D Perceptions versus actual roles of the Indians and Chinese communities in Myanmar economy**

**Thesis:** There is a discrepancy between the perceptions of the respective economic roles of the Indian and the Chinese communities and their actual economic roles.

**Research recommendations:** Research perceptions and compare with the economic statistics. Take into account the grey economy, including black market, border markets, mobiles, etc.

**Policy recommendations:** If the thesis is validated by the research, findings should be disseminated to various levels of the government and media in order to mitigate preconceived ideas. Promote the idea that there are both positive and negative impacts in their investment in the country. Chinese and Indians groups are not homogeneous and awareness about their diversity should be raised.

### **E. Buddhism and market economy**

**Thesis:** Are Buddhist practices influenced by economic practices and the liberalization of the markets?

**Research Recommendations:** Buddhism has had a great influence throughout Myanmar history, dating back from the imperial period. In fact, the history of Buddhism in Myanmar extends nearly a millennium. What impact has Buddhism had on recent socio-economic developments and vice versa? Drifting of religious beliefs and practices in taboo businesses (i.e., cigarette, alcohol and drugs trading) and are becoming a more common practice in a few decades. (Der letzte Satz macht inhaltlich keinen Sinn)

**Policy Recommendations:** The majority of the country's population is Buddhist and it is known as the world's most religious Buddhist country. Both government body and private sectors should therefore take into account current realities and future possibilities for Buddhism in Myanmar.

### 3.4 Summary Working Group 4: The Business Cultures in Myanmar (Myanmar as a „plural society“)

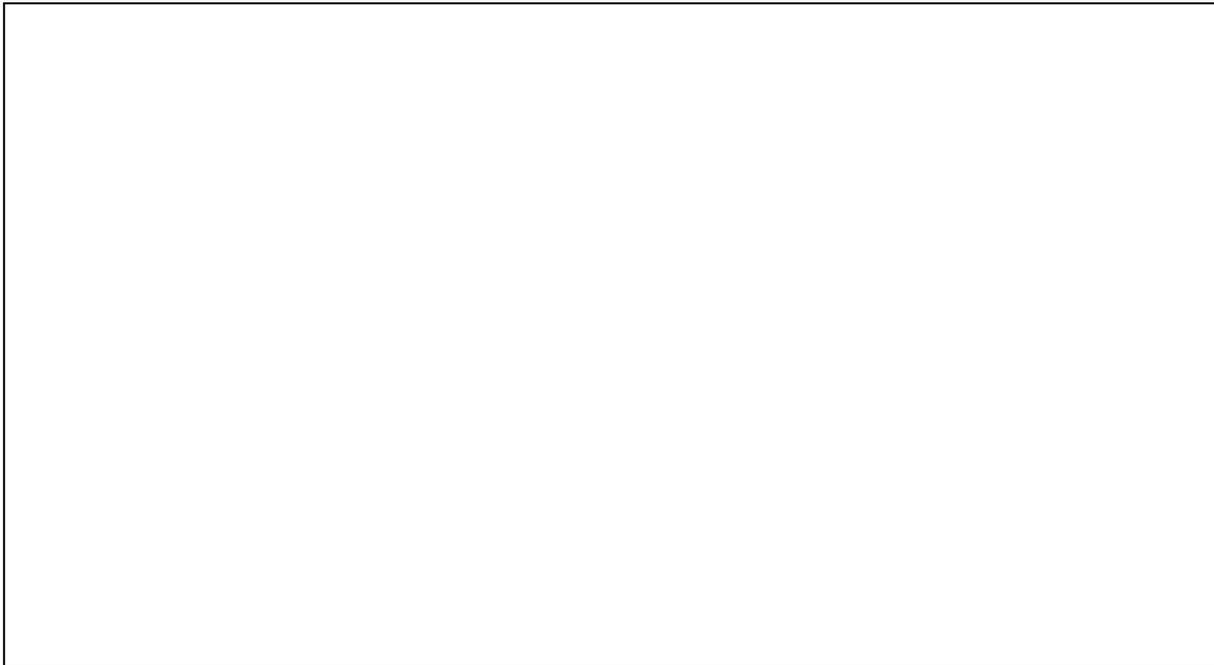
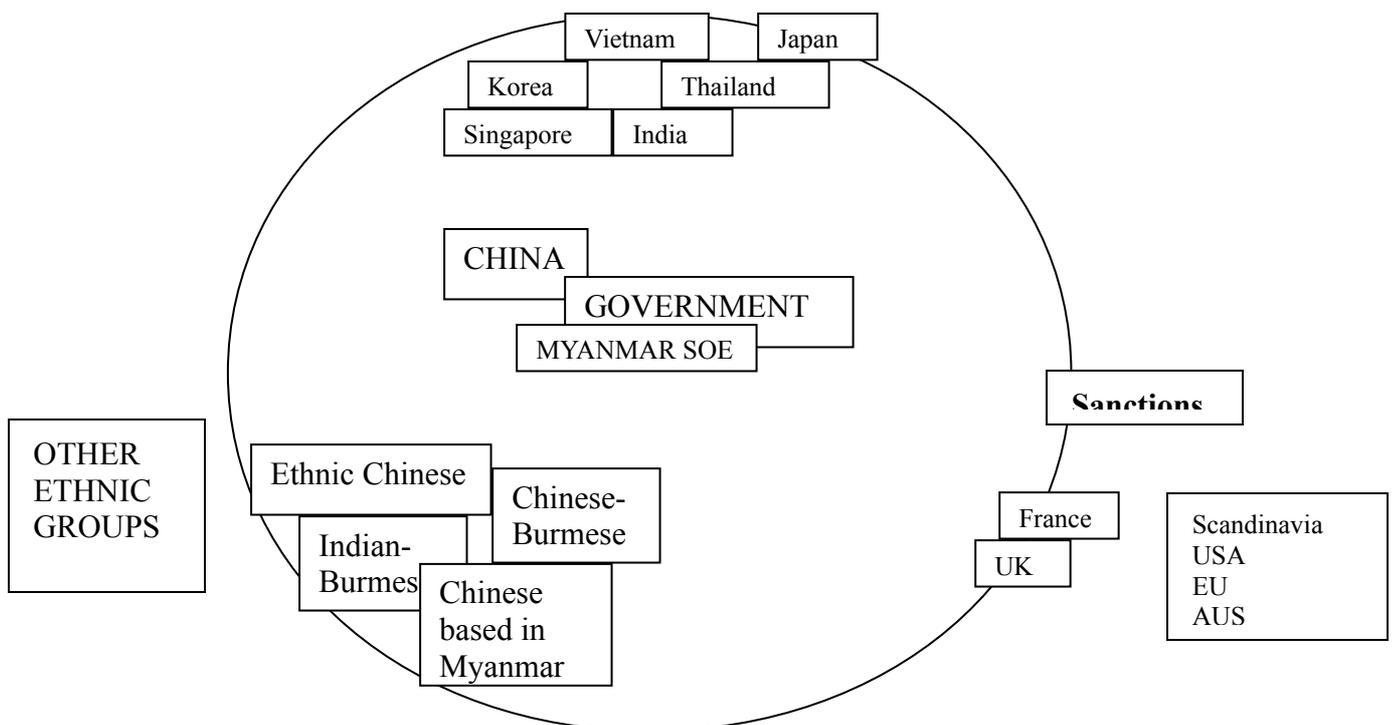


Figure 9: Working Group 4

The first group discussion began with the clarification and elaboration of the different business players in Myanmar. The different ethnic groups involved in Myanmar business and other players were divided and assembled into groups after their current economical involvement in the country. The group designed a chart for better understanding:

#### Business Groups in Myanmar



After figuring out the main groups participating in the businesses in Myanmar, the discussion

progressed to which are the country's major industrial and economic sectors. In order to reach a comprehensive conclusion, the group discussed the impact of these business sectors on the national economy.

Additionally, the group figured out the Driving forces behind the development of the Myanmar economy, which helped to foster a deeper understanding of the various business players and their roles.

To reach the necessary conclusions, the group listed the different sectors, driving forces behind them and the problems, according to their importance.

<b>Sectors:</b>	<b>Driving forces:</b>	<b>Problems:</b>
Oil and gas Gems and jade Informal economy Agriculture Mining Logging Fisheries Hydro Trading Tourism	Profit Networks Culture Religion Subsistence Social motivation Nationalism	Political system Legal framework Sanctions Financial system Corruption/transparency Cronyism Capital access Economic policy Physical access Trust Superficial understanding of religion Unemployment No added value

The discussions and related conclusions led to the formulation of the first few thesis points, which are listed as follows:

1. There is no uniform „business culture“ in Myanmar.
2. Myanmar’s business culture is very relationship-based (Must know the right people)
3. Business environment is very unstable and unstructured and based upon ad-hoc decisions.
4. At the moment, business in Myanmar is very Chinese dominated.
5. Economy in Myanmar is crony-driven.
6. Competition exists less between economic sectors but rather for „the best relationship“.
7. The conditions for the investors are too insecure.
8. The lack of law enforcement prevents the emergence of ethical business development.
9. One of the root causes of Myanmar’s economic problems is the poor implementation of policies and the lack of appropriate legal framework.
10. The rudimentary financial system prevents Myanmar from participating in international

trading systems.

On the basis of these thesis points, the group further discussed what might occur with the opening of the economy into the international markets. To summarize, four possible future effects were identified:

- There will be winners and losers
- Key sectors must be identified by government authorities in order to be protected for national development.
- Laws must be established by the government to patronize the Myanmar economy.
- The exchange rate needs to be stabilised to improve the basic conditions

In addition it can be said that the basic problem of the economic system in Myanmar is the inability of the Government to implement an economic policy.

During the discussion, it became clear that there was a discrepancy between the current situation in Myanmar and the needs of private owned business in the country. The participants pointed out in which areas the differences were most pronounced.

- Lack of trust between the private business and the government
- Budget problems of the government
- Budget allocations
- Strategic planning for Ministries
- Role of state and trust in state
- Business governance

In response to the conclusions outlined above, the group set up policy recommendations.

### **Policy Recommendations**

#### **1. Trust building between citizens and State:**

- ✦ Good governance
- ✦ Transparency
- ✦ Accountability
- ✦ Clean government (anti-corruption)
- ✦ Clear working procedures and stabilisation of decision process.

#### **2. Creating equal and level playing fields**

- ✦ Stop cronyism
- ✦ Make the judicial system accessible to all
- ✦ Make sure Law is justly applied to all.

#### **3. State to play a leading role in creating an environment for responsible and appropriate business**

- ✦ Financial and Banking sector (access to finance for all)
- ✦ Judicial reforms (sound and independent judicial system)

- ✦ Legal framework (environmental law and appropriate business law)
- ✦ Balanced infrastructure policy for business

Finally the group decided that further, in-depth research would be necessary to address all issues faced by the country. Thus, the group agreed on more research recommendations.

### **Research Recommendations**

Myanmar: Research on legal, business framework to highlight the existing loopholes.

Myanmar/Foreign: Research on the specifics of the various business cultures in Myanmar (B'ma, Chinese, Indian (Muslim and Hindu), Western, Ethnic).

### 3.5 Summary Working Group 5: Livelihood, particularly in Rural Areas

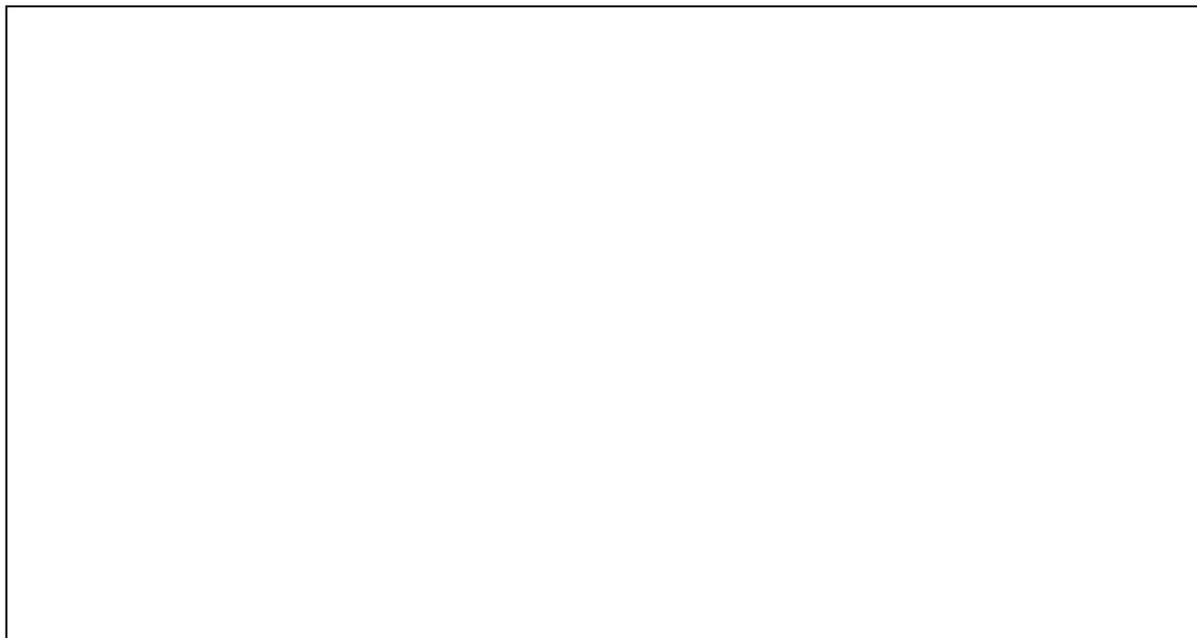


Figure 10: Working Group 5

#### **I Theses/results of discussion after group session 3 (25.11.):**

##### a) Measures to be taken are ...

- ... Technology transfers and method transformation;
- ... educating rural people (basic education);
- ... increasing trust among stakeholders (for example by reducing interests on loans for merchants);
- ... Agri-loans for farmers (increasing the loan size given by the government);
- ... trust (farmers, middlemen, exporters);
- ... establishing a mixed system of assistance (private/NGO – government – international agencies) in close relation with the farmers;
- ... Life skills training.
- ... selection of 10 strategic products and drawing up of a plan to promote a value-chain analysis: a long product line including the government as one of the stakeholders (supplying education, information, distribution, packaging system and market access);
- ... promote an Agricultural Journal which is accessible at village level (and is attractive for the farmers);

##### b) Stakeholders:

Government – Organisations – Farmers

Merchants – Privates – People

Technical Specialists – Economists

- c) In Myanmar, TRUST in economic institutions (both public & private as government agencies, cooperatives and banks) has to be built up as a precondition to the cooperation of the different economic players/stakeholders – both horizontally (between farmers, villagers etc.) and vertically.

For economic development in rural areas, time has to be allotted in order to secure a proper evaluation of new economic ideas/schemes in which the farmers play an active role.

Autonomous institutions for various services for society (medical doctors, lawyers etc.) under institutional and not just personal control of the government.

d) Problems: Relationship of successful/promising programs implemented by NGOs and international organisations and government agencies; many of these programs might only happen because the government neglects its duties to allot money to various ministries (health, education etc.).

## II Final recommendations (26.11.):

### a) Policy recommendations

15. Building trust between the stakeholders (see above) in the country's agricultural sector.
16. Educate people (farmers, rice millers, district officers etc.) to use the common standard Metric System and use such education to pass information about the economy from the level of the farmers to the global economy.
17. Sharing market information through radio stations (FM) in different regions of the country to enable farmers to react to current developments.
18. Producing soft operas with an agricultural setting which combine entertainment and information about livelihood issues.

b) **Research recommendations:** Joint research between Myanmar and foreign researchers along with attempts to address other issues (greed, vices like gambling etc.) are recommended:

- The **understanding of poverty** by rural people/communities in different parts of Myanmar (Lower Myanmar (wet zone), Upper Myanmar (dry zone), Chin Hills, Kachin Hills, Shan States, Wa region etc.) - aspects of **quality of life** - together with the collection of data (household income etc.) - aspect of **quantity**.
- The **impact of *dana*** on the rural economy . a) How much of the economic output is invested in *dana* and what economic sectors provide for the respective goods (monks' clothes, gifts, food etc.)? How can we define the relationship of giving in cash and in kind? (aspect of **quantity**). b) How does the tradition of *dana* affect the mindset of rural people and are there differences to the population in the cities? (aspect of **quality**). c) How can we define the situation in terms of 'giving' in non-Buddhist communities? d) How can the findings be related to the theory developed by Max Weber and the ongoing discussion about it as well as the „Small is beautiful“ thesis (Schumacher, Payutto)?

## 4 Spontaneous Assessments of the Workshop and Some Comments

In this chapter, feedback given directly after the workshop will be commented on and set into the context from which they arose.

### 4.1 The Groups

#### *4.1.1 Excellent mix of people in groups – NGOs, business (very great idea to include MWEA!)*

Comments like this came from most of the working groups. During discussions, it was revealed that the different backgrounds of group members had positive effects on ideas and results arising. This was especially important because the topic of economics was chosen (as mentioned in the introduction) as something connecting the various, recent issues concerning Myanmar. So while there were members with an economic background, others were focused rather on topics concerning religion, history or culture. Hence, it was helpful to sort out the various challenges facing Myanmar in the future.

#### *4.1.2 I am happy to learn that Western organisations are really interested in our issues; but I wonder whether Western organisations are really able to help Myanmar's economic development?*

Another point of interest was the mix of participants from Myanmar on the one hand and internationals on the other. A lot of local Myanmar group members were surprised about the participation of people from western countries (Such as France, Australia and Germany) and welcomed them. In some groups, however, the relation between locals and foreigners was not well balanced and foreigners were in the majority. Given that one of the approaches of the workshop was to enable Myanmar participants to come up with solutions, this fact was considered rather unfortunate. Also, the question arose as to whether western organisations are really able to provide useful support in developing the country's economy.

Since Chinese and Indian business communities play an important part in Myanmar's economy, some participants expressed that their respective members should have been included in the workshop as well.

---

Coverage – very comprehensive. Perspectives from the point of religion, history, culture, pluralism and agriculture – Overall was a great learning experience and excellent exchange of ideas and solutions with a **dynamic group** consisting of **diverse backgrounds** – It enabled interaction

between foreigners and locals; very important to identify common issues in the context of Myanmar  
– Exchange of ideas between foreigners and locals critical in formulating policy and implementation of programs – I found, **surprisingly**, that the visiting & ex-pat **foreigners** are **taking part** in the discussion about Myanmar's affairs – More Myanmar participants

---

## 4.2 The Moderator

### 4.2.1. *The moderator should not try to dominate the discussion and should accept different views*

This comment refers to a situation that arose in working group one from the senior workshop. During discussions, the moderator of this group seemed to have slightly different ideas from the participants about what exactly his role was.

The aim of the first group session was to get to know the other participants and then to map the topic which, for working group one, meant talking about Buddhism's influence on Myanmar economics. The groups were asked to start with a round in which each participant should introduce him or herself. The moderator, however, decided otherwise. He had collected the name cards of each person and started reading them aloud to the group.



Figure 11: The Saya(ma)gyi-complex

The moderator then suggested that the group should work itself through the textbook. After a short argument with a western participant, who pointed out that this would take hours and would not lead to discussions, the proposal was dropped. Following this, the moderator started his own introduction of the topic, talking for at least a quarter of an hour about his own commitment to Buddhism and his way of *dana* and then going on to explain the Moonlight Festival and the donors

provided there. He then invited the participants to comment before starting with a long explanation of the division between the mundane and the supra-mundane forms of Buddhism. The situation only eased when he explained he had another appointment for the afternoon and left after the lunch-break.

These problems show precisely the “Saya(dama)gyi – complex” mentioned in the introduction. The role of the moderator in Myanmar is that of an expert talking to his pupils: not that of a mediator who is there to enhance the discussion and mediate between controversial opinions in the group.

The organizers of the workshop tried to prevent this problem by placing the moderators in groups not concerned with their own area of research, thus achieving an equal measure of knowledge between participants and moderator. In the other groups, this worked out well, but group one's moderator refused to be placed in any other group.

This problem also became apparent during the meeting of senior and junior participants from working group 1. The moderator of the junior group presented the results, after none of his participants volunteered to do so. Then, the senior group presented its results. The following discussion was dominated by some members of the senior group, telling the Myanmar citizens what they have to research and what they need to do. Although there was some truth in these speeches – the majority of research should be done by the people of Myanmar, and not by international researchers – the manner in which these thoughts were presented also reflected the “Saya(dama)gyi – complex” - this time through “westerners”.



Figure 12: Diagram of the Junior Group 1 – Vicious Circle

#### ***4.2.2. Moderator's role in the discussion is weak***

This comment was made by a participant of the junior workshop and represents the other side of the coin. Naturally, if the prescribed role of the moderator presents a break with the traditional role, some uncertainty is to be expected. In the group discussed above, the moderator put too much emphasis on his own role, thereby repressing the discussions. In the group referred to here, the moderator is likely to have restrained him or herself too much, thereby failing to guide or enhance the discussions. In general though, the moderators in almost all working groups did their job very well.

---

Moderator must be carefully chosen and briefed - Moderator should know about **visualization** and **moderation techniques** - Moderator must give **equal voice to everyone** - Selection of moderator should be reviewed - give every participant the chance to express their views

---

### 4.3 Exchange between groups

#### *4.3.1 Not many question and answer sessions, so not much interaction between groups*

Although discussions within the several groups mostly went very well, there was not much time for discussions between different working groups. Even though there were two plenary sessions in which the groups reported their working progress and recommendations, it was only in the second one that a discussion between different working groups arose. Since the time was limited, asking questions or discussing the various results with the whole workshop was not possible. However, participants expressed a desire to have more opportunities for interaction between the groups. Due to a participant there should have been chosen a different format for the reporting session to channel the discussion and to make it more precise.



Figure 13: Plenary Session

#### *4.3.2 importance of bringing together “senior” and “junior” participants*

On the last day, a joint session between the junior- and senior workshop was taking place. Here the different working groups were coming together to exchange their specific results. It was interesting to see how similar the conclusions of both the junior and senior members were, but there were also some problems during this session. Again, time was limited, so there were not many opportunities for discussion. Also, since the groups had already finished their recommendations, this session was limited to reporting. It might have been better to bring the two workshops together beforehand, thus allowing them to collaborate in making joint recommendations to address the issues discussed within the junior and senior working groups.

---

Output of discussion: Each group's output is extensive and comprehensive, but **cross-questions** and **linkages** between groups were **not made** – I recommend a “Reporting” format for recommendations next time to channel discussions

---

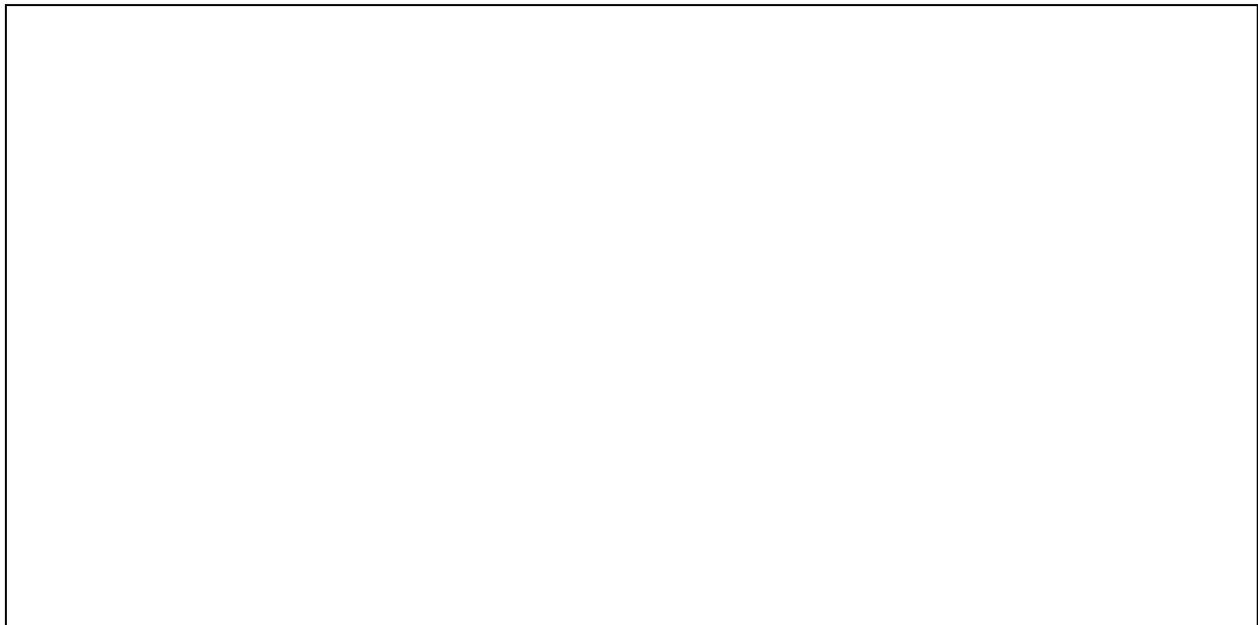


Figure 14: Joint Session

#### **4.4 General Assessments**

##### *4.4.1 The workshop is necessary but should be more organised*

As mentioned above, several comments referred to the time management and organization. Here it is necessary to distinguish between the junior and the senior workshop, too. As described in the introduction and visible in the pictures, the two workshops differed highly in facilities and number

of participants. Due to this, the junior workshop appeared to be slightly less organized than the senior workshop.

The comments on time management refer to the different situations already mentioned in the parts above. Though the discussions were interesting and needed time. Although the discussions between different working groups were inspiring and fruitful, they required thorough preparation by the separate working groups beforehand. That is why the organizers concluded that it would not have been efficient to shorten the time for inner-group discussions. The solution to this problem would, of course, have been a longer workshop, which brings us back to the difficulty of some participants having limited time.

---

A few warm up exercises were needed on the second day - **Need to set aside more time for comments** - facilitators need more preparation beforehand - The facilitators could have been more prepared + focussed - **time management could have been better** -

#### ***4.4.2 Very successful workshop. It is a unique endeavour for Myanmar.***

In general, all participants were really content with the way the workshop was organized. They stated that the atmosphere throughout the workshop was open and relaxed and that the discussions were fruitful and interesting. Here are some of the comments provided by the senior workshop:

---

- **Great workshop!** - You established a platform for mutual exchange, theoretical discussions, practical work - Perfect time, perfect place - **Thank you for the opportunity!** - This workshop is effective - Good for sharing information - **Very open in discussions - meet with great people and get information** - Thank you! - very relaxed atmosphere for everyone and had a great time sharing perspectives - **thanks for initiating and arrangement** - Workshop facilitates exchange of ideas and perceptions among participants - Very good concept of the workshop - **Excellent idea** -

---

The feedback from the junior workshop was just as positive but, as you can see below, the tone of the comments differs somewhat from those of the seniors. Both sets of comments address the issue of the mix of participants, but the juniors' points do so in a more personal way. They also seem to consider themselves, probably due to their age and experience, in the position of a beneficiary:

---

We were able to gain experience - Thank you for the opportunities to participate - Very interesting workshop - **I've got so much experiences from this** - Thank you very much!! - It's a good program for the new generation. - **Of course, we've started.** It was great. Thank you so much. - **Made many friends** - Very satisfied with discussions - **we need** knowledgeable training- Creating knowledge and Information - Good to see you all and get new information.

---

#### ***4.4. Insightful workshop that should be continued***

The exchange between foreigners and Myanmar citizens and the chosen topics produced not only recommendations that present the “Myanmar perspective” but also created an environment in which fair and face-to-face discussions became possible. It held lessons in store both for the foreign participants and for the Myanmar people: Especially in Europe, the cultural impact on the economic domain is often neglected as, the cultural differences inside the region aren't as pronounced as the differences between Europe and Asia. The Myanmar participants, on the other hand, were surprised by the amount of knowledge of and interest in their country on the part of the foreigners: long years of sanctions left the impression that the “western” world cared little about Myanmar. This kind of mutual understanding and cultural competence is lacking on both sides of the globe - especially in the league of decision makers - and needs to be trained and enhanced.

As shown above, the comments and assessments vary between positive and negative critique, which shows the honesty behind the statements. Although there were some minor organizational problems, the concept of the workshop was accepted as useful, necessary and effective. Most of the participants expressed their hope, that the workshop staged in Yangon wouldn't be the last one of its kind and most also wished to be included in further steps in the process. Finally, is there any praise better than the act of asking for more?

---

- **Want to have following progress or information** - describe the Workshop in the journals, magazines and blogs - Should be more of this kind of workshops - I hope we will increase economic development - **Looking for more on the phase 2** - interested in the results of the editing process and further projects - I think that the workshop should be the beginning of further exchanges - **recommendations ought to be shifted to a higher stage** - hopefully a publication/paper can come out of this - Serial workshops will further benefit the development in Myanmar - **I wish to use my input and recommendation and can change the country** -

---

Figure 15: Group Picture Senior Workshop

## 5 Notes from an Evaluation Session of the Workshop on „Myanmar Perceptions of the Social Economics of Myanmar“, held on 27 November (H.-B. Zöllner

Editor's note: The ideas presented here are a summary of the commentaries and discussions of participants of the workshop at the evaluation meeting of Sunday 27 November, at the J.S. Furnivall Hall, Thamada Hotel. Most of the 25 attendants had participated in the Junior Workshop.

### Basic Presumptions

- Myanmar is presently undergoing a very rapid process of transition. On the way to a newly shaped society are many crossroads. They call for - among other things - a new way of decision making.
- Political decisions are always of a top-down nature. They should be preceded by discussions on the grassroot level and based on bottom-up proposals.
- The Workshop provided a successful model for such discussions and the working out of political recommendations. MORE of it is needed.

### The Format

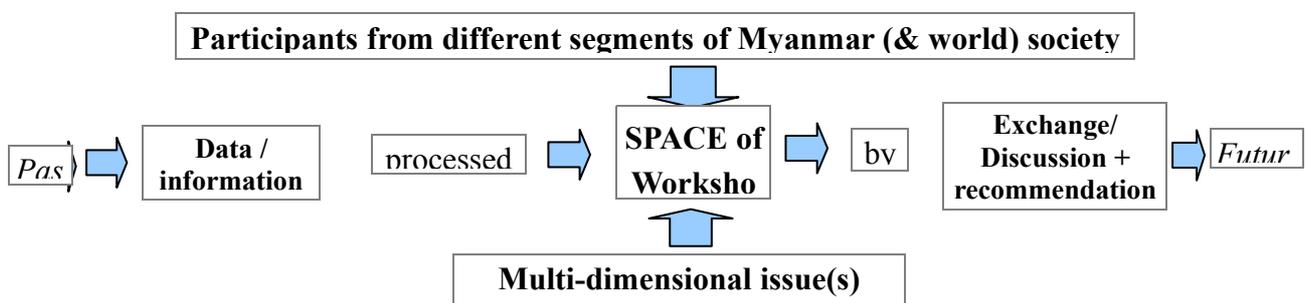
#### a) People and issues meet

In the November Workshop, people of different walks of life came together and discussed economic issues that lay at the intersection of Myanmar traditions and global developments. People coming from different directions and backgrounds met at a crossroad for a limited period of time. Thus a special marketplace for the exchange of views and recommendations was created.

#### b) Information is transformed through communication

The Workshop was based on a set of texts allocated in a textbook. The information (the „data“) provided by the material could be assessed in a variety of ways - or simply neglected - by the members of the working groups. The participants sat around tables on an equal level: no hierarchy was supposed to exist. Each member of the respective group was regarded as a Saya/Sayama in her/his own right. The moderators were assigned to facilitate a smooth discussion. In a way, outside information (textbook) and the personal experiences and ideas of the participants met in, what could be called, a space of „intellectual democracy“.

**Graphic sketch** (Horizontal arrows signify the present transition process as well as the non-hierarchical structure of the workshop:



### The Demand for MORE Exchange and Discussion

The information compiled in the textbook, the topics of the working groups taken together and the composition of the members of the two workshops ("senior" and "junior") were of a comprehensive nature. That, however, prevented a thorough discussion of information and results within working groups and between the two workshops.

Given the innovative nature of the Workshop, which was in many ways unique, this lack of

exchange could not be prevented. The first evaluation showed that the lack of time can be seen as a demand for more exchange of views, a broader discussion on certain policy issues and, thus, a call for the supply of more workshops.

### **Supply of More Workshops**

The format of the Workshop can be used – and of course must be modified – in order to organise more workshops aiming at:

- ▲ addressing crucial questions of the present transition process;
- ▲ contributing to capacity building of the stakeholders in the process (including foreigners who need to be "educated" about Myanmar);
- ▲ suggesting ideas and presenting demands to policy makers and implementers on different levels of the country's political and administrative system;
- ▲ broadening civil society,
- ▲ creating a network of concerned groups through informal contacts and PR activities.

### **Organisational Proposal**

A „Coordinating Committee (CC)“ of the groups participating for the November Workshop (MWEA, Myanmar Egress, FES, MIT, Myanmar Youth Network) should be established to:

- discuss about topics for further workshops (*for example: one or two of the sub-topics of the November Workshop*);
- look for organisers and decide on the dates (it could be advisable if the members of the CC take responsibility for holding the workshops alternatively);
- provide data and material that is considered suitable to serve as a basis for the discussions and distribute this data to the participants before the workshop;
- consider inviting other participants from other segments of Myanmar society (*for example: farmers when discussing the issue of livelihood in the rural areas of Myanmar and monks when the issue of Buddhism & economy is chosen*);
- look for funding;
- train moderators;
- be sure to forward the workshop results to agencies concerned.

PART II

TEXTBOOK

## **Introduction** (Hans-Bernd Zöllner)

### 1 Contexts, objectives and aims

One of the many epithets assigned to Myanmar reads “hermit nation”. The attribute evokes a variety of connotations. The country is famous for its Buddhist monasteries, in which the art of Impassable meditation leading to a state of complete individual enlightenment and liberation from all worldly troubles is taught. It has been remarked that this kind of meditation has been one of the most notable export goods from Myanmar.<sup>4</sup> Being a country of hermits - of very different kind and not just of pure Buddhist character - contributes a lot to the charm of the country noted and praised by most foreign visitors.

Looking from a political perspective, the country’s isolation was at least partly positively assessed for many years – if it was noticed by the international community at all. Some foreign observers regarded the Burma under the “Burmese Way to Socialism” as an example of a Third World society that took the desired “Third Way” between capitalism and communism, a contemporary Asian version of Asterix’ and Obelix’ Gaulish village and their fight against the global village as implemented by the Roman Empire. This favourable image however completely disappeared in 1988 when the military took over power. Now the country’s leadership was labelled xenophobic retrospectively, despite the fact that the international community had respected (if not supported) the isolationist politics under Ne Win.<sup>5</sup>

Ironically, the military government immediately abandoned socialist economic principles after the takeover and propagated the shift to an open market system as it committed itself to hold multi-party elections and to implement democracy. Myanmar’s Asian neighbours and some Western companies made use of the new opportunity while the Western governments did not. They tried to hermetically isolate Myanmar politically and economically as much as possible given the available means in order to achieve political change.

The justification as well as the effectiveness of such policy is disputed, the dire state of Myanmar economics is not. Economic growth rose after the change in the economic policies but public needs were not satisfied as shown by the monks’ demonstrations in 2007, sparked off by the sudden rise of fuel prices, an economic move performed by the government. The international public blamed the unrest and its economic reasons on the same culprit as the majority of the Burmese public: the government was at fault. Implement good governance and the economy will blossom.

Some of the texts assembled in this volume support such assumption. Other documents point to

---

<sup>4</sup> Houtman 1998 *Mental Culture in Burmese Crisis Politics. Aung San Suu Kyi and the* : 134. One of the most famous “exporters” was U Ba Khin (1899-1971).

<sup>5</sup> Japan and Germany for different reasons gave a lot of assistance between 1962 and 1988.

other factors behind Burma's/Myanmar's poor economic performance over decades. One of them is denoted by metaphor of the "hermit nation". Among other factors, Burma's poor economic records might be influenced by the country's dominating religion and its traditional culture.

The texts assembled in this volume intend to shed some light on these and other "indigenous" factors influencing economic life in Myanmar, which should be observed in any attempt to improve the present state of affairs. They were collected to give an idea about the mindset of Myanmar people with regard to economic matters.

Such intention can be corroborated by theory. Max Weber (1864-1921) raised in his ground breaking sociological works the question of how religion/culture influenced the "spirit" of economic activities.<sup>6</sup> With regard to Burma/Myanmar, J.S. Furnivall (1878-1960) contributed to this issue in the 1930s and 1940s and developed the idea of a "plural society".<sup>7</sup> Later, E. F. Schumacher (1911-1977), after a visit to Burma, wrote his book "Small is beautiful" which contains a chapter on "Buddhist economics".<sup>8</sup> In the early 1960s, Melford Spiro collected data about economic life in a Burmese village and used them to disprove some prevailing conceptions of Buddhists' attitudes towards inner worldly activities like economics.<sup>9</sup> However, these theoretical approaches have not yet been integrated in the discussion of the future of Burmese economics.

One aim of the collection presented here is to provide material, which may help to take up the given academic strands and promote further investigation. Another goal is to initiate practical steps in order to improve the living conditions of the Burmese population by bottom-up initiatives as complementary to the governmental top-down approach or the implementation of economic schemes from abroad.

## 2 The problem of getting access to the mindset of "the people"

It was the idea of complementing the existing literature on Burmese economics that was the force behind the collection of the texts presented here. Such supplementation was stimulated by the observation that most books dealing with the topic focus on the "political economy of Burma" as the title of Furnivall's handbook published in 1936. Economic policies implemented in the various periods of the country's history focus on the ideological factors which together, with other

---

<sup>6</sup> Max Weber's essay „Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus“ (The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism) came out in 1904. His works on Buddhism and Hinduism were published shortly before his death in 1920.

<sup>7</sup> John S. Furnivall 1931 *An introduction to the Political Economy of Burma*. Rangoon : Burma Book Club. (Reprinted 1957); John S. Furnivall 1948 *Colonial Policy and Practice. A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India*. Cambridge [u.a.]: Cambridge Univ. Press.

<sup>8</sup> Ernst Friedrich Schumacher 1973 *Small is beautiful. Economics as if People Mattered*. New York [u.a., Harper & Row.

<sup>9</sup> Melford E. Spiro 1970 *Buddhism and Society. A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes*. New York, Harper & Row.

circumstances like war and civil war, prevented Burma to realize its assumed great economic potential.

Typical for this approach is the motto of David Steinberg's book *Burma. The State of Myanmar*: "Dedicated to the diverse Burmese peoples who have suffered so much in a state yet to fulfil its promise".<sup>10</sup> The quotation stresses the responsibility of the state towards the people and suggests that "the peoples" share this attitude. But is that true? If yes, do Burmese people define "responsibility" for economic well-being in the same way as Mr. Steinberg does? Here a fundamental problem becomes visible: Our knowledge about what "the peoples" have in mind mostly stems from what peoples' representatives – academic, political or humanitarian – say.

This problem applies to the texts presented in this volume as well. Even the mini-essays of students in chapter 1 only represent the view of a minority of young educated Burmese who make up their minds about what their compatriots may have in mind. This epistemological barrier cannot be eliminated, it can only be tried to circumvent. One way to do this is to rather arbitrarily choose texts from different contexts hoping that such a collection might help to discover some patterns of what one is looking for. Therefore, the most salient feature of the texts presented here it is the randomness of their selection and the need to make sense of them.

### 3 Method in randomness - diverse personal starting points

Even in randomness – as in madness - there is a method. The mode of creating this collection of documents is simply provided by the horizon of the editor. He is strongly convinced that any discourse on "things Burmese" require a strong cooperation with the country's people. As a consequence, all texts reproduced here are "Made in Myanmar" and – with one exception - produced by Burmese and Myanmar nationals.

The editor is by no means an economist and a latecomer to the field of Myanmar and Southeast Asian Studies. His interest in Burmese economics was aroused by the encounter with the Nagani song reproduced in the historical section 2 of this textbook. This meeting happened in course of the attempt to document the books published by the Nagani Book Club between 1938 and 1941.<sup>11</sup> The song promoted the club's activities effectively. The refrain asserts "We will be healthy and wealthy, protected and defended from all the dangers and perils. Poverty-stricken people will soon be rich and no more out-of date." This can be seen as a clear economic message which was to be achieved not only by the "potency of the Nagani Book Club", e.g. reading and other activities undertaken by the enterprise, but also by two famous Burmese magicians, Bo Bo Aung and Shin Ajjigona. The question arose of how these two components of economic success might be related. Other texts

---

<sup>10</sup> David I. Steinberg 2001 *Burma. The State of Myanmar*. Washington D.C., Georgetown University Press: ii.

<sup>11</sup> For the results of this project see [www.zoellner-online.com/MLP.htm](http://www.zoellner-online.com/MLP.htm).

from Nagani books posed other questions as did newspaper editorials, official statements and speeches of politicians.

Some of the editorials come from the *Ludu* newspaper published by the famous writer and editor Ludu U Hla and his wife Daw Amah. The couple worked in Mandalay and represent a special tradition in Burmese literature because of their literary works and their commitment to “the people” as demonstrated by the name of the newspaper (*Ludu* means “people”) and the honorary prefix to U Hla’s name. Other documents provide portraits of wealthy Burmese living in Mandalay written by Daw Amah and two short stories by one of the couple’s son, Nyi Pu Lay. These diverse documents may help to assess the idea of Burmese “progressive” advocates of the people and provide a starting point for reading other literary texts which might reflect the notions of a general public.

Another starting point was the editor’s acquaintance with various educational institutions in Myanmar, which paved the way to asking students for their perceptions of economy and the writing of “economic profiles”. The questions and answers on economic matters published by a Burmese professor for economics and some of the essays reproduced in chapter 3 are further results of this connection.

These essays can be used to demonstrate the arbitrariness in the method, which was attempted to obtain material for section 3, essays that look at economics from different perspectives. A number of acquainted people were approached and asked to write about a certain topic. Some promised to write something but were unable to keep their promise, others changed their topic and others who were not directly contacted proposed a paper after hearing about the project. As a consequence, the papers assembled in section 3 of the textbook reflect both the ideas of the editor of what could be important and the distinct choice of topics by people willing to contribute.

A deadline for the submission of texts was set at end of November 2010. Some contributors were not able to finish in time. Some others promised to make some changes or add some paragraphs as requested by the editor. Essays arriving after December 2010 will be included in an appendix. Further, a revised and enlarged version of the textbook is scheduled to be finished in mid 2011.

#### 4 Limitations

It goes without saying that this textbook is utterly incomplete. In principle, this shortcoming cannot be healed because of the sheer endless mass of material that could be included. It is hoped that with the assistance of the readers some texts will be added, which may help the selection coming closer to representing the variety of Myanmar perceptions of Myanmar economics.

Just one case for such completion shall be mentioned. It was attempted to obtain material informing about the views of ethnic nationalities. Such information would be necessary to compare

Furnivall's concept of a "plural society" with recent developments and to address the "ethnic issue" crucial for Myanmar's future properly. The low turnout of texts may reflect the low degree of awareness of this problem. A student of economics from Kayah State was surprised to learn that the traditional way of economic life among the Pa-O might be of interest. His first draft of a paper was composed of two unconnected parts, traditional agriculture and the economy in the hand of the Pa-O National Organization, one of the cease-fire groups. A redrafted paper on this issue is still expected.

In the meantime, information from the outside must be consulted – including research undertaken by Burmese organizations working outside of Myanmar.<sup>12</sup>

### 5 The textbook's user value

According to Marxism value has a dual nature - made up of use value and exchange value. Independent of labour, use value relates to the utility of the properties of a product, which is realized only upon its use. It cannot be expected that many people would be willing to exchanging money for the contents of this textbook. Further, the publication of this work was sponsored by a German non-profit organisation, the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation. This status prevents the organisation to sell publications published with its financial assistance.

All the more it can be hoped that users find it valuable reading at least some of the texts assembled here. Three categories of user value are imagined:

a)Private value: The reader is invited to benefit from the material presented here by getting new ideas, comparing the views of some texts with his own experiences, frowning on other contributions, asking questions about the meaning and relevance of some passages and starting to draw conclusions or develop hypotheses. He or she is invited, too, to share some of the reactions with the editor.

b)Teaching value: The texts assembled in this volume might be useful for a variety of teaching opportunities both inside and outside Myanmar. (Note: For people who read Myanmar language some of the texts are to be published in Burmese – hopefully.) It could be worthwhile to compare facets of the "Burmese mindset" manifested in these texts with experiences in other countries or cultures.

c)Workshop value: It is intended to organise a workshop to be taking place in Yangon in late 2011 based on the material introduced here. At the centre of the workshop four or five discussion groups are planned in which topics related to the contents of this textbook are to be discussed. At the end of

---

<sup>12</sup> See recently: Ken MacLean 2010 *The Rise of Private Indirect Government in Burma*. Susan L Levenstein (ed.) *Finding Dollars, Sense and Legitimacy in Burma*. Washington D.C., Woodruff Wilson International Center for Scholars: 40-53..

the workshop, some policy recommendations should be formulated. – At the end of Dr. Tin Soe's contribution on (3.1) some recommendations for such topics are suggested. More proposals are very much welcome!

The editor has already gained much profit from reading the texts and the discussions with many of the contributors. Special thanks go to U Kyaw Min who provided the cartoons reproduced in this book. They were given to him by the cartoonists for an exhibition that took place in Yangon in November 2010 on the occasion of the Thadinyut festival.

Hamburg, December 2010

Hans-Bernd Zöllner  
habezett@t-online.de

## 1 TODAY

### 1.1 The Effect of Economics on (my) Daily Life – Mini-Essays of Students

Editor's note: The following texts were written by students of two Myanmar educational institutions in October and November 2009. They were chosen from some 60 mini-essays written by students of one of Myanmar EGRESS'<sup>13</sup> courses in social entrepreneurship & leadership on October 30 and some 15 papers written by attendees of the BARS program at the Myanmar Institute of Theology (MIT) in Insein. The EGRESS students had one hour time to write down their ideas, the contributions from the MIT are results of a homework assignment.

Most texts were originally written in Burmese language and were translated into English, the text submitted in English had to be edited. - The headings were added by the translator and the editor respectively.

#### *Text 1: Knowing People*

What I understand about Myanmar business and economy is „Not **what** we know“, it's based on „**Who** we know“. But when we need to grow business, we have to study more about economics, politics and social. Sometimes, economic strategy can't directly be used in a situation. We have to know more different people to promote our business. Even hawker businesspeople need to know YCDC [Yangon City Development Corporation] and Police. When we do trading, we have to know the related government officer. But we need to be careful that they still can help you. But when you're in trouble, they will not bother you. There is a saying in Myanmar society „If there is nothing, it's no problem. If you face some difficulties, you will spoil everything.“

Now in the younger generation, people like to study and utilize their studies in their field. So, some of the businessmen are using business strategy. You have to study and you have to know more people. But in Myanmar, people are escaping tax. So even business grows individually, Myanmar economy cannot grow up.

EGRESS

-----

#### *Text 2: Traditional Fetters*

As Buddha taught, rich and poor people have their previous life's effects. They are different because of their previous lives, and also present doing of good or bad actions. We accepted the differences of endowments although we believe in the equity of rights. Some people may be better,

---

<sup>13</sup> For details see <http://www.myanmaregress.org/> [5.6.2010].

richer or more intelligent than others and this is not merely because of his present actions. They are born to achieve, what the law of *kamma* stated.

Another belief is not apparent but widely spread; because he was trying hard. But it is faded away because of cronyism. We also know that the influence of politics on economics. Past & present experiences taught us the importance of policy & will of political leaders upon the economy.

Starting of a business is also dependent on social & religious customs. What should be done, when should it be started etc. are mainly based on religious teaching & advices from fortune tellers (may be astrological or numerical, etc.).

EGRESS

---

*In my young married life, I was burdened with the kitchen money. Now that I'm old, I'm still burdened with the health-care costs.*

Translator's note: kitchen money means the money paid every day by man to wife for buying raw foods to be cooked into meals.

### *Text 3: Kamma and Risk*

First of all, I appreciate your idea that has advantages for you and me through writing an essay. It is an opportunity to observe our Eco-life which is a mix of lucky and unlucky elements. In terms of Myanmar language, *kan* (luck) + *Nyan* (intelligence) + *Weyiya* (diligence) = success, according to the teaching of Buddha. That is also the guidance for learning of how to lead your life. No matter how intelligent and diligent you are, you will be failed if *kan* (luck) doesn't give you a chance. Most of Myanmar people believe in this concept. Even a successful businessperson gets worried that there might be no *kan* (luck) when he is starting a new project or business.

That is one of the reasons why a business person doesn't want to take a risk. There is no risk, and there is no profit. I am a country boy who came from Pyay [Prome]. My native town is not big geographically but there is a wide range of business firms. It is one of the towns which are situated on the bank of the Ayerwady River that is a useful way to transport goods from Upper Myanmar. Many trading-ships from there berth in my town and trade their goods. After that, goods arrive at Yangon and flows from there to other towns. I think that is a fortune of my town because we have a lot of chances to do business according to the geographical strength.

In Pyay, 30 % of the population are youths who are attending two universities, one colleague and one institute. Hence, there are not only a lot of graduates every year but there is also a high unemployment rate. Life after graduation ceremony is meaningless and jobless. Schools can't give abilities like giving a degree. On the other hand, there are illegal jobs which offer interesting incentives, e.g. illegal lotteries (Nalonetee and Cheal) and trading motorcycles without license. If someone wants to do business like that, you don't need any degrees, certification and interviews. So, these facts force youths to do these jobs.

Although these opportunities give real income, the youth has lost the critical thinking on every scope which is related to aspects of daily life, politics, economy and so on. Life without risks is easy going till the end. Thinking locally bans those people from thinking globally. Satisfaction what they are doing makes us not to do more and more. Someone has contentment with his illegal job. So I asked him why you haven't tried another job. He answered that this job can give more profit rather than other jobs because of *kan* (luck). And the fortune-teller gives advice not to do trading which is connected with water. He believes that he will get bad fortune if he doesn't obey this advice. I don't want to debate his belief because of his faith.

As I said, there is a minority doing business with trading-ships although it is a big opportunity. That defect is caused by our lack of pre-vision and because we don't know that *kan* (luck) in reality means "action". Similar issues impact our daily life and every part of Myanmar.

-----

*Text 4: Dependence*

In forms of economy, most of Myanmar people defined it as food, clothes and shelter. It was the basic thought of the common people in Myanmar. None of Myanmar people was interested in politics as long as they were having rice to eat. When they got nothing to eat, they started to think about politics. Some of the Myanmar people make interpretation on Buddhism as living in life peacefully which means they don't want to be rich and don't want to try hard on their business. As long as they can have proper food, clothes and shelter, they don't care nothing. It was the majority's lifestyle of Myanmar people. After the Nargis cyclone, NGOs went to the severely damaged area for providing aids. In terms of food security, NGO workers had to provide food and livelihood assets. At that time, NGOs didn't have enough funds to cover the whole area. So, they needed to prioritize for the identification of beneficiaries. They did some wealth ranking to get the idea for a beneficiary list. For example, those who have under 5 acres of land, vulnerable persons and child-headed households are eligible. Every beneficiary could be selected by such a wealth ranking procedure. After all, NGOs had problems in the distribution of aids because the villagers didn't agree on the prioritizing method. What they said is [that] they want to get everything on same and equal. Otherwise, they want nothing. Some NGO workers explained why they used the prioritizing methods. Because some rich people live in the village, they can recover by themselves. So, they would like to choose some eligible people instead of giving relief material to all people. The villagers argued that, of course, rich people can recover by themselves. But we rely on rich people, such as: we can borrow money from them, working as labour in their farms and rich people make donation to the community and monastery. They should be selected for distribution. If not, we don't want to your help.

That's the real culture of Myanmar people.

EGRESS



*I tell beads 1,000 rounds a day--not because I wish to attain Nibbana, but because I want to be a rich man.*

*Text 5: Trouble-makers and poor economic prospects in Rakhine State*

I have spent my early life in western and eastern parts of Rakhine State. Having lived for seven years in Kyauktaw Township, eastern Rakhine, I am acquainted with some businesses of the region.

Briefly put, it is difficult to do business in Rakhine State. The two main businesses of the region are fishing and paddy growing. Although the minority is engaged in large businesses, the majority—especially paddy cultivators—encounter difficulties. Their main trouble-makers are the military men. The military deploys its troops on the farmland. They have constructed some buildings on the plots of farmland, and confiscated the lands in the surroundings without conditions. If farmers wish to do cultivation, they have pay tax to the military. The tax is paid annually whether harvest is successful or not. This forms an impact on the farmers' business.

Other impacts include poor means of transport and lack of border trade, to which losses in business can be ascribed. In Rakhine State, average persons are lower in status than their counterparts in other States and Divisions, and so-called rich men are lower in status than their counterparts in other States and Divisions. It is mainly due to the fact that the economy of the region is controlled by big dealers and merchants and privileged persons who have connections with the government.

In Western Rakhine State, the residents live on mountains. Small ethnic races—the Myo or Khmi, the Thet, the Dainet and the Chin—are cultivators. They are poor and their areas are less developed. Their education and daily life are lower because of the taxes and poor transportation.

MIT



“I’m going to vote for the party that has promised 24-hour continuous power supply”

*Text 6: The trouble cycle*

Early in the morning, mother and sisters are moaning about the sky-high prices on their arrival back

from market. They come to buy less meat and more vegetables. They cook sour vegetable soup and potato and gourd dishes. We cannot buy breakfast and instead, have fried rice mixed with boiled peas in the morning. Mother gives priority to preparing meal boxes for those who go out to work, and those remaining at home have pot-luck. This situation is worse for families led by pensioners.

Fuel oil dealers no longer work as the prices go up and not much profit is left. Families with cars have come to use them less frequently, and turn to buses. Taxi drivers choose the routes where they can find passengers easily. Buses become more crowded than ever. Buses that use CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) queue up at the filling stations that work with electricity. Because of the shortages of electricity, gas filling stations do not work regularly, and the buses cannot ply on their routes. Because of the crowded buses, people get to work late.

With inadequate money, people take great care of their health. They go to clinics and hospitals only when they are compelled to. They cure minor ailments with home-made traditional medicines and cocktail medicines bought from unlicensed drug stores. They have come to depend more on traditional medicines and free clinics.

Supermarkets and shopping malls are far from those living a hand-to-mouth life. They can afford to buy essential items for home. Pawn shop business becomes active. They buy collaterals which are sold out by the pawn shops at cheap prices as the original owners have not come to recollect them from the shop.

People are following get-rich-quick methods like trying their luck in the illegal 2-digit or 3-digit lotteries. If they buy State lottery tickets, chances of winning a jackpot are slim. Some collectively try luck, but they cannot invest much.

Employees at companies and neighbours at wards collectively save money.

Apart from successful businessmen and traditionally rich families, others are always worried about their daily lives. They do not trust banks. They do not take the trouble of queuing up at the bank to withdraw their own money. When they keep money in hand and disburse it at certain interest-rates to others, they experience failures to repay. They are worried that their money would vanish into thin air. If they keep the money in hand or at bank, the value of currency tends to go down gradually like a cube of ice melting in hot climate. When they think of doing a certain business, they dare not take risks because of the smallness of the sum and also big entrepreneurs are dominating in groups.

People cannot enjoy entertainment properly. When they choose to watch Korean dramas telecast by the State television stations, electricity supply is not regular. There are more blackouts than the bright nights. Hence, operators of private video show sheds, working with generators, have come to make money. Youths throng soccer matches.

There are no local-made clothes. Clothes of all types roll in across the border and through import companies.

High costs make newly married couples hold their weddings on a small scale against their wish for grand ceremonies. Some young women elope with their lovers. Others live together without formal marriage or grand receptions.

In their married life too, as they cannot afford more money to spend on children, pregnant women have abortions—committing murders. If one goes into statistical survey, a clearer picture of the impacts of the present economic conditions will certainly appear.

EGRESS

-----

My native town is located in the middle of Myanmar, in Magway Division, on the west bank of Ayeyarwady river, named Thayet and it is a District.

In my native town, there are three kinds of ethnic Chins, Burmese and Indians. As for culture, there are three of them and each of us is practicing our own culture and sometimes we also participate in each other's culture. As a significant, we use to avoid religious conflict and politics. And most of the country men are content.

As an economic effect, Indians will do their job such as feeding cows, goats and doing agriculture. Burmese will do most in trading and agriculture. Chins are most in agriculture and weaving. So these ethnic groups equally participate in agriculture and in the officially programme, their traditional work is accepted.

They take part in their work field on their own and they don't disturb each other in their jobs. For example, when you get off from your motorboat at that town, you will find ships and boats that are used in transportation which are owned by Burmese. And when you want to buy dairy and other meat, you have to buy it in Indian shops. And I think, 50 % Asho Chin are in officially work field and other 50 % are agriculture and weaving. If you are concern about shawls or others weaving things, you have to go Asho Chin shops.

As in the above case, these jobs are automatically divided in the minds of the people. They don't mind in each other's field of work and don't get involved in other fields of work. However, as a result, economic is not big or famous and the people's living style and its forms are very simple. There have no internet, no satellite and computers are also still developing now. And that town is isolated from other towns in the area and communication is bad.

Religion is most influential there on these three ethnic groups as the Chins are Christian, the Burmese Buddhists and the Indians Muslims.

The people assume that economic is a thing that help them in their living, education, donation and socialization. So they try at their best and they don't need big and enormous economic style and the shape of the town causes the business being silent and mild. And the people of the town don't want to change their business and living style.

So in my opinion, if I can be content in that situation, I can live. Otherwise, I have to move or to go to other places. If I try to change this situation, they will not give a piece of chance to me. However, I am happy to live in my native town despite the fact of its own low economic effectiveness.

MIT

-----

*Text 8: The Missing Link*

“Poling boat, without capital/ investment”

“Investing a dead mouse, becoming a millionaire within 4 months”

“Donation 1\$, with getting 50cents”

“Donation while selling”

Those are the popular proverbs used in Myanmar economic culture. Many businessmen are coming out by following them.

Actually, economic rights are restricted only for a minority, in mentioning: who are professionals if not the rulers and those closely related to rulers. This can be seen even in developed countries like USA, not only in Myanmar.

Obviously one can see there is a link between business and community development projects, donation in countries. Mostly Myanmar people are getting less than 2\$ per day.

For many lives, all the wealth I had got is till out of hand to earn all my living expenses. If so, we

can not guarantee for our health. Moreover, from government's side, the supportive measures are only on paper and not for real. And therefore, civil societies, NGOs, INGOs had been coming at in our country. But there had been some misunderstanding and barriers that prevent politics and nature of those organizations to be known by beneficiaries openly. Those barriers are coming from insufficiency of knowledge, nature and ability of citizens.

What exactly need to do is to build the bridge between donors and recipients. This will be sympathy, empathy and sound institutions.

One of the projects presently doing is Microfinance. We can see success only on the reports and statistics not on real lives.

EGRESS

-----

#### *Text 9: Sanctions*

Myanmar is rich of many Natural Resources. In early times, Myanmar people can get enough food and they can support their family well. They owned many land and they could make their own business. I heard that there was no one who didn't know Myanmar at that time. Myanmar was very famous. At the time of my Grandmother, Myanmar Education was very good. They could speak in English and could pronounce it well. But nowadays everything is changing. Our country is always behind the other countries. We can't get what everybody wants. Everything is under control. Up to 1988, General Nay Win didn't allow to export or import. And after that our country's condition became even worse. I think that our country's economy is related with politics because of after the 1988 case until now our country is sanctioned by the US and because of this effect our Myanmar people became poor. Our education level is also low nowadays because I believe that our government is cut out the level of education. Every one can't go to school. If we can't read or write we can't do anything.

I was born in Yangon so that I want to tell about the living style and economy of people in Yangon. Now Yangon is the second city of Myanmar and many other countries came and make a business here. In Yangon there are various standards of people. If someone was rich he became rich and richer. But if someone was poor he became poorer and poorer. If we are not passing the matriculation exam or graduate we have difficulties to find a job. There are a lot of people who are jobless. And there are a lot people who have to work everyday for their daily food and if they can't work for this day they don't have money for food. Some people have to work hard but they earn only few money. And nowadays our earnings aren't enough to support our family well. That is the main problem that we face today. And there may be other problems we don't know why our country is poor.

MIT

-----

#### *Text 10: Selfishness*

There are not much people who understand the economy in our country, Myanmar. Most of the people aim to succeed only in their own business. They do not think about the impact of their business to the community and also their own long term business and the national economy. They try to get success in their business. They do business, consume and donate to proud themselves. They have much ego. The most of successful business person treat their servants and the grassroots-people badly, such as there is no person as great as them. They rarely teach the unskilled people and cooperate with them. Therefore, there is a gap between the rich and the poor like the saying "Water comes to too much water". Most of the successful businessperson target only towards their own profit. So they readily aim to their national interest. And they could not make an effort for their national people.

I was born in the middle Myanmar region at a grass root level. My parents tried to satisfy their boss and they tried to set up their own business. So the former boss fought them. I think even they should help my parents. But my father tried hard and become successful. Then he saved all the income to buy offsets for his job. When he arrived in Yangon to buy the machine, he was cheated and all of his money was gone. So, he became an alcoholic because the business was depreciated. The same business owner treated him badly. He was very down-hearted. Now I am facing the same situation in my business. As for the big business, I even my small business face that crisis.

At this time, I want to make effort towards others by my own success. We should co-operate with others with our experience and knowledge. Not only oneself, but also all the people living in our country should get success in business to develop our country. If we could do well in our business, we could help our nation and religion. So that we can live with a peaceful mind by meditation. Therefore, Myanmar economy directly impact on their culture and religion.

EGRESS



Mark my words! Man should have a great shadow of himself

### Text 11: Two Different Classes

The state economy is based on rural areas. Of the paddy farmers in rural areas, some farmers who are financially fairly strong, buy and use tillers, good-quality fertilizer and pesticide and good-strain seeds, and thus, the output is so good that they can live comfortably in large houses, furnished with modern facilities such as televisions, refrigerators, washing machines, rice-cookers, etc.

With large profits from sales of paddy, they buy high-class furniture, cars and motorboats. They can hold *ahlu* (traditional feasts with making donations to monks and treating guests with foods). They wear good clothes and enjoy proper health care.

On the contrary, poor farmers, who constitute the majority, have to take pains, toiling with draft cattle. As they cannot afford to buy fertilizer, the harvest is poor, and fetches only a small income. They live in small huts without any modern facilities. They cannot enjoy proper health care. They cannot send their children to school. As a consequence, the children grow up into uneducated persons, who become farmers or casual labourers.

Similarly, rich fishermen, armed with motorboats and good fishing gear, go out into the sea on trawling trips and pile great catches into the hull. They live comfortably in large houses, furnished

with modern equipment. Their social, economic and educational standards have become higher and higher.

Poor fishermen row along the creeks on their creaking boats, casting ragged nets and collecting only small catches. They suffer hardships in their daily lives, and their social life have become lower and lower.

Well-to-dos choose lucrative businesses such as trading in various forms while the poor work, felling trees, fishing, catching frogs, and growing low-yielding crops. Thus, the economic mechanism of the current era has classified the people.

---

*I wonder who the devil has devised the idea of giving “kitchen money”! All the giving, giving..... and I can't stop it.*

## 1.2 Profiles of Myanmar Economic Actors

### 1.2.1 Profiles of Today's Actors

Editor's note: Most of the profiles were written by students attending the BARS program at the MIT. The lecturer of the Business Major course, Kyaw Kyaw Thac, instructed the students on the special project. Profile 16, the self-portrait of the owner of the art gallery was written by his son, Bo Bo. The final profile was written by Khin Maung Nyo, editor of a business magazine.

#### **Profile 1 Mini-store keeper**

##### **Personal data:**

- Name: Daw Nang Thida
- Residence: 15 Thayagone Street, Nant Tha Gone Ward, Insein
- Education: 1<sup>st</sup> Year (Geology), Yangon University
- Native place: Kunhing, Shan State (South)
- Marital status: Married. (2 sons and 1 daughter) Eldest: son, military captain; Middle: son, graduate of University of Computer Science; Youngest: daughter, final year, Government Technical College

##### **Business profile:**

Daw Nang Thida was formerly a primary schoolteacher. She was studying geography in the first year while working as a teacher. Soon afterwards, she got married to a government employee. After working for three years, she quit the job when she had to take of her two sons.

As her husband's salary did not cover the family living costs, she opened a mini-store, renting a room at 15 Doun Tha Gone Ward in the same township. Just after two and a half years, her husband was assigned to a rural town, and so she closed the store and went together with her husband. When the family returned to Yangon in 2004, she re-opened the store.

With her education not finishing the degree course, she had not been prepared to take up a business, but situations compelled her to do so. Income from the mini-store, in which stationery is put on sale, not only covered the family costs, but also contributed to various charities. Located near a school, the store catered to the needs of students.

She invested K2.5 million in it, which brings in a monthly income, ranging from K 55,000 to K 100,000. The income is adequate for the kitchen needs, her children's education expenses and also

contributions for social and religious causes.

Born of parents who had a tradition of doing private business, she does not have difficulty in her business. She is tactful in dealing with her customers. Her secret of business success is “persistence” without any laxity.

Daw Nang Thida shows motherliness, characteristics of a good home-keeper and reinforcement to her spouse.

---

## **Profile 2: Traditional snacks manufacturer**

### **Personal data:**

- Name: U Ohn Kyaw
- Native place: Zalun Township, Ayeyarwaddy Division

### **Business profile:**

U Ohn Kyaw is now engaged in “Mua Mua Lay” traditional snacks industry. Formerly a cartoonist, he did not do well, and so decided to change career. Before launching the manufacture of traditional snacks, he studied the market, read economic journals and finally chose a product that would stay long on the market. That is “pickled tea”, along with accompanying ingredients—fried gram, fried sesame seeds, and fried garlic. Traditionally, Myanmar people make “pickled tea salad” by mixing the pickled tea leaves with the above ingredients and also with dried prawns, over which a little bit of peanut oil is splashed.

To be able to penetrate the market, he first distributed sample products and obtained the feedback of consumers, according to which he made changes. He was engaged in promotion, erecting billboards.

U Ohn Kyaw is pleased with his products because consumers show their recognition, and is committed to producing fresh “pickled tea.” Whether there are rivals or not, he just pays thorough attention to his product for perfection. He suggests other people to study the business at the initial stage, before doing it, and start it from a manageable level.

---



(song) *You said Romeo and Juliet could not match our love...our love was more than that of Adam and Eva..... Now you've cooked a wishy-washy soup for me. How cruel you are!*

**Profile 3: Cultivator**

**Personal data:**

- Name: U Khra Naw
- Residence: Palaung Peace Hill, Kyaukme Township, Northern Shan State
- Native place: Mang Pun village, Kyaukme Township

**Business profile:**

U Khra Naw was studying at 6<sup>th</sup> Grade when PSLA, a Palaung insurgent group, recruited the children in the region into their insurgent force, and he became a Palaung insurgent. PSLA came into the legal fold in 1990. Initially the government provided 2 sacks of rice and some money. One year afterwards in 1991, he started growing corn and wheat on 4 acres in partnership with a friend.

In the first year as a cultivator, he encountered financial difficulty. Since the harvest one year later, his business has rolled on normally. He added paddy and tea, extended the area under cultivation to 12 acres, so that the income covers costs for the four children's education. U Khra Naw also has to support his relatives.

Farm cultivation is traditional for those on hilly regions. Now U Khra Naw manages the business single-handed. In U Khra Naw's generation, there is hardly anyone who has passed the high school final class or obtained a degree. University graduates appear only in the generation of his sons and daughters. His youngest son is still studying in the high school.

He invests K 700,000 and gets in return K 2,500,000 per annum. He buys seeds from the town. To maintain quality, he removes faulty corns and grains, which are set aside for pig feed, before selling the products. As long as the weather remains fair, his cultivation business goes on without a hitch.

Local dealers buy his products. Corn is used for chicken feed and also for making snacks, and is exported to China. Wheat is exported to Japan.

Engaged in cultivation for 19 years, he can manage it very well now. He feels excited to see the plants grow tall. For the time being, he has not thought of changing career.

---

#### **Profile 4: Marketing employee**

##### **Personal data:**

- Name: Ma Aye Kyi Lin
- Marital status: Single (No 4 among six siblings)
- Work place: Yangon
- Native place: Lashio, Shan State

##### **Business profile:**

Ma Aye Kyi Lin came up from Lashio to Yangon in May, 2008 to look for a job. For the first one year, she was a clerk working for Asia World Co Ltd. She was not happy because the manager had bad attitude towards her. Feeling stress, she moved to another job—a marketing staff member. In Yangon, she works from Monday to Saturday from 9 o'clock up to the time when the targeted number of orders is fulfilled. So, she can go back home early sometimes when the target is met. Occasionally, she has to travel to rural areas to elicit orders.

Her work is demanding. Its targeted number of orders per day is 15,000. But she is pleased with her job in which she has interest. However, it is not without difficulties. At times when market is not steady and financial market is tight, chances of getting orders are slim.

She gets more salary from the current job than the previous one. With more than K 100,000 in monthly salary, she pays for her hostel rent and food and for other needs. She sometimes remits part of it to her family in Lashio.

In her opinion, the most important part of her job is to create good relations with potential customers. She feels that a marketing employee must be healthy, courageous and knowledgeable about the regions. Her job is really tiresome, but her interest in it keeps her always happy. She aims to be a manager who deals with subordinates equitably.

#### **Profile 5: Internet café business**

##### **Personal data:**

- Name: U Soe Naing
- Marital status: Married (2 children)
- Residence: 82 Taw Win St, Kyimyindaing Township
- Internet Cafe: 24 Holme St, Peace Ward, Kyimyindaing Township

##### **Business profile:**

U Soe Naing is currently a network engineer for Ivan Hoe Co Ltd, and has long been a computer consultant. Wishing to raise the standard of youths and to enable people to speak with their relatives abroad through the internet connection, he opened “Netsky” internet cafe. He is part employee and part operator of own business. Having got a diploma in computer science, he thought of running an own business which he is interested in.

He invested about K 15,000,000 in the shop. Daily expenses, including electricity bill, internet bill, room rent and maintenance charges, amount to K 900,000 per month. More than 100 customers visit his shop every day. U Soe Naing pays special attention to customer care, good service and net

connection. Currently, he is trying to open branch cafés.

---

### **Profile 6: Company employee**

#### **Personal data:**

- Name: U Soe Moe Naing
- Marital status: Single
- Residence: 7 U Ba Oh Street, Mayangon Township
- Education: B Sc (Botany), Dip in Japanese Language (Tokyo), Dip in Computer (Tokyo)

#### **Business profile:**

Formerly working at the Fish Market in Tokyo, U Soe Moe Naing has now moved to Myanmar Offshore Ltd (MOL) where he is a project manager. Yet, he still has a flame of hope—to found a company of his own.

He gets a monthly salary of K 400,000 plus bonus. Among the fellow Agonies of the same generation, it is a fairly large salary. He also holds good attitude towards his job. Yet, he is In the first stage, she had to spend K 50,000 on the purchase of pots, dishes and spoons. Later every month, she has to invest K 10,000 only from which she gets a daily profit of K 5,000 to K 10,000.

By nature, she has had a hobby for preparing food, and so does not have any difficulty. She needs a helper to work for her as the waiter. But she is disappointed because the waiter is often changing.

Customers specially take time and energy to come to Daw Khin Nwe Aye's shop which is a little far from the main street. She has also made her shop the best customer choice. A person who has tasted her Mont Ti once cannot stay visiting her shop the second time. Because the shop is close to a market, a factory and a school, her customers include workers and students.

Her motto is "Quality is first". She uses a bit more expensive ingredients for better taste. She also likes cleanliness. She always keeps the dishes clean. She understands that if her food and dishes are not clean, customers may suffer diarrhoea or dysentery.

Daw Khin Nwe Aye deals with her customers, young or old, equally with respect. Her good relation, quality of the product and cleanliness all constitute characteristics that attract customers.

She seeks income at her best. She is partly a money-lender, who disburses loans at an interest rate of K6 per K100 per month. She spends her money for her son's education and for good causes such as going on pilgrimages.

Once in the past, she visited Shwe Li, across the border, in China. She uses her money but is not a spendthrift.

Just as she aims to open a larger shop, her supreme aim is to practice insight meditation.

---

### **Profile 7: "Shoe Gallery" employee**

#### **Personal data:**

- Name: Su Sandar Kyaw
- Marital status: Single (Eldest of the three sibling)
- Education: B A (Eco), LCCI (Level III)
- Native place: 235<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Regiment, Pakokku Township, Magwe Division
- Residence: Hostel, Yangon.

### **Business profile:**

Ma Su Sandar Kyaw was only 17 when she started working for “Mamee” instant noodle industry. At that time, she was not prepared for work. She just wanted to work and gain experience. She had to take time to get to work because the factory at Htaukkyant was far from her hostel. Also as a salesgirl she did not see any progress in career, and she quit the job after one year.

Now she has been with “Shoe Gallery” for five years at Stock Department as a “stock controller.” In the new rank she was faced with the task of checking vouchers and data. Having gained skills and experience, she is now comfortable in the position. Initially, she could not control her mind as there are over 70 employees with different attitudes. Now she no longer shows any emotion.

In fact, her income of over K 2,000 per day, is just enough for her costs—K 200 for bus fare and K 1,500 for three meals. There is no extra money to save.

“Shoe Gallery,” which caters to lady shoes, is customer-oriented. If a customer buys a pair of shoes, her address, birthday and phone number are recorded and it sends K 2000-gift card on her birthday. If the shoes bought are broken within a week, it mends them free or changes them with a new pair. The top 10 customers, who bought shoes for the largest amounts, are treated to food and drinks at a hotel. Every month, 20 customers are presented gifts by drawing lots. There are two promotion sales twice a year.

“Shoe Gallery” imports shoes from Malaysia. Shoes imported in containers are transported to warehouses from which they are sent to rural towns. In Yangon, the shoes are put on sale at counters at department stores such as Gemone Pwint, Sein Gayhar and Plazas. In Insein, sales are not brisk, and so shoes of two or three colours of common choice for the local people are sold. “Shoe Gallery” has more than 20 outlets in Yangon.

Employees of “Shoe Gallery” are sent on a recreation trip every year to resorts such as Chaungtha Beach.

With the slogan “Shoe to you, Art to us”, the company promotes its product through periodicals—magazines and journals. It once sponsored “Miss People” show. In this way, Shoe Gallery brings its brand to the notice of people.

Su Sandar Kyaw, who works for 5 ½ days a week, believes that one should work at his or her best wherever he/she is.

### **Profile 8: Private hostel keeper**

#### **Personal data:**

- **Name:** Daw Ni Ni Aye
- **Nickname:** Kyee Ni (lit. Big Auntie Ni)
- **Age:** 57
- **Education:** 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (High School)
- **Marital status:** Single (8 family members: 1 elder brother, 1 elder sister, 1 younger sister and her husband, 2 nieces, 1 aunt and herself)
- **Residence:** 1025 (Kadoe New Compound), East Gyogone, Insein Township, Yangon
- **Native place:** Magwe (Central Myanmar)

#### **Business profile:**

Daw Ni Ni Aye is a spinster who runs a private hostel in Insein Township. She is also the secretary of Mayanchaung Social Service Association (Leprosy). Formerly, she opened a bookshop for about 30 years. She closed the bookshop because of some inconveniences, and has now turned into a hostel keeper for 2 years. To open this hostel, she had made a lot of preparations. Of the two wings of her house, she repaired and decorated one wing with new furnishing for opening it as the hostel,

which accepts ladies only, especially young ladies. Her family members live in the other wing. She had to arrange for beds, water supply, clotheslines, toilets, electricity supply, bathrooms with tanks, dining rooms, reading room and security. A telephone has been installed to enable the hostellers to communicate with their families.

Now the hostel business is convenient for her because she can stay in her own house comfortably, without the need to go outside to work. Her two aims are fulfilled—to meet the living costs of her family and to provide lodging for students attending the nearby seminary.

Her daily average income is about K 5,000, which comes from hostel rents and fees for the telephone use. She uses her income on food needs and other expenses of the family. Her main concern is her two nieces. She feels easy and encounters no big difficulties also because of the fact that the lady hostellers adhere to hostel discipline and are conscientious. There are minor obstacles such as shortage of water because of the failure of electric supply, breaking of pumps, and poor phone line connection. She spends part of her income to repair the two-storey hostel. Especially, she places emphasis on security of the hostellers, who are ladies. She has to repair broken beds, tables, or fluorescent lights. But the income and expenditure are balanced.

The number of hostellers each year ranges from 10 to 13. When the number is large, more resources have to be used while more income is fetched. She always maintains discipline and keeps the hostel clean so that her hostellers are pleased with their stay. As the hostel building is inherited from parents, the business also concerns her siblings. The income is shared among them. Every day, she rises early and pumps water so that the young ladies can use it sufficiently. She constantly checks lights (fluorescent and incandescent) and replaces them with new ones if they are dead. Moreover, she gets K 60,000 per month from the rent of the small room which she formerly used as the bookshop. Her future plan is to furnish more beds in the hostel.

---

အဖေ...  
စားတဲ့တွေအတွေ့ဝယ်လို့  
ဝယ်ချမ်းသာနေပါကလား။



*Oh, you've bought a saving box! What a rich man you are!*

Translator's note: In Myanmar, the majority in the lower classes do not have extra money to save because of inflation.

### Profile 9: Brick manufacturer

#### Personal data:

- Name: U Aye Win
- Age: 45
- Education: 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (High School)
- Marital status: Married (with 3 siblings)
- Residence: 150 Thida Street, Market Ward, Taikkyi Township, Bago Division

#### Business profile:

U Aye Win was formerly a dealer of beans and rice. He has changed to brick-baking industry because his former work demanded big investment, too much travelling and anxiety for the goods

vulnerable to weather. Actually, brick baking has been family business, traditionally done for 20 years.

Now he does not have difficulty in this industry as he has studied it since he passed the 9th Grade. Preparation includes collection of clay, kneading it, building a warehouse to store bricks, buying a brick-making machine, hiring labour, and clearing ground for sun-drying. His investment is reckoned to be K 50,000,000. His daily income ranges from K 50,000 to 100,000. He uses part of his income on education of his 3 children and saves the rest for re-investment. He does not have much concern for work because he has appointed a manager, who sees to everything, and there is not much damage.

There are many brick manufacturers in Taikkyi who do not have the business permit. U Aye Win has obtained permit. He still has some difficulties. He has often been swindled by workers who flee the work after obtaining advance fee from him.

There is less damage in the production of bricks because he is skilful in appraising the soil and can maintain the quality of bricks. Formerly, he sold the bricks direct to Yangon. Because there are swindlers in Yangon, he now sells them to the dealers in the area.

He makes his workers start work at 6 am and lets them have breakfast at 8 am. They have to resume work at 9, and there is lunch break from 12 noon. The workers resume work again at 4 pm, up to 6 pm when work is over. Hence, there are 7 hours of work a day. Wages are settled, based on the number of bricks produced per person. The target production per day is 3,000 bricks. The net profit from selling a brick, after deducting the labour cost, is K 25.

At present, he cannot provide transport service for his customers. He plans to buy a truck for free delivery service.

---

## **Profile 10: NGO employee**

### **Personal data:**

- Name: Daw Suziena Htun
- Marital status: Single (Five family members)
- Education: B Sc (Physics), Diploma in Civil Engineering, M A (Development Studies)
- Residence: Kyimyindaing Township, Yangon
- Designation: Director (Programme Support Department), Population Services International (PSI)  
She has to provide support for 9 units—HR, general admin, local procurement, international procurement, ICT, logistics, transport maintenance and quality control.
- Former jobs:
  1. Secretary of Joint Venture Company
  2. Trade manager/tourism operation manager in private sector for six year
  3. Head of Social Unit in World Food Programme
  4. PSI Myanmar (for 8 years) (1st time)
  5. Assist Field Officer (UNHCR)
  6. National Field Coordination Officer in UNOCHA
  7. PSI Myanmar (2nd time) up to NOW

### **Business profile:**

Daw Suziena Htun has changed jobs in the private sector and the NGOs over the years as she wishes to gain more and more experiences in social services. Her aim of moving from PSI after working for eight years was to UNHCR and UNOCHA was to contribute her part in assisting the victims of Cyclone Nargis. After working with two agencies, she re-joined PSI Myanmar for the

second time.

Her study of the diploma course in civil engineering was interrupted by the 1988 Uprising. Meanwhile, she worked with Joint Venture Company and resumed her diploma course study. While working for PSI, she completed her Master of Arts in Development Studies degree.

Before joining work, she studied English, computer and book-keeping.

She did not reveal her monthly salary because it was confidential. But she said she sets aside 10% of her income for unexpected expenditures, spends 20% on helping others, 30% on her food and other expenses, and another 30% on the education of her niece studying in Singapore and saves the remaining 10% for health care and future.

She has a number of difficulties in dealing with the employees of the 9 units of PSI Myanmar, but she said she enjoys her work.

### **Profile 11: Store (Small shop) seller**

#### **Personal data:**

- Name: Daw Hla Hla Wai
- Marital status: Husband (U Khin Maung Myint) and 2 daughters (Elder daughter: University final year), younger daughter: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade (final year of the Middle School/Lower Secondary)
- Residence: Ok-yay-dwin Street, Taungthugone Ward, Insein Township

#### **Business profile:**

Daw Hla Hla Wai and her husband U Khin Maung Myint started opening the small shop 20 years ago. At that time, commodities were not so expensive as today and their capital was K 2,000 only. They sold goods for K 480's worth every day. Later on, the capital has increased to K 3,000,000, and monthly average income is more than K 300,000. She has to provide K 100,000 for the education of her two daughters. She spends K 150,000 on food and general expenses. She re-invests the rest K 50,000.

At the beginning, the husband and wife built a small shop, and bought some kitchen items. They had to study the retail prices of other small shops. U Khin Maung Myint procures goods for the store. The major items in the stock are rice, edible oil and salt. They have to look for wholesalers whose goods are of good quality and the prices are also reasonable.

Despite occasional fluctuations of prices, they can go about their business smoothly also because they have accumulated experience for the last 20 years. Under some situations, she is compelled to offer deferred payment, and it is difficult to collect the debts from her customers. If the total amount of debts is great, this causes delays in restocking.

She emphasizes the quality and does not reduce her prices by comparing to those of her rivals. But, she maintains good relations with her customers. In her residential quarters, she occupied 60% of the market. Her advantages are quality of the goods and good social relations. The store is open from 6 am to 9.30 pm every day from Monday to Saturday, and is closed on Sunday.

She does not have a specific future plan, but wishes to extend her shop.

---

### **Profile 12: Photo studio**

#### **Personal data:**

- Name: Ko Myo Thant

- Marital status: Single
- Family: 8 members
- Residence: 7 Yangon-Insein Road, Insein Township
- Education: M Sc

**Business profile:**

Ko Myo Thant started opening a photo studio 10 years ago out of hobby. He had to invest K 20,000,000 initially. His daily average income is K 50,000 and spends K 10,000. He is pleased with his business and has no difficulty at all as he is skilful in photography. He plans to extend his photo studio.

---

**Profile 13: Fritters hawker**

**Personal data:**

- Name: Lakshmee (Mrs)
- Marital status: Married
- Family: six members (husband, wife and 4 children)
- Residence: Meeyahta Street, Insein Township (Rented)

**Business profile:**

Lakshmee is an Indian woman who earns her livelihood by selling “baya kyaw” (Rice dough fritters). She was born in Kyauktaga Township, Bago Division, and formerly, worked as a casual labourer—paddy planting, transplanting and tilling for farm owners. Because her life was hard, she moved to Yangon and began selling fritters. Now she has been hawking baya kyaw for eight year.

Each day, her capital is K 5,000- K 6,000, and her daily profit is K 3,000 on days of brisk sales. Sometimes, she loses her capital money. Because her profits are not steady, she cannot save money. She has to lead the family because her husband’s health is poor.

In fact, she is still not satisfied with her present business. She hopes to do a better job. Her major sales places are the MIT campus and in front of KBC Clinic. To attract customers, she always gives extra pieces of fritters to the buyers. In addition to “bayakyaw” she also sells Indian fritters.

She gets to her sales place at 2 pm every day and all her fritters are sold out by 8 pm. Sometimes when the sales are damp, she has to stay late into the night. Her income is barely enough for her family. Her children are all High School students. Despite her hard work, she looks fresh and active.

Actually, she wishes to open an own shop, instead of hawking.

**Profile 14: School teacher**

**Personal data:**

- Name: Naw May (Senior Assistant Teacher)
- Marital status: Single
- Family: 9 members (herself, her two parents and six siblings)
- Residence: 959 B, Seminary Street, East Gyogone Ward, Insein Township

**Business profile:**

Of the seven siblings, Naw May is the eldest daughter of the family. Formerly, she worked as an office staff member of a political party, but the salary was small and there was no pension allowance, she changed her career, to be a high school teacher. She is a good teacher in English.

Though she is a teacher she does not cease her studies. She is constantly reading English, rivaling her students in making study efforts. She is pleased with her job, but sometimes, she feels upset by other workmate teachers who have different attitudes. Teaching is tiring but she feels pleasant if her students achieve success. Her salary is small, K 40,000 only, but with fees she collects from working as a private tutor, her total monthly income is around K 300,000. Because she does not need to support her brothers and sisters, the income is enough for her.

To maintain her quality, Teacher Naw May is engaged in continuous learning. It is the key to achieving success for a teacher, she said.

In addition to core teaching, she has to prepare her students for occasional competitions. As a supervisor teacher, it is tiring. When her students win prizes, she is pleased. One of her students who entered the All-Myanmar High School-level English Language Skills Contest won the first prize in Essay category.

Because of her good teaching, many students approach her for extra classes (outside school hours).

Despite her content with her present life, she wishes to live a life in higher social position.

### **Profile 15: Mushroom cultivator**

#### **Personal data:**

- Name: U Saw Alan Byaw
- Marital status: Married
- Family: 4 members (husband and wife and one son and one daughter)
- Residence: 31/61, Sabe Street, Shwepyitha Township, Yangon Division

#### **Business profile:**

U Saw Alan Byaw worked abroad formerly. After coming back home, he was engaged in manufacturing finished timber products. Now he has suspended this business because of some difficulties but not completely. He fulfils orders placed specially. Now he is a cultivator of mushrooms in Shwepyitha Industrial Zone.

Asked why he has shifted his business to cultivation, U Alan said electricity was not sufficient to run the saw-mill. It has now been only one year since he started growing mushroom.

Initially, he attended a training course conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation. He brought the strain from the ministry to grow the first ever crop. Mushroom cultivation does not need electricity, many labourers and much capital. He also has a concrete market. He invested around K 1,000,000 in this business, and his daily income is about K 20,000 to K 30,000. So far, he distributes the produce to the domestic market. He said if he could extend the cultivation, he can earn much more profit by exporting. He said that there is external market demand.

He spends his income on charities, extension of business and disbursing labour charges. The present business goes smoothly, and he is pleased with it. The most essential need for the mushrooms is moisture. He has to keep moisture at the plantation, keeping the temperature constant. If temperature rises, mushrooms do not bloom fully. Especially, he has to take care in April and May, the hottest months of the year.

At present, he orders mushroom seeds from the ministry; sometimes he produces seeds by himself. To produce seeds, the middle part of the mushroom is extracted and kept in a glass tube. A laboratory is needed to do this.

To maintain the quality of mushrooms, he pays attention to cleanliness. He has to take care in picking mushrooms. When he extracts parts for seeds, he has to choose the best ones. He seeks advice from technicians for growing larger mushrooms.

His market lies in Thiri Mingalar Market and Than Market. There are also small dealers in the neighbourhood, but the prices they offer is low. Regularly, he caters to hotels and restaurants which offer high prices.

There is great demand from China, Thailand, Japan and Taiwan. So far he does not need foreign market. Hotels and restaurants are his strong market. Mushroom can also be produced in tins or sold in packages at supermarkets. But he still has to reach this stage of added value.

In the early morning, mushrooms are picked and their quality is checked. They are weighed and packed. And the packages are sent to the market. In the afternoon, he takes a rest and afterwards, prepares for the next day. Mushroom-picking starts at 4 am and the work is closed at 4 pm.

U Alan said his income is enough for his family. He wishes his fellow Kayin nationals under the Kayin Baptist Church to grow mushrooms on a manageable scale. He is prepared to provide help to them. For growing mushroom, not so much capital or not so many labourers are needed. It has market. He wishes others to try it.

He advises young persons interested in doing a business, "First calculate the costs and profits before doing a business."

-----

#### **Profile 16: Owner of Thiriwaimon Art Gallery**

Name : U Myint Swe

Age : 58

Position: Owner

Address :15, University Avenue Road, Bahan Township, Yangon.

I was born at "Thone Gwa" town which is about 21 miles far away from Yangon. My parents were selling nippa thatch & fish sauce. My father passed only 7<sup>th</sup> standard. My mother only know how to read & write Burmese as she was born at remote village. My parents wanted me to be an educated person. Their dream is want to see me as a civil servant. After I finish high school at my home town, I studied philosophy major at Yangon University. Then I was qualified to attend for the master degree. To get the M.A degree, I did one thesis paper which is specialized on Aesthetics. The title of my paper was "Approaching on Realism Painting technique with Realism way of thinking". In my university life, I was visited the exhibitions of students to find out what kind of trend they wanted to create. My passion is contemplation on paintings.

I was serving as a lecturer for 10 years and then I was involved in the 1988 uprising. To be frank, I just did as same as everybody did, neither leader nor follower in that movement. I would say I was lucky to stay alive. When we protested right in front one of ministry offices, the soldiers were shooting at us from the top of building. By the time of the military coup, I was forced to resign from my career. Again, I was lucky because the one who was working together with me was going to prison. I decided to keep a low profile for a while. So I moved my family to one of the towns in the Irrawady delta, it was also my wife's native town. I was starting to do business since we were living at my wife native town. It was selling "Longyi".

When all things stabilized, we all get back to Yangon. In Yangon, the Longyi business is quite competitive. It needs a lot of capital money to be established. As nobody supports my family, I was working as a manager at my friend's gallery. I was friendly with well known artists ever since I worked for my thesis. During the time of preparing my thesis, I often visited their homes to do the

interviews. To be an art dealer, not only you got to know with the artists but also you need to know thoroughly about the art to explain the customers. In the mean time, I realized how to make picture framings as well. I just only received paintings from the artists. So I got to make framings them to hang on the wall by my self.

I have some experienced on organizing for the exhibitions of famous artists such as “Bagyi Aung Soe”, “Paw Oo Thet”. I sold one water color painting of “Paw Oo Thet” for 3000 Kyats in 1990. I just needed to give money back to the artist 1500 Kyats (1.50 \$) only. 3000 Kyats was well enough for one household in 1990. The US embassy was the main customer for the exhibitions held at Yangon in those days. Nowadays, “Paw Oo Thet” painting prices are very high. If you want to collect his water color paintings, you have to afford 2.000.000 Kyats (2000\$) for 10 into 15 inches size. For the oil paintings on a canvas, the prices are within 500.0000 Kyats (5000\$) to 1.000.0000 Kyats (10.000 \$). It depends on the quality & the condition of the paintings. If I had kept his paintings at that time, now I could be a rich guy through selling his paintings. I got nothing left when the prices rose right after the artist died. The point is no ones know the future what will become next.

Then I quit the job from my friend’s gallery, I rented a small shop in Bogyoke [Scotts] Market. At first, I sold “Shwe Chi Htoe” tapestry which is made in Mandalay. One of my friends who lives in Mandalay, he hired some workers to make “Shwe Chi Htoe” and deliver to me. At that time, Japanese business guy asked me “Can you produce 500 pieces per month, I can pay you 50000ks (50\$) for each”. I said “What we making is handicraft, we don’t have capability to do it like mass production”. That’s how I missed the chances to be millionaire.

I and my friend were over estimate on visit Myanmar year 1996. We made quite a lot of “Shwe Chi Htoe” to sell in that year. Due to the political crisis, just a few tourists came into the country. Then I had stocks of “Shwe Chi Htoe” at my home. Meanwhile, some of my customers came to my shop in order to make framings. Later, I received framing orders from the embassies & INGOs. Then I decided to stop selling “Shwe Chi Htoe” tapestry. That business became too risky for me because I had to pay in cash everything that I ordered from my friend in Mandalay. I didn’t even know exactly when I would sell out those things. My wife starts selling fabric at Bogyoke Market. I was accepting the framing orders at my home. Framing business has some procedures. When someone gave me the order, I measured the size of material and then I order at my carpenter to make the raw frame. There are many stages to have passed from the raw frame to the complete frame. I only used teak wood for framing.

My name has become prominent in the framing business. Of course, there are others framing shops in Yangon. The difference is that I can communicate with foreigners. I know what they want me to do. I deal with different nationalities. Among them, the French are very sensitive people. They want everything precisely, no mistakes even not a millimeter.

In 2005, I have been starting run my own gallery with saving moneys but I am still accepting framing orders. In my gallery, I want to be standardizing on quality and originality of paintings. The artists I have chosen to be shown in my gallery, they are all quite famous in Myanmar. Some of the paintings are my collections. Some paintings are given by the artists. In that case, I take 20% when their paintings are sold out. I don’t want my gallery to be a street vendor’s shop style like galleries in Bogyoke Market. Besides, I don’t want to sell pseudo or copy things. The market for paintings in Myanmar is very crucial. Although the works of Myanmar artists are becoming authentic and modernized, the price they get is still lower than in neighbouring countries like Vietnam & Thailand. Compare to the two decades ago and current situation, none of the diplomatic officers was interested to buy paintings from Myanmar. The tourists can afford only tapestry and copy paintings from Bogyoke Market. The only thing we can rely for our business are antique collectors. It was just a fist full of people. Let’s say someone brings and show me the paintings of a late artist, I must have knowledge to justify that whether it is real or pseudo. If it is genuine one, I need to consider how much money I have to pay for that as well as how much profit I can get when I sell

back in market. Then I got to invite those antique collectors to show what I have. This is how my business is functioning.

---

**Profile 17: Khin Maung Nyo, From Pegu Yoma to IT Entrepreneur: Wah Wah Tun<sup>14</sup>**  
(Text taken from a Power Point Presentation)

Part 1: From Class Room to Battle Ground

Her father, a close friend of Thakin Aung San, was a central executive member (Politbureau member) of the Burma Communist Party (BCP). She was born in a forest camp in Thayet District in 1953 and joined her father in the fight against the government in 1965. She received military training and was instructed in the communist ideology. Her parents were killed in battles with government troops. She took part in 30 battles between BCP and government forces between 1971 and 1975. Then she was captured and interrogated for two years at government military camps.

Part 2: Entering the Business World in the Socialist Period

In 1977, she was an orphan without any educational achievement and business knowledge. But she had inherited the spirit of entrepreneurship, was eager to learn and resilient in the face of adversity. She studied under her grandmother who traded in tobacco. In 1983, she moved to Rangoon. Here, she started to collect waste and by-products from the government's fishing industry and processed it. In the demonetization of currency 1987, she lost all of her capital.

Part 3: Under Market Economy

In 1988, the government changed the economic policy turning it towards a market oriented economy. Women entrepreneurs were still not welcomed by the male dominated business world. In 1990, she established a store and a franchise business with Apple computers. She developed multimedia products on CD-ROM such as an English-Myanmar Dictionary, Myanmar language studies and curricula for basic education.

Part 4: IT Entrepreneur

In 1994, after attending a lot of training courses, seminars and conferences, she delivered ten thousand Apple computers to the Ministry of Education which formed the base for multimedia class rooms. In 1995, she established an IT centre, hired Australian technicians, transferred technology and expanded the CD-ROM production. In 1998, she produced the first interactive CD in Myanmar: "Myanmar – Another Incarnation." The CD was introduced to the public by the then 1 of the SPDC, General Khin Nyunt at the Myanmar Business Centre.

Part 5: Remarks on the Business Environment in Myanmar

Mercurial trade policies being inconsistent and unpredictable; government interference characterised by cronyism and favouritism; narrow-minded and polarised ("with us or against us mentality") environment; political thoughts and ideas are immature; differences and diversity are hardly tolerated; Government controls were never reduced; the economy and businesses were managed by military personnel who never got necessary and sufficient knowledge and experience in economic matters; women usually just manage the households and the family business.

Part 6: Strengths of the Lady Entrepreneur Introduced Here

Buddha's moral teachings encourage her to refrain from immoral acts and help her maintain morality and ethics; she is ready to accept change according to the Buddhist law of impermanence; always tries to be dutiful; does not want to win the sympathies of others.

---

<sup>14</sup> The name was not mentioned in the presentation of Khin Maung Nyo.

Helped to develop books as guides for those who have only poor chances to get formal education and have to rely on self-learning; envisioned the role and potential of information technology; the risks in nowadays business are negligible compared with her previous life which was characterised by a “live or die” situation; focuses on preparations in advance in order to survive; seizes opportunities and tries to minimise risks.

## 1.2.2 Literary Portraits

Editor's note: In this section some portraits of Burmese businesspeople written by contemporary authors are republished.



*I wish you to win a literary award. Only then I will be free from lending money to you.*

Translator's note: Some Myanmar are crazy about being a writer: They assume that wearing shabby clothes, slinging a traditional Myanmar bag and writing something for a small honorarium are characteristics and style of a true writer. They are contented with this lifestyle, do not work for regular income and always need money.

### 1.2.2.1 Daw Amah<sup>15</sup>

Editor's note: Daw Amah (1915-2008) was a well known writer. Together with her husband Ludu U Hla (1910-1982) she run the *Ludu* (People) Press in Mandalay since the late 1930s. Both writers were regarded as leading dissidents throughout their life. Besides, Ludu U Hla collected folk stories from different ethnicities and Daw Amah wrote on Burmese culture.

#### 1.2.2.2.1 Wealthy U Thet Shay and son U Kyaw

They were originally poor. They did business. And they prospered. They prospered so much so that at that time it would be said that they had got rich because the custodian spirit of a treasure trove had given them gold and silver. Neighbours were wont to say that they had found the pot of gold hidden in the ground by somebody else. In the time after that period, people would say behind their backs that they got rich because they also dealt in opium. The readers will often hear of people getting rich at the present time by also dealing in the white substance (white opium or heroin), by dealing also the green stuff (jade). When a person gets very rich there is always a reason for becoming so. People always give their opinions.

In our youth, in Mandalay, the town folk knew the donor of the monastery U Thet Shay and his son U Kyaw as wealthy people. In addition to knowing them as wealthy people there was no end to chanting words of approbation for their giving away things in charity and good deeds by the people.

Their wealth was acknowledged but there was no word of how they had accrued their wealth other than by their ability and endeavour. Not only that but you could hear people saying how they did their business, how diligent, tireless, upright and pious they were. There was one thing though. People used to say that they got rich because they gave away so much in charity. Even before they had completed an act of giving things away in charity, they would be getting money to give away more things in charity. People would say that they fit the saying that one could give away in charity without ever depleting one's possessions.

In our Mandalay, there were many large monasteries where the Buddhist Scriptures were taught. Among these monasteries was one which had produced many monks well versed in the Buddhist Scriptures, monks who had written treatises on the Buddhist Scriptures, monks who had attained teachership of the Buddhist Scriptures and monks who had come out first in the examinations testing one's knowledge of the Buddhist Scriptures. The monastery still is a well known centre for the teaching of Buddhist Scriptures.

That monastery is no other than the Ma Soe Yein Monastery (literally meaning the monastery free of anxiety) that had been presided over by the Agga Maha Pandita, Abbhidhaza Maharahta Guru Bhaddanta Thuriya Bhivamsa for more than sixty years. This monastery has some 700 to 800 resident teaching monks and student monks every year. Within the surrounding thick brick walls a *pya* or about a furlong on each side are the central main monastery and sixteen encircling monasteries, a clock tower, dining halls, cook houses, toilets and artesian wells built and donated for the monks.

The main central monastery is a two-storey brick building that has eleven sections from east to west and eight sections from south to north, and four stairs. The interior is brightly gilded. The sixteen encircling monasteries are also two-storey brick buildings that have seven-section and five-section walls. The huge posts are brightly gilded. The people who built and donated these large monasteries were the wealthy U Thet Shay and his son the wealthy U Kyaw who was also known as Tea Kyaw and Salt Kyaw. U Kyaw's friend, U Lan of Pwe Gone, requested them to allow him to build and donate a monastery in the Ma Soe Yein monastery compound so that the good deed might result in an encounter with his friend in the future existence. Being extremely good friends, he was granted his request and there was the Vinaya Naru Padesa monastery donated by U Lan; the daughter of U Thet Shay, Daw Wee, also desired to build and donate a monastery and the daughter/ sister was

---

<sup>15</sup> The following stories were taken from: Ludu Daw Amar 1991, *Men and Women hailed from Mandalay (Mandalay Thu Mandalay Thar)* Yangon, U Aung Gyi.

allowed to build the Pali Naru Padesa monastery. The other fourteen encircling monasteries and the main monastery were the good deeds of U Thet Shay and his son U Kyaw.

To give away in charity on such a grand scale, not by a king, but by commoners was very rare or non-existent. Their donation would amount to thousands of lakhs in present day currency. It would be unbelievable to say that the father and son started their business by carrying their goods around with shoulder-yokes and selling them. But these words are true.

U Thet Shay was raised in Myo Pyin Gyi. Myo Pyin Gyi was a village west of the Myit Nge Bridge, which was ten miles to the south of Mandalay. Some say that he was a native of Oo Yin Taw village. Myo Pyin Gyi and Oo Yin Taw are the same. Myo Pyin Gyi was the village and Oo Yin Taw was the orchard from which fruit was offered respectfully to the king during his reign. Good varieties of mango, jackfruit, lime and lemon were planted in the orchard that was close to the village. The Aung Din mango, the San Ya mango are varieties of mango that were named after the persons who had offered them respectfully to the king. From Myo Pyin Gyi/ Oo Yin Taw U Thet Shay went to Mandalay to sell green tea. In the past there were no roads or railways coming down from the southern part of Shan state to the plains like today. There were only footpaths and bullock tracks. Myit Thar was the station of the plains for pack bullocks and U Thet Shay had to go to Myit Thar to buy green tea. He then came to Mandalay to sell green tea. He was a vendor who carried green tea with a shoulder- yoke for 10 miles to sell it.

U Thet Shay had three children. The elder son was Maung Kyaw. The middle child was Maung Taw. The youngest was the daughter, Ma Wee. When the elder son Maung Kyaw came of age the father took him along to sell green tea. The father and son carried green tea with two shoulder yokes and sold them. Business was good. Good business allowed them to be in comfortable circumstances. When they were in comfortable circumstances U Thet Shay arranged to buy a cart and bullocks to carry and sell green tea because it was very tiresome to walk and carry the goods with a shoulder-yoke. In making such an arrangement U Thet Shay consulted villagers of the same mind so that they would not have to go alone; he found those who would go to Myit Thar to buy and sell *sebesten* leaves,<sup>16</sup> and those who would buy and sell other Shan produce and he had four or five carts for company. And so U Thet Shay and his son would come to Mandalay on a cart to sell green tea.

I will tell of an incident that U Thet Shay encountered while he went selling with his cart. When they entered Myit Laung village to give the tired bullocks a short rest, they went along the track and made a clearing in the east of the village. There suddenly appeared a small pagoda about fifteen cubits<sup>17</sup> high. They carried on clearing the area and found a stone inscription.

This small pagoda was built and worshipped by a carpenter of Da Noe village. The carpenter stole the relics of the Buddha from the Shan queen Saw Mon La and had them enshrined in this pagoda. It was a carpenter who built this pagoda and it was known as the Carpenter's Temple (with a hollow vaulted base).

And then U Thet Shay who revered the Three Gems prayed and vowed that if they prospered they would rebuild the pagoda into a larger one and worship it and left the small pagoda clean and tidy.

U Thet Shay's green tea business prospered. They prospered more and more, year after year and they did not stay on in Myo Pyin Gyi and moved to Mandalay and established a green tea broker's sales centre. The large compound in Pwe Gone ward and the huge two- storey brick building at the centre was the auspicious ground for U Thet Shay.

From selling green tea in Mandalay, he expanded his business by dealing also in pickled tea. The pickled tea came from Kyaukmeh to Mandalay on pack bullocks. It seemed that the pickled tea baskets were so woven that the pack bullocks could carry them in ease. Nowadays they don't use

<sup>16</sup> *sebesten* leaves (*Cordia dichotoma*) are used as wrappers for rolling cheroots.

<sup>17</sup> About 18 inches

bullocks; they carry them in cars and you don't see baskets anymore; they now pack pickled tea in plastic, 'Penang' bags.

The business of transporting tea on pack bullocks was done by Chinese pack bullock handlers. The Palaung who cultivate tea would hire the Chinese to do the transporting task for a fee, or the Chinese would buy the tea and sell it himself in Mandalay. The place where these pack bullock handlers made their camp in Mandalay was the large orchard between 34<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> streets and between 87<sup>th</sup> and 88<sup>th</sup> streets. Now that place is known as Daewon. Daewon is not a Bamar word. Those who were old enough to have heard it used at that time said it was a word of the Chinese pack bullock handlers.

When U Thet Shay and U Kyaw traded in pickled tea in addition to green tea, they bought a large compound in Daewon. U Kyaw built a two-storey brick building similar to the one his father had built in Pwe Gone. He established a large pickled tea broker's sales centre to the north of the building. This was adjacent to the place where the pack bullock handlers made camp.

When U Kyaw (and group) traded in pickled tea, only at the beginning did they buy and sell in the usual way. Later on, they expanded the enterprise and paid out to the Palaung in advance. Tea had to be planted on the sides of hills. The whole hill would be planted. It was planted on many hills. U Kyaw (and group) could buy tea by the hill. The money paid out in advance amounted to 4 or 5 lakhs even in the currency of those days. If someone is accomplished at something or had something firmly in his grasp, we in Mandalay would say that 'he had it by the Palaung and by the hill'.

It was said that this saying came into being at the time when U Kyaw (and group) dealt in tea. It was said because he could buy all the tea produced on the whole hill from all the Palaung who planted the tea.

U Kyaw (and group) also had a broker's sales centre in Kyaukme.

The business prospered more when they dealt in green tea and pickled tea. There was another wealthy U Kyaw in Mandalay who dealt in mercuric sulphide. To make out between the two, Mandalay folk would refer to U Thet Shay's son U Kyaw as Tea Kyaw.

The older generation would say of how U Kyaw (and group) prospered and became wealthy by claiming that 'if a man was to become rich, money would come searching for him'. And there was cause to say so, too.

When the First World War broke out, there was a large German ship loaded with salt in Rangoon port. The German government said there would be war and urged all German ships to leave British territory with the utmost speed and to return to Germany. The German owner wanted to leave only after selling the salt in Rangoon port. And so the salt merchant approached U Kyaw and asked him to buy the salt and to pay, not in British currency but in gold. It was not usual to trade in gold and U Kyaw did not have enough gold with him. But the German said just to give what gold U Kyaw had and that he would leave all the salt and U Kyaw got a ship load of salt very cheaply.

During the First World War, Burma was not a battlefield and escaped its ravages. Exports from Burma fetched high prices and some Burmese became wealthy. Lima beans, to feed mules from the army, and rice from Burma had fetched high prices and made some people rich. U Kyaw was one of those whose business prospered because of the First World War.

The salt he acquired filled the whole warehouse that had 10- section walls, in Daewon. He had been selling the salt to the districts for a long time still the warehouse was not empty. And that was how people came to call him Salt Kyaw.

U Kyaw's father U Thet Shay was devout and revered the Three Gems. He was from Myo Pyin Gyi and had the opportunity to revere and attend to the Myo Pyin Gyi Sayadaw who was well known for his knowledge of the Pitakas. When his business began to prosper, U Thet Shay humbly informed the Sayadaw that it was his desire to build and donate a monastery. The Sayadaw was far-sighted

and said that if he wanted to build and donate a monastery, he should not to do so in Myo Pyin Gyi, but to do it in Mandalay. So he built a wooden monastery in one of the well known teaching institutions in Mandalay, the Hpa Ya Gyi Taik. When the wooden monastery was burnt down in a fire, he built the large central brick building of Hpa Ya Gyi Taik.

U Thet Shay's business prospered very much and he was desirous to build and donate a large teaching institution like the Hpa Ya Gyi Taik and so bought a large orchard that was not far from Daewon ward from the mayor U Pay Si and made plans to build a large teaching institution. U Pay Si had his small grandchild treated in the orchard when the child had smallpox. When the child got better U Pay Si had people running to him to inform him that there was no longer any cause for anxiety and U Pay Si came to call it 'the orchard free of anxiety' (Ma Soe Yein Oo Yin).

When U Thet Shay bought this orchard he retained the name because it was auspicious and the monastery came to be known as the Ma Soe Yein Kyaung Taik (the monastery free of anxiety).

U Thet Shay filled the lake that was at the centre of the orchard with earth and built a large brick building that had 11-section and 8 section walls there. It was started in the year 1269 of Buddhist Enlightenment and completed in 1271 BE.<sup>18</sup>

The son, U Kyaw built 14 encircling monasteries at a rate of almost one building a year. The daughter, Daw Wee built one monastery. U Kyaw's friend U Lan built one. All made up the 16 encircling monasteries.

The Ma Soe Yein Kyaung Taik was intended for the proper learning of the Pitakas and the institution's rules were very well laid down and strictly observed. It was laudable the way the monks and the laity worked for the prosperity of this institution.

U Thet Shay lived to be 70. While U Thet Shay and U Kyaw were alive and well, the monks from the Ma Soe Yein monastery need not go around collecting food when it was raining. They could visit shops near the monastery selling rice and curry and have a meal and hand the owner of the shop a card that had been provided them with for this purpose by the donors of the monastery. The owners of the shops could collect the money for the meals from the donors of the monastery. Measures like these were taken to enable the student monks to study without having anything to worry about.

U Thet Shay and U Kyaw continued running their business during the First World War. But their business did not survive the three years during the Second World War that turned the country into a battlefield and shattered it. It could be said that their business was ruined in the two generations of father and son. Although their commercial enterprise was no longer in existence, their enterprise for the propagation of their religion still flourishes and still claims words of approbation.

When his business prospered, U Thet Shay adorned and raised the height of the Carpenter's Temple near Da None village. He worshipped it and held pagoda festivals there every year.

#### 1.2.2.1.2 Daw Mya who sold crockery

Times have changed. Huge fires had broken out many times in Mandalay and its form and appearance have changed. The condition of Mandalay before World War II and its condition today are very different. But the difference is known only by those who are old enough to have seen it.

#### *The women of Zay Cho Taw*

Among those who have brought prestige and fame to Mandalay are many women. Our city had been a royal city. It was the capital of a kingdom and therefore the centre of national culture. But from the days of British colonial rule to the present time, it was no longer the administrative capital

---

<sup>18</sup> Editor's note: The dates given refer to the Burmese Era commencing in 638 of the Christian era. Accordingly, the monastery was built between 1907 and 1909.

of the government and its existence was by trade and commerce. In the past, the distribution of goods was done by private entrepreneurs and traders and vendors were a major class of people in Mandalay. And as Myanmar women are wont not to be like our Indian and Chinese neighbours and depend on the husband but would earn one's bread alongside the husband, many women were traders and vendors. They made up almost 90% of the class. If you were to talk about Mandalay of the past, it would not be complete without mentioning the large Zay Cho market. Much has been said of the large Zay Cho market and its women. And there were reasons enough to do so too.

In the past, in Mandalay only government officials wanted their daughters to get degrees like B.A. and M.A. The middle class were more eager to let their daughters learn how to buy and sell goods; the working class parents would let the daughters learn some handicraft. And therefore when the girl has the barest of functional literacy, or if she could pester her parents enough, after she has attended the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, she would be taken to a merchant as an apprentice salesgirl. This was done by all middle class people. As an apprentice they were not paid wages; they didn't have to pay to be taught the trade either. The apprentice would carry her food container to the shop, open the shop with the shopkeeper, work and study with the shopkeeper and return home when the shop closed for the day. They had to study like this for at least a year.

Not only did they learn how to buy and sell, and how to measure and weigh but also how to read body language and how to acquire a pleasant manner of speaking and how to attract customers. The first thing that was taught was how to be at ease and to mingle with the public. Then they were taught how to deal and talk with all sorts of people, like the need to call a woman an aunt and a young man a brother as the case may be.

These young, single girls would be in the prime of their life and at the peak of their beauty. Most of the girls were the stay-at-home types, and these girls were taught to deal with the many types of people coming to the large market place and to trade goods. When they came to know quite well about trading, the parents would give them some capital to run a business of their own and earn a living.

At the Zay Cho market, a whole building would have stalls selling the same commodity. The items you were selling were also sold by many other stalls in the same building. The potential customer could go around looking at the items and buy at any shop that he favoured. And so it was important in selling the same kind of commodity at the same sort of price that the customer bought from your stall.

To be the one that the customer bought from would require that you deal very well with the customer. That was why it's important that the salesgirl should communicate well and speak in a pleasant manner. At that time, there was no one to monopolize a trade.

That was why people who had witnessed the times and those shopkeepers were disappointed with the sales clerks at the people's shops of a later era. They said that the sales clerks were not shopkeepers but government salary workers. The sales clerks did not care about getting the goods sold from the shops. Whether the customer bought the goods or not did not matter; they would go home at closing time and draw their salary at the end of the month. When a customer asked them about a particular item, they would answer only if they wanted to and would pretend not to hear the customer's enquiries if they didn't want to. When a customer asked them to show an item, they would show their annoyance at being asked to do so. It was a far cry from the shopkeepers who sold their wares in the Zay Cho market. They were as different as chalk and cheese.

*Daw Mya who sold crockery*

Had there been video recording at the time, I would have recorded how Daw Mya sold crockery in the big crockery shop surrounded by her many customers, so that I could show it to the younger generation.

Crockery was a commodity that was used much more in the past than at the present. For instance,

when there was an alms-offering in the rural areas, as was usual at harvest time, it was customary in our part of upcountry that those attending the ceremony contribute to the cost of the charity in cash and the donor would, in return, give gifts which could be cups for green tea. If the contribution was K1, he could be given 2 cups and if the sum was K10 he could be given 20 cups.

Crockery was also among the items offered to the monks. On the occasion of the special offering of Kahtein robes, crockery would be hung on the tree shaped stand along with other useful items like towels, bars of soap etc. Also the money customarily given to the young men and women when there was a marriage ceremony would be used to buy crockery and entrusted to the care of a respectable member of the community for later use. These community-owned items could be used at food-offering ceremonies, marriage ceremonies etc. Broken crockery would have to be replaced but there would be no charge for the temporary use of these on such occasions.

In the past, there were many kinds of crockery imported from China, Japan, England etc. and enamel ware imported from Czechoslovakia. Wares from various countries were sold in Myanmar.

Many shops selling crockery were located in Taik Tan Gyi (large brick building) and Taik Tan Galay (small brick building) and also in the building in the market, in Mandalay. The shop in the Taik Tan Gyi that consisted of three adjoining stalls made into a single large one by removing the intervening partitions was the largest and busiest shop selling crockery. It had a large wooden sign board with the words 'Fezula Nanji's crockery shop' painted in red and gold that stretched across the three stalls. I think the stall numbers were 28, 29 and 30.

In the large shop were hundreds and thousands of pieces of crockery stacked in rows. You can get crockery of the same colour, design and form by the hundred and in no time at all. Bowls, glasses, teapots, plates and cutlery were in profusion. Everything you need is displayed and sold.

Behind the store, the workers would unpack the crockery that came in wire mesh crates to be displayed in the shop. Other workers would pack the crockery sold to customers in boxes and baskets. The owner of the shop, the Indian Fezula Nanji would sit in a chair at the table a little to the rear of the shop. At the front of the shop, the one actually selling the wares was Daw Mya who saw to the needs of all the customers coming to the shop. Assistants were there to fetch and carry for her. She could be heard uttering, 'please show this customer that,' and 'Please pack that for this customer' etc.

'Daw Mya, how much is the plate? How much if we buy by the dozen? Can we get 50-100 of these of the same colour and size?' a customer would ask.

'Daw Mya, are these the only teapots in the shop? Are there any porcelain teapots that are thicker? We want quite a few of them for communal use.'

'Benefactress/ donor woman, how many kinds of cups for green tea have you (got)? They are to be given as gifts to those coming to the alms-offering ceremony and contributing to the cost of it. Could you show me some? How much would it cost if I buy it by the hundred? I would like to buy about 5000 of them.'

'Amay Mya, I want to give a dinner set as a wedding present. How many kinds have you? Could you show me some?' some would say.

'I want three dinner plates,' another one would say.

Daw Mya would deal with all the customers amicably. You can sometimes hear the words Daw Mya and Amay Mya all coming out at the same time. Her dealings were so good that people who wanted to buy crockery would come to her shop first. They rarely go to other shops first. Only when she said the item one was looking for was not available at her shop or when a deal could not be struck that the customer would go to another shop. The shop was never without any customers; there were usually 14-15 customers at any one time.

In the large Zay Cho market, there were many shops selling crockery. But customers would come to

this shop first and ask Daw Mya. They would buy from her and would take no notice of the Indian owner sitting in his chair. If the old Indian tried to attend to the needs of the customer when Daw Mya was not present, the customer would rather wait for her return than deal with him.

Daw Mya was eloquent and dealt well. Everyone was satisfied with her manner of speaking. I could remember well one incident when my grandfather and grandmother went to buy crockery at her shop. I went along with my grandparents. Grandfather U Pho Gaung wore a white garment and a white cotton jacket with a white silk scarf wrapped around his head. Grandmother Daw Shan Ma wore a green skirt and a white jacket with mauve stripes and wore a small bun of hair at the top. They were both over 70 and approaching 80. They both had fair skin. While they bought crockery, she remarked that it was very pleasing to see an elderly couple together and sat down and with her hands clasped palm to palm, paid her respects to them. It was an act done in all sincerity. Actually Daw Mya was of Islamic faith. Myanmar Muslims were called Pa Thi (Parsee). Although they had a different faith, Myanmar Muslims in Mandalay lived like the Bamar. The Bamar thought they were like them too. Myanmar Muslims of Mandalay were different from Myanmar Muslims of other parts of Myanmar. Some of them were praised by the Myanmar kings and they had assimilated the tradition and matters associated with Myanmar culture. They could speak as well as the men and women of Mandalay; there were many who spoke better. Daw Mya was an eloquent Muslim woman. She sold very well. In 1938 there was a conflict between Indians and Bamar in Mandalay. The young monks forbade people from buying at Indian shops but as an exception allowed them to buy at Daw Mya's shop. The customers did not take her as a saleswoman but regarded her as the owner.

Fezula Nanji had a son called Ba Kyu Bai. Sometimes when he thought that she was selling things at lower prices and said, 'Amay Mya, why are you selling at lower prices?' She would scold the young man for interfering; she would have her reasons for selling like that.

His father, the owner of the shop had to accept this. It was impossible not to. Daw Mya was the indispensable person in charge of the shop. A customer from the countryside would hand Daw Mya a list of crockery that he wanted and tell her to have them packed in the basket with only the words that there should be no cracks and be of the right kind and at the lowest possible prices. The customer would go buy other things needed for the alms offering. He would come back on his way back to the village. Daw Mya would say that she had packed all the things mentioned in the list, hand him his list, and say that she had added some as her contribution to the alms offering. This kind of thing wouldn't have been possible with the Indian owner. She had the integrity and had won the trust of the customers. It is the most important qualification sought after in the business of trading.

When the trading enterprises were nationalized, Daw Mya stayed at home. The owner came to her house and asked her to come to the shop if only to show her face.

Daw Mya worked at the Zay Cho market from the age of 18 until she was 90. At the age of 90 while showing a prospective buyer a brick house, she slipped and fell and became bedridden. She was confined to bed and died two years later on 22.8.1972 at the age of 92. Daw Mya's granddaughter Khin Ma Ma was the wife of U Ko Ko who was the head of the department of Pali (the Prakrit language of the Buddhist Scriptures) and Oriental Studies at Mandalay University. U Ko Ko's eldest son U Soe Myint was a teacher. He also produced Shwe Yoke Hlwar 'Thanaka (a fragrant paste made from the bark and roots of the 'thanaka' tree).

Daw Mya was not lucky when it came to getting a good husband. Her first marriage left her a widow after four months. The second husband was very bad. He beat her. He even beat her only days after she had given birth to a baby boy. She could not bear it any longer and clutching the baby to her bosom, ran away from her husband. The child died not long after.

Daw Mya then adopted Khin Ma Ma the daughter of her niece and never married again.

Daw Mya said she was hurt by her matrimonial affairs.

Her motto in life was to live happily, to love all and not to let race or religion affect your relations with others.

And Daw Mya said there was hope as long as you lived.

When the war broke out Daw Mya went to Bone Oh village where Muslims from Mandalay took refuge. As a refugee, she acted as a go-between for those who wanted to buy and those who wanted to sell jewellery. When she was 90 and confined to bed, there were quite a few visitors asking after her health. Some of them would say, 'Amay Mya, we are sorry to see you confined to bed like this but we want to buy a small brick house/ we want a pair of diamond earrings of about 3 carats each.' To this she would say, 'Wait, someone go and fetch this person,' and would act as the go-between and bring about a deal. Her great grandson, Shwe Yoke Hlwar U Soe Myint said she earned some K30, 000 after she was confined to bed.

Daw Mya was said to have been born on a Saturday. But she was not wrathful. She was tolerant. Men and women of Mandalay remember her as a good shopkeeper.

### 1.2.2.2 Kyaw Yin Myint<sup>19</sup>

#### 1.2.2.2.1 Mya Gon Yi

The sounds 'tong, tong ... tong, tong...' could be heard around Shwebo Kyaukmyaung as a stick like a staff is poked again and again into the glazed earthenware pot.

I first came to know him (now 70) as one who mended defective glazed earthenware into usable ones. He had no formal education. He was from the lower class and was well-grounded in the basics of his trade. He is now the owner of a glazed earthenware business 'Mya Gon Yi'. More than 20 years ago he made the huge glazed earthenware structures that made up the façade of the decorated archway welcoming the Union Flag on its journey around the country. When they constructed the People's Square in Yangon, he created big, beautiful vases to adorn it. He used glazed bricks in building his house in Kyaukmyaung Nwe Nyein. He had the walls of his compound decorated with a variety of glazed earthenware pots.

While in Kyaukmyaung I looked up U Mya Maung and asked about his life.

He was a stout man with brown skin who had the appearance of one who lived a simple life. He had a large key-ring tucked into his waist and could be seen going about his kilns. His glazed earthenware works is situated in a large compound. He knew the basics of his trade and would be supervising all stages of the operation. He would be there where workers were grinding and mixing red, yellow and various types of clay; where pots were made; where they were dried in the sun; where they were painted with glazing material; where they were baked and after taking them out from the kilns and taken to the storage site from where they would be sent to the market. He could be seen everywhere with the large key-ring tucked into his waist.

I again went to his house in the evening when he was free. He told me of his life which began with nothing in his possession.

I was born in 1299 (Myanmar calendar).<sup>20</sup> I was a native of Shwe Goon village. I am a Burmese Buddhist. My father was U Toke and my mother was Daw Chit.

When I was young I stayed at the Pa Khan monastery. I had no formal education. I was taught the teachings of the monastery. I had a short period of schooling. I was taught for about three years. I learnt the barest of essentials.

I was five when the family moved to Ta Ohn village to take refuge during the Japanese invasion. As war refugees we had to live under a hay rack in someone's compound. We were miserable. It

<sup>19</sup> The following texts are taken from the book Kyaw Yin Myint, 2009 Colorful Scenes of the Stage of Life. Yangon, U Myo Nyunt. The stories were translated by Phone Kywe Myat.

<sup>20</sup> 1937 according to the Christian calendar.

was the lowest possible existence. We always had to size up the rapport with the owner of the house.

It was during the war and the owner of the house hoarded cans of petrol on the hay rack. And one day the hay rack collapsed. We were living under the hay rack; my mother had finished cooking but my aunt was still cooking and the petrol cans caught fire. We ran away from the fire, without aim or direction. My brother and I got to the banyan tree at the edge of the village. The fire was extensive; the south half of the village was razed to the ground. I was only a child and sat there, crying under the banyan tree. My father and mother found us and we lived under the banyan tree.

The fire had started from the hay rack we were living under, and some villagers said they were going to kill us. It was during the war and anything could happen when people were angry. The headman of the village, U Ba Thar, took us to his house. He said we had not started the fire and we were saved from being killed.

I was two years old when the family moved to Kyaukmyaung. My parents died of the epidemic when I was 12. The four of us brothers and sisters were mere children and orphans.

I went to work for U Chit who cultivated crops other than paddy. Live and work as long as one was happy. It didn't last long. I moved to Nwe Nyein and worked in the glazed earthenware works. As an apprentice, I worked under the master glazed earthenware potter. I was interested in my work and became a master potter myself when I was 14. I could make glazed earthen pots that could hold from 5 to 200 viss. Later I could make toys and vases.

After working for the owner for 6 years, I became an owner of a small kiln and a shed.

The business failed and I was left with nothing again. The business failed because I had chosen a wrong place to build a kiln. It was situated on top of a hill. When clay was carried to the kiln about half of it was lost on the way. If ten sticks of firewood were carried to the kiln some would drop on the way and only about seven would reach the kiln. There was much wastage and I lost the kiln.

When I lost the kiln I started doing what nobody had done before. I sold glazed pots that had been mended.

When glazed earthen pots were taken out of a kiln there were some that were broken and some that had cracks. Pots were made of clay, dried in the sun and painted with glazing material and put into the kilns. If there was too much heat, if the firewood was unsuitable or there had been a crack in the kiln and outside air entered the kiln, pots could have cracks or be broken.

Previously if there were broken pots or the pots had cracks, they would be thrown away into the river. I bought these and mended them. I bought defective pots for 2 ½ kyats each. I mixed cement and other materials and put the mixture into the cracks and mended them. After mending the pots I sold them for 7 ½ kyats each. These pots were bought by people like itinerant gamblers moving from one seasonal festival to another throughout the year. The pots were water tight and usable. If other people wanted their pots to be mended, I mended for them at a cost of ½ to ¾ kyat a pot. I did that for about twenty years.

That produced good returns and I was again able to build kilns and sheds. Later I also became a trader.

I went to the lower part of Myanmar like Pyapon, Kyaiklat, Dedaye, Bogale and Maubin. I rode on a raft of glazed earthen pots to Yangon to sell them. Now I take them there on a motor boat.

I am interested in creating new things. When I saw them constructing the façade of the decorated archway to welcome the Union Flag, I thought of building it with glazed earthenware. In 1984 on the 37<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Union Day and in 1985 on the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Union Day, I built the façades of the decorated archways with glazed earthenware. The letters also were of glazed earthenware.

I tried baking glazed bricks. Now there is much use of glazed bricks. They come in four colours. I made glazed earthen pillars and huge glazed vases.

Foreigners would tell me what they desired and I would create those things for them. I succeeded in making five glazed vases that successively fit into one another snugly.

When they said they were going to place flower pots at the People's Square, I thought I could make vases ten times the usual size; I conferred with U Aye Myint who was a master of traditional art, and using his designs, successfully made them.

When I look back at my life I saw it was full of struggles.

#### 1.2.2.2.2 Ngwe Zin Pale

The large imported milch cows were standing in rows in the cowshed. It was rather dark because the roof was a little low; the brick and concrete floor was deficient in places.

The workers milking the cows were going from one cow after another that were standing in rows of about 25 to 30.

It was like watching a contest. The workers went milking one cow after another, pouring the milk into a large tin which would be taken to a digital weighing machine, weighed, and after the briskly changing digits had settled and the weight recorded, the tin would be carried swiftly to and put on a waiting car. When the car was full, the car which had the sign 'ngwe zin pale, pure natural milk' would dart off as if from the starting line of a race. It was speeding to sell the freshest milk on the market.

As soon as a car took off, another would immediately come and take its place. Just as we had seen previously the milk tins would be weighed, taken from the digital scale to the car and the car would race off when it was full. And another car would take its place.

A stout man was moving about in the cowshed looking at the milking process. The same man came near the digital weighing machine; a moment later he was back in the cowshed.

He was U Tin Win, the producer of 'ngwe zin pale, pure natural milk'.

I did not know that U Tin Win was a government engineer when I first went to the 'ngwe zin pale' dairy farm at Lay Daunt Kan village which was quite a distance from downtown Yangon. He would jostle among his cows and was intimate with his workers. He had the style of a real dairy farmer.

I learnt that he was an expert when we sat down for a conversation in his office. I was full of respect for him when I heard him tell me about dairy farming, based on the facts he had searched on the internet and from what he had read from the books on dairy farming that his son, who was studying in Singapore, had sent.

I sometimes get to meet U Tin Win and his wife Daw Khin Than Win. I again visited his dairy farm at Lay Daunt Kan village later. I also learnt of his struggle for an existence.

I was a native of Dawei ward, in the north part of Mandalay. U Htun and Daw Kyi are my parents. My parents had a bakery, the "flying tiger cakes"; we did catering for weddings and alms-offerings.

For weddings the bride and groom needed only prepare the invitation cards. We took care of the rest like cakes, erecting pavilions, arranging sound systems like loud speakers, provision of cigarettes etc. Similarly, at alms-offering ceremonies we took care of almost everything except hiring a Myanmar orchestra.

Baking was the important thing for our family and my father wanted me to go to England and study baking after I finished high school. When I passed the tenth standard I attended the

Rangoon Institute of Technology because I liked it. I got the bachelor of engineering in textiles in 1970. I did not get to learn bakery as my father had hoped for.

I started as an assistant engineer at Meikhtilar textile mill in 1971. I also did other things because I was interested and wanted to do them. I raised poultry in Meikhtilar; I grew sunflower, tomato and papaya. I was successful in some ventures and not in some others. I raised pigs and cattle. I bought rose plants from Mandalay and grew them in a market-garden. I reared catfish. I bought nether garments for men from Wan Dwin and sold them in Meikhtilar. I borrowed money at 3% interest from friends and lent it at 4% to those who needed it, taking in the 1%. I was very much interested in business and did quite a lot.

I was selected as a state scholar while working at Meikhtilar textile mill. I went to Italy for 11 months. In 1981 I was transferred to the spinning and weaving factory as the director. While I was in Wan Dwin I was sent to the Netherlands for 4 months as a state scholar. I was transferred to the headquarters in Yangon after serving about 5 years in Wan Dwin. I was again selected as a state scholar to lead a team of 20 to study in Korea when there was to be a new garment factory. But then I was not allowed to go because it had not been a year since my return from the Netherlands.

When I was in Yangon I raised poultry, cultivated mushrooms, and bought land near Bago and grew paddy. I bought shares from friends who set up a distillery. The distillery eventually collapsed.

I bought land from the owners of the distillery compound and little by little I ended up having quite a large market garden. I cultivated spider orchids in the garden. I expanded the cultivation of the orchids and I got to sell quite a lot of them when they bloomed in profusion in April and May. I sold them at Asoka market in Yangon.

The family who lived near my garden kept buffaloes. When I enquired about the business I was told that they had recouped their capital in 4 months. I calculated that they made about 25% profit. I had never kept buffaloes. I had raised cattle when I was in Meikhtilar. If they could recoup their capital in 4 months, I asked myself why I wouldn't be able to recoup my capital in one year. And I borrowed some money and raised dairy cattle. Ma Khin Mar Aye, a junior colleague who became a close acquaintance in Meikhtilar, came and helped me. I bought eight pairs of mother cows and calves.

At first, I went and sold the milk to the old Indian who lived at the edge of the village. The milk was not adulterated. At that time, milk sold at 100 kyats a viss. The old Indian gave an extra 10 kyats a viss because the milk was unadulterated.

I thought I would not prosper if I went on selling my milk to the old Indian at the edge of the village. I bought a motorcycle. I delivered the milk to North Okkalapa, South Okkalapa, Yankin, Kamaryut, University Hospital, etc. It sold quite well. I also sold the milk at Asoka market where I sold orchids.

I was still a government servant so I had to get to the office by 9:00, 9:30 in the morning. I had to set the alarm at 3:00 in the morning and had to get up and go to Lay Daunt Kan from Yangon in the small car to fetch the milk. From there I would go to Asoka market to sell the milk. At 9:00 I would drive the car to the office with speed, trying to get there by 9:30.

There was a woman in Lay Daunt Kan who sold fritters. I would drive noisily past her house on my way to the farm, before 4:00 in the morning. She came to think (laughing) that if a wealthy person from Yangon can get up before 4:00 in the morning trying to sell milk, why should she be lazy to get up and rallied her strength and did quite well, I was told.

My two daughters and a niece were attending ACCA classes. They had different subjects so I had to pick them up at different times. Every day I had to go into the city many times to pick them up. And my wife said that would it not be good if we tried to sell milk in the city. If I were to tell

the truth, I was a little wary of selling milk in the city. But I agreed to give it a try and took 25 viss of milk and gave some milk to the houses in the street. I had to give away only about half the amount because people bought about half of the milk I had brought. It was the same the next day. On the third day I started selling milk and I sold 25 viss that day. The volume increased gradually and I had to issue token receipts.

When the milk car came, customers would crowd round the milk car and jostle to buy milk. It became unmanageable to accept the cash in one hand and hand out the milk with the other. And we had to take the cash and give token receipts before the milk car came. When the milk car arrived the customers could exchange the receipts for their milk. That did not go well either. Some customers got many receipts while some got none. That was why I sought more money and bought more cows. Now I sell milk in the morning and also in the evening at various markets.

When I first sold milk in the city, I was selling it on the pavement. I wanted a more convenient place and rented a room on Mahabandoola Street near Kon Zay Dan. I had to pay quite a lot of money to get the room. People had a low opinion on the quality of milk; everybody thought it was adulterated. I did not dilute the milk. I had a shop and customers could buy milk any time. They could tell me anything if they wanted to and I sold quite a large amount of milk.

There was a lot of people selling milk before I did. They were big businesses. They supplied milk to the supermarkets which sold it to the customers. I sold directly to the customers. I sold pure milk and customers liked it. There are many places where milk from my farm is sold in the morning and in the evening, Than (iron) market, Pazundaung market, Asoka market, Thida market, Hledan market, Railway station market in Hlaing Township, Myaynigone, and Kon Zay Dan. It is sold the whole day at the North Point shopping centre.

In addition to pure milk I have started to produce pasteurized milk.

Sometimes I could not meet the demands. I felt it was quite an offence that a manufacturer could not supply a customer. I conferred with some villagers and entered into some form of partnership with them; I provided them some money so that they could buy cows. There was now more milk. They could deduct from what they owed me the price of the milk they gave me. The villagers now have more cows.

The Japanese say that a glass of milk can raise the standard of a people. I liked that and I have been offering free milk at a primary school.

At one time I had some shares in a distillery. Selling liquor is the opposite of selling milk. Selling milk is like its colour - white and pure.

### 1.3 Questions and Answers from a Business Magazine

Editor's note: The following texts are taken from the book "Questions and Answers for the Business Management" published by the Today Publishing House in June 2009. The contains some 100 questions of readers of a business magazine and the answers given by Dr. Khin San Yee from Yangon University, Department of Management.

1 Turnover: There are nearly 100 employees in our business. They have also been given proper fringe benefits, but resignation of employees takes place very often. Could you tell me about how to control this rapid turnover?

*ANSWER:* The personnel are resigning; we can't stop them from doing so and we can't negotiate and resolve the issue with them" are the problems facing many international business enterprises. The root causes could be studied and analysed from various angles/points of view. The first would be to look at the condition of the labour market. If the demand for skilled personnel is more than that is available in the labour market, personnel would be moving to more attractive enterprises and we would have to accept the problem whether or not we wanted to. That is why entrepreneurs & managers are trying to keep or retain their personnel. They are doing this by giving them good wages and salaries or by agreements and rules and regulations. Comfortable working environment, a peaceful social environment and fringe benefits like free accommodation, the use of a car and a telephone and other perquisites are factors that keep personnel at their work.

Again, we need to study the factors that drive them to work and keep them at their work. Even after we provide them with every possible need their behaviour and response may not be what were expected. You will find many employees who work for self-esteem and for the recognition by others rather more than for the wages, salaries and allowances.

Although company policy, job supervision, work relations, working environment, rank, status, job stability and security are indispensable, what secure them more are the sense of achievement, of being recognized by others, of doing a meaningful job, of being responsible, and the opportunities for progress? (Experts have studied human behaviour and proposed various motivation theories.)

Another factor is the training of personnel to acquire skills. Training programmes provide the personnel with opportunities for progress and increase the chance to be lost to more attractive companies. Far-sighted managers and entrepreneurs give their employees various trainings so that they would progress and be able (to keep up with the evolving technology) but, on the other hand, find that as they become more experienced and knowledgeable, the employees search for more prosperous paths. Enterprises inevitably need training programmes for human resources development. Managers and entrepreneurs need to improve their skills and the skills of their personnel. Another factor is that the objective of the personnel and that of the enterprise need to be the same. To have the same objective is not easy but must be attempted. Managers need to build a work culture to achieve the objective of the enterprise. The physical, intellectual and moral development acquired through experience and training is known as the work culture. We especially need to develop moral development. Then, the objective of the personnel and that of the enterprise would be almost identical. There would be a culture. The last factor is to understand and consider the views and behaviour of the younger generation and work in coordination with them. It is a requirement of modern enterprises that both sides need to understand the need to lessen friction arising from a difference of opinion because of the generation gap.

To wrap it all up, to secure good personnel at their work, they need to firmly accept that their job is the best for them.

2 Ethics: I would like to know the ethics (code of conduct) that must be observed by leading persons in large businesses.

*ANSWER*: In conducting business there is the need to observe social responsibility as well as work ethics. In general, the two may seem similar but are different if you delve deeper. If you fulfil your duties and are loyal to your employer or organization, you may be said to have work ethics. But your actions might affect others in a beneficial or detrimental way; this is related to your social responsibility.

Ethics is concerned with an individual's values like loyalty to your business organization; you have to think about your company's profits, and for the good of the social community. If you withheld some information so that shareholders of your company would profit, and acted so that it would look good in the eyes of the shareholders you might be loyal and ethical but if it didn't do the community any good you would have failed your social responsibility.

In leading an enterprise, doing what is right can be seen to be observing the rules of conduct. But it isn't easy to define what is right because morals depend on social environment and cultural traditions. For instance, some people might regard it as rude and unscrupulous to be straightforward and speak frankly, while in some countries it might be deemed to conform to the rules of conduct.

Rules of conduct are sometimes enforced by law and sometimes guided by cultural norms. It is forbidden by law to kill someone. Religion and culture also forbid this. Women are not required by law to be modest and morally upright but culturally, they are expected to be so. A person has the social responsibility that concerns his faith, family, personal affairs, his race, his town, his country etc. These are related to his personal affairs and social conduct. Although it might be within the law, some of his actions might not conform to the accepted opinions of his social environment. It would then be a difficult situation regarding rules of conduct. Depending on what is right or wrong as accepted by the majority could create difficulties. Sometimes you have to go along with the crowd and do things that do not conform to the rules of conduct. If you did not observe the rules you might be derided and shunned but you might not be particularly appreciated if you did observe them either.

Suppose a manager had to present and analyze how the company fared during the year at the annual meeting to the owner of the business and the shareholders. When he said sales were down 30% and profits 50%, a shareholder would ask why that happened so. The manager knew that the root cause was due to the wrong decisions and poor judgment of the board of directors the shareholders had elected. His colleagues did not want him to expose the truth; nobody wanted to; if it were exposed none of the shareholders would have liked it. In that case, should the manager lie? They say it's wrong to lie, but is it always wrong to lie? If you were in his place, what would you do?

There are rules of conduct for those of Buddhist faith and culture. For example, trades involving weapons, humans, killing animals and selling the meat, liquor and poisons are prohibited. The rules of conduct prohibit killing other living things and telling lies. But people would not buy fish if it weren't fresh; if the meat was not fresh people would say that the vendor misled and sold them the rotten meat. For example, if an entrepreneur misled and sold some items of inferior quality to his customers, it might be profitable for him in the short term but in the long run when people lose their trust in the items and his trade, the business could be ruined. Especially in small enterprises, the morals of the entrepreneur could profoundly affect his business.

When morals or standards of behaviour have become serious issues laws would be laid down to deal with them. If there were mutual understanding, good relations and standards of behaviour were good, there would be less restrictions by laws. Laws could be enforced but

morals or standards of behaviour could only give guidance as to what should or should not be done.

You need to act with a sense of social responsibility as well as observe a standard of behaviour when doing business. You could face difficulty in trying to conform to rules of conduct and fulfilling your social responsibility. The personnel and managers of companies and organizations in their quest to make profits for the shareholders of the companies and to make them look good to shareholders might be acting ethically but they might not be fulfilling their social responsibilities. If they did fulfil the social obligations it could be questioned whether they had acted to the best of their abilities.

The main social responsibility of business enterprises would be conserving the natural environment. All the leaders of enterprises and personnel are obliged to conserve our planet and its natural environment for posterity. They should not pollute the environment. They should not waste natural resources. The enterprise should be of benefit to mankind and be safe. Internationally, there is awareness of the fact that waste products should be recycled, that the ozone layer should not be destroyed and that waste material like the thin plastic bags that do not support the top-soil should be disposed of properly. This awareness has affected the manufacturing and packaging of goods.

### 3 Trust: How can trust be built among businesses?

In this rapidly changing business environment, endeavours have to be made without interruption in every business to survive and to achieve success and progress. Participation of every person in the organization is the most important requirement, and to enable such participation, trust among the employer/board of directors and the employees has to be built.

There are differences between trust-building within an organization and that among acquaintances and friends. In the businesses, it is not difficult to build mutual understanding and trust and easy to establish ties among persons who possess business-related knowledge while it may be difficult to work together or build trust with a person who lacks knowledge of the nature and concepts of business and who is not skilled at work. Hence, a business is established by organizing and cultivating persons who possess nature and concepts of business.

In the next step, trust has to be built among persons who are well familiar with business. In an environment where trust prevails, conditions such as mutual help, sharing, duty-consciousness, selflessness, non-egoism, the spirit of family, etc are required.

The following elements are required:

- 1 Transparency, knowledge for everyone, and doubtlessness in executing business issues,
- 2 Decisiveness, justice or dealing with things fairly and equity on the part of a manager, and
- 3 Acceptance of norms, beliefs and values of work.

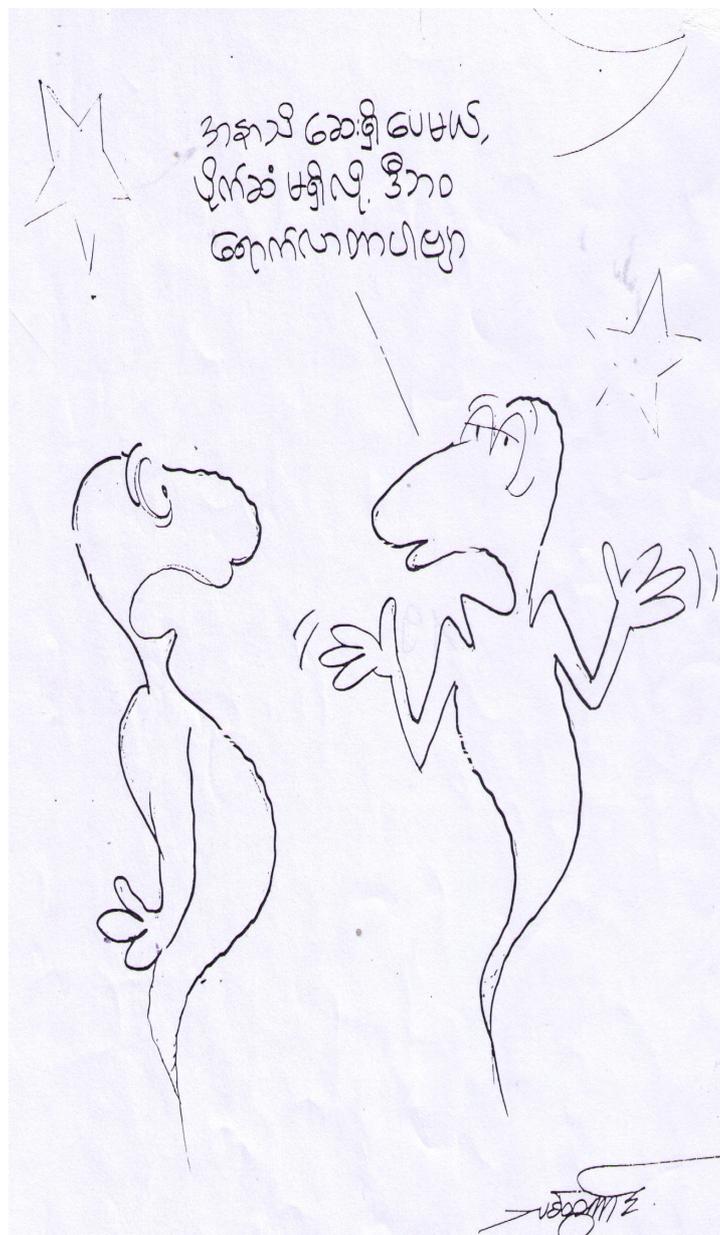
Only when there is a situation which everyone understands and where there are no secrets in carrying out work programs, will everyone come to participate with confidence for the success of the business. In so doing, there should be regular relations among businessmen, business executives and personnel. There should be frankness in these relations. Trust cannot be built just by calling a regular meeting. For the benefits of the business, its members should be given the rights to challenge freely and to debate decisions honestly. Such rights will motivate the employees to carry out their activities voluntarily and

earnestly. Here, the role of uprightness and opacity of decision-making officials plays a crucial role.

Secondly, it is important for the employees to believe that decisions and actions of the managers are fair. The belief that managers are usually unsympathetic, do unilateral acts that do not reflect of the needs of work, and are self-seeking erodes the employees' trust.

Finally, it is needed for the employees to accept the fact that they are working not only with loyalty to the employer and company, but also with their own principles and satisfaction. To be able to so, they must also perceive the accomplishment and success with the fulfillment of long-term business norms. Only then will they have trust in their work and business.

All in all, to be able to win the valiant participation of each and individual employee in undertaking venturesome business activities, the kind of confidence that acrobats have in circus shows is necessary. One must be confident that he/she has the two fast-holding hands to fly from one bar to another.



Two ghosts meeting

*Though there is a saying, "If the disease can be identified, there certainly is a medicine for it," I did not give money and thus, transcended into this life*

## 2 Yesterday

This section provides some documents on the history of the perception of economics in Myanmar. One main criterion for the selection of the documents was availability because it proved to be difficult to get access to Burmese newspapers as well as the protocols of the debates in the Burmese parliament between 1948 and 1962 which might give an idea about the variety of views about the actual economic performance of the respective government and particular economic actors. With regard to the colonial period, an abundance of material exists since the proceedings of the sessions of the Legislative Council (1898-1936) and the two chambers of the legislative (1937-1941) are accessible but have not yet been evaluated.

“ရွာဝန်ကြေးကြောင့် ဝေးချည်မယ်”

(အိုင်ချင်း)

အမယ်မင်းငယ်နှင့်၊ အမင်းငယ်မသနား၊  
ဥစ္စာလည်းမဲ့၊ အားလည်း နှံ့သန့်၊ ဖြစ်ခဲ့ငြားလို့၊  
သကြားငယ်မှ ရည်ရှိ၊ ခါးထိုင်သိုးနှင့်၊  
ပြည်စိုးအိုက၊ စေဆိုသနှင့်၊ လက်ဖက်မလှမ်း၊  
ကွမ်းမကမ်းသန့်၊ ကြေးထမ်းမြင့်လို့၊  
အခွင့်ငယ်မှမသာ၊ အပေါ်ချောနှင့်၊  
ပြောရရှာ၏၊ သို့ပါလျက်ကို၊ ဘယ်ပိက်ကံ၊  
ဘယ်နှယ်ဖန်လို့၊ ငွေကျန်အများ၊ ရှိသည်တစေ၊  
ပြည်စိုးတကာ၊ မွေဖန်များလို့၊ စကားငယ်လွန်သည်၊  
ရွာဝန်ကြေးငယ်ကြောင့်၊ ဝေးချည်မယ်လေး။

“တောင်တွင်းရှင်ငြိမ်းမယ်”

Alas, These Tolls and Taxes!

(A 16th century Aing-gyin)

by Lady Shin Nyein Mai of Taungdwin

(Translated by Kenneth Ba Sein)

Thus the maid laments:

Pitiful is my plight,  
Impoverish'd, un-resourceful,  
For that old village headman—  
With saliva-dripping mouth,  
And robe tuck'd up the loins—  
Is so reproachful, dictatorial,  
That *kun* or *laphet* I cannot  
Offer for our betrothal:  
O, the soaring, spiralling  
Village tolls and taxes have made me  
So helpless, I seek subterfuge  
In sweet-worded pretexts!  
Ah, what past-life misfortune  
Shadows my present life  
That this village Official  
Should extort all my savings!  
And despite our plighted word,  
Alas! these village tolls and taxes  
Will keep me and my beloved  
Forever far apart.

x x x x x

village headman=hereditary village official during feudal times

*kun* and *laphet*=betel-leaves, areca nuts and pickled tea served to guests during an *ahlu*, betrothal or wedding ceremony.

—o—

<sup>21</sup> The Guardian, Burma's National Magazine 13, 6: 23.

## 2.1 Colonial Period

### 2.1.1 Discussion in the Government's Council, 27. July 1921<sup>22</sup>

Editors note: The following extracts reproduce just a very small part of a lengthy debate. The Governor's Council before the implementation of the diarchy reforms consisted of 25 persons chosen by the governor. Three of them, among them (Maung) Myint, the mover of the resolutions discussed, represented the views of the nationalist General Council of Burmese Associations (GCBA) that through the *Wunthanu* associations influenced the majority of the rural population. Like (Maung) Chit Pe, he was engaged in the rice trade. Mr. Booth-Gravelly was a government servant.

MAUNG MYINT: "Your Honour: I beg leave to move this resolution : That this Council is of opinion that in view of the present high prices of rice in Burma the Government should intermediately take such steps as may be necessary to protect the Burma consumers and that this Council recommends this Government for actions necessary. [...]"

MAUNG CHIT PE: "[...] You will, I trust, agree with me that freedom of competition and no interference in trade and industry is, as it should be, 'the general policy of the State. There are exceptions in which State interferences and regulation are justifiable and called for, It depends upon the circumstances of each country. For instance, salt and weaving industries in Burma require State interference by way of protection, but in the case of agriculture, the interference by way of fixing the maximum price of paddy and rice and restricting their export is absolutely unjustifiable. [...]"

Without State restrictions on export, the country can have adequate supplies for its consumers [...]. Let the Government notify to the people, say in January, February. and September ever year, through the press and by distribution of printed notices that there will be no restrictions whatsoever on export of food-grains and they should store sufficient food-grains for their own consumption. The publication of such notification, I think, will have the desired effect and can do away with the Government restrictions. [...]"

MAUNG MYINT moved the second resolution : - "That in view of the facts that the majority of consumers in Burma are cultivators and that they are usually compelled to sell their crops at low rates and pay for the same at much higher rates for their own consumption, this Council recommends to the Lieutenant-Governor of Burma that ways and means be found to protect them " and said : " In support of this resolution, I beg leave to state that Burma is a rice-producing country and the bulk of her people are producers of rice which is the mainstay of Burma 's export trade. It is desirable therefore to see the people responsible for its cultivation are comfortable and happy.

As matters stand, it will be alarming to examine their lot as to their comforts and the life they usually have to lead. It is far below the mark to be satisfactory. Its causes are not far to seek

Their average standard of intelligence and commercial knowledge and information is very poor and limited. Their financial embarrassments due to the high rate of interests are extremely great particularly during the time they are usually in possession of the crop they produce. [...] Loans are unavoidable to them. They usually have to discharge the debts in the early part of the year after the forced sale of their crop. [...]"

For these drawbacks of theirs a good majority of them have to sell their crops not much longer after the thrashing and some have to sell even as standing crops at unreasonably low prices; and again later, usually from about the middle of the year, they have to buy the crop of theirs for their consumption at high prices altogether out of proportion to their selling prices in the year.

<sup>22</sup> Source: Abstract of the Proceedings of the Council of the Lieutenant-General of Burma, Assembled for the Purpose of Making Laws and Regulations under the Provisions of the Government of India Act, 1915. The quotations are taken from the pages 854-880.

It may be suggested that they should not sell out the whole output of theirs but should rather store some *wunsa* for their consumption.

I submit such a suggestion is well and good in theory but not practicable on account of those debts contracted. Those debts are due to the low rates of prices they get at their sales.

These facts cannot be disputed. They thus become the inevitable victims of either the moneylenders or the ungrateful middlemen or of both in many cases [...]

The producers of rice in Burma are no better than field laborers and to leave to them to help themselves: to raise their status higher under the circumstances is altogether unfair, for from our expedience we know they are incapable of doing it themselves against the tactics of the middlemen and the pressure of money lenders.

I submit it is the duty of the Government to see that these helpless people get their due for the crop they produce, and all consumers including themselves pay reasonable prices for the same crop for consumption. Some sort of protection either by way of control of prices and of export of rice both to Foreign and India, [...]"

Mr. BOOTH-GRAVELY : - "With a good deal of what Maung Myint has just said one cannot but be in hearty agreement. There is no doubt that many cultivators sell a proportion of their crops at relatively low rates. For this state of things there are several reasons, viz., debt, to which the hon'ble member has referred very often; the necessity of paying rents, which bulk much larger than the land revenue in the budget of the ordinary tenant ; the necessity of repaying advances, which have been made on the crop ; lack of storage, which undoubtedly is often operative, and very often, it is to be feared, the temptation undoubted of prices which are somewhat high and which tempt the cultivator to gamble on future prices like other people. [...]"

As regards the debt question Government is naturally anxious to relieve the situation in any feasible way, but there is no royal road to the solution of this question. Government cannot prevent debt nor is it possible for Government, even if it were advisable to attempt a solution by the provision of unlimited cheap credit. It seems to me that the only promising solutions for this problem are the expansion of the co-operative movement, which is steadily going on, and the extension of education. The hon'ble member has himself attributed a great deal of the trouble to lack of intelligence on the part of the cultivator. For this the only remedy is education. [...]"

### 2.1.2 Ba Thoung, *Dobama* Manifest No. 1

Editors note: In May 1930, the Dobama (We-Burman) Association was founded which should become the leading Burmese nationalist organisation led by Aung San. The founder was Ba Thoung who adopted the title "Thakin" (master) to indicate that the Burmese and not the British were the masters of the country. Thakin Ba Thoung propagated the program of the new association through a song that should become Burma's national anthem and two series of pamphlet the first of which started with the following exhortation:<sup>23</sup>

O fellow countrymen, is not Burma your and our country? Is not loving your and our country the supreme obligation for you and us? Is not the country of Burma for the people of Burma? But of course! Burma must be for Burmans! And, if it is not yet so, we must endeavour to make it so in the future. We must begin this task from now. Let it not be forgotten. Let there be unity. Let there be congregation. Be of service to each other.

Begin establishing Burmese shops.

<sup>23</sup> Hans-Bernd Zöllner (2000) Birma zwischen "Unabhängigkeit Zuerst – Unabhängigkeit Zuletzt". Die birmanischen Unabhängigkeitsbewegungen und ihre Sicht der zeitgenössischen Welt am Beispiel der birmanisch-deutschen Beziehungen zwischen 1920 und 1948. Münster, Lit-Verlag: 508-509.

Buy at Burmese shops.

Spill, if you must, in your own pockets. Burmese shops, don't sell at prices higher than the current prices. Purchasers, if goods and prices are the same, buy at our native Burmese shops.

Economy is strength. In Burma, our country, only the Burmese should prevail. Do not be content, to live as hewers of wood and drawers of water, in your own country and in your own land. So long as foreigners dominate the economy we Burmans will not shine with power. A viable economy means strength. Economy is the greatest weapon. Only the command of the economy will assure the brightness of social promise. One of the reasons why the Germans lost the war was because the Allies were able to carry out a destructive economic blockade. Without an economy there is no power. Because we Burmans have no power, there is no respect. Because we Burmans have no power, those born in our country, with Burmese blood in their veins will not say that they Burmans. Isn't it a fact starting in your eyes that they are passing themselves as foreigners? Let this direct message register the naked truth in our head. Don't yield the economy to others. Wealth is Power. Seek Wealth. Seek Power. Make hay while the sun shines.

Trade is the field that we Burmans had ignored. Therefore beginners as we now are, we are bound to meet all kinds of difficulties. Let not these difficulties daunt you, or overcome you. Show that we Burmans can make a good job of any task. Avoid diffidence. Avoid giving credit. Avoid pretensions and arrogance. Learn to develop courteous conduct between the vendor and the customer. Always remember that "Burma is for Burmans". Always bear in mind the spirit of "Dobama".

### 2.1.3 The Nagani Song<sup>24</sup>

Editors note: The song was composed end of 1937 to propagate the Nagani ("Red Dragon") Book Club founded by young Burmese intellectuals and politicians-to-be, the most prominent being Nu who became independent Burma's first Prime Minister and Than Tun and Soe, later leaders of the two Burmese Communist parties. The song was an instant success and remained popular among the Burmese intelligentsia for many decades.<sup>25</sup>

- **Stanza**

- a) To be free from poverty and paucity, (we) will guide and lead. (Indeed,) variety of gems, gold, silver are enriched. That is OUR NATION'S LAND.
- b) Poverty-stricken people will be able to do charity, (such as) building monasteries, also erecting pagodas.
- c) Similar to the times of Bo Bo Aung<sup>26</sup> and Shin Ajjagona<sup>27</sup> (when they helped poverty-stricken people) now, our predestined ostentatious time has arrived.

#### **Chorus**

(We) will be healthy (and) wealthy, protected and defended from all the dangers and perils.  
Poverty-stricken people will soon be rich and no more out-of date (and left behind).  
With the power and the potency of our *Nagani* Book Club, poverty-stricken people will not be withered or wasted. They are bound to enjoy "Special

---

<sup>24</sup> Translation: U Tin Htway

<sup>25</sup> For some more details see Working Paper 1 of the Myanmar Literature Project, pp .....

<sup>26</sup> A famous mystic with supra natural powers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who was – and is – believed to help Burma to find a way out of any troubles.

<sup>27</sup> An alchemist of the Bagan period.

Results”.

(We are) going to establish a “NEW AGE” (for us), peaceful and prosperous, With the competency and capability of *Nagani* Book Club, (we are) going to raise (our) “National Pride, Glory and Honour”.

- **Stanza**

19. For (everyday living) dwelling and eating, (these things) must be disburdened and unencumbered without delayed.

20. We, the *Nagani* Book Club, will endeavour to help poverty-stricken people feel comfortable and content.

21. The Light of (our) Religion, The Light of Buddha *Sasana* will be luminous and glitter.

22. Our Land of Myanmar people will be prosperous and successful. Golden Rain will fall (i.e., our land will be blessed with prosperity, happiness and well-being).

**Chorus**

- **Stanza**

23. All sorts of perfections will be secured and protected. Without practicing alchemy day and night, (we) can enjoy (good and prosperous) results.

24. Myanmar – our Myanmar Land, with the power and potency of *Nagani* Book Club, will be able to submerge in to the earth (or) will be able to fly in the sky.

25. For the poverty stricken people will not suffer scarcity (in terms of) money, (we will) struggle and endeavour. Aiming (to reach our National Goal) (we) will guide and show “THE WAY OUT”.

**Chorus**

#### 2.1.4 Ba Khaing, Political History of Myanma, 1938<sup>28</sup>

Editors note: Ba Khaing (1906-1940) was a Burmese intellectual and a co-founder of the Fabian party which propagated a kind of “soft socialism”. Fabian ideas had been introduced to Burma by J.S. Furnivall (1878 – 1960) who tried to reconcile Western and Burmese traditions in terms of society and economics.<sup>29</sup> Ba Khaing’s book was the first Burmese attempt of writing about the country’s current history. It was critical both of British and the mainstream of Burmese politics of that time.

The first paragraph deals with the GCBA activities in the early 1920s, the latter is part of a section entitled “Weakness of the Burmese People”.

In economic matters there is the call "to promote native arts and crafts", and "monk preachers should teach people the value of austerity during their dhamma talks." "The government is requested to promote and assist salt production." "In villages money lenders are charging high

---

<sup>28</sup>The quotations are taken from Hans-Bernd Zöllner (ed.), Material on Ba Khaing, *Political History of Myanma*. Myanmar Literature Project 10:5.

<sup>29</sup> In 1935, Furnivall wrote a book on Burmese economics designed as a textbook for Burmese students entitled “The Political Economy of Burma”.

interests. They should be stopped." "The government is requested to stop giving land grants and holding rights to foreign investors." "It is resolved to put up appeal to the government not to freeze paddy prizes in 1919-20. The profits from paddy business should be spent in Burma." These are advanced economic proposals. Judging from them we have to admit that those leaders were really far-sighted.<sup>30</sup>

[...]

The Burmese people these days are not living well like in former days, when they used to say that, "There is no funeral of one who died of starvation." They said it because it was true then. But times have changed. The Burmans are doing worse; they are like fish in water that's getting scantier. One can see for oneself poverty and starvation. This is due to the gradual intrusion of foreigners who are cleverer. The Burmans being unable to match their cleverness have fallen from being well off to badly off.

Foreigners who have intruded into the country rob from the people; but they do not rob all at once. Their method is gradual, like driving in a wedge; it's slow torture. For example, the people do not object the municipals which prescribe home designs; the people don't think it was against their interest. But the law makers have intentions. By making rules about home designs, the people are forced to buy iron, corrugated iron sheets for roof, cement, glass for glazing, ceramic toilet seats etc. That makes good business for importers and foreign factories, but puts the people in financial hardship. By such indirect means, the foreigners rob from the people. That is the way foreign capitalists work.

To fight such exploitation, the people need to produce the materials domestically; and there must be laws, enacted by government, to enforce the use of domestic products. The people on their part should use native products out of patriotism. In this way we can develop our national economy. But we are sad to observe that in Burma people are interested in politics, but not in the economy. A nation may be free, but without economic freedom, there is no real benefit; the people will remain backward. This is obvious in Thailand, which is politically independent, but cannot economically recover, because it is exploited by France. Due to unbearable economic oppression by foreigners, there had been a revolt to dethrone the King. In Abyssinia, even before it came under Italian invasion, the economy had been in the hands of foreigners. Economic exploitation by Italy is also evident in Albania which has its own monarch. It is clear that political leaders should bear in mind the importance of economic independence, in addition to national independence.

There is another important task. That is to improve commerce. It is the duty of the Burmese Chamber of Commerce, Burma Central Trading Association, Upper Burma Trading Association, and political leaders to work together to develop commerce. Commercial organizations have the duty to provide information, and assist people with their problems with regard to commercial business. They should find ways and means to make progress. The organizations should talk with the government, railway and shipping companies, to recover, or prevent losses. They should also fight foreign exploitation; find foreign markets for Burmese companies to export, exhibit native products foreign trade exhibitions.

It is for the purpose of assisting in these tasks that the Burmese Chamber of Commerce has got a set in parliament to represent it. The Burmese Chamber of Commerce and Upper Burma Trading Association have representatives attached to railways and Rangoon port authority. Although the Burmese Chamber of Commerce is not quite active at present, it is hoped that in future it will work for the benefit of the country, as indeed it is required. It is the duty of the people to remind and ask them to do their duty.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Ba Khaing, *Political History*: 35.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid 132-134.

## 2.1.5 Thein Pe, Indian-Burmese Riot, 1938<sup>32</sup>

Editor's note: In July 1938, riots broke out in Yangon which quickly spread to many parts of Burma and. 240 people were killed and almost one thousand injured. The main targets of the Burmese assailants were Indian Muslims. Shortly after the incidents, Thein Pe who later should become one of the most prominent Burmese writers, published a pamphlet dealing with events. Between 50.000 and 100.000 copies of the booklet were distributed.

The Indians never consider the interests of the Burmese. They are always seeking their own benefit. They never dream of working together with the Burmese for better or worse; instead they segregate themselves into a privileged minority. On many occasions in national politics as well as in district and urban administration, they make alliances with the Europeans just to oppose the Burmese.

Therefore, it is very funny that some of the Indian leaders and the Indian newspapers lay the blame for the Indo-Burman riot on the Europeans who separated Burma from India by force. It is a great joke. In the economic field, the Indians always suppressed the Burmese. They gave no room for any sort of progress.

One of my friends became a retail agent for a foreign perfume and toilet goods firm. But a group of Choliya Indians claiming that this line of business was not suitable for Burmese, tried to obstruct him in every way they could. Yes, it is true. Not only that: another friend of mine manufactured some cosmetics and sold the goods by himself. But the Indian traders did all they could to ruin him. At last the poor fellow was forced to allow one Indian as his sole agent for trade and then only could he carry on his business. When the Wunthanu movement reached its height, Burmese home-spun cloth became very popular and the demand for textiles from Madras and Bombay fell badly. To take counter action, the Indians, being the wholesale dealers for cotton raw materials, raised the price to squeeze out and strangle the Burmese weaving industries. When the government, with the aim of promoting industrial know-how in Burma, proposed to establish a technical institute it met strong opposition from an Indian capitalist. By these and similar methods those Indians had a strangle-hold over the Burmese and, albeit without bloodshed, were working for our ruination and destruction, the method propounded by Gandhi.

The instances of unjust and illegal oppression by the Indians of the Burmans are numerous. On the issue of the restriction of immigration, mixed marriages, the Tenancy Act, the promotion of industrial expertise, Burmese as a first language in school education etc. etc., the Indians' part was only to protest, obstruct, and prevent.

I hope you can now see that the Indians who are obstructing and working against Burmese interests belong to the capitalist and middle class. They cannot be described as average Indians. But these capitalists and middle class Indians in Burma are trying to involve the poor ordinary Indians in our quarrel. Therefore, it appears that we Burmese have come to hate all Indians without exception.

But actually, I don't think the ordinary poor Indians, who came and lived in Burma are ungrateful. They never attack the Burmese. They don't treat the Burmese as their enemies. And sometimes they work together with the Burmese for better or for worse. In oil-field strikes such as Yen-an-gyaung and Syriam and some other strikes, Indian workers and Burmese workers were inseparable. And it is certain that even if the capitalist and middle class Indians try to break their unity, they will not be divided.

So, while the Indians are giving all sorts of trouble, the Burmese are becoming more and more aware; the Age of Prosperity is disappearing and the Age of Austerity begins; the Burmese become poorer and poorer with less and less to comfort them, physically and mentally. They see the approach of poverty, unemployment and hunger in turn. But on the other hand, our young men are awakening. Those who have an education but no job are becoming more and more aware of the real

<sup>32</sup> The quotations is taken from Hans-Bernd Zöllner (ed.), *Material on Thein Pe, Indo-Burmese Riot*. Myanmar Literature Project 10:12.

situation. And even the monks are organizing themselves to face the country's predicament.

So, in such conditions and in such an atmosphere it is not surprising that some small incident should spark off an Indo-Burman riot. It is no wonder that that the spark gradually became a flame.

As usual, capitalist groups and capitalist's stooges, the middle class groups, were those to start to attac

### 2.1.6 Aung San on the economic basis of Burmese democracy

On May 23, 1947, Aung San at a convention of the AFPFL outlined his principles for the new constitution to be drafted by the Constituent Assembly elected in April. After some remarks on the quality of the Burmese state he stated that a "true democracy" had to be established based on the following principles:

#### Basis of Burmese Democracy

Economic principles are the underlying basis of political conception. Politics is inseparable from economics. A capitalist democracy may deny it, but when we study profoundly the constitutions of the world we find economic laws immanent in them.

Capitalists may argue that capitalism is the last word in the sphere of economic truth, but no political or economic system can be permanent. They change with circumstances. As for Burma, she has to rise from a position of subjection which is even worse than capitalism. We must first rise from subsection before we can get over capitalism. Meanwhile we can and must control and restrict capitalism. Only by building our economic system in such a way as to enable our country to get over capitalism in the quickest possible time can we attain to a true democracy.

How shall we lay the foundations of such a democracy?

1) Ways must be found that will lead to the nationalization of important industries and mean of production. [...]

Seven other criteria follow the next two of the, (workers rights and the right to own the land) being closely related to economics. After that, other political topics (minorities, power control, fundamental rights, defence, judicial system) are mentioned. At the end of the list and before an elaboration of these principles, Aung San stated:

Without such fundamental principles no true democracy can be attained. Built on such foundations and in time the noble edifice of true democracy will stand for all the word to marvel.

## 2.2 The Parliamentary Period, 1948 – 1958

### 2.2.1 The *Pyidawtha* Programme

Editor's note: *Pyidawtha* can be translated as “happy motherland”. Under this name, Prime Minister Nu announced an ambitious program in 1952. Two years later, when it was started, a book was published that outlined the basic foundations of the scheme.<sup>33</sup> The book commences with the following text:

#### **A PROSPEROUS FUTURE CAN BE OURS BECAUSE**

we can more than adequately feed our own population. Unlike many of our neighbors, Burma is not overpopulated.

We have within our nation adequate fuel resources and great electric power potential - the prerequisites for industrial development.

We have known deposits of a variety of minerals-raw materials to feed industry and to benefit agriculture.

Our great rivers, with their tributaries and canal systems, constitute a natural transportation network over which goods and people can be moved cheaply between the main population centers.

We are leading producers of several commodities, notably rice and teak which can be sold abroad to earn the money we need to buy the things we must import.

The people of Burma are resourceful and talented. In their native intelligence, their spiritual strength, and their faith in the future of our country, they possess the indispensable personal and human values that always underlie national greatness.

These are the elements of our future prosperity: fertile land, power, transportation, raw materials, and good human resources. Efficiently developed and wisely administered, they can provide the material basis for a new era in Burma.

Yet in large measure our assets today represent only potential wealth. In the past our resources were exploited not for Burmans but for foreigners.

Much of what we had was destroyed in the war. More has been destroyed by the insurgent enemies of the New Burma.

Instead of the high standard of living that our resources make possible we have today an abysmally low standard of existence. It's well known that living standards throughout Asia are sadly inferior to those of Western Europe and especially the United States. Yet standards of living in Burma are low even when compared to most of our neighbors.

But we shall waste no energies in lamentations or bitterness over the past. Our heritage is proud and strong, but our tea history lies ahead. And there is much to be done.

What is to be done for the next few years has been charted carefully. For more than two years the Government has been laying the groundwork for the economic and social development of the nation. An intensive study of Burma's resources-present and potential-has been carried out; and we have drawn up ambitious but practical plans for development in agriculture, mining, transportation, communication, power, industry, and finance, as well as in health, education, housing, and social services.

The most qualified experts from Burma and abroad have been engaged in these studies. Their reports and recommendations have been carefully studied by Government. With some changes and modifications to suit the conditions of the country, we have now adopted a great programme for economic and social development, including an impressive list of projects for completion in the near future. Some of them already are under way. Together with the policies and principles that will guide them, and a flexible time-table for their completion, these projects constitute the Development Programme for our *Pyidawtha*, the New Burma.

It is important that the people of Burma know about this programme and understand it. They

---

<sup>33</sup> Government of Burma (1954) *Pyidawtha. The New Burma*. Rangoon, Economic and Social Board: 9-11.

must share its purposes, understand its requirements and, in the end, make it work. That is why this report has been written.

## OUR OBJECTIVE

THE New Burma sees no conflict between religious values and economic progress. Spiritual health and material well-being are not enemies: they are natural allies.

We do not seek Improved agricultural techniques or modern factories as ends in themselves: we seek them as useful means towards a better life.

We shall describe in the rest of this report the material and technical steps that must be taken to build the New Burma. But do not forget that the objective of all these steps-separately and together-is a Burma in which our people are better clothed, better housed, in better health, with greater security and more leisure – and thus better able to enjoy and pursue the spiritual values that are and will remain our dearest possession.

## OUR PRIORITY TASK

IT is not necessary to tell the people of Burma that war and insurrection - quite apart from being a moral outrage - are destructive, wasteful, and costly. We have seen enough of that to need no reminder.

Yet it must be emphasized that until peace is fully restored throughout our land, we cannot push ahead with maximum speed in building our New Burma.

We cannot bring crops to market from lands that lie in areas held by insurgents. We cannot complete our river and rail and road and air transportation systems into enemy territory.

We cannot construct dam to provide us with power until the river banks are clear of bandits.

We cannot even explore some territories for minerals and other resources because they are not free for peaceful development.

And so, reluctantly, we have devoted much time and money and materials to our national defence against internal enemies. Reluctantly, because it is sad that we should have to fight against brother Burmans. Reluctantly, because this time and material and money that should rightly go to constructive use must be employed for destructive purposes.

There are many things that can be done to develop our nation even as the fighting continues, and these things are being done. But our soldiers must be paid, fed, clothed, housed, and armed. This effort now takes nearly one-third of our total budget. Every kyat and every hour devoted to garrison, to patrol, to guard, to arm, to kill, is a kyat and an hour stolen from our Development Programme.

So more in sadness than in anger - but with firm resolve - we shall spend allocate and fight until peace dwells in the remotest corners and in the deepest jungles of our land.

This is our first - our priority task.

### 2.2.2 December 1953: Maung Maung, State Socialism in Burma

Editor's note: Dr. Maung Maung (1925-1994) was a Burmese intellectual who held a variety of positions from his training as a soldier of the Burmese army in 1944 to his post as the country's last chairman of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) and the country's president in 1988. Furthermore, he can be regarded as the chronicler of Burma's history from the times of the independence struggle until the end of Burma's socialist period. In 1953, he became editor of *The Guardian*, an English language weekly magazine which sympathetically reported and commented upon the country's development.<sup>34</sup>

Most people in Burma today are ardent leftists. Marxists, intellectuals and thinkers, organisers, and workers, revolutionaries and realists. It is extremely difficult to find people who profess themselves to be rightists; "rightists" and "reactionaries" are terms of reproach reserved for political opponents. At the core of this great enthusiasm for leftist principles and ideology is state socialism which finds acceptance in the constitution of the Union and which is today becoming a real and active force. A whole series of government sponsored schemes have been launched to build the welfare state; "pyidawtha" or "welfare state" is a slogan as much as a programme. A national convention was assembled with the Anti-Fascist Peoples Freedom League (AFPFL) and the Socialist Party as organisers; representative organisations came, and men from the professions and experts. There at the convention, socialist principles were expounded, socialist plans were proposed and approved, "pyidawtha" committees appointed. Burma, however, was not unaccustomed to such national gatherings. There had been a number of them before, were great messages had been delivered, lofty principles expounded, pledges and promises made, and plans even adopted. After such gatherings peoples would usually go home happy to have done their bit. The pyidawtha convention was different from many of its predecessors in that serious endeavour survived it-

### A NATION AT SCHOOL

The endeavour has given rise o many plans of far-reaching range. State socialism is at it with a vengeance. Government machinery itself is to be overhauled and rebuilt. There is the plan for "devolution of powers" by which the people are to be brought into the government at different levels through the village, township, district and divisional welfare committees that are to be set up; in future government and the people are to be one. [...] There are plans for the development of Burma's economy; agriculture production is to be stepped up, national resources fully exploited and industries built. The plans appear practical and practicable. In 1948, in the first flush of freedom's excitement, such plans had been hastily drafted, but it was under unduly optimistic envisaging a two-year period of operation. The present pyidawtha plans are long-term plans and therefore more realistic and have a better chance of success. [...] Perhaps the best hope of the pyidawtha plans is the education plan. There is a growing realization of the urgent need to educate the people for democracy, to train men and women to run the welfare services of the state, to develop the country's economy, to man the industries. It is a picture of a nation at school, and the encouraging thing is that people are learning without much trace of self-consciousness. [...] Mass education that began in a groping way a few years ago has now found its feet; field workers are being trained and sent out to deliver education at the door of the peasant and the villager. The pyidawtha plans seem to be in earnest.

Apparently there are no obstacles to the success of State socialism. The constitution is pledged to it. The Socialists enjoy a decisive majority in Parliament; they hold important Cabinet posts. [...] Nobody quarrels with socialism; even those who do not know what it is all about are ardent Socialists and Marxists. The danger to State socialism comes from within, from the habits of behaviour and thinking and the complexes of the people. In the Burmese political scene the one thing that is sadly and conspicuously missing is an organised and disciplined opposition. Those parties and splinter parties which have something to say and some ability to organize have preferred to fight it out with the government in the field rather than in free and fair elections. [...] When the masses are educated for a genuine and active democracy, when they are taught tolerance, taught to appreciate the value and necessity of unity amid diversity, then perhaps multi-party politics may cease to do the harm that is has been done to the country. Till then, it may become a painful essential for the government parties to assume greater and more far-reaching powers to enable them to preserve the State and promote effectively the various pyidawtha and welfare schemes. For that, the AFPFL and the Socialists, who have come through five years of office a little battered but whole, seem best-fitted. But how to reconcile concentration of power in the government to make State socialism work, and such of the pyidawtha plans as that for the devolution of powers is a question that must worry the best political strategist.

---

### 2.2.3 Editorials from the *Ludu* Daily

(Translation: Phone Kyaw Myat)

Editor's note: The *Ludu* ("People") newspaper was founded in 1946 by U Hla (1910-1982) who later became known as "Ludu U Hla" in Mandalay. It was renowned for its critical and independent reporting and commentating. For a series of articles the editor was jailed for three years under the Nu government. The newspaper was closed down by the military government in July 1967.

#### 2.2.3.1 August 6, 1952: Pyi Daw Tha (Peaceful and pleasant country) Speech

We heard over the radio the first part of the recorded speech that Prime Minister U Nu gave on 4.8.52 at the opening of the Pyi Daw Tha conference which was to last two weeks, held at the Kyrgyzstan racecourse. The Prime Minister's speech lasted three hours and it would have to be recorded as the longest in history not only of that given by U Nu but for a conference opening speech.

If you considered the fact that not all members of the parliament but only some selected members were invited; that some prominent members of the opposition were left out; that the Arakan members had walked out of the preliminary meeting that was held on the day before the conference etc., it seemed that they did not want any opposing, or weighing up of the pros and cons of the proposals that would be presented at the conference and only wanted the 'pote thin nyo/ chameleon' (yes-men) delegates. If that were the case, the 'Pyi Daw Tha' programme drawn up by U Nu's cabinet could have been presented at the parliamentary meeting and the matter settled and it could be said that (? 4-5 lakhs) of tax revenues were wasted, and not used. We heard the meeting chairman Minister U Tun Win say at the opening that the conference that was being held would become a tradition and forever remain in the history of Burma, and thought that posterity would say that U Nu's government had wasted abundantly on AFPL propaganda as if the financial situation was comfortable.

U Nu had the habit of mentioning about the rebels whenever he had the chance to do so in his speeches and he didn't forget to do so this time at the Pyi Daw Tha conference either. U Nu said his government did not like the violent course and had said repeatedly to the rebels to lay down their weapons and to come in. If there was difference of opinion in the country or if they were not satisfied with the government and rebelled, it was understood that reconciliation through negotiation was called the amicable way and fighting to suppress totally the rebellion was called the violent way to end the rebellion. We couldn't understand U Nu saying that he did not like the violent way when instead of negotiating with them he had been following the path that would lead to fighting until either party was soundly defeated.

In his speech U Nu said the Burmese had, during the British rule, 'education for slaves' and in the future they would get education fit for 'Thakin (master)' and the country would be 'Pyi Daw Tha-peaceful and pleasant'. By this he must have meant the sort of education that would produce barristers-at-law, directors of companies, traders, factory owners, bank managers and wealthy persons. That sort of education would only make those people the masters/ Thakin of the people. In any country that sort of people only amounted to a handful. We find it quite hard to digest that. The education fit for Thakin (master) must have meant sending the sons and daughters of those officials and ministers to study abroad as state scholars at the expense of the state and the son and daughter of the owner of the company going to study at their own expense. We don't want that sort of Thakin, and neither do the people. At some point in his speech he referred to the saying that 'only people who were well fed could afford to be morally upright' and that bribery was rampant because the Burmese were not well fed. We heard that the Pyi Daw Tha plan would make the people well fed and abolish bribery. We would dare say that was totally wrong. There might be many thieves and robbers because the people were not well fed but bribery was not because they were not well fed; they were not just well fed, they were so full as to be almost at bursting point. We have often

heard it frequently enough in U Nu's speeches. It was difficult to investigate cases of bribery at this time because the officials at the top themselves condone such acts and 'share' the spoils. The head of department could expose or cover up bribery in the department. When people at the top shared, the bureau of special investigation officials could not do anything. What we meant was, under the capitalist system where there was much vying among the people, saying that making the people well fed would abolish or reduce bribery was just wishful thinking. The point is the AFPFL government will, in carrying out the Pyi Daw Tha plan, make mistakes (as U Nu had admitted) and change through trial and error, which needed to be changed. And even if in the end it went smoothly and successfully, the type of prosperity would be like that of the Americans and the English (like the example we had given) and there would be making bigger buckets and pots for those fetching water- there would not much benefit for the people. We could envisage the prosperous minority frequently changing new cars and coming to own two or three brick houses instead of just owning one.

#### 2.2.3.2 August 16, 1952: Plan for Economic Progress

If the government were to say that the peasants who made up 85 % of the village population were hard up and poor and drew up an economic plan that would enable the village to have telephone communication with the city, construct a road so that they could send their children easily to the university and do aerial survey of the village, the village headman and the hamlet committee would give up in despair.

The plan for economic progress that the American companies and experts in economics drew up for the Burmese government was rather similar to the one mentioned above but U Nu's government instead of giving up in despair had been presenting the plan with affectation at the Pyi Daw Tha conference; it was amazing.

The peasants make up 85% of the population of Burma. Traditionally, only when the peasants were well off was the country as a whole well off. Yet, in the plan expected to cost 1080 million, only 250 were to be used for the construction of irrigation canals. Not only that, but it also mentioned a future plan that would cost 7500 million out of which about 2500 million would be used on foreign experts and equipment. We understand that, by accepting the plan drawn by a group from America, U Nu's government was distributing the profits from the sale of rice, the fruits of the labour of the peasants, to the so-called foreign experts and the followers of AFPL.

The objective of inviting only 'pote thin nyo/ chameleon' (yes-men) delegates and not inviting members of the opposition became abundantly clear with this matter. The plan had major undertakings that would prove to be white elephants and members of the opposition would surely object to the proposals when they see that these were shams and meant for the consumption of AFPL followers. But now there were only 'pote thin nyo' delegates hoping to benefit from these projects and there was thunderous applause after every project had been proposed. U Nu's government had anticipated this.

With the current paddy prices the welfare of peasants is not beyond reach. Supposing every farmer were to have 10 acres and did not have to pay any rent, and an acre of land yielded 50 baskets of paddy, that would mean 500 baskets of paddy, and if he were to sell it at 500 kyats ( per 100 baskets) a household would get 2500 kyats. It should not be difficult for the government who would be selling it at more than 700 kyats/ 100 baskets to give the farmers 500 kyats/ 100 baskets. It could even exempt them from having to pay the tax on paddy land. In that case, a farmer's household would get 2500 kyats a year and even if the cost of seed paddy and the cost of hiring the farm hand were to be deducted, they could still live comfortably in a rural setting.

It would only need paddy land and draught animals for this to happen. By natural law the paddy land should be owned by the people working it; if this rule proved insufficient, it should not be impossible if the government were to clear virgin land with the help of machines. This could be

done within the 7500 millions that U Nu's government had proposed and the farmers would obviously be better off.

Burma had the history of having an economic set up where persons of great wealth who did not work the land got the lion's share from the land instead of the farmers who had to sweat it. For example, a farmer who had 10 acres of paddy land would get 500 baskets of paddy, and (at the rate in the past) was to get 500 kyats for his paddy, but since he had taken a loan to be paid back with paddy at harvest time the farmer only got 400 kyats. The wealthy person who gave out the loan got 500 baskets of paddy for 400 kyats. He would store it up and sell it when the price of paddy had become 160 kyats per 100 baskets. He would get 800 kyats. Now the wealthy person who gave out the loan who did not have to do anything except jiggle his knees got 400 kyats from the 10 acres of paddy land. The farmer had to give water tax, land tax, the cost of seed paddy and the cost of gathering and transplanting seedlings out of the 400 kyats and he had to toil and would be exhausted. This state of affairs had been going on throughout the history of Burma and still continues to this day and since there were no plans to touch this in the plan for economic progress proposed by the American experts and accepted by U Nu's government, it will continue like this.

Whatever the plans, at how many millions the cost, so long as the problems mentioned above are not addressed, there is no way that the farmers are going to be better off and those traders depending for their livelihood on doing trade with the farmers would be worn out gradually. All the while, those persons of great wealth who stored up the commodities and demanded exorbitant prices, the so-called craftsmen who got a lot without exerting much from white elephant projects, those who got government contracts, AFPL followers and so-called foreign experts would be the only ones whizzing by in their cars.

#### 2.2.3.3 March 4, 1957 Farmers and Foreign Currency

Selling rice still fetches more foreign currency than others and it still remains the 'gold' of Burma. According to the Burmese government and foreign news agencies, paddy production in Burma had been less due to adverse weather conditions and export would not be able to meet foreign demand this year.

The people and the government of Burma very much needed the foreign currency and we believe that if paddy was purchased systematically with due attention rice could still be exported to foreign countries like the previous years.

Many towns still had paddy that was harvested last year. The hitches that the farmers still face when they come to sell the paddy at the purchasing depot of the agricultural produce trading board should be rectified without fail. The farmers should be able to lawfully sell their paddy directly to the buyers and receive promptly, the due amount in full. The cotton farmers face the same problems at the cotton purchasing depot. Sugar cane farmers also have the same problems.

Some responsible persons presumed these problems to be insignificant and did not pay attention to the fact that these were not giving the farmers their peace of mind. The peasants had to toil alongside the draft animals the whole year round and when they came to sell the paddy at the town, they had the opinion, for quite some time that the relevant persons were not giving them the privileges that should be accorded to them.

The farmer coming to town to sell the paddy on his cart wanted his paddy to be measured correctly and paid the right amount. He would not like anybody to deduct any amount of money for any reason from the money he received from the sale of his paddy and he did not want to wait two or three days to get the money. These basic problems should be solved so that there would be hope for increased paddy production, growing seed paddy of pure stock and improvement. It is especially needed that the farmers be able to buy useful and indispensable items more easily at cheaper prices. It would not do with those who have mainly profits on their mind.

In some towns farmers from the rural areas would come to the paddy purchasing depot at the edge of the town and parked their carts outside the area managed by the municipal corporation and still had to pay fees for parking their carts. The farmers were ignorant and had to pay the fees. The officers from the depot did not intervene; other organizations did not say anything about this and the unknowing farmers had to pay needlessly.

We believe that the government should pay more attention to the farmers if they want increased paddy production and more foreign currency. Peasants constitute 80% of the population. Their peace of mind, prosperity and enthusiasm are very much needed for the economy of the country. Only when we have abundant amounts of foreign currency from selling paddy would we be able to establish industries. Therefore, relevant persons should be more attentive when dealing with peasants and should be fair and compassionate. Help and education should be offered so that the desired progress could be made. It is time to put it into practice.

*Going shopping abroad? Be considerate of the department  
stores here*

#### 2.2.3.4 February 19, 1958: Finance of the State

Observers of the financial situation of the state had predicted that the state would be in financial straits. The government knew this and had been increasing taxes and introducing new ones. It had been registering war reparations as an income and borrowing from foreign countries.

The state had been in financial straits all these years except when the price of rice had been very high. France had been in a financial strait because it was waging a war in Algeria to expand its territory; England was not in a comfortable financial situation because it had been competitively producing weapons; the government as well as the opposition accepts that our country had been in financial difficulty because of the civil war. The people had personally experienced that.

The financial situation of our country would be worse this year. It could be said that we would be worse off because the production of paddy would be half of that of the previous years.

According to the news going around in Rangoon, the financial difficulty was not a trivial one. The government's expenditure was 85 million a month while the revenues had decreased by about 40%. Initially, on average, it had been 90 million kyats a month; it was said that at the end of January, it was only 45 millions. If so, it would be cause for anxiety.

While we were having economic difficulty America was also in an economic depression; unemployment had risen three times in January from 1,120, 000 to 4, 494, 000. The situation had President Eisenhower announce that the economic difficulty was a temporary thing to raise the morale of the people. What would be the repercussions of the American depression in the capitalist world? How would it affect us directly or indirectly?

Our country had invited foreign investments. The ministers personally invited them when they went to America, England and Japan. In the present circumstances, it was a long way off for America to come and invest here on purely economic grounds. Capitalists from America and other foreign countries would have liked Prime Minister U Nu saying that he did not accept Marxism at the AFPL conference. But even for foreign capitalists like them, circumstances would not allow them to invest heavily.

If it could affect like this directly, how could it affect indirectly?

If teak and minerals fetched high prices when rice production was less, it would have been better. But it was American aid that enabled the European countries to buy teak and minerals. Since American aid to the European countries would decrease it would affect the trade in Burmese teak and minerals.

The American economic experts that the government had hired to deal with the financial difficulty of the country had proposed:

1. The first advice was to issue more bank notes, and
2. To take drastic measures to cut costs and scrap or merge government boards and departments created on a temporary basis was the second advice.

If more bank notes were issued it would be like the time of Japanese occupation. It would complicate the interrelation with foreign banks and the government would not be able to do so. It would not be easy to scrap some boards and departments, or to merge them or to reduce the manpower. Some departments had incompetent or redundant people. Originally, these people had been appointed even though it was known that they were incompetent or redundant. It would not be easy to dismiss such people like some others.

But the present economic situation of the state had reached the life or death stage and we should be candid and weed out those who had been appointed as a favour.

This alone would not solve the massive economic difficulty and we must be quick to follow the path the people liked and which would rid us of the cost of the civil war and save us from feeling inferior at having to borrow from foreign countries and really overcome the various difficulties.

## 2.2.4 Nu on the foundation of economics (January 1958)

Editor's note: In January 1958, the AFPFL held its third All-Burma Congress, the first after December 1947. After the elections of 1956 the result of which had shown that the party had lost credibility with the public, Nu stepped down in order to reorganize the AFPFL. Be Swe took over for eight months and handed the premiership back to Nu in February 1957. In his opening speech at the congress Nu gave an all-encompassing overview about the policy of the party and its background as a foundation for its future policy.<sup>35</sup> In the first section Nu speaks about the goals of the AFPFL. In order to clarify the socialism practiced by the AFPFL he deals with the Marxist concepts of Dialectic and Historical Materialism as well as economics. The following extracts reproduce the beginning and the end of this part. A lengthy passage on the history of economics and philosophical matters is omitted.

### **Economic Doctrine**

Comrades, before we discuss Marxian Economics, let us see if we can define economics in an understandable way. Economics is sometimes known as Political Economy.

Economics is nothing but a study of the activity of man in relation to his needs for food, shelter and clothes. This is a rough and ready definition, and is not comprehensive or very exact. But, it will do for the present.

" How are commodities used by man produced ?

"How are they distributed?

" How are they utilized ?

„Why is the income of a car driver better than an income of a peasant?

„Is it better or otherwise to separate a piece of work into smaller undertakings done by different individuals rather than to have a consolidated, big undertaking?

„Is it desirable for the government to manage or control the production, processing or distribution organs in country?

---

<sup>35</sup> Nu, *Towards Socialist State*. Rangoon, Director of Information. 68 pages.

- „Where does money come from?
- „Who decides on a fair wage?
- „What is the cause of unemployment? “

These are some of the questions, concerning man's acting for food, shelter and clothes and for the satisfaction of other economic needs that the science of economics attempts to answer are need food, shelter and clothing. The simplest way to get these things is to grow one's own food, to make one's own smelts and clothes.

In primitive times, people provided for themselves in this simple way. Even now, in some areas of the world, this simple solution for the satisfaction of human needs is being practiced. But, with the development of society, human needs became more involved and complex. For instance, in primitive times, a piece of meat would just be roasted before a fire for eating. But now a days there are many ways of cooking a piece of meat. And there are additional accessories and luxuries, even in the matter of meals, such as dessert courses and sweets followed by a cigarette. In the matter of clothing, too, a bare minimum is not enough. In the olden days, five yards of *pinni* (home spun) would have been sufficient for a man for six months. But now, one wants to wear silk, muslin, voyle, and nylon. In the matter of shelter also, it is not enough to build a hut with bamboo and thatch, but cement, bricks and steel girders are needed as building materials. Then, we have to have electricity to dispel the darkness, and fans to cool us.

Therefore, in this present age, it is a sheer impossibility to provide for one's own needs directly by one's own work, that is, to produce the commodities needed by oneself.

And it is not practicable for a man to build factory after factory to produce all the commodities he needs.

Therefore, the production of commodities needed by people has to be divided up and specialized. This is called division of labor. For instance, the cobbler makes shoes, the tailor makes dresses, and the peasant ploughs the land to produce paddy. The produces of such specialized activity can be exchanged for barter, or can be sold for money with which other commodities desired by one can be bought. People who work in offices, or mechanics or car drivers get wages in return for their services, and these workers can buy commodities with the money they thus get.

There are three stages in relation to any commodity. These are:

- (1) Production,
- (2) Consumption, and
- (3) Distribution of Income.

I will first explain Production by means of an illustration.

Take, for instance, the production of a cheroot. First, a piece of land has to be cleared. Next, the plant, the *Cordia Myxa*, the leaf of which is used for the cheroot, has to be planted. Then, the leaves are picked, dried, and packed in long baskets. Then, these baskets have to be sent to cheroot-rolling factories by means of train, truck, steamer, boat, coolies and other methods of transport.

Then the workers in the factories have to roll the cheroots. The cheroots are then sold by wholesale and retail shops. The means of transport such as train, truck, steamer, and the distribution outlets such as shops, have to be included in this first stage, called Pro- auction, because though they may not be, directly involved in the actual manufacture of the cheroots, they add to the price of the cheroot. For instance, if the price of a hundred cheroots is one kyat, the train, truck, steamer, coolie and shop get a portion of that kyat. Thus, they indirectly are involved in the Production Stage, by adding to the price of the cheroot.

Comrades, I have explained the first stage, called Production. Now we come to the second stage, called Consumption. This is easy enough to understand.

Comrades, smoking the cheroot, when it is the finished product, is Consumption.

Comrades, I will now go on to the third stage, namely, Distribution of Income amongst the factors of Production.

Comrades, of the three stages, that I have mentioned, the third stage of Distribution of Income is the hardest to grasp. Distribution here means the distribution of the wealth, usually called income, gained in return for the commodity, amongst the various factors responsible for, or involved in, the production of the commodity. Here, by wealth or income, money is not meant. Some economists define this wealth or income as anything that satisfies the needs of people. This wealth can not be gained without work. In the case of my illustration above, the cheroot leaf, the content of the cheroot, the filter and the cheroot itself can be regarded as form of wealth. The extent of their wealth depends on the price of the cheroot.

Although the price of the cheroot is handed over to the cheroot seller, he is not the only person who gets this price or income in return for the cheroot. From the man who clears the ground for planting the cheroot-leaf plant, to the cheroot seller, many individuals share indirectly in the income, received as the price of the cheroot, and these individuals would include even the maker of the paper for the cheroot brand, the printers and engravers of the brand, and the man who sticks on the brand. In this way, everybody involved in the production of the cheroot to the point of its sale, shares in the distribution of the income derived in the form of the cheroot's price.

However, it would be impossible to look for every individual who shares in the distribution of the income from the commodity.

Therefore, we have to look for the factors of Production. These are

- (1) Land.
- (2) Labour.
- (3) Capital.
- (4) Management.

These four factors of Production exist in Capitalist society, and now I will explain each one of them.

Land is at the root of all economic activity. Take the case of the cheroot. The cheroot-leaf plant has to be planted in the ground. Even the scissors used in cutting the leaf, and the metal used in the engraving block for the brand, are made of raw materials which are obtained from land. Even the cheroot factory has to be built on land. Therefore, when any income, or wealth derived from the production of any commodity, is distributed, land is a factor taken into account. For instance, if a piece of land is hired out to plant the cheroot-leaf tree, rent is obtained in return. If the owner of the land himself grows the plants, when he calculates his profit, he will have to charge the rent value of the land first.

Labour also is an essential factor, as without workers no commodity, and no raw material can be produced. In this category of labour is included both the manual worker, who handles tools and implements, and the intellectual worker who works with his brains. In the distribution of Income, labour has to be taken into account as a factor.

As regards Capital, there are two schools of thought. Capitalists hold that capital is nothing but savings, accumulated as a result of industry and hard work. Socialists hold that capital is profits gained as a result of exploiting the labour of the workers, by withholding part of the income that is due to the workers. Capital exists not merely as money, but can be in the form of means of production, buildings, and raw materials.

In the distribution of Income, the capitalists take their share in the form of interest. Just as rent has to be paid for hiring land, interest has to be paid to the capitalists for the use of their factories,

machines and tools, buildings and raw materials.

Management is also an important factor sharing in the distribution of income. Even though there may be land, labour and capital, if there is no one to manage the production processes, no production can be successful. Those responsible for management must plan for the development of the undertaking, must find the land, must engage the workers, must maintain discipline amongst the workers, must save up for capital, and must take risks for the enterprise, Taking risks means taking the risk of making a profit or incurring a loss. Therefore, in the distribution of Income, management has to be taken into account.

Comrades, What I have said so far is just background material to make it easier to like to touch on grasp the economic doctrine of Marx. I would the history of Economics, since an understanding of Economic History will be of great value in studying the Economic Doctrine of Marx. Therefore, I would like you to pay attention to the following summary of the history of Economics.

Economics, as a Science is of fairly modern growth. At the earliest, its scientific beginnings may be placed in the 16th or 17th Century. At that time it took the form of Mercantilism.<sup>36</sup>

[...]

Comrades, as the AFPFL does not believe that Marxism is a doctrine that is infallible,

- (1) the AFPFL approves of only some parts of the Economic Doctrine of Marxism, and
- (2) rejects Marxism as to the ideology of the AFPFL.

Comrades, we accept some parts of the Economic Doctrine of Marx. It is our belief that commodities should not be produced for profit, but for use. The production of goods for profit and not for use is one of the main causes of poverty and starvation in the midst of plenty, and one of the main causes of ill-health and disease, of immorality, and of destructive in bloody wars.

Comrades, it is not an easy task to establish a system in which goods are produced not for profit but for use. In attempting to establish such a system, the most difficult part would be to overcome human greed. If greed can be overcome successfully, to that extent will the establishment of such a system be successful.

However, difficult it may be to overcome human greed, as Socialists we must make it our goal to establish a system in which goods are produced not for profit but for use. There will be plenty for all if we are successful in establishing that system.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.: 24-28.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.: 42-43.



*Darling! I happened to spend the kitchen money on buying a piece of cloth for its unusual design.  
So, today's dish will only be kazunywet, water green.*

Translator's note: Kazunywet is a cheap, leaf vegetable

## 2.3 The Caretaker Government (1958-1960)

### 2.3.1 General Ne Win on “Economic Insurgents” (1958 and 1959)<sup>38</sup>

Editor's note: In September 1958, U Nu resigned as Premier Minister of Burma and handed the Government over to General Ne Win who was elected Premier by Parliament on October 31. According to the 1947 constitution, his tenure was limited to six months. Before this period expired, Ne Win resigned in February 1959. After the constitution was amended, he was re-elected again. The following texts are taken from his speeches before parliament on the two occasions and contain the sections dealing with economic questions.

#### 2.3.1.1 From Ne Win's Speech on October 31, 1958<sup>39</sup>

Mr, Speaker, Sir, I wish now to speak about the fact that just as there are perils threatening the country due to the armed insurgents, there are also perils in the form of economic insurgents. The people of this country will continue to suffer at the hands of the economic insurgents as long as businessmen will do anything for a profit, as long as they always strive for a large profit margin and as long as they welcome participation in black-market activities.

I wish to make this request to the business sector. Give up those ideas of raking in huge profits. Give up those monopolistic practices. When the rebels are bringing the country to ruin through armed rebellion, do not contribute to the ruin of the country also through economic insurgency. Do not commit this economic insurgency, even if inadvertently.

<sup>38</sup> Source: *Is Trust Vindicated? A chronicle of the various accomplishments of the Government headed by General Ne Win during the period of tenure from November, 1958 to February 6, 1960.* Rangoon; The Director for Information, 1960.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 549.

It shall be announced here in no uncertain terms that, even if despite this request, rules and regulations continue to be routed, due and severe action will be takers according to law. My Government will strive its utmost to bring down the high-ceiling prices of goods and foodstuffs today. I wish to suggest to the slumbers of Parliament and to the consumer public not to remain passive against those guilty of inflating prices. Do not depend entirely on the Government to take action against them. Lend your help to bring these economic insurgents to the attention of the Government. If the people, through mass action, can bring about the apprehension of these economic insurgents, I assure you that my Government will mete out due and severe punishment to these wrong-doers.

#### 2.3.1.2 From Ne Win's Speech on February 13, 1959<sup>40</sup>

Mr. Speaker, Sir with your kind permission, I would like to issue a warning to the economic insurgents. They might think to themselves: "Now, the Caretaker Government is no more and we can commit as much economic insurgency as we like".

Do not entertain any such notions. I give you this stern warning that you will face a penalty as severe as the scope and extent of your act: of economic insurgency.

On their part, citizens of the Union should not indulge in widespread purchasing and stocking of goods and necessities just to forestall the economic insurgents. Citizens should refrain from doing so, because by this very activity they will be aiding and abetting the cause of the economic insurgents. The Defence Services will continue to perform the task of providing and distributing the various basic necessities and foodstuff required vitally by the populace.

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 550.

## 2.4 The Socialist Period

### 2.4.1 Editorial in the *Guardian Magazine* (1966)<sup>41</sup>

#### PRESCRIPTION FOR PROSPERITY

In his address to the Second Convocation of the Institute of Economics last month, Rector Dr. Aye Hlaing put the matter in a nutshell when he pointed out that the two measures needed for a country to become prosperous were to economize on expenditure on the one hand and to amass capital and make investments on the other. This prescription for prosperity is agedly, which, nevertheless, holds true for all time. This has also been stressed by the Revolutionary Council Chairman and his colleagues time and again in giving their leadership for the improvement of the people's economic condition. The call made by them for the people to put forth their utmost efforts to increase the national production must still be vivid in the mind of the people. It was pointed out that the country's population was increasing by about two per cent. If the production stagnated, the people would become poorer yearly. It was imperative that the people strove to ward off yearly worsening poverty. But for a better life, they would need to increase their productivity of national wealth by more than enough to feed the increasing mouths; enough to allow for capital accumulation for investments in development projects and industries. The nation's economic planners have set their sights at an eight per cent increase. This would provide the people with a better living standard and also allow for reasonable capitalization.

But, any increase in productivity would avail the people very little if they do not exercise, or try to develop habits of thrift- We, as a people, it is feared are sorrowfully lacking in this habit of thrift. More sorrowfully, it would seem we have been born, rather with a great propensity for ways of improvidence. This weakness of ours it can be seen, has been fully exploited by strangers in our midst. True, the depression of the thirties hit the cultivators hard and as a result the majority were dispossessed of their lands, It was also equally true that their unconcern for the morrow, too. was partly responsible for their plight. This defect in us, which might be called a national malady, must be remedied, if we would build ourselves a better life. Otherwise, all our efforts at increased production would amount to a futile labour of fetching water in a sieve. It would, thus, seem to point to the fact that of the two measures of increasing production and exercising economy, the latter is no less imperative than the former. While some of the factors may be beyond one's control in the former, there is none that one cannot control in the latter. All that the people need is to make a resolve and hold fast to it. If the people can see that they are making a valuable contribution to the national prosperity by economizing in their expenditure, there can be little doubt of their being able to rise to the full expectation of their leaders.

### 2.4.2 Editorial in the *Guardian Magazine* (1967)<sup>42</sup>

#### Definitely Better

The new paddy purchase systems explained to the press last month by Trade officials, may admit of improvement but is definitely better than the old, and an easily be seen as one designed to profit both the cultivators and the State. The rise in the paddy prices, though hardly high enough to meet the desire of to cultivators, will become some sort of an incentive for the new purchase system. The cultivators have now the freedom of selling at any place they want, not restricted to a certain centre as they had been before. Then, they may sell at the mills and storage and buying centres or through their AMPC's or Collective Marketing Bodies where there are no AMPC's or through individual registered agents of the Trade. This makes for a whole lot of convenience for the cultivators.

---

<sup>41</sup> *The Guardian Magazine* 13,11: 5.

<sup>42</sup> *The Guardian Magazine* 14,11: 5.

Registered agents are a new innovation this year. This should prove successful, besides giving some of the active peasants a profitable spare-time employment in the kind of work that they can do well.

The people will also welcome the categorical statement that there will be no compulsion whatever used to make the cultivators sell their paddy. The cultivators are free to; sell any amount they wish or not all. Only appeals would be made to their good sense and some incentives in the nature of essential consumer items would be given. On the whole our peasantry can be relied upon to show good sense. The incentive in essential commodities would be heartily welcomed by them. Salt, textiles, oil, green tea are some of the items sorely needed by the peasants, for which they had been made to pay through their nose by profiteers. These incentives would reflect on the enhanced prices to be given this year a great deal of attraction. The increase would become substantial against controlled prices for the essential commodities. The government may not be able to meet the needs of the cultivators fully in this respect, but it would be able to ease their lot considerably. And, that would be quite a large incentive, to be sure.

The peasants would also be allowed to barter their paddy for other essential commodities like oil, onions, chillies, and so on. This would also ease their lot. The paddy so bartered would have to be sold to the State. There is no outlet for them. With the bumper harvest expected, the prospects of the State being able to procure as much as it wants may be stated as better than ever. And, the new system of classifying 'emata' and 'ngasein' grades ought also to encourage the cultivators to sell. But, the thing which appears would need to be done is to persuade the cultivators to sell early. If they rushed in only at the last moment just before the rains, a lot of paddy could get damaged by the rains. It would also present difficult transport and storage problems. It is the Mass Affairs and Peasant Cadres to convince the cultivators of the need to sell and sell early, both in their own and State interest.

### 2.4.3 A Letter to the Editor of *The Guardian* (1968)<sup>43</sup>

People's Forum

Frank Views & Comments

Hiring of Private Nurses

Sir,

'Hiring of Private Nurses' in this (December 1) morning's paper prompted me to try my hands at letter writing, hoping I might in some way be able to improve things as they are now.

I don't see why without private nurses we could not keep our hospitals clean. We do not need private nurses to help us, but what we need is hard work, dedication and highly trained nurses with good theoretical grounding. A well-trained nurse with good basic grounding and a true sense of duty will always be a good nurse overworked or not.

The best way as I see to improve nursing in our hospitals are not keeping of private nurses, but in helping and teaching the present nurse to understand more of their duty towards the sick and refresh them with latest developments in modern nursing. The aim is to turn present nurses into better one and the future nurses into good ones.

Refresher courses for all the nurses working in a highly-organised institutions now a necessity. We cannot keep drop-outs and duds in teaching hospitals. Those working in a teaching hospital should have a thorough selection and reorientation course to qualify them to stay on. The future of nurses depends greatly on the knowledge, teaching and sense of duty of the present ones. As they are like pillars of guiding light for the younger ones much depends on them what kind of nurses we turn out in the future. The most important thing for the teacher and the student as well, to realise is that we are striving to produce humble, reliable and highly-trained good nurses and not an imitation of a third-grade Private Doctor.

---

<sup>43</sup> Source: *The Guardian*, Tuesday, December 3, 1968, 4.

Selection of future nurses also is important. A high school drop-out with no sense of duty and dedication, but seeking only a livelihood out of nursing, will be worthless compared to a girl of 7<sup>th</sup> grade who really wants to be a dedicated nurse, Both will be nurses, but the former irresponsible, and the latter dedicated. It needs more than brain to be good nurses – DEDICATION.

Yours etc.

F.N.

#### 2.4.4 Extract from Chairman Ne Win's Address at the Last Day Session of the Fourth Congress of the BSPP on August 8, 1981<sup>44</sup>

Editor's note: In his speech at the end of the party congress, Ne Win covered three matters. First, he explained why he resigned of the post of President of Burma. Second, he spoke about economy and third, he talked about party matters stressing that "goodness" of the leadership on all party levels was more important than "ability". The following text reproduces the section dealing with economy.<sup>45</sup>

The "political report" of the Central Committee had stated with regard to the economy: "The Second Congress of the Burma Socialist Programme Party, held in October 1973, laid down guidelines for the twenty-Year Long-Term Plan and for the Second Four-Year Plan. [...] During the period of implementation of the first and second year of the Second Four-Year Plan, targets were not achieved in almost all sectors."<sup>46</sup>

[...]

The second point I would like to talk about is the economy. I would like to speak on what Burma should do in the economy. Let us say economic principles. I do not mean that they are to be carried out *in toto*. They are to be practiced as opportunity arises and time is right.

- (a) Receipts and payments and income and expenditure should at least balance.
- (b) Effort must be made, if conditions permit, to ensure that income exceeds expenditure. [...]
- (c) In making investments, it is best to do so with one's own money and one's own possession, without borrowing from others.

If a venture undertaken with one's own money or resources should fail due to unfavourable circumstances, or should collapse and get totally lost, there is no need to worry as it is one's own money and no one will come to bother you. [...]

- (d) If a venture is sure to be profitable, such venture should be carried out partly with one's own money and partly through borrowings or totally through borrowings.

Here I would like to add that if preliminary surveys show that an enterprise is not likely to lose but is sure to be profitable, carry it out with loans if necessary, or if possible, with some of one's own funds and some loans. [...]

- (e) If it is a manufacturing enterprise it must be one which would make use of raw material produced within the country. If a manufacturing industry is set up just for the sake of setting up an industry with no raw materials available within the country that industry could meet with difficulty. That industry would have to be closed down or be throttled by those who have raw materials for such an industry. So in setting up a new enterprise of an industry survey must be made on whether raw materials would be available for it within the country.

---

<sup>44</sup> Burma Socialist Programme Party, Central Committee Headquarters 1985 *The Fourth Party Congress 1981. Party Chairman Speech and Political Report of the Central Committee*. Rangoon, The Burma Socialist Programme Party.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.: 286-292.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.: 191.

In continuation to (e) I would like to go on to (f). If work is to be done with loans, care must be taken that interest and principal are paid back without fail in due time. Don't build an industry merely for the purpose of saying that ours is an industrial country, pointing at the mills, leaving the future to take care of itself. In short, do not buy and ride an elephant merely because you can buy it on credit. Carry out an enterprise only after seeing that the points mentioned above have been fulfilled.

I say this because I do not want our country to get bankrupt, as we would, if we carry on without being careful about the points I have mentioned and if we are not able to repay the loans when due. [...]

Another point is (g). We must say that our people and our country are fortunate. I have just now said that if, either an individual, or a family, or a country, is unable to meet food, clothing and shelter needs it would be hard to have a decent standard of living and move in decent society. Some countries are unfortunate. They are not able to produce enough of the most essential food. [...]

Over thirty years have passed since our country became free from enslavement. To be really independent, it is not enough only to be politically independent: the economy is also a related factor. Though politically independent in name, if the economy is not sound, a hand will have to be thrust before others to borrow. If one's economy is very unstable one can feel very humiliated. But if prospects are good, the lender might willingly lend. [...]

Let us repeat it in political terms. There was colonialism, imperialism in the past. Under imperialism, the imperialist governments had their local administrations which monopolized the economy. That was what they did. That was what we suffered. However, after World War II, imperialism and colonialism declined to some extent. The world no longer accepted that. So, they do not themselves come and govern. They strive to exert their influence through some other means. The means they use on a wide scale is to exploit, in the guise of well-intentioned aid, the newly-independent countries which do not quite know how to manage their economies. That is why I was relating a few economic principles earlier.

Then after ten or fifteen years of independence, as the saying "the gaur teaches the hunter" goes, independent countries gained experience in economic matters through working and learning lessons when exploited or swindled by others.

What they did next was to get in and control the economy and then continue to manipulate politics. When they could not manipulate through control of the economy, they tried to recruit traitors from among our own race, those who would be subservient to them and they worked to put those people in executive positions. Such instances are many the world over. It is necessary for us to be vigilant and prevent such danger from reaching us.

I have dealt with Burma's economy. I shall go on to say something about the world economy. [...]

If I must go into details on the world economy there will be much to be said. However, I shall mention only what should be noted. There are some matters that, though true, will hurt here and there. I shall not speak about those matters here. I will however have close discussion on these matters with individuals and enterprises taking the leading role in economy.

What I want to mention at this Congress are samplings of world economic and monetary problems. [...]

What I wish to say here, and what I have already told our people in charge of the economy, is that these nations<sup>47</sup> will have to strive for recovery the next two or three years. During this time, they will be in no condition to grant loans or provide aid. Do not look forward to it. Just carry out what you can accomplish on your own. Afterwards, when conditions improve, help will have to be procured. In my opinion, a secret economic war and a secret monetary war has been in progress. It has now come out into the open. A cure must be found. They say that they will look for a redress in

---

<sup>47</sup> Ne Win talked about Britain, America, Germany and Japan.

October. We can only pray that they will be successful in finding it. One cannot say what might happen if a cure cannot be found. I wish to tell you that the world economic conditions today are similar to those which led to the world economic crisis of 1932-33.

[...]

## 2.4.5 Nyi Pu Lay, Two Stories

Editors note: The author is the son of Ludu U Hla (1910-1982) and Daw Amah (1915-2008). The two stories shed some light on the changes in Mandalay after the great fire which destroyed great parts of the town in 1984.

### 2.4.5.1 The Python (1988)<sup>48</sup>

Translation: Vicky Bowman<sup>49</sup>

The front door which was always kept closed, had been opened. Sitting in the front room, U Taw Daw was gazing vacantly out onto the road. The armchair in which he was reclining had once belonged to his father. Rather than cover it in nylon or cloth, his father had upholstered it in leather so that it would endure years of use. In the days when the cover had been new, the leather had been stiff and strong-smelling. His father had sat there throughout his many discussions concerning all shapes and sizes of beans and pulses with his broker friends. Here, his father had read his way through the newspapers of the day: *Ludu*, *Baho-si*, *Man-khit*. And here, he had riffled his way through the piles of banknotes bearing the signature of the then treasury secretary, Maung Kaung. In those days, they had house on stilts, painted with creosote. When he had lived in a grown up, story brick all he knew and built a new building, and it was in this home that U Taw Daw had learned about chick peas and pigeon peas and every variety of bean.

Nowadays, the armchair's leather cover had been worn as soft as velvet, and although the leather was not burnished or polished, the color shone out of its smooth surface, and the seams had all but sunk into the material. Contact with years of *longyis* had frayed some of the stitching, and the padding at the head of the chair was stained brown with coconut hair oil. The embroidery on the headrest was his father's own handiwork and the stitches were so regular that one might have thought they had been big wooden his father had pulled down the old house of the then sewn by machine.

The clock that his father had used to teach him how to tell to the east wall. To the time was paper was to the base with the red letters SUN in his father's hand, boxed off in blue pencil - it was a note to remind him to rewind the clock once a week. Although the face of the clock had begun to yellow, the black roman numerals still stood out clearly. Second by second, it still kept good time. Two of its hands told the hour, and a third pointed to the date. All three still rotated correctly and today the third hand was pointing to the fifth this day, a piece of attached still attached day of the month.

U Taw Daw sat gazing around him at the house, the compound, the furniture, all the household goods and kitchen utensils, down to the thermos flask and betel box-everything he saw had been left to him by his parents.

His thoughts then turned to his younger half brother, U Aung Toe, and his nephew, Maung Thant Zin. U Taw Daw's business had been sliding downhill for some time. Despite the fact that none of the three had any weakness for gambling or drinking or other forms of entertainment, they still had to dip into their savings from time to time, and, while dipping in on the one hand, they were still trying to earn on the other, but little by little, like an evaporating mothball, their bundle of savings

<sup>48</sup> Source: Travor Carolan (ed.) 2010 *Another Kind of Paradise. Short Stories from the New Asia-Pacific*. Boston, Cheng & Tsui Company, 193-201. – The author kindly permitted the reprint.

<sup>49</sup> Vicky Bowman is a British diplomat who served as her country's ambassador to Myanmar from 2002 – 2007 after having served at the embassy before from 1990 to 1993.

was diminishing. Nowadays, they had to work hard just to repay the money that they had borrowed.

Business was not booming. He bought when the price was high but then all went awry and the price of his stockpiled beans didn't rise as it should have, so that when he sold his beans, he failed to make a profit. In fact, business was a disaster. Although he could bear one bad year, or even two, after three or four bad years on the run, he was in deep trouble. Just as a boat cast adrift must be chased by another boat, so the sums of money that had drained away had to be chased by more money. And once he discovered he was no longer able to send good money after bad, what was to be done? He and his wife had often discussed this very question. The first person to come up with advice had been Ko Nyi Aung, one of their relatives, who was a property broker. "Uncle" he had said, "I could easily get you eight hundred thousand kyats for this place of yours."

When U Taw Daw had heard this, he had flown into a rage and came close to beating him. Get out! Get out!" he had sputtered, his face bright red with fury. But it had only been a little misunderstanding between age and youth. Ko Nyi Aung had not taken offense, and had apologized to his uncle, saying that he had no idea that he was so attached to the place. Soon after, he was to be found coming and going in his regular manner, and he never missed coming with gifts for his elders on festival days.

Outside in the road, the bicycles steamed past. U Taw Daw's house was close to the petrol pump used by the buses plying the routes all around town, so that buses from all lines rumbled by outside. This was the business quarter of Mandalay, full of brokers and merchants, and full of warehouses, bean-processing factories, oil mills, wheat mills, car-maintenance workshops, and video parlors. As he gazed out onto the road, U Taw Daw shivered and put on his jacket. The workers from the bean factory across the road had started to lay out a tarpaulin to spread out the beans. On the roof of the building, he noticed a row of pigeons sitting, gazing expectantly at the tarpaulin, waiting for their supper.

Through the fence-posts of the compound, U Taw Daw caught sight of his wife returning from the market, twenty minutes earlier than usual. From afar, Daw Daw Thwin tried to gauge her husband's expression. He had been gloomy for many days, but in the last two or three, his despondency had become more obvious.

Carrying her basket by her side, Daw Daw Thwin went straight in through the house to the kitchen at the back. Neither said a word to the other. Sitting in his armchair, U Taw Daw continued to stare out at the road. Usually, when Daw Daw Thwin returned from the markets, he would get up to open the gate of the compound for her, and help her with her shopping basket. What are you going to cook for me today, Ma Thwin?" he would ask, and she would perhaps reply, "Shall I cook us up some fish with some nice sour soup?" Or, if it had been a day when she bought pork: "I thought I'd cook you a bit of that pork curry that you like, dear." "Whatever dish Daw Daw Thwin suggested, U Taw Daw invariably responded, "Mmm, that'd be just fine." But today, they behaved as if they were hardly on speaking terms, like a couple on the verge of divorce.

Suddenly his reverie was interrupted by the appearance of his young brother, U Aung Toe, smiling broadly and asking him how he was. "Uh, well enough-where's young Maung Thant Zin?" he replied.

"He's coming along later, he went off to buy a quid of betel." U Aung Toe took a look around the house. U Taw Daw inclined his head toward the brass level box and said, "There's plenty in there." Then he resumed his gazing at the road.

When he heard two honks of a car horn, his heart skipped a beat and he turned his head to look. But the car sped on past, without stopping in front of the house. Every time he heard a car horn, his stomach gave a lurch, and he would turn to look and check his watch.

Maung Thant Zin arrived, his quid of betel making his cheek bulge. "Uncle, what curry is Auntie Thwin cooking for us today?" he asked, his words rendered virtually unintelligible by the betel quid. "I'm sure you're going to give us something delicious today, aren't you?"

U Taw Daw tried to smile. "Of course, we're planning to," he said.

The conversation stopped. No one uttered a word. The two older men just stared glumly into space, while young Maung Thant Zin silently studied the house. The photographs were still on the

walls. The bed, the furniture - all were where they had always been. The room was as silent as a morgue, the most recent arrival having been infected by the miserable thoughts of the two older men. He stopped chewing his betel quid, and didn't even get up to spit out the juice.

A car pulled up in front of the house, the latest model, in bright red. The sound of the engine running could scarcely be heard. U Taw Daw's jaw sagged and he murmured, "I think this must be them." The other two turned to look. The driver of the car glanced up at U Taw Daw and another face appeared next to his. From the moment the car pulled up at the doorstep, U Taw Daw felt like a patient who had just been told that his cancer was confirmed. Ko Nyi Aung climbed out of the car first, while the other man raised the windows and gently closed the door on his side, quite unlike the slam Ko Nyi Aung had given on his side.

"Uncle! Uncle, I'm so sorry we're a little late," Ko Nyi Aung was calling. U Taw Daw said nothing, forcing a smile. In fact, they had arrived on the dot.

"It's my fault we're late, I'm afraid. I had some business to finish concerning a building in the Chan Aye Tha Zan Quarter" Ko Nyi Aung's voice echoed around the silent room and his booming tones seemed at odds with the surroundings.

Ko Nyi Aung quickly took stock of the situation, realizing everyone was putting on a brave face. Daw Daw Thwin came bustling out of the kitchen, asking "Maung Nyi Aung, did you eat before you came?" The others knew she was simply looking for words to fill the silence. Disconcerted, Ko Nyi Aung replied that he had just eaten. Thant Zin handed him a betel quid. The other man had brought in a hold all made of a rough, scaly fabric, the kind that some termed a snakeskin bag, others a Penang bag. As he watched the newcomer, U Taw Daw felt his breathing become even more constricted, as if a weight were bearing down on his chest. Again he forced a smile.

The men placed the bag on the bench and Nyi Aung carried out the introductions: "Uncle, Aunty, this is Ko Myo Khin." As U Taw Daw was wondering what to do next, the newcomer stretched out his hand toward him. Caught off guard by the unexpected gesture, U Taw Daw rose hastily from his armchair and grasped the proffered hand. When he touched it, he noticed how cold and clammy the palm was, as soft and supple as a girl's. U Aung Toe broke in, "Sit down, please, sit down in this chair here." "Yes sit down, do sit down, Ko Myo Khin," urged U Taw Daw.

The room again fell silent. Each smiled at the other, although they had not a thing to smile about. "It's all wrong that we should be silent like this," thought U Taw Daw, and he blurted out, "Ko Myo Khin, are you from these parts? Were you born in Mandalay?"

No sooner had he asked the question than he realized he had made a mistake. He felt embarrassed at the thought of appearing unduly nosy.

"He says he hasn't been in this city long, Uncle," interrupted Ko Nyi Aung. After a while, Daw Daw Thwin went back out into the kitchen again. The newcomer simply smiled.

From the moment Ko Myo Khin had stepped through the doorway, they had all been sizing him up. Quite young; in the prime of his life; maybe about forty or so. On his wrist he wore a gold watch, which was set off well by his yellow-toned skin. On his left ring finger was a bright green ring. He was smartly dressed, and U Taw Daw guessed that his clothes must be quite expensive.

Bundles of bank notes were plainly visible, protruding from the snake-skin bag, and U Taw Daw was thinking that once he took this money, the house and land would no longer be his. He and his wife would be forced to move out to the so-called new pastures in the suburbs that were more in keeping with their financial means.

Ko Myo Khin started to undo the string tying up the bag containing the money. U Taw Daw wondered if Ko Nyi Aung had mentioned that they wanted to stay on in the house for another two weeks. He had assumed that the buyer would not pay up in full until they actually moved out, so would he hold some back? He took the handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the beads of sweat from his brow.

U Myo Khin tipped out the contents of the snakeskin bag onto the long table on which U Taw Daw's father had once displayed samples of his beans and pulses to the other brokers. Holding up the two corners of the bag, he shook it out until the last bits of dust came tumbling out with bundles

of money. Three or four bundles fell off the edge of the table. Of all of the bundles of green, turquoise, crimson, and brown notes, the crimson notes predominated. If anyone asked, U Taw Daw would have had to admit that he had never handled so much money in his life.

His eyes glazed over and he stared straight ahead without seeing a thing. He was remembering the people to whom he owed everything, his parents, and was only brought back to earth by the voice of U Myo Khip. What was that the man had just said? U Taw Daw started and stared about him wildly.

Ko Nyi Aung repeated what the buyer had said. "Ko Myo Khin says he brought the money along without counting it properly just. He just bundled it up. So Uncle Aung Toe and Thant Zin should check it carefully. Whatever's miming, you're just to say. He'll make up the shortfall."

U Aung Toe put a little water in a teacup and put it down next to him so that he could wet his thumb and index finger as he counted the money. Thant Zin spat the betel juice into the spittoon. They started to count the money and Ko Nyi Aung made a move to close the front door so that people outside would not be able to see them counting. But Ko Myo Khin indicated with a wave of his hand that it should be left open.

Ko Myo Khin was apparently suffering none of the agonies being endured by U Taw Daw; he was sitting calmly on the wooden chair, and far from inspecting the rear of the house, he did not even bother to inspect the immediate interior. This was the just time he had stepped across the threshold; yet here he was, behaving more like a man who had just come home to his own hearth than someone buying a house.

U Aung Toe and his son were counting the money deliberately, placing the bundles of money to one side after each had been counted. U Taw Daw sat wondering if it would help any if he took part in the counting of the money rather than just looking on. He knew that in his present state of mind it would be easy to make a mistake. But he felt a need to assuage his misery by some methodical counting. He brooded over the merits of joining in and really lifted his eyes, which had been glued to the floor. He had come to a decision.

He would count the money. That way, the whole business would be over more quickly. Ko Myo Khin and Ko Aung Toe and everyone else would leave the sooner, and he would be left in peace.

The first thing he did was to search for a bundle of notes stapled together by the bank. But he failed to find a single one. As he reached for a bundle, Ko Nyi Aung immediately glanced across at his uncle in surprise, as if to say that this was no way for his uncle to behave. U Taw Daw, who could not bear to be on the receiving end of such a look, pretended not to notice. His hands were trembling so much that it was only with concentrated effort that he succeeded in untying the bundle and started to count ten-kyat notes. Holding down the bundle with the heel of his left hand, he turned the notes over one by one with his right index finger as if his fingers were climbing stairs step by step. This was the method that his father had taught him. Carefully he counted the thousand notes and found neither a note short nor a note too many. U Taw Daw picked out another bundle, and as he counted, he could feel Ko Nyi Aung's eyes upon him. Ko Myo Khin stood up and wandered out to the car, as if the counting of the money had nothing to do with him whatsoever, as if he knew without a shadow of doubt that the counters were not going to try and pull a fast one. He did not even look back over his shoulder. U Taw Daw wanted to call across to his brother and nephew to make sure that they counted correctly, but in Ko Myo Khin's absence, perhaps it was better to say nothing so that any misunderstanding could be avoided.

Ko Myo Khin walked back to the house carrying a gold cigarette case that he had left in the car. U Taw Daw realized with embarrassment that he had neglected to offer his guests anything to smoke - although, on reflection, Ko Myo Khin did not strike him as the sort who would accept the offer of a cheroot. Meanwhile, the bundle he was counting only seemed to contain ninety-eight notes. He scratched his head and then began counting again very slowly from the beginning. As he counted, he was praying that there would not be any missing after all. If there really was a shortfall, what was he to do? Should he mention it? U Aung Toe and his son had been counting for some time, but he hadn't heard them say that they had found any shortfall. U Taw Daw had previously been wetting his fingers from U Aung Toe's teacup; but now he counted this bundle again, using his

own spit.

He stopped at nine and heaved a huge sigh of relief, not bothering to count the last note which remained under his finger. He fished out his handkerchief from his pocket and took off his jacket. Ko Nyi Aung looked the other way and lit up a cigarette offered to him by Ko Myo Khin.

As they counted the money, the seconds ticked by and started to mount. By now they had counted about a quarter of Ko Myo Khin's pile of money and so far not one of them had said that a bundle was short.

Next, U Taw Daw picked up a bundle of forty-five--kyat notes, while Ko Myo Khin picked up the newspaper and started to read, Ko Nyi Aung inhaled his cigarette with a long, drawn out breath.

U Taw Daw had collated the bundle carefully. One forty-five-kyat note was missing. This time there was no mistake. One forty-five-kyat note, out of a pile of over a million. It would be embarrassing to mention it. He held the bundle in his hand and wondered what he should do. "It had to be my bundle, didn't it?" he thought to himself and looked over to Thant Zin, who was counting his bundle. "There's one short," he whispered and held up a single finger as he passed over the bundle. The finger shook imperceptibly. Ko Myo Khin lowered his newspaper and looked up.

Almost unable to contain himself, U Taw Daw followed Thant Zin's every movement and counted along with him under his breath, Thant Zin was clearly a faster and more accurate counter than himself. The bundle under his fingers passed from thick to thin. U Taw Daw was on the edge of his seat asking "How many? How many?" like an accused man waiting for the sentence to be passed down. He and Thant Zin arrived simultaneously at the same figure. Thant Zin pushed the incomplete bundle across to Ko Myo Khin saying, saying, "Here, you count it too," but the latter simply smiled and slowly shook his head. Reaching into a bundle of money he was keeping separate, he pulled out a forty-five-kyat note and handed it to Thant Zin.

As the pile of counted notes grew, so did U Taw Daw feel his strength ebbing away. U Aung Toe said that his bundle was two notes short. Thant Zin made as if to count it again to be sure, but Ko Myo Khin again just smiled, and, saying something which U Aung Toe could not understand, gestured with the palm of his hand that it would not be necessary to recount it and took out two fifteen-kyat notes. He appeared not to want to waste any time. He lit up a cigarette and returned to reading the newspaper, looking like a man without a care in the world, quite unruffled, more like an automaton than a human being.

All that could be heard was the sound of the old clock ticking and the quiet rustle of notes. U Taw Daw finished a bundle and decided that he could not count another note. Leaning back in the armchair he looked long and hard at (his man, Ko Myo Khin, who had come to buy his house for eleven lakhs when four months ago it had only been valued at eight. Ko Myo Khin was still perusing the newspaper, his lips moving as he read as if he was spelling out each line word by word.

"Did Maung Nyi Aung mention that we would like to stay on here another two weeks?" asked U Taw Daw.

The money counters shopped with their fingers in midair. Speaking in the same slow manner as he had been perusing the newspaper, Ko Myo Khin said something that none of them understood except Ko Nyi Aung, who repeated it for their benefit: "If you want to stay on another two Geeks, you can stay. I will still give you the money now in full. But please make sure that you move out on the day you say you will."

#### 2.4.5.2 Nyi Pu Lay, Yadanabon - Golden Mandalay<sup>50</sup>

Translation:

"Thu Daw (white-robed acolyte)."

"Hey, Thu Daw." The latter call sounded angry and was harsher than the first.

"Hpa Yar." I had to answer quickly.

“Be quick about it! Every morning we have to wait for you. It’s getting late.”

The monks who were to go around the town to accept offerings of food were already in a line under the neem tree in front of the monastery. Thu Nanda (hadn’t called me and) was letting me get into trouble. I got this scolding because he went there and made the monks know that he was ready and waiting. I carefully wrapped the garment around me and looked for my constant companion, the triangular brass gong and the small club with which to hit it. I found only the small club and not the brass gong. Had the students been playing with it last night and did not leave it back at its usual place? Or was Thu Nanda trying to get me into trouble? When I carefully rummaged for it, I found it under the reed mat. Someone must have done this and I think it was done by Thu Nanda. He would often get me into trouble like this.

It was just like any other day. When I got there under the neem tree, the monks had already tucked one end of their robe neatly about the wrist, had the sling for carrying the food bowl across their shoulders and were falling in a line according to the seniority of their monkhood. The Sayadaw did not say anything but gave a meaningful look. The look had a lot of meanings. ‘Take a look at the cane.’ ‘You lack diligence.’ ‘If you are late in the coming days you will be punished.’ It was a reproving look. The monks looked pleased at my being scolded and given the reproving look. Some of the monks smiled. The acolyte Thu Nanda smiled with much satisfaction. A moment later, the Sayadaw said, ‘Ay, Thu Daw, let’s go.’ The elder monk said it without guile but I thought there was a hint of sarcasm. The gentle breeze at dawn in the month of Nayon (June) was scampering hither and thither. It had carried the chimes of the clock from the tower of Ma Soe Yein monastery declaring that it was five in the morning. The chiming ended when we reached the north gate of the monastery. In that case we were not late. It was as usual. We were on time and yet ....

I was about to hit the brass gong as we left the north gate when Thu Nanda whispered, ‘Strike the brass gong.’ There was no need to say that. I know he was deliberately trying to appear better than me. I abruptly turned my head back and looked daggers at him. I hit the brass gong hard out of spite and the sound rang through the Aung Duwon ward. I chalked up a grievance against Thu Nanda. I did not want to report that he had been reading novels and cartoons behind their back. Had I reported that to the monks he would surely be put on the bus to Myingyan and sent back to his village.

Aung Duwon ward was largely made up of working class people and there were mostly huts and wooden houses. There were two small brick houses and the owners did not usually offer cooked rice or some other food. I can’t tell where they go to offer alms. Oh, the wife of the healer of the Arogyan traditional medicine clinic at the south end of the street, Daw Sein Oo is offering cooked rice. Yes. Today’s Tuesday. She was born on a Tuesday. The goldsmith also offered cooked rice. Only these two families in Aung Duwon ward offered cooked rice today. Daw Sein Oo, the wife of the healer, as usual, offered a large scoop of cooked rice for me. Some people did not take us into account.

Back at the monastery, we get to eat at the same table but I sometimes yearn to carry the deep basket with the offered food like Thu Nanda. Who would want to be always hitting the brass gong? The brass gong is quite light and carrying the deep basket can make the muscles stiff and the hands numb with fatigue and that it gets worse as time passes. But the dogs in the wards bark at me, who is at the front hitting the brass gong, don’t they? The monk Oo Zin Pyone Nyo said that the one who sounds the brass gong could become a celestial being with a pleasant voice in his next existence. It would not be bad if it really turned out like what he said.

We passed Aung Duwon ward and reached the banana plantation. People from this place do not usually offer cooked rice much. They only offer it once in a while. The elderly man from the central plot is peculiar. In a whole year, he would offer once, on a day in July; you do not need to look at the calendar, the whole country would feel deep sorrow on that day. The cooked rice from the fourth garden was a little red in colour. Up to now, the small cups with lids for holding dish of meat or vegetables offered to the monks are still mostly empty or only partly filled.

We passed the banana plantation and halted for a while at the North West corner of Mya Taung monastery. Monks who had collected food from donors in Da Huttaw, Shan Waing and Monti Su wards that are to the east of our monastery would join us here and accompany us into the city to accept food offerings. The monks who came with us but who were going to collect food offerings from donors in Daewon and Gaw Wein would leave us at this point and go west.

A while later, the Sayadaw told me to tap the triangular brass gong. It was the sign to continue going around collecting offerings of food.

We now have a line of nearly 25 monks. I was at the front; behind me was the acolyte Thu Nanda, behind him was the Sayadaw, the monks followed in a line according to the seniority of monkhood; at the end of the line were the novices Koyin Bhaddiya, Koyin Zawtika, Shin Paduma etc.

In the large Ma Lun ward we went weaving in and out of the various sectors. It was a ward where merchants lived. It was a ward totally made up of Burmese Buddhists. The elderly matron from the broker's sales centre at the corner of the street regularly offers food. She was elderly and I had to strike the brass gong louder and at shorter intervals because she was a little hard of hearing. The cooked rice she offered was white, steaming and fragrant, too.

The first dish to go into the small cups with the lids was beans that had been boiled and fried. It was offered by the wife of the owner of the car workshop. The beans were cooked to a bright red colour. But too little oil was used.

The people from the long-distance bus terminal offered fritters made of split yellow peas. I remembered that there were a lot of those fritters in the monks' bowls on the 8<sup>th</sup> waning day of Tabaung (March). It was the anniversary of the day that a fire broke out in the centre of Mandalay. I think these offerings were made to ward off disasters. The people from the house with the 'beware of the dog' notice at the south end of Ma Lun ginger sector offered boiled garden peas. The boiled garden peas had only a wee amount of cooking oil. After that, the old woman who sold pickled tea and a variety of fried beans and offered cooked rice and a dish of curry every day, today offered a dish of bitter gourd. This is a favourite of the Sayadaw. They say bitter food is good for elderly people, don't they?

After that we got some cooked rice that had a tinge of red. The people at the corner of 33<sup>rd</sup> Street who bored a deep well and sold water also offered cooked rice and a dish of curry every day. Today she offered a dish of fritters of split yellow peas. This old woman seems to like fried crickets. When these are in season she would often offer fried crickets as a dish. The female crickets would be laden with eggs. They would be fried with ginger and garlic. That would be the favourite of Bhaddiya and me.

Before the fire mentioned just then, we got a lot of cooked rice and many dishes of meat and vegetables. Many of our donors lost their houses in the fire. Now, only some of them remain; some have moved to more favourable places. After the fire, some donors no longer offered food daily; they would offer only when they had the opportunity. There were new donors but there were not as many as before. The fire had taken away the heart of Mandalay. It was a huge fire. Mandalay is said to have a new heart but it has not settled yet. The injury was not a small one. The people had to struggle their way up from the ashes. I know that was why they could not offer food to the monks yet. Otherwise, they would, you know. They are Myanmar, always ready to give away in charity.

Some people 'rose' higher after the fire. Those who previously had a small brick building now have a two-storeyed or three-storeyed brick building; some who had a two-storeyed building now have 3-4-storeyed buildings. But these were the minority. Some are newcomers. We have not yet encountered them with much frequency to recognize them yet.

The man who usually offered a dish of roselle, the one Thu Nanda made a lampoon against, was unable to build a new house. There was a notice with the words 'to enquire at Nyunt Wai's barber shop, 32<sup>nd</sup> Street' fixed to a stake driven into the ground of his plot. It looks as if he's going to have

to sell it.

The old woman who used to offer a dish of pork in thick brown sauce made of horse gram on days of religious significance took advance payment for hiring a house from the tenant and built a small two-storeyed brick house. It hasn't even been painted yet. She and her family live upstairs and the tenant has opened a shop and hires out books and cassettes. Many are trying to get on their feet again in this way.

Once past Bo Gyoke Street, we got to the ward with the new heart\_ new people and or new houses. After crossing Bo Gyoke Street, a person offered a dish of pumpkin. Another one offered only cooked rice. Then a short woman with yellow skin who recently opened a guest house offered fried pork sausages that were cut into pieces about two finger joints in length. I don't know how much she offered to each monk. I don't know if she also offered some for Thu Nanda and me. The person from the ice factory offered only cooked rice. The old lady with gold teeth, from the two-storeyed brick building that hasn't been completed yet, offered deep-fried dough sticks. The big black dog behind the iron door bared its teeth. In the past, there had been a small wooden house here. Whenever there is an offering of deep-fried dough sticks, I would see the tray of deep-fried dough sticks that nobody touched lying on the table in the dining hall. Sometimes the heap of deep-fried dough sticks would be touching the underside of the top of the mesh cover made of thin bamboo strips. The elder monk would give these to guests or visiting monks. They did not like them much. We turned left after about a furlong. The man from the shop that sold lottery tickets offered some fried bean curd. After that, a fat elderly man offered cooked rice. He was not one of those who we meet with any frequency. He probably came out from between the yards. There are various reasons for offering food. Some hope for the attainment of Nirvana; others offered it because it was their birthday; some did so in keeping with an astrologer's advice to avert impending misfortune and some offered food in dedication to the dear departed or for those in a difficult situation etc. The woman from the beauty parlour offered fritters made of split yellow peas. By looking at the way she's holding two fritters in her hand, I think she's offering two to each monk. The person from the guest house diagonally across the street offered deep-fried dough sticks. I slowly turned my head back and saw that Thu Nanda too, looked unhappy like me and he made just a small grimace so that the woman with the narrow eye slits who offered them would not notice it. From there we went north for about a furlong. When we reached 29<sup>th</sup> Street, we went west towards Wahdan and walked back towards the monastery.

On the way back someone offered cooked rice; another offered what looked like shrimp paste curry or tamarind curry that I could not tell because the dish had oil covering the top of it. Then there were fritters made of split yellow peas. The slit-eyed woman from the shop that sold electrical goods again offered deep-fried dough sticks. When we got a little distance from that house Thu Nanda whispered something to me that I didn't hear because of the sound of the triangular brass gong. When I turned back to enquire, Thu Nanda gave a solemn look as though as if he hadn't said anything. I thought it was not important and decided to ask him only after we got back to the monastery.

On the way back to the monastery, we were offered quite a lot of cooked rice and curry.

In the dining hall, the Sayadaw and the elder monks would sit at the round table at the east end. The other monks would be seated at the two tables to the west of the first table. The novices would sit at one table in the north end and another in the south end of the hall.

In our monastery they all have their meals together like this. There is discipline at meal times and everything is quiet. The acolytes and the students wait on the Sayadaw and monks while they are having their meals.

We acolytes and the students have our meals after the Sayadaw and the monks have had their meals. The Sayadaw had finished his meal and was having green tea and dessert when he called Thu Nanda.

I was a little distance away and didn't hear all of what he said.

'.....'

'.....'

'It was because I forgot, Hpa Yar (your reverence)'

'How could you forget that? The next time you speak while on the round accepting offerings of food, you'll get the cane.'

The Sayadaw always reminded us to walk with composure while going around town accepting offerings of food. This would be an opportune time to inform the Sayadaw that Thu Nanda had been reading novels and cartoons and expedite his downfall.

Thu Nanda remained motionless and cast down his eyes.

It was evident from his expression that he had done something wrong.

'Do you think I didn't hear what you said?' The Sayadaw's voice was harsher. The Sayadaw scolded me this morning. It was Thu Nanda's turn this afternoon. I did not even have to expedite his downfall.

'If I hear something like this again, you'll be given some severe punishment.'

'Yes, yes, Hpa Yar.'

'Hpa Yar, what did Thu Daw say?' interrupted the monk, Oo Zin Pyone Nyo, with a question.

'What did you say when the deep-fried dough sticks were offered?'

Thu Nanda looked very frightened. He couldn't find his voice for some time.

'Yes. Yes, I said it would not be long before the acolyte would get the more deep-fried dough sticks the longer he lost his bearings.'

(This was an allusion to the saying that a nun gets more rice if she lost her bearings.)

We laughed when we heard his words. Dhaddiya and Chet Phaung laughed out loudly. His words prompted me to look at the mesh cover by the shelf for the crockery. There was some ground for Thu Nanda saying so. There were a lot of 'the things Thu Nanda referred to'. But the monks did not even smile, let alone laugh, at this. I can't understand why the words as laughable as a joke for us, didn't make them smile. The elders are far-sighted, aren't they?

Why didn't they laugh or smile? I'll have to ask the monks later.

## 2.5 The SLORC/SPDC-Period

Editor's note: Some features characterizing the perception of economics in the period after the coup of September 1988 are presented in chapter 1. Some others will follow in chapter 3. Here, just two documents will be reproduced. The first document is SLORC's programmatic Announcement 1/88. It hinted at the shift in economics from a socialist system to a more "private" one. - The second text shows how economic affairs were perceived by a writer commenting on the Visit Myanmar Year of 1996. The journal "Myanmar Dana" dealt with economic issues. Because of the censorship, the editor asked writers to convey some "hidden meanings" to the readers by means of texts that did seem to deal with cultural matters only.

### 2.5.1 SLORC Announcement 1/88

#### **Announcement No. 1/88 of the State Law and Order Restoration Council, 18 September 1988**

1) In order to effect a timely halt to the deteriorating conditions on all sides all over the country and for the sake of the interests of the people, the Defence Forces have assumed all power in the state with effect from today so as to carry out the following tasks immediately:

a. to restore law, order, peace and tranquillity;

b. to provide security and to facilitate transport and communications;

c. for this organization to do the utmost to ease the people's food, clothing, and shelter needs, and to render as much help as possible to the cooperatives and the private concerns;

d. to stage democratic multi party general elections after fulfilling all the above-stated responsibilities.

2) The present Elections Commission for Holding Democratic Multi party Elections will continue to exist for the successful holding of multi party general elections.

3) In order to be ready for the multi party general elections, all parties and organizations which will accept and practice genuine democracy can make preparations and form parties beginning now.

4) All presently active organizations, individuals, monks, and all the people are requested to render their assistance.

Signed: General Saw Maung, Chairman of the SLORC.

## 2.5.2 Nay Lin, Articles in Myanmar Dhana Magazine featuring economic views

Translation: Ye Nyunt

This paper deals with articles in a series of the “Myanmar Dhana” monthly magazine which feature various economic views in the 1990s, which was a period of transition in which Myanmar social life, political situations and economic patterns evolved. In other words, it was a period in which socialism was abolished and people began to embark on a new political system. During that period, the socio-economic life of the people took on various forms, and people were awakened to international economic situations. It was also a period in which businesses were set to transform into e-economics, based on industrial and computer technologies.

Hence, the issues of Myanmar Dhana that appeared in the 1990s reflect a new outlook on the economy, as different from the socialist economy, business enterprises that appeared in response to the times and new industrial technologies and techniques prevailing during the period.

### **State-owned and private businesses**

In the first instance, Tekkatho Ne Win, in his article “State-owned and private business,” stressed the greater success achieved by private enterprises in the public sector, comparing it with businesses in various other countries. The author mentions that state-owned businesses were transferred to the private sector beginning in the years following 1980. It also mentions that the practice of releasing businesses from the government control was common not only in industrialized countries but also in developing, Third World and communist countries.

The author gives instances of success stories of private businesses. In Britain, Jaguar Motor Company was nationalized in 1975. In 1979, its production declined, and a loss of 1,000,000 pounds incurred. Beginning in 1984, its shares were sold out to private businessmen, and gradually Jaguar fell into the hands of the businessmen. Since then, the business reared its head again.

Argentina sold the state-owned oil-drilling businesses to foreign companies in 1986. Mexico, too, began selling 85 public companies in 1985, and declared that it would also sell the remaining 66 companies to the private businessmen.

In the Far Eastern part of the world, Japan transferred telecommunication and rail transport businesses to the private sector. Sri Lanka handed its passenger transport business over to the private bus companies. Overall, more than 50 countries of the world had come to accelerate privatization. These countries included not only industrialized capitalist nations but also socialist and communist nations. For instance, in 1986, the Soviet Union tentatively transferred some of the cultivation work and restaurant businesses. In the meantime, the Chinese communist government started selling housing complexes to the private individuals.

### **The “white elephant” view**

The genuine cause of transferring government businesses to the private businessmen is the fact that people had come to realize that the public businesses were nothing more than a “white royal elephant,” which actually brought no benefits to the people. This was dubbed by the Myanmar author as the “white elephant” view. Adam Smith’s economic study team of London remarked: “Despite the Karl Marx’s view that production should be in the hands of workers, it is only the free market and the government that encourages the private sector could implement his expectations.” Thus, author Tekkatho New Win points out the successes achieved by the private sector in the 1990s.

### **The Art of Advertising**

Author Khin Maung Than (Psychology), in his article “The art of advertising,” deals with the changes in the economy along with the crucial role of advertising. The author says just as the economic systems changed from socialism to marketism, sales of commodities took on different modes. Just as sales became competitive, businesses came to rely on advertising to make their

products as widely known as possible. With advanced technology, advertising was upgraded from print media (newspapers, journals and magazines) to electronic media (television and digital-screen billboards). The author suggests choosing the most effective method in popularizing one's products.

The author has a guess that some traces of the ideas of advertising might have been identified with the earlier barter system.

In conclusion, the author thinks of two points connected in effectiveness with advertising (1) increase in the number of the readers of newspapers, journals and magazines; and (2) smooth transportation, which will bring commodities easily to far areas .

### **Mini-market**

Author Moe Myint Aung, in his article "Mini-market," presents a sketch of the Myanmar economy in which the scales patterns of products had changed. It is about the mini-markets or small stores of private businessmen that have taken the place of government's department stores. Mini-markets mushrooming in cities have made people in convenient in obtaining what they want.

The author explains:

**In fact, a mini-market is a small store of assorted products laid out attractively. Asian countries coined a new word "mini-market" to refer to these small stores. It has been more than a decade since mini-markets emerged in developed Asian countries.**

In Myanmar, mini-markets emerged since before 1980. The first ever mini-market in Myanmar is U Tin Kyi's "Kyi Myanmar" store on Pansodan Street. However, the first store that assumed the word "mini-market" was "Sein Gayhar". The author details lay-out designs of the products, organizational set-up, management of accounts and publicizing of the products. He points out some benefits for the customers such as all-time availabilities, convenient locations of the mini-markets. As the Myanmar market opened to the outside, products from all parts of the world have come into the country. These foreign products occupy the shelves not only of mini-markets but also department stores, shopping centres and shopping malls. The author believes that emergence of these modern markets would help stabilize the prices of commodities.

### **Interesting facts about banking**

Another article carried by the Myanmar Dhana Business magazine is "Interesting facts about Banking" compiled by Dr. Aye Lwin. The article deals with the nature of banking, the history of Myanmar banking industry, and world's banking industry.

The author explains that banking is an industry that provides monetary or financial services such as keeping and augmenting the deposits, issuing cheques, transferring money, and rendering assurances for various transactions. He also writes various kinds of banks—State- owned bank, cooperatives bank, joint venture bank, conglomerate bank, private bank, etc.

The history of banking dates back to more than 2000 BC of Babylon era when, though not yet endowed with full characteristics of modern banking, Babylonians undertook keeping deposits, giving out loans, and fixing the values of gold, silver and other metals (use value) and exchange value.

In China, Shanxi banks existed beginning from 600 BC. They undertook remitting money from one province to another, collecting 3% of the remittance as service fee. The author mentions the banking practice beginning from Greek and Roman eras up to the development into modern banking industry in Italy, England and America.

In Myanmar, in the author's view, the nature of banking could be traced back to the Pyu era when the Pyu had relations with China. He based his speculation on the coins of Pyu era. But modern banking appeared only under the British rule. The banks during the colonial era benefited the British government. There was the fair progress of the financial services in the post-independence period under the AFPFL government. Later in the BSPP era, banking industry was controlled by the

government which imposed strict rules and collected high service fees. Hence, people turned to a private money-transferring business, known in Myanmar as “hondi” system. In other words, financial black markets emerged.

In the last part, the author emphasizes the importance of the banking services, which need to satisfy the requirements of clients pointing out the fact that banks are to work for the brisk circulation of money, further progress themselves in the interests of the State or individuals. Without proper mechanism, the banking industry may bring negative impacts on the society or individuals. Especially, banking industry plays a crucial role in this market-oriented age, he concludes.

### **If you intend to buy a watch ...**

Among the articles carried in the Myanmar Dhana Business Magazine are ones that advise people ways to choose correctly the products they wish to buy and avoid falling into the tricks of rapacious persons. For example, the article “If you intend to buy a watch ...”, authored by Maung Sein New, presents facts about watches, in vogue on the market in the 1990s, such as Seiko, Citizen, Casio, etc and winding watches from China and Hong Kong and their prices so that buyers would know correct prices and differentiate between the genuine and imitated products. He also explains significant points to enable the buyers to differentiate genuine and the imitation, and frauds of some watch shops.

### **Transformation of Mandalay**

Zin Thant, in his article “Transformation of Mandalay”, examines the fresh sketches in socio-economic conditions of Mandalay. Residents of Mandalay rely more on bicycles than motor-cars. As its streets are mostly busy with bicycles, it is often referred to as “the Bicycle City”. Bicycles are used to not only for normal travel but also for business. Some people are seen carry big loads on the pillion, to distribute goods such as cheroots, snacks to small shops. Wholesales are making large profits from such form of distribution. Thus, the writers reveals a pattern of the distribution of goods in compliance with the prevailing local transport mode.

The author also throws light on the sugar industry in Mandalay. Sugar is usually produced from cottage industry which existed more in the earlier eras when the producers applied traditional methods in producing sugar on commercial scales. In the period following 1988, the businessmen in Mandalay began using large sugar mills, and productivity has become higher, enabling them to distribute not only in Upper Myanmar but also to lower Myanmar and export to Bangladesh. When sugarcane season gives out, they continue to refine toddy-palm sugar. Thus, sugar production runs continuously throughout the year. If a person invests about 2 millions kyats on the machine and raw materials, he/she can retrieve the investment money in the 19 months. So, sugar production is said to be second best industry, next to wholesale business. Nowadays, sugar industry has gradually expanded from its original centre Mandalay to various regions in upper Myanmar. The producers are also striving to upgrade their products to export quality.

### **The Glittering Monastery with a dark shadow**

Than Htay (Uttara) in his article “The Glittering Monastery with a dark shadow,” reveals the dark sides of the Mandalay’s socio-economic and civilization development such as large gaps between the rich and the poor and deterioration of moral characters.

The author says Mandalay has changed in its appearance since the outbreak of a large fire in 1984. Its façade has assumed modernity—with modern stores, department stores and hotels. Products in array in these stores are mostly of foreign origin. Modern restaurants have taken the place of traditional food shops. Brokerage houses or warehouses are busy, trucks coming in and going out.

Behind the facade lay unfavorable scenes—poor persons picking up pieces of recyclable plastic and waste paper, beggars and hawkers. Some persons, desperate in life, have turned fraudulent or come to engage in gambling. Unemployed persons have become real estate agents. Some have resigned themselves to fate, drinking day and night. The author thus compares the socio-economic sketches

in Mandalay in the 1990s with miserable scenes behind the curtain.

### **Conclusion**

Some articles in the series of Myanmar Dhana Business Magazine brought out monthly in the 1990s reflect sketches of the contemporary socio-economic changes. Especially, the authors have pointed out conditions suited to the changing economic system. The authors have reviewed the situations developing during the transition from the socialist economy to the market economy: characteristics of state-owned and private sector greater than those in the public sector, the crucial role of advertising in the market economy, the first Emergence of Modern sales mode such as mini-markets, and their consequences, the role of financial services, issues experienced in the sales and purchase of commodities in the people's socio-economic life etc. Compared to the transitional period the current situations show a great leap: the market economic situation expanding wider, and emergence of new industries in various economic fields.

The presentation in this paper is only a selection of the articles that appeared in the Myanmar Dhana Magazine during the 1990s. Economy embarks on a wide area with a variety of fields. It is believed that the articles dealt with in this paper will provide a true picture of the 1990s.

### 3 TOMORROW

Editor's note: Contributors were asked to submit papers that

- look at the crucial issue of Burmese economics from different perspectives - historical, literary, cultural, religious etc.;
- deal with one particular topic without examining the whole picture of Burmese economics;
- can be submitted either in Myanmar or English language;
- should have a size between 4 and 8 pages,
- should inform about the sources used (interviews, literature), but must not meet academic standards;
- should contain a final paragraph on the future economic development of Myanmar.

#### 3.1 Tin Soe<sup>51</sup>, Myanmar Economy in the context of Myanmar Culture and Tradition

Myanmar is a tradition-bound society so much so that not even an official function is opened without a display of traditional things like inviting the Buddhist monks to read for the “*undaye kin pa-yeik*” (i.e; literally the religion-like sutra to overcome the dangers regarding the event) which is not strictly religion as some argued; it is purely social or historical tradition. It was practiced since long time in the past as if a religious recipe so that most Myanmar (and some analysts of Myanmar as well) think it is a religious activity. However, it exerted very strong influence on the thinking and behavior of the policy-makers as well as the peoples that most policies are confused with traditions and culture. To employ Karl Marx's terms, the Production Relations conditioned Productive Forces in Myanmar, but not Vice Versa. Regardless of the levels of development; the prevalence & exertion of influence of tradition on social, political & economic activities can be high in everyday decision-makings & living.

These traditional factors may be constraints of (economic) development or not, but these mostly caused to merge inequalities in ownership; unequal distribution of income, and imbalance of trade etc. so that it can be regarded as a definite constraints to (economic) development of the society & country. Now, let us briefly introduce the traditional activities and its influences on the socio-economic & political activities of Myanmar society.

So far, three major strands of thought in the history of economic development can be pointed out as: Myanmar also faced all these three systems and, strangely enough, tradition has strongly exerted influence that no system has showed any significant progress.

- (1) 1950's & early 60's: Stages of growth theories;
- (2) Late 60's & early 70's: International dependence theories, and
- (3) 1980's & 90's: Free market theories again.

Why market? Because, most probably, market can allocate resources more efficiently than any other mechanism so far available and used by men. It can be argued with valid reasons that that

---

<sup>51</sup> Dr. Tin Soe was professor and Head of the Dept. of Economics, Yangon Institute of Economics from 1994 to 1999, then transferred to the Mandalay University of Distance Education (MUDE) from 1998 to 2005, re-transferred back to Yangon University of Distance Education (YUDE) in 2000 to 2006. He then retired from the Professorship in 2006 and took the job of the Visiting professor, dept. of GSICS, Kobe University, Japan in 2007. He was offered a Visiting Professor from the international Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) in 2007 and he rejected the offer due to his deteriorating health condition. He is at present a consultant to private & government consultation bodies in Yangon, Myanmar. He is at present also an adhoc consultant and a free lance writer at the local media.

market came as a successful response to the 'government failure' for economic development.

Hence, the rapid & widespread development of market since the turn of the 20th Century is a miracle. However, despite the important & inevitable space & span with which the market was growing & taking place in our day & time, Government. is still necessary in the areas/cases of 'market failure'; Market and government are no longer seen as substitute, but as complement to each other.

Competition as rejected under socialism & Communism as undesirable is turned to essential again for assurance of quality, efficiency and progress for which ICT, flexibility, skill and knowledge are called for urgently & these become crucial.

Accordingly, emphasis has changed to growth of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), HRD (Human Resource Development) and of competition. The pace of the change of the subjects & content of these subjects as taught at today's universities all over the world are so rapidly changed that even the syllabus designer & drawer can be amazed in reviewing the syllabuses of the subjects.

### **Orientation towards HRD**

The objectives of the growth theories are to raise the standard and level of HRD together with the growth of GDP. The core values of HRD are to raise the value of HRD. The three core values of HRD needed to grow included:

- Life-sustenance of human beings;
- self-esteem of HRs ; and
- freedom of choice.

Taking into consideration of these HRD values, the meaning of development was noted to redefine as to raise the level of living of people.

In expansion of globalization, the three main characteristic features of globalization are to be considered more importantly than others. They include:

1. International trade based more on the principle of the 'competitive advantage' than on the 'comparative advantage'.
2. Increased interdependence among the developing economies, and
3. The expansion of the Third World markets.

It would be more sensible to discuss Myanmar tradition in the context of Myanmar economic development considering the following Myanmar traditional wisdom;

Thus, Myanmar Traditional Wisdoms **selected for discussion in this seminar are:**

1. Conception on Myanmar Kingship; Perception on '*Min*'
2. Govt. intervention in the economy
3. Social Classes & Productive Classes
4. Perception on Land and Labor
5. Perception on Money Lending
6. Perception on Tax and Revenue
7. Perception on Crisis and Remedy

### **Conception on Kingship (*Min*)**

- ▲ **(Western) divine right theory:** A certain person had God's exclusive blessings to have a right to rule.

- ⤴ Traditional Myanmar wisdom: The fit person shall rule because of his intrinsic merit (*kutho*).

-This stems from the Buddhist beliefs in reincarnation together with the concept that one's good in this life is the result of good deeds done in the previous life, and gives best opportunities in his next life.

▪This stems from the Buddhist beliefs in reincarnation together with the concept that one's good in this life is the result of good deeds done in the previous life, and gives best opportunities in his next life.

(UDE: 1997:144)

### Extended implications

The king must have a very meritorious past; the greater the power of the king, the more meritorious he becomes and hence the nearer to the future Buddha;

The idea of 'check and balance' or 'argument' is alien to Myanmar kingship for he or she rules because of his virtues (*phon-kan*), but not for the blessings he receives from God;

He or she is not equal to any others; He or she is the law and others are obliged to obey.

### Perception and Image of 'Min'

Traditionally *Min* in Myanmar was perceived as one of the five kinds of enemies of mankind (known in Myanmar as *yan--thu-myo-nga-bar*):

11. *mee* (Fire) ;
12. *min* (King or govt.);
13. *yay, lay* (Water/air, refers to floods/storm);
14. *khoe-thu* (Thieves); and
15. *ma-chit-ma-hnitet-thaw-thu* (The unloved and disliked ones).

### Implications:

- ⤴ Nothing good can be expected to come from the enemy (*min* in this case).
- ⤴ Consequently, indifference, ignorance, lack of trust, and reluctant to participate in the activities and plans initiated by *min* become a tradition.
- ⤴ For the opportunists, it was a 'blessing in disguise' to achieve their ambitions, but with a result of widespread corruptions.

### Govt Intervention in the economy

- ⤴ The traditional Myanmar wisdom was in favor of govt. intervention in the socio-economic affairs. (The *Mahasamata*: i.e. the Great President is needed by the people to rely on him for equity and justice, and for security and support (*Hman-Nan* 1:64).
- ⤴ The Western concept of *laissez-faire* seemed to have no appeal to Myanmar rulers.
- ⤴ Implication: Govt. intervention is perceived by the rulers as justified and desirable.

### Social Class & Productive Class

In the ancient times, Myanmar tradition has only two classes of mankind and they are:

- ⤴ the ruling class (the rulers)

♣ the ruled (the subjects), and ruled of the game was

The ruled or the subjects are to obey and the rulers are to rule by hook or by crook, the rulers make rule so that they are above the laws. The concept of rule of law is alien to them (the Myanmar people as well as the rulers). That is, for the rulers, action towards rule of law is to pretend that he or she is the noble ruler.

### **Tax had been the main source of King's revenue;**

1. Categories: Vary and many including

(a) Land tax, (b) Irrigation tax, (c) Production tax (d) Commercial tax, (e) Gifts/ Presents, (f) Other

2. Neither the tax rates nor the tax collecting system was standardized, and was a heavy burden to the tax-payers.

3. A definite disincentive for promotion of production, trade and consumption.

### **Four Social Classes prevailed up until the era of Early Konbaun Dynasty:**

1. *Min-myo* (the King and royal members/officials)

2. *Ponnar-myo* (Bramins)

3. *Thuhtay-Thugywe-myo* (The rich and wealthy)

4. *Thusinye-myo* (The poor class)

### **Four Productive Classes until the period of Late Konbaun Dynasty**

▪ *Le-loke* (Farmers or cultivators);

▪ *Kon-thwe/Kon-the* (Traders or merchants);

▪ Well informed, reputed *hmu-matt* officials;

▪ The learned reverend **monks**.

*(Raja Dhamma Singaha Kyann)*

### **LAND: Traditional classification:**

1. *Ayardaw Myay* (Royal Land);

2. *Naingandaw-Paing-Myay* (State Land);

3. *Athe-Myay* (Commoners' Land);

(a) Common, (b) *Boba-Paing*, c) *Dama-oo-cha*

- *Wuttaka-Myay* (Religious Land).

### **Ownership of land:**

1. The king is the sole landlord and owns all land; (the *asu-a-ngan-thar* cultivate the royal land for the king).

2. The king considers the property of his subjects as in reality belonging to him 'for every subject is the emperor's born slave'.

3. The tilling right was noted to be transferable for the *Boba-paing Myay*

### **Value of land**

♣ Transferability of land was an indication that it had an econ. or commercial value;

♣ Three determinants of land value:

5. Fertility of the soil;

6. Irrigated or not in cultivation; and

7. Location (i.e., access to market).

▪ Note: Very close to the differential rent system of the present time

ci) Subjects was perceived by him as his private property because he is the 'lord and master of the life and property of his subjects who were his born slave';

cii) The king has no obligation to pay for any lobar service. If he pays his slaves after a service that satisfies him, it is done not from a sense of justice but as an act of bounty (UDE:1997:145).

ciii) This point is often interpreted by many as 'forced labor' by the commentators, but is officially termed as 'free contribution of lobar'.

## PERCEPTION ON MONEY LENDING

▪ Existed since early Pagan period;

▪ The king himself was the money-lender, and his officials and the wealthy the borrowers;

▪ Loans neither for investment nor for supporting production; it was mostly for socio-religious purpose (a kind of non-performance loans);

▪ Interest rate very high and bad debts heavy. *The Hluttaw*, during King Thibaw's time, had heard about 47,000 cases of bad debts, and were settled by writing them off.

## CRISES

Classification of Crisis: Caused by two factors:

(1) Naturalistic and/or *Karmic*; (2) Supernatural

Naturalistic/*Karmic*:

A class of ills, dangers and troubles (e.g., snake-bite, imprisonment) is perceived to be caused by natural or *karmic* factors.

Supernatural elements:

Another class of miseries, even if their distant cause is *karmic*, its proximate cause is supernatural agents like witchcraft, spirits, planetary influence, evil omens, bad fortunes etc.

Economic Crisis

♣ two main factors as the cause of economic crisis:

(1) *Karma*, and

(2) Avarice or greed.

*Karma*:

4.2 Calamities, dangers, class distinctions and discriminations, inequality in income, property ownership and status etc. among the social classes are all believed to be due to *karma*. As such, *karma* is the first attributable factor that causes economic crisis.

Implication: Undertake the activities that could change *karma* and kill greed (i.e., religion)

*Greed*:

▪ Greed is another major source and cause of economic crisis.

▪ "The life span of mankind deteriorated from *assenchie* (indefinite) years of age to *se-hnit-tan*

(two-digit-years) of age because of widespread greed which finally led to shortages and to crisis”.  
(*Hman-Nan-Yazawin*, 1:55)

- Implication: Accumulating capital and enhancing wealth and property is not desirable for they are motivated by greed.

## CONCLUSION

- ⤴ Most traditional wisdoms considered in this seminar are observed to be widely prevalent or preserved today.
- ⤴ None of them was noted to be suitable to or relevant for fostering national economic growth in the context of free market theories and broader meaning of development under globalization.
- ⤴ Traditionalism has some advantages (e.g., maintaining social stability, unity and harmony) but disadvantages outweighed them.

---

Remark of a scholar from China in responding to my query on why their govt., following the ‘opening of their economy’, has sent a large number of scholars and students only to the ‘capitalist’ countries for study tour:

‘Because our thousands-year history of culture and tradition that we stuck up for more could not compete with the 200-year history of culture and tradition’

(Response of a personal query in 1989, Sydney, Australia)

### 3.2 Tin Soe, A Summary of the Economics Ideas of Bogyoke (General) Aung San<sup>52</sup>

The book entitled, *Bogyoke Aung San; Seebwaryay Amyin* (Lit; Economic Ideas of Bogyoke (General) Aung San) was written and published in 1974, and second printing in 2010. The author is U Tin Soe, a young tutor from the Dept. of Economics, Yangon Institute of Economics; whose pen name is Tin Soe (Bawgagon) (Bawgagon literally means Economic Honours). The author is now a retired Professor of economics.

The book was written for two main reasons. As Gen. Aung San (GAS) is very highly and widely respected and revered by the Myanmar public as a national hero, certain members of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) under General Ne Win (1962-88) very frequently quoted the economic ideas of GAS to justify their unreasonable, inconsistent and failing policies and get public support.

The author saw these quotations as mostly untimely, irrelevant as well as misleading. He therefore would like to let the public know truly about the economic ideas of GAS and the environment under which these ideas have been diffused. The second objective was to arouse interests among the Myanmar youth and researchers of GAS by pooling the scattered economic ideas of GAS and analysing them for the general public to be able to understand them easily by the laymen. Very unfortunately for Burma, a very intelligent and well qualified leader like GAS was assassinated by the stooges of imperialists at his young age of 33 years. It was a great loss for Burma. GAS was contemporary to and a friend of some outstanding leaders of the region then: Nehru (India), Nasser (Egypt), Sukarno (Indonesia), among others though young, Aung San was matured, well informed and had the vision and vice. To understand them, some quotation from his public speeches and briefings delivered at several official meetings and conferences have been extracted to attest the above statements.

GAS pointed out that the cinema halls and theatres conceived by the British officials and socio-economic indicators are not true indicators of the socio-economic conditions of the country by arguing that although these might be socio-economic indicators in other countries, they couldn't be in Burma because the founders of Cinemas and Theatres Halls and those who regularly visited these places were generally the middle and upper classes? Also, GAS raised questions to the Imperialist Administration whether they know that the majority of the poor who visited these places did it as an outlet or a form of relaxation in desperation? (*Gen. Aung San: Burma Digest 16, 5, 1946*) Aung San had also reminded as since 1947 not to overdo in revising they inflation problem.

“We must review and revise the inflationary conditions. But when this problem is tackled, we must be careful not to overdo it for it could lead to the other extreme. (of the problem i.e. deflation) (*Gen. Aung San Burma Digest 17, 4/ 1947*)

“In rehabilitating the country, we should adopt the national planning. The country could not develop and prosper without applying the national planning(methods)” (*Gen. Aung San Burma Digest 7, 6/1947*) He had pointed out that the state owned enterprises (*SOEs*), Good and clear conscience would be required and it should also be timely in undertaking the issues. (*Gen. Aung San Burma Digest 7, 6/ 1947*)

Although Aung San had studied economics generally when he was a student of Rangoon

---

<sup>52</sup> Tin Soe was born in 1945, in Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State. Got his very first degree of B.A (Honours) in Economics in 1966 from the Yangon Institute of Economics. Then he got M.A of the same subject in 1976. He did research as a post-graduate fellow in Agricultural Economics in Tokyo University from 1976 to 1980. As his farther study, at the University of Sydney, he got the degree in M.Ag (Agricultural Economics) in 1988. He got his Ph.D. (Agricultural Economics) from University of Sydney in 1992. He worked as a Professor and Head of the Department of Economics, Yangon University of Distance Education from 2001 to 2006. He retired in 2006. As the visiting Professor, he worked in the Kobe University in 2007. At present he is serving as a consultant of Agrobusiness & Rural Development Consultants. – The summary was written for this textbook.

University, he has never studied economics widely and deeply as he was fully occupied with politics and warfare in his whole life time (which was unfortunately very short), he has enough experience and become a practical economist of the time. A few summary gists are presented here to attest Aung San's economic qualifications.

Aung San was neither a Marxist nor a Maoist but noted to be an admirer of *Marxism*. He has used *Marxist* methodology in many of his analyses in English. For instance, in analysing the principles of development of Myanmar society, noted that "Fascism is the worst product of capitalism, the world has ever seen. It is the most reactionary jingoism, imperialism and, indeed, rule of Finance Capital. How is it that the growth of such a monstrosity of humanity and history has made possible? The answer lies in the very laws of capitalist society.

"Capitalism, being based on anarchic production for profit and resultant inequalities in distribution of wealth, is no longer able to solve the problem that it itself sets. Instead it has called forth irreconcilable antagonism between man and man, race and race, nation and nation, which is greatly intensified and extended in depth and range, by the very culture that it breeds (the culture of profit motive, greed and hate) and by the very technique it has forged science! As the contradiction of and crisis of capitalism deeper further and further, it grows more and more desperate, and thus it resorts to all sort of stratagems, subterfuges and stupidities. Unable to solve the crisis of "over-production" which it creates, it destroys goods and machinery exploits workers and home market more intensively while it also hunts furiously for foreign markets and colonies. Desiring to get more profit and yet more profit, it get less and less, and therefore it sets in motion unbridled competition amongst the capitalists of the same country and between one state and another, leading progressively to the elimination of one by the other and formation of trusts, cartels and such form of monopoly nationally and internationally which again intensify competitions, seek more fields and pastures new and attempt to exploit or rob existing ones harder until it calls in sharp divisions and struggle between capital and labour, between state and state, between imperialist countries and colonial countries and finally leads to a series of local wars extending at least to a large part of the world and affecting it to its very foundation. This is how, roughly, the laws of capitalist development operate. But this is what capitalist society does not want to do. Instead it seeks to prop itself up by various artificial devices and means. Thus we came to have Imperialism and Fascism, the two expressions of the same phenomenon in different forms-Finance Capital.

**"Problems for Burma's Freedom,"** Presidential Address delivered at the first congress of the A.F.P.F.L, Jan. 20, 1946. ( A.F.P.F.L= Anti Fascist Peoples Freedom League)

### **Aung San's Ideas on Agrarian Issues.**

Gen. Aung San assessed that the ownership of land would be the fundamental issue of agricultural development. This land ownership issue should be considered on the basis of the land ownership of those who really cultivate or work on farms. Feudal land ownership i.e. large scale lands owned by the land lords should be constrained or eliminated by law. The size of farm-land ownership should also be limited by law. Allowing the govt-owned and cooperative owned land is not undesirable if it can be controlled and run effectively by law. The govt. must help the farmers, and the constitution guarantee them .(Abstract from the Address delivered by Gen. Aung San at the meeting of East and West Association held on Aug. 29<sup>th</sup> , 1945, at the Rangoon City Hall)

The agricultural policies for national economic development as seen by Gen Aung San were noted to include the following categories of work and phases:

- ⤴ Rehabilitation and Resettlement,
- ⤴ Development of agriculture, and
- ⤴ Long-term objectives of agriculture.

How to do them in practice was analysed and outlined in detail is given later. (See them in the book 2010, pp 38-56).

## **Aung San's views on Industrialization in Burma**

Aung San's ideas of industrialization are also interesting and seem to be still valid. "We start on a modest scale in developing form. And we must do first things first and begin with basic things such as relief, supplies, transport, communication, law and order, education, housing and public health on a progressive scale. And we must for our success apply principles of co-operation whenever necessary and practicable" ("**Problems for Burma's Freedom,**") Presidential Address delivered by Gen. Aung San to the first congress of the AFPFL (*Anti-Fascist Peoples Freedom League, Jan.20, 1946*)

**Aung San's ideas on the financial policy, which can be summarized as follows, is also notable.**

"One of the objectives that we have in our Economic and Social Policy is to 'encourage private enterprise'. One of the points of our policy in connection with currency and finance is raising foreign loans in the cheapest markets without the obligation of making concessions at the expense of national interests" ( '**Critique on British Imperialism**', Address delivered at the Second Session of the Supreme Council of AFPFL, on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1946.)

As can be noted from these and various other speeches delivered by Gen. Aung San, one other major industrial policy would be "protectionism" in the early phases.

4. Allowing the private enterprises to play freely on emergence of chaotic situation as a result of prevalence of unjust and unfair distribution systems, and production points locating too far from the market place, prices may increase leading to inflation. (The same source as above)

Aung San analysed inflation by classifying it into three categories; namely, cost-push inflation, Demand-pull inflation, and structural inflation (For further details, see *Economic Ideas of Gen Aung San*, 1947, pp 73-5)

At a Press conference held in the 27<sup>th</sup>. April, 1946, Aung San had observed that money is scarce in Burma, which was published in *The New Times of Burma*, an official British Govt's. Journal. The editor of the journal responded very loudly in the following day issue and replied that money was not scarce in the country as pointed out by Aung San, Instead, according to a wise local economist, money is too abundant in the country that certain amount of money should be withdrawn from the money in circulation (to make the value of money stable).

Aung San responded to the editor in his "**Critique on British Imperialism**", an address delivered at the Second session of the Supreme council of AFPFL on 16<sup>th</sup> May, 1946, which run as follows:

"----- At a Press conference held on 25<sup>th</sup>. April 1946, I gave a short sketchy view of the situation in our country. I then stated: Money is scarce. Prices of consumer goods are high while those of those of rice and paddy are relatively too low. Agriculture is in chaos, and harvest and crop yield are not good. The food (rice) situation in Burma is continuously deteriorating. Education is in shambles. Salaries, allowances, and wages are extremely low everywhere. Reports of acts of discrimination between servants and employees of Govt., and of Govt. subsidized companies and corporations are frequent. Law and order is seriously jeopardized. Political persecution is getting into stride. Civil liberties are still being severely curtailed, and emergency laws and Defiance Act continue. There are growing signs of discontent amongst peasantry and labour. The salaries of teachers have all along been low. Now they have been brought much lower. Even then, not all teachers are paid. In particular, the vernacular teachers suffer most. The situation amongst peasantry in several districts is getting from bad to worse. They have no sufficient *wunsas* (food grown by cultivators for domestic consumption), and yet they have to sell whole or part of their *wunsas* to repay govt loans, to pay taxes and rents and to buy essential commodities. In a number of cases, cultivators have been evicted from their buildings. But Govt. up to now is following a policy of drift. The situation is thus anything but a happy one.

“To my above rough survey of our national situation, the official organ of Govt. *‘The New Times of Burma,’* wrote on editorial rejoinder two days later. They argued with my finding that the situation in our country is not happy. However, they did not agree with my diagnosis of the cases of the present situation. To my comment that money is scarce, they made a counter-comment and said; “our observations” (“-----“ are mine) suggested that there is more money about than even before. So much so that a wise economist has argued that a good deal of it should be taken out of circulation. In either case, it must be noted, it is only a case of “observations”. Now all that I would like to ask *“The New Times of Burma”* on what grounds their observations are based. Do they form their observations by seeing the utterances at not very many cinemas and theatres of Rangoon? Do they judge this question of money circulation by paying a stray visit to a local bazaar? Do they know that there are many in this country who cannot think of going to these places by having to struggle for their bare existence from day to day. In Rangoon and a few big towns, belong generally to middle and upper classes and the very few of the many poor who can attend at all are doing so as desperate form of relaxation just to make them forget their unbearable existence for the while whatever may be the tomorrow that await them? I have been through a good many places in this country, I have known personally the actual plight of several people in several places. I also know that when the Japanese currency was abruptly declared null and void by the British Military Administration, even before the whole country was occupied and before the people in the country side has knowledge of it, the commercial adventures from towns dumped all their currencies of the country folks in return for goods and thus aggravated the situation beyond measure. I have already referred, very briefly no doubt, in this point in my presidential address, delivered at the first congress of AFPFL, The money certainly is not in the hands of the people, whatever may be the argument *“ The New Times of Burma”*. After all, we know very well that even before the war the greater bulk of the people were very poor while only a few, who were mostly Europeans and foreigners, were rich and in their hands was accumulated the far larger amount of the wealth of our country. Now this position has become much more accentuated. For the cost of living is four times higher than pre-war level according to the Burma Gazette only 12 days ago and even if we assume that the figures that gave were correct and grant that there is a general fall in prices of essential commodities (which, however, I doubt for a good many reasons), it is still quite higher. Place this factor along-side of what have done by the war, such as the fall in production, the absence of export returns, large slaughter of cattle, destruction of homes, materials and transport and the after-effects of the war, such as bigger corruption, malpractices, misdistribution, increase in dacoities, with low prices of the main staple product of our country(rice and paddy) low wages etc., any one who is prepared to face facts must agree, then that money is scarce or, at any rate, not in hands of the people. We would very much like to know exactly from the authorities concerned what the volume of money in circulation is like. Then we can compare with the pre-war condition, and also we must not forget here a huge amount of dislocations caused in our economy and finance by the Japanese occupation which resulted in pre-war currencies being replaced by the Japanese currencies which flooded this country and the huge consumption and appropriation of our goods, gold and silver by the Japanese war machines with no return in kind etc. When therefore it is said that there is more money about than ever before, a superficial comprise between the pre-war circulation and the present circulation will not give us a true perspective of things. For even if the amount of money in circulation is larger than that of pre-war period, that cannot mean in our country that there is too much money which must call for attempts to withdraw a good deal of it from circulation. The volume of money in circulation must be judged in relation to the actual cost of living in general and if, for instance, the cost of living now is over four times higher than before the war, and if the amount of money in circulation now is nearly two times higher than before the war it cannot [be] said that there is more money about than ever. And, as I have pointed out above, we must not forget the intervening factor of the Japanese occupation which upsets the equilibrium of our country’s economy and finances and complicates the present situation all the more. Therefore when we tackle the inflationary situation, it is necessary that we do not over-correct ourselves and saving from one extreme to another. For in that case there will come about deflation, a deflation which will be for

worse off than a usual sort we conceive it to be, in that the prices are still uneven and high, and the income of the people in general is very low, in fact lower even than pre-war level, according to my observation-----

“If Govt or we desire really to know the true economic and financial position in the country, it is not by superficial observations such as looking at attendances at a few theatres and cinemas or a crowd of people in a bazaar stall struggling to buy daily necessities which for many have to be severely reduced in amount and kind, just enough for bare subsistence, but by a deeper and more factual survey that we can hope to get a true picture. If at all we must withdraw a good deal of money from circulation, it is not by cuts in wages and salaries (so far adopted by the Govt.) of middle and poor classes but by curbing the activities of profiteers, hoarders, exporters of money outside of Burma, etc. And also by devising measures to take money out of the keeping the rich few for circulation among the people in general we should rectify the present economic conditions of the people.”

### **Economic Fascism in Burma**

As a political leader and the chief of staff of the Armed Forces of Burma, Gen. Aung San might, no doubt, be very busy. Despite this, he has delivered many addresses, and, he has also written a few articles and a book, and most of them are not easily available now. One of the articles, entitled, ‘Economic Fascism in Burma’, was written by Aung San and published in the *Burma Digest*, vol 1, No. 5, May 1946 issue. I have translated that article into Burmese and published in the “Bothahtaung” Daily Newspaper (11-7-1972) issue. As the *Burma Digest* Journal was not available now, I tried here to retranslate some relevant ideas of Aung San from Burmese to English briefly for our foreign readers.

As the non-sensible war policies were no longer popular among the Burmese people, and they no longer approved any war policies of the British Colonial Administration in Burma. Moreover the strong and severe offensive attacks by the Fascists (Japanese), the British forces were finally defeated and withdrawn and settled in (India’s) Simla briefly. The British colonial Administration (BCA) during their brief stay in Simla even tried to introduce economic fascism to Burma under the disguised names of the Rehabilitation plans and Projects.

Nobody could deny the fact that resettlement and rehabilitation works were urgently needed for every region of Burma. However, what measures had been taken by the BCA for this purpose? It was reported that the Governor had gained an interest-free loan of 87 million Pound Sterling to implement the so-called resettlement projects. Please note the word, “interest-free” loan. How could an interest-free loan for Burma be available, while the British Govt. itself then was borrowing from the USA at 2 % interest-rate p.a. Moreover, the loans for Burma were not in cash but in kind, and interest has been included in determining the prices of those commodities, Thus, not a word of them on loans is believable so that whatever they say could not be expected to come in reality.

When Britain borrowed from the USA, many Britishers in the Parliament and among the public had expressed their anger and unhappiness and complained on this issue so that the British Govt. had tried hard to cool the emotions of their people by promising that the loans taken is free from any kind of bindings or bond. Some Britishers had strongly criticized openly to the too much ‘business-like’ behavior of the Americans. Furthermore, some Britishers demanded that just like the USA was enjoying the preferences offered in trade by the Imperial Govt., the USA, in return, should also relax its import controls.

However, in the case of borrowing loans to Burma, the Imperial Govt., although not expressed in clean terms, had deliberately included some conditions that would be beneficial to the UK. What are these conditions?

Discarding the condition that the loans should be used in Britain, the loans obtained by the Governor was not to use in lifting up the economic life of Burmese people, but to help the British and associated business communities. Regardless of whatever they say or said, under the false

promises and objectives and targets, the Governor and his people clearly intended to rebuild the interests of the British and their associated ( especially, Indians) business communities. Sooner or not long after, most of these enterprises would be handed over to the British and associated business agents as indemnity for the damages and losses caused by war that they encountered during the war. So what the Governor had given to the Burmese people was not a loan but collecting the costs of war from our people. In other words, it was demanding for war indemnity from Burmese people, who, in fact, had been the victims of war.

Burmese people, instead of getting the war indemnity, had, in reality, to bear for the costs of war. This was a true fact as attested by the Govt's response to our query of "Why didn't they take any measures to pay the war indemnity to the people of Burma?" The Govt. responded bluntly that they (the Govt.) have no knowledge of what had been happening over the past three years, so that they couldn't do anything. Do they have to enquire the situations by landing the grounds by dropping parachutes? They couldn't do that way. Moreover, we should also know how they tricked us with regard to inducement of foreign investment to flow into Burma. Burma needs the genuine inducement of foreign investment. We do not want collecting the costs of war under the disguised name of war indemnity, monopoly enterprises, and unilateral investments.

In announcing the establishment of the Civil Supply Board, some projects like the Agricultural Project, the Govt. committed to procure the "surpluses" or excess domestic supply over domestic demand for all the crops. The Govt. has expected that such measures would induce to arise production of rice as the market and prices of crops was guaranteed, and that these measures would boost production so that stability and normally could be brought in and maintained.

However, for whom would the price incentives be? Is it for the cultivators? Or for the agents of the British Govt. (Capitalists, merchants and traders)? I accept fixation of agricultural crops, especially paddy, by the Govt. Before the war, although we have demanded to guarantee the agricultural prices by fixing them, the Govt didn't respond at all. Now, the Govt. is trying to fix the prices of agricultural prices when inflation is at its maximum height. How to do it then? I accept that the prices of basic commodities based on world market prices and the conditions of consumers. However, the inflation problem should be first solved before fixing the prices of basic agricultural commodities (especially staple item like paddy or rice). Determination of prices before solving inflation problem would mean that it is like squeezing the throats of cultivators and labourers. What benefits could they (the British colonial administration) expect from taking such a measure? The consequences, no doubt, would be more dacoities, more robberies, more black market (or illegal) sales of army use items like sweaters, pants and mosquito-nets, among other, which widely prevailed even now. Then, how is the inflation problem to be solved? In this regard, the first thing to do have to encourage the free flow of commodities both inside the country and or from foreign countries, and for that purpose, preparations for the necessary production and transportations should be made. Although the Govt. cannot take responsibility for all these activities, the Govt. can undertake the activities or measures like reducing wastages and supervising or remedying the chaotic situations in the markets and in the economy. I would also like to mention a few of export and import. The export-import business of Myanmar (Burma) is going to be controlled and operated soon under the Govt. monopoly. However, the form of monopoly that the Govt. intended is not like the one practiced in the USSR. Giving the excuse of inexperience in this kind of monopoly business, the Govt. is going to transfer the monopoly power to their former agents (some old exploiters; capitalists, traders and merchants). And, the monopolistic business is to be run by the capitalists and petty-buzzer. How unfortunate our people, especially the poor, are?

Well, if the Govt. cannot take responsibilities of all, then why does the Govt. honoured the former monopoly business tycoons by inviting them to undertake the activities that are going to be controlled by the Govt.? Why not our Myanmar nationals considered becoming their agents? Why not Myanmar nationals appointed as agents? The main reason they (BCA) gave us is again "inexperience"

Due to this inexperience facts, our nationals have even to lose all the opportunities for learning or doing to gain experiences? And, was it or is it that difficult to gain experiences of marketing and or trading? In other words, is marketing trading activities too difficult to learn and gain experiences? Can't the Govt. give or provide advice or consultancy service, if necessary, to learn about the businesses and gain experiences?

Under these circumstances, the Japanese legal tenders have been made null and void so that our people, especially the country people have been hit hard. The unclassifiable or unjustifiable fact in this regard was that while the Japanese money in Burma was demonetized, how come that these moneys were left undisturbed and legal and operational in other British colonial countries. What causes or reasons make them do the above thing in Burma? Is it because that the British Colonial Administration has no interest on Burma than those of other non-colonial countries? The military operations are over and printing out the unlimited amounts of Japanese currencies had also been stopped by law now. Why didn't the Govt. undertake any measures still, as they did successfully in some regions, to legalize the Japanese currencies and include them in the money in circulation? Why don't they (the BCA) put any effort, although they can do it, to administer Burma not by the Govt. agents but by the representatives of the people to get approval and appreciation of Burma by the international community? Why don't they try to legalize the Japanese currencies and permit them to include in the circulation of money of Burma, although they can do it?

It would be a long story indeed to write about the introduction of economic fascism into Burma by the British imperialists. There will be no end of the excuses they made. Burma is now facing big troubles caused by the rampant inflation. A great number of people are unemployed and have no money in their hands. These and other factors are causing economic forces to deteriorate and chaotic. The British Govt. not only failed to supply goods and public utilities but also unable to let the free flows of internal and external trade-instead, the Govt. closed all imports under their "dog in the manger Policy" moreover, the Govt. even cut off relations with the United Nations Rehabilitation and Resettlement Agency (UNRRA). These measures could never bring Burma to her former state and bring back into normally. Instead, Burma cannot avoid but encounter more failures and loses. As Burma was still left in a state of ignorance (by the British colonial Govt.), conditions here are still bad, if not worse.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

The assassination of Gen. Aung San by the murderers at a young age of 33 years was not only a loss of a great political and military leader but also of a 'real' economist for Burma. As he was an intelligent young man with a hobby of observing everything he sees or comes across, most of his observations as expressed in his speeches, writings, though few, and recording are noted to be well qualified and systematic. As he has been through many parts of Burma especially rural regions and areas\_ his true knowledge on the issues and problems as encountered by the peasants and labourers are very wide and note-worthy.

Aung San's knowledge on the financial and monetary problems was not only wide and deep, but also trust-worthy as attested by the argument made between him and the editors of the New Times of Burma, among others. Many economic ideas of Aung San are not only note-worthy, but also still valid today. If Aung San were still alive, most of the financial and monetary problems prevailing in Burma today could hopefully be solved effectively by him. Many of the current rural and agrarian issues and problems, and those of industrial, financial and monetary issues have the same implications that Aung San could be able to correct and assemble them correctly to the path of development.

The loss of Aung San was thus the loss of an economic leader for Burma, indeed, and his economic ideas should be learnt by all Burmese leaders from top to bottom. Aung San might not be a text-book economist or an economic theorist but a 'real' or an applied economist who is more useful for the country than the 'text-book' economists widely prevailed now-a-day in Burma.

### 3.3 Zeya Thu, Pyidawtha: Promise of Development

On January 4<sup>th</sup> 1948, Burma became independent. Burmese who have been under the British rule for more than a century were, once again, masters of their own fate. They became proud members of humanity escaping from the yoke of the colonial masters.

One year later, on January 20, 1949 when President Truman of United States took office, he introduced the word 'underdeveloped' in his Inaugural Address:

*'We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.*

*The old imperialism- exploitation for foreign profit- has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing.*<sup>53</sup>

By using that term 'underdeveloped', Truman divided the humanity into two regions: developed and underdeveloped.

That division was perhaps best described by the words of Mexican intellectual Gustavo Esteva:

*'Underdevelopment began on January 20, 1949. On that day, two billion people became underdeveloped.'*<sup>54</sup>

Those two billion people included Burmese. With that speech, Burmese who just recently became proud masters of their own fate became suddenly underdeveloped. They found themselves as second class citizens of the world.

However, that speech was not just all about doom and gloom. It offered a way out, i.e, program of development. If a nation is underdeveloped, it has no choice but to embark on a 'program of development.' 'Program of development' would bring about 'development', the most desirable goal.

With that speech, the term 'development' in that context was adopted universally. With that speech, era of development was born. With that speech, 'the promise of development' would inspire leaders of newly independent countries, alias underdeveloped countries.

In the words of the father of ecology, Haeckel: *'Development is, from this moment on, the magic word with which we will solve all the mysteries that surround us or, at least, that which will guide us toward their solution.'*<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Harry. S. Truman, Inaugural Address, January 20, 1949.

<sup>54</sup> Gustavo Esteva, 'Development', in 'the Development Dictionary: A guide to Knowledge as power', Zed Books, 2005 Edition, p. 7.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p 10.

## **Pyidawtha**

Development means one has to escape from an undignified condition called 'underdevelopment'.<sup>56</sup> To escape from such condition, one has to realize that one is under that condition first.

Burmese realized their unfavorable conditions. Having confidence after winning independence back, they believed they can 'develop'. They were going to embark on a 'Program of Development' of their own.

That program turned out to be Pyidawtha. As can be seen in the exact words of the Pyidawtha plan compiled in the form of a book,

'Between these covers is presented Burma's answer to the challenge that faces every newly independent nation in Southeast Asia- her blue print for a democratic state dedicated to the welfare of her people.'

A couple of years after the Truman speech, Pyidawtha came to Burma.

Being an elusive term to translate exactly, Pyidawtha meant '*Peaceful and Prosperous Nation*'. Some referred to it as 'Happy Land.' On the cover of the Report itself was printed ***Pyidawtha- the New Burma***. So, Pyidawtha is program of building a **New Burma** or marching toward **New Burma**.

What does New Burma mean? Well, welfare state. According to the Report, it was Burma with 'new levels of prosperity, health and security, and social justice.' The goal of Pyidawtha was captured in a speech made by Prime Minister U Nu during his 1955 visit to the United States- he wanted to '*demonstrate to the masses of people in so-called underdeveloped parts of the world that democratic methods can bring increased standards of living under a system of economic and social justice*'.<sup>57</sup> Words and concepts in that speech were strikingly similar to those of Truman in the excerpt from his Inauguration Speech mentioned earlier.

## **Promised Land**

Prime Minister U Nu in his 1952 Martyrs Day speech announced the slogan, 'Toward a Welfare State. He promised his fellow countrymen '*ludago titetalone cardazee lagasheetyar*'- 'every man would possess a house, a car and a monthly income of about \$200'.

Thus, Pyidawtha was the promise; promise of development. The promise was dramatized in an attempt to inspire and mobilize masses.

The sense of promise can also be seen in an almost poetic slogan before the prose text of the Report

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p 7.

<sup>57</sup> Nu, 'An Asian Speaks' quoted in 'Richard Butwell, U Nu of Burma, Stanford University Press, 1963, p 138'

compiled in the form of a book which includes 128 pages, photos and graphs;

*'Burma can become one of the most prosperous nations of all Asia.*

*In this New Burma we can enjoy a high standard of living*

*...health and security for our people...social justice for all.*

*We can remain faithful to our past, yet live consciously and gladly in the twentieth century.*

*We can be proudly independent, yet a willing partner in the community of nations.*

*We can blend successfully the religious and spiritual values of our heritage with the benefits of modern technology.*

*To the creation and perpetuation of this great New Burma, we bend our backs and commit our hearts.*<sup>158</sup>

Pyidawtha was an ambitious attempt to transform Burma into New one. Pyidawtha was an attempt of modernization. Modernization is, in essence, 'catching up' or 'narrowing the gap' with the West. As President of Ghana Nkrumah once hailed: 'We in Ghana will do in ten years what it took others one hundred years to do.' Here in the case of Pyidawtha, it also meant catching up with neighbours. The Report explicitly expressed it;

'...we have today an abysmally low standard of existence. It is well known that living standards throughout Asia are sadly inferior to those of Western Europe and especially the United States. Yet, standards of living in Burma are low even when compared to most of our neighbours.'<sup>159</sup>

U Nu observed during visit to Thailand that; '...for every step forward that Thailand takes Burma needs to take ten.'<sup>160</sup>

The sense of urgency in catching up can be seen in the then Prime Minister Nu's words expressed after Pyidawtha Period:

'We have been in a hurry and we are in a hurry. We have waited for so long and we feel we must accomplish a great deal in a short time.'<sup>161</sup>

'The standard of living, wrote Jean Fourastie, is measured by the quantity of goods and services which may be purchased by the average national income'.<sup>162</sup> National income is also measured by Gross Domestic Product GDP or Gross National Product GNP, the most common measure of development. The corollary is that development happens when GDP increases. As geographers

<sup>58</sup> Pyidawtha: the New Burma, 1954, p 8.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid;p 9.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Butwell, U Nu of Burma, Stanford University Press, 1963, p 119.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p 112.

<sup>62</sup> Serge Latouche, 'Standard of Living' in 'The Development Dictionary: A guide to knowledge as power', Zed Books, 2005 Edition.

Richard Peet and Elaine Hartwick pointed out in *Theories of Development*; 'High per capita GNP, reached through economic growth, becomes the objective of development.'<sup>63</sup> If Burma wanted to develop, it had no choice but to increase its GDP.

The overall goal of Pyidawtha was to raise the GDP to 7000 million kyats by 1959-60 which is about two-thirds above the 1952-53 figures of 4244 million kyats and about one-third over prewar 1938/39 figure of 5537 million kyats. That meant roughly doubling the GDP between 1950/51 and 1959/60. That also meant GDP increase of 31 percent over prewar levels and increase in per capita production of 4 percent- slight increase- over prewar levels.

To bring about the step-up of GDP to planned target, 7500 million kyats was estimated to be invested over the plan period- between 1952 and 1959.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, Transportation, Telecommunications, Power development, Minerals, Industrial development, Small scale industries, Health, Education, Housing, Social welfare had been identified as key sectors for development.

### **Great Expectation Unmet**

Pyidawtha was introduced to the people with fanfare. It was publicized heavily. The word 'Pyidawtha' eventually found its way into everyday life of the Burmese.

By 1955, Pyidawtha was abandoned and revised with a Four-year plan. In 1960, scheduled finished time, GDP was only 60 percent higher than that of starting point 1950. Doubling of GDP between 1950 and 1960 did not materialize. Falling short of targets, Pyidawtha failed.

Why did Pyidawtha fail?

'Pyidawtha Plan stalled because of lack of funds, as the price of rice had fallen in the international market; the revenue from rice being the main source of fund for the plan. Added to this was the lack of knowhow and skill on the part of the government.'<sup>64</sup>

According to Myanmar economist Myat Thein, the reasons given by then Prime Minister U Nu for the failure to achieve the plan targets are:

*'The failure to restore law and order fully;*

*Because of the lapse of time usually occurring between the making of orders and actual fulfilment, the implementation of the projects gained momentum only in 1954/55. Unfortunately, a financial crisis also happened in the same year;*

*Lack of intensive preparation, organization, supervision, and management in the establishment and*

<sup>63</sup> Richard Peet and Elaine Hartwick, *Theories of Development*, The Guilford Press, 1999, p 10.

<sup>64</sup> Khing Maung Kyi et al, *Economic Development of Burma: A vision and a strategy*, Singapore University Press, 2000, p. 10

*running of state enterprises;*

*Lack of trained personnel to administer the projects;*

*Administrative centralization and the consequent bad effect on the morale of the executives;*

*Prevalence of low productivity and inefficiency as a result of lack of skill, low morale, and improper administration'*<sup>65</sup>

Even before Pyidawtha began, a review of planning in Burma in general and KTA methods in particular done by four-man mission of World Bank in March and April 1953 commented:

*'The principal limitation of the planning activity so far, appears to be a preoccupation with the engineering and financial aspects of individual projects without adequate consideration for Burma's limited administrative, managerial and technical capacities. Personnel limitations make it improbable that Burma can undertake any large number of development projects within a short period. ...In much of the planning activity, the availability of effective programme administration and efficient management of individual operations appears to have been assumed rather than established.'*<sup>66</sup>

Several reasons of the failure of Pyidawtha were given by both government and experts alike. Chief culprit seemed to be poor planning. Out of desperation to catch up with the developed world, Burmese made a mistake of careless planning. For this, they had to pay dearly as wheels of fortune cannot be reversed.

However, there is another question in waiting. It is, perhaps, the most important question. Did Pyidawtha really fail?

Comparing 1951-52 economic data with those of 1959-60, some Burmese economists stated:

'Performance was moderately respectable. GDP increased by about 40 per cent and per capita GDP and agricultural production and paddy output increased by about a third. Timber production, both teak and non-teak, increased very substantially, more than doubling in the case of teak. Rice exports also approximately doubled in terms of physical volume.'<sup>67</sup>

Those economists again commented,

'The period from 1950 to 1962, in retrospect, was a "golden age" of post-war Burma. The eight-year "Pyidawtha" Plan saw solid achievements in infrastructure, Agriculture and industry.'<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Myat Thein, *Economic Development of Myanmar*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004, p 20.

<sup>66</sup> Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma: A Study of the First Years of Independence*, Oxford University Press, 1959, Second Edition, p 111.

<sup>67</sup> Khing Maung Kyi et al, *Economic Development of Burma: A vision and a strategy*, Singapore University Press, 2000, p 7.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p 2.

Pyidawtha failed vis-a-vis its ambitious goals. In other words, if goals had not been set that high, it would not have failed. Ambitious goals lent Pyidawtha the look of failure. Pyidawtha Report itself confessed it was ambitious.<sup>69</sup>

'Social scientist S.C.Dube commented: 'Sights were set rather high when developing societies uncritically accepted the development theorists' assumption that life begins at \$1000 per capita and when an economic historian of Rostow's repute suggested that the test of development is one car for four persons in the society!'.<sup>70</sup>

It looked even more ambitious placed vis-à-vis figures in Dube's comment which described those figures as 'rather high sights'. The goals of Pyidawtha according to U Nu's words were far higher than those in Dube's comment. 'Monthly income of about \$200 a person' is definitely higher than '\$1000 per capita' and ' a car per person' than ' a car per four persons'.

Looking back, Pyidawtha was like a 'Get rich quick' scheme; another factor to help Pyidawtha look ambitious.

U Nu later confessed the causes of failure of Pyidawtha as in, ' We wanted to get a thing done in one month which normally should take one year.'<sup>71</sup>

Consider the following:

'As U Nu publicly admitted, that 'because of our intense enthusiasm to achieve these ends (of a socialist welfare state) in the quickest possible time we have committed several blunders.

These blunders included an over-anxiety to reach the unrealistic goal of self-sufficiency, inability to maintain internal law and order, and a miscalculation of time required for development.'<sup>72</sup>

### **Mismatch of Promise and Reality**

When reality does not meet expectation, it paves way to frustration which in turn gives way to counter-action. It would be more so if expectations are set very high. When high expectations are not met, frustration might be greater and counter-action would be disastrous. That seemed to happen exactly in the case of Pyidawtha. Pyidawtha was promoted using 'emotional words and unrealistic goals.' That raised expectations. When the plan fell short of expectations, it back fired. People were frustrated. Masses might not matter. But, elites mattered. Just as its formulation inspired elites, its failure frustrated elites, to be more exact, military elites. Frustration might prompt those elites to take action to change the undesirable situation. Pyidawtha Period was interrupted by Caretaker

---

<sup>69</sup> Pyidawtha: the New Burma, 1954, p 2.

<sup>70</sup> Philip McMichael, Development and Social Change: A global perspective, Sage Publications, Fourth Edition, p 33.

<sup>71</sup> Richard Butwell, U Nu of Burma, Stanford University Press, 1963, p 117.

<sup>72</sup> A comparative study of U Nu and Sihanouk, Moo Yubin, Master Thesis, National University of Singapore, 2006, p 67.

Government in 1958 when General Ne Win, the chief of Armed forces, took over the power in a thinly veiled coup d'état to become the Prime Minister amidst chaotic situation of the nation. It was not an official coup d'état only because elected Prime Minister U Nu offered to make the appearance of acceding power to General Ne Win under his own will to maintain the stability of the nation. Caretaker Government was 'efficient, honest, frequently inspiring, and equally often frightening in its authoritarian character'.<sup>73</sup> That experience might convince military elites that they would be more effective in pushing the nation towards the goal of development in their own program. Caretaker Government lasted until February 1960 when U Nu came back into power again after winning a free and fair election.

In 1962, a coup d'état, again, was launched against U Nu's government to embark on another program of development, "Burmese Way to Socialism" sponsored by Burmese Socialist Programme Party. Pyidawtha and other subsequent programs before 1962 were based on socialism and planning. This time, as if not to be enough, planning was to be substituted with more planning, and socialist methods were to be replaced with 'more socialist methods' if there were such methods. Full-fledged Socialist Programme promising the most extreme form of socialism was adopted. History was already written for that program and we all know its fate. The program 'Burmese way to Socialism' failed spectacularly after 26 years of its introduction in the midst of 1988 Uprising which ended up in another military coup d'état.

At the time of writing this essay, half a century after first major development program failed, Myanmar is passing through another critical juncture in her history with another goal of development. Election was held based on a new constitution, and once-in-a-generation parliament would start on January 31, 2011. This time, the goal is more vivid: ' Building of New Modern Developed Nation.' Essentially, it is still the same goal as Pyidawtha half a century ago. In the first year of second decade of 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Myanmar has enriched itself with experiences of 'experiments of development'. As famous inventor Edison put it, ' *Results! Why man, I have gotten a lot of results. I know several thousand things that won't work.*' The morale is just keep on eliminating things that do not work, and things that work would be found out finally. If Myanmar can translate those experiences into wisdom, guiding light to embark on unfinished journey of development, we can step onto the higher rungs of development ladder and catch up with our East Asian brethren starting with Japan, South Korea and more recently, China and Vietnam.

What is in store for development of Myanmar? Well, only time will tell. Forecast of future is always a tricky business though human beings love to do that. There are many unknowns. Even trickier is the fact that there might also be **unknown unknowns** - the probable existence of unknowns is not

---

<sup>73</sup> Richard Butwell, U Nu of Burma, Stanford University Press, 1963, p 209.

known or overlooked. One thing is for sure. Whether we like it or not, tomorrow will eventually become today, and then yesterday. Our development journey will go on perhaps forever.

### 3.4 Ye Htut, Buddhist Teachings on Economics

Buddhist teachings, with the rays of Dhamma, illuminate the path to Liberate from the severity of the worldly sufferings. Individuals have numerous worries and stresses. The Buddhist way of meditation is only the solution to relieve stresses. One thing you need to do is to do it yourself. Edward Conze names Buddhism as “do-it-yourself religion.” Just relax the whole body and keep your spine upright. Place your attention at the tip of your nostril where the breath is coming in and going out. Gradual growth of concentration keeps your mind not to travel somewhere else. Your body and mind become cool and calm, reducing your stress and strain at one sitting. The very fundamental and constant rules of a Buddhist are to avoid doing evils, to do good deeds, and to purify her or his mind. While the cries of war-torn victims from battle-countries, Buddhist meditation centers are mushrooming all over the world to appease the severely painful humanity. That is why some scholars point out the fact that many people still consider Buddhism to teach a denial or escape from worldly concerns into a private, hermetic realm of bliss. But if you go a little deeper inside it and find a full and rich teachings of the Buddha encompassing every facet of human life, with a great deal of practical advice on how to live with integrity, wisdom and peace in the midst of the chaotic world.

To advocate the Buddhist teachings as a perfect and true doctrine for the whole planet, H.G.Wells, in his “The Outline of History”, says: Over great areas of the world it still survives: it is possible that in contact with western science, and inspired by the spirits of history, the original teaching of Gautama, revived and purified, may yet play a large part in the direction of human destiny.

There are two human destinies – to obtain wealth and happiness in the mundane world and to attain Nirvana or Immortality in the supra mundane world. A healthy, wealthy and happy life can be built through the mundane way of Buddhist teaching and a peaceful and wholesome life in one’s present as well as in next existence through the supra mundane way of Buddha Dhamma.

Human world is where we dwell and earnestly strive to survive. Human world is defined by U Ba Khin, the Master of the International Meditation Centre of Myanmar as “a half-way home between Heaven and Hell. We experience pleasure and pain mixed together, in degrees as determined by our own part Kamma (volitional activities which lead to either beneficial or detrimental effect).

Men's basic requirements are food, clothing, and shelter. Though we do not have anything to wear or dwell, we can live if we have food and drink. Food is, if empirically tested, the most essential need that makes us survive.

Being empirical in approach, Buddhism views all problems, including economic problems, faced by man in the most practical way. It is this empirical approach that led the Buddha to accept the basic premise that all beings subsist on food (sabbe satta ahavatthitika: Dighanikaya III PP. 211, 273; Ariguttara Nikaya, V. PP. 50, 55) Working on this premise the Buddha realized that people had to

resort to various ways and means to acquire this basic need. Here he intervened to regulate the ways and means adopted by people and to keep them within ethical boundaries. For this he applied the general ethical norms that control and guide actions (Kamma) of people. Thus one sees that in this manner the Buddha formulated theories that indirectly influence production, distribution, consumption and preservation of all types of goods required to satisfy the wants of people to faster their material well-being.<sup>74</sup>

To be a wealthy human or the one who is successful to train himself as a cultured citizen before he becomes rich. He or she must be ethical not only to become civilized ones in the world but also readily purified ones attaining four noble truths-*dukkha sacca* (the truth of suffering), *samudaya sacca* ( the truth of the cause of suffering), *maggā sacca* ( the truth of the path to liberation from suffering) and *nirodha sacca* (the truth of the cessation of suffering).

The Buddha does not neglect economic life for those who are in need of it as supreme compassion dictates. To get economic welfare or blessing one should do a job without confusion or perplexity. From right means of livelihood one develops greatly and nobly to a high level in a society; so unlawful means to get profit or money(income) must be avoided with a steady vow(= determination); black marketing, illegal trade, evasion of necessary taxes, false statements of income, and profit, etc. are unscrupulous, they take or give recklessly when money is concerned. So fools love foolishness, no doubt. The millionaires in some countries indulge in using harmful drugs, drinks, bribery and corruption to get more and more wealth: their life is indeed miserable now as trade in living beings is indulged in. Drugs, drinks, gambling, sensual indulgence, sensual pleasure must be avoided to get the truth, good and beauty and beauty at present. By dutiful performances of a lawful work, diligence makes one a welfare *Mangala* (blessed) person immediately. So “*Anakulasa Kammanta Mangala*” one of the 38 blessings, taught by the Buddha in *Mangala Sutta*, that means ‘having blameless occupation is a blessing) means, significantly, the deed of peaceful occupation or job, this is the highest *Mangala* known to the wise only. In most countries economic crises are accelerating, developing with alarming rate.<sup>75</sup>

Buddhism does not consider material welfare as an end in itself: it is only a means to an end- a higher and nobler end. But it is a means which is indispensable, indispensable in achieving a higher purpose for man’s happiness. So Buddhism recognizes the need of certain minimum material conditions favourable to spiritual success.

His teachings on ethical, spiritual and philosophical problems are fairly well known. But little is known, particularly in the west, about his teaching on social, economic and political matters. Yet

---

<sup>74</sup> S.K. Nanayakara, ‘ECONOMICS’, in ‘Social Dimensions of Buddhism, Encyclopaedia of Buddhism Extract-No. 3 published by the Department of Buddhist Affairs, Ministry of Buddhasasana-Sri Lanka, 1995, p.17

<sup>75</sup> Lay-Ein-Su Ashin Vicittasara, INTRODUCTION TO 38 BLESSINGS OF MANGALA, translated by U Han Htay (Research), subtitled ‘Mangala and Economic Progress’, p.47.

there are numerous discourses dealing with these scattered throughout the ancient Buddhist texts.<sup>76</sup> The Cakkavattisihanada-sutta of the Digha-nikaya (No. 26) clearly states that poverty (daliddiya) is the cause of immorality and crimes such as theft, falsehood, violence, hatred, cruelty, etc. Kings in ancient times, like governments today, tried to suppress crime through punishment. The Kutadanta sutta of the same Nikaya explains how futile this is. It says that this method can never be successful. Instead the Buddha suggests that, in order to eradicate crime, the economic condition of the people should be improved.<sup>77</sup>

The passage mentioned below is an excerpt from the kutadanta Sutta.

‘The Buddha then related to him accounts of King Mahavijita in the olden times. He was blessed with wealth, having conquered a large territory, and would like to perform a great Yanna for his progress and security. So he called his Brahmin advisor to tell him how to do so.

According to the Brahmin’s advice, the criminals were the first to be eliminated, but not only by killing or imprisoning, since the rest of them would take their place in doing harm to the people as before. The best way was to eradicate their kind through (such measures for economic development as) distributing the seedlings to industrious farmers who live out of their land, granting some money as investment capital to industrious merchants and providing food and salary to those who served the king (i.e. Seeing that all had some work to do from which to earn income). Through such methods the king’s wealth would multiply, the towns and cities peaceful and the people happy and merry, dancing their babies on their bosom, without the need to close the doors of their houses.”<sup>78</sup>

Grain and other facilities for agriculture should be provided for farmers and cultivators; capital should be provided for traders and those engaged in business; adequate wages should be paid to those who are employed. When people are thus provided for with opportunities for earning a sufficient income, they will be contented, will have no fear or anxiety, and consequently the country will be peaceful and free from crime.

Because of this, the Buddha told lay people how important it is to improve their economic condition. This does not mean that he approved of hoarding wealth with desire and attachment, which is against his fundamental teaching, nor did he approve of each and every way of earning one’s livelihood. There are certain trades like the production and sale of armaments, which he condemns as evil means of livelihood, as we saw earlier.<sup>79</sup>

The Buddha, thus, encouraged householders to be wholesome in whatever they do. The ideal morality is the measure of how valuable a man is. If a man is morally established, he himself deserves to be regarded by the others; the human world is a better place to live in because of the

---

<sup>76</sup> .Walpola Rahula, What the Buddha taught, Gordon Fraser, England, P.81.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, P.82.

<sup>78</sup> Dighanikaya Sutta, I, P.127 ff.

<sup>79</sup> Walpola Rahula, What the Buddha taught, Gordon Fraser, London, p. 81.

men who have blameless occupation or do blameless actions. As they don't offend the world, the world is in peace.

The Buddha taught the householders the Mingala Sutta or 38 Blessings to the humanity. The blameless occupation is one of them, anakulaca kammanta (blameless occupation). In finding one's wealth through trades or jobs, what he does must be blameless. His blamelessness makes him to be respected by others in the present life and attain Nirvana in the next existence.

And then most of us cannot avoid economic affairs, so good clean work has to be done. The Buddha has taught Anakutaca Kammanta to keep family in honour and glory of physical and mental happiness, unity and integration. The important point here is not to do work haphazardly or carelessly. 'Anakula' can mean 'care' or 'systematic work for a living', with blameless occupation. If you fully understand the power of Anavajjani Kammani (doing blameless actions), you will be perfect in doing economic affairs.



*When we go paying homage, the small parcel is to be presented to parents and the bigger one is for the superior.*

Translator's note: During the lighting festival in the Myanmar month of Thadingyut, young persons pay homage to older persons, mostly parents, grandparents, teachers, bosses at work, relatives, etc.

Right livelihood is one factor on the Noble Eight fold path. It is not determined by the amount of material wealth it produces, but rather by the well-being it generates. Many livelihoods who produces a surplus of wealth simply cater to desires rather than providing for any true need.

For the individual, the objective of livelihood is to acquire the four necessities or requisites of

human experience: food, clothing shelter, and medicine. Again, the acquisition of these four requisites, be it in sufficient amount or in surplus, is not the ultimate objective. The four requisites are merely a foundation upon which efforts to realize higher objectives can be based. If one has the right livelihood, he or she will be secured in life. Secured life is sure to create happiness.

A man named Dihgajanu once visited the Buddha and said: “Venerable Sir, we are ordinary lay men, leading the family life with wife and children. Would the Blessed One teach us some doctrines which will be conducive to our happiness in this world and hereafter.”

The Buddha tells him that there are four things which are conducive to a man’s happiness in this world: First: he should be skilled, efficient, earnest, and energetic in whatever profession he is engaged, and he should know it well (utthana-sampada); second: he should protect his income, which he has thus earned righteously, with the sweat of his brow (arakkha-sampada); (This refers to protecting wealth from thieves, etc. All these ideas should be considered against the background of the period.) third: he should have good friends (Kalyana-mitta) who are faithful, learned, virtuous, liberal and intelligent, who will help him along the right path away from evil; fourth; he should spend reasonably, in proportion to his income, either too much nor too little, i.e., he should not hoard wealth variously, nor should he be extravagant-in other words he should live within his means (samajivikata)<sup>80</sup>.

Buddhism stresses that our relationship with wealth be guided by wisdom and a clear understanding of its true value and limitations. We should not be burdened or enslaved by it. Rather, we should be masters of our wealth and use it in ways that are beneficial to others. Wealth should be used to create benefit in society, rather than concentration and strife. It should be spent in ways that relieve problems and lead to happiness rather than to tension, suffering and mental disorder.

Here is a passage from the scriptures illustrating the proper Buddhist attitude to wealth:

‘Bhikkhus, there are these three groups of people in this world. What are the three? They are the blind, the one-eyed, and the two-eyed.’

‘Who is the blind person? There are some in this world who do not have the vision which leads to acquisition of wealth or to the increase of wealth already gained. Moreover, they do not have the vision which enables them to know what is skilful and what is unskilful..... what is blameworthy and what is not ..... what is coarse and what is refined.....good and evil. This is what I mean by one who is blind.

“And who is the one-eyed person? Some people in this world have the vision which leads to acquisition of wealth, or to the increase of wealth already obtained, but they do not have the vision that enables them to know what is skilful and what is not..... what is blameworthy and what is not.....what is coarse and what is refined good and evil. This I call a one-eyed

---

<sup>80</sup> Walpola Rahula, What the Buddha taught, pp.83.

person.

“And who is the two-eyed person? Some people in this world possess both the vision that enables them to acquire wealth and to capitalize on it, and the vision that enables to know what is skilful and what is not.....what is blame worthy and what is not.....what is coarse and what is refined.....good and evil. This I call one with two-eyes.....

“One who is blind is hounded by misfortune on two counts: he has no wealth, and he performs no good works. The second kind of person, the one-eyed, looks about for wealth irrespective of whether it is right or wrong. It may be obtained through theft, cheating or fraud. He enjoys pleasures of the senses obtained from his ability to acquire wealth but as a result he goes to hell. The one-eyed person suffers according to his deeds.

“The two eyed person is a fine human being, one who shares out a portion of the wealth obtained through his diligent labour. He has noble thoughts, a resolute mind, and attains to a good bourn, free of suffering. Avoid the blind and the one-eyed, and associate with the two-eyed.<sup>81</sup>

The Buddha also expounds the four virtues conducive to a layman’s happiness hereafter: (1) Saddha: he should have faith and confidence in moral, spiritual and intellectual values; (2) Sila: he should abstain from destroying and harming life, from stealing and cheating. From adultery, from falsehood, and from intoxicating drinks; (3) Caga: he should practice charity, generosity, without attachment and craving for his wealth; (4) Panna: he should develop wisdom which leads to the complete destruction of suffering, to the realization of Nirvana.<sup>82</sup>

Compiled by  
U Ye Htut  
National University of Art and Culture

---

<sup>81</sup> Anguttara Nikaya, I , pp. 128.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, pp. 786 ff.



Daughter, if you have something urgent while I'm at the meditation centre, give me a call. Whoever receives your call will certainly know that it's me, Daw Htut Khaung, staying in the special hostel.  
 Translator's note: A person going into a Buddhist meditation centre to practice insight meditation should have left home affairs behind. He/she should not choose between a good or bad hostel.

### 3.6 Sayadaw U Eindathiri, *Dāna and Hope in Myanmar Buddhism*<sup>83</sup>

#### ***Dāna***

Writing on the topic of *Dāna* and Hope I will begin with some explanations about *Dāna*.

*Dāna* can be classified into the following three categories:

*dānasāmi* (*dāna* given like a master),

*dānasahāya* (*dāna* given like a companion),

*dānadāsa* (*dāna* given like a servant).

If a person offers a valuable object with the best intention to a noble recipient considering it too good for of using it herself, this constitutes an act of *dānasāmi*.

If a person offers an object that she uses herself, or an object that is similar in value and function to one that she uses herself, this constitutes an act of *dānasahāya*.

If a person offers an object that she has no use for, or another object of minor quality that she wouldn't want herself, this constitutes an act of *dānadāsa*.

Of these three, *dānasāmi* will reap the best and noblest consequences. *Dānasahāya* will reap mediocre consequences. And *dānadāsa* will reap the least desirable consequences.

Related to *dāna* is also the following: Even if an animal is served food so that it can eat its fill once, the offering will bear the fruits of long life, physical beauty, comfortable live, physical strength and intelligence in for the next 100 lives, as the Buddha, explained about the 14 kinds of recipients for *dāna*.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> The author is the abbot of the Shwe Oo Min Monastery in South Okkalapa, Yangon. He wrote the text as a contribution to a Buddhist-Christian dialogue on "Dana and Hope" (editor's note).

<sup>84</sup> Animals are the lowest of 14 categories of recipients for donations listed in the *Dakkhi\_avibha\_a Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikāya* : a Buddha being the highest, followed by arahats, sangha, Buddhist layman, moral non-Buddhist, immoral human, animal. Here the Buddha also points out that the fruits of a donation for the donor depend on the nobility of the recipient.

### 3.6 Yi Yi Myint and Hinn Wai,<sup>85</sup> The Role of the Myanmar Women in Economics

Myanmar holds precious its cultural heritage and national character and concerted national efforts are being made to preserve and safeguard it. Uplift of the national prestige and integrity and preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage and national character is one of the declared national social objectives. So, the cultural heritage and the social and legal status of a Myanmar woman is such that she never loses her identity or even her name or her right to property and inheritance after marriage.

The traditional, social and cultural attitudes in Myanmar of children in eternal debt to parents for giving them life and for bringing them up, and the bondage of gratitude, wife and family owe to men (as Kyai-Zu-Shin) who are the bread-winners and protectors of dangers and threats to the family, could give an ideal picture of women who are not directly involved in economic development; but only vicariously by bringing up children and relieving men of the less important details of every day living, so that they can devote their full energies to the economic, productive life. There is no job from which she is barred and no educational opportunities that discriminate women because of her sex, according to the constitution. Additionally, there are no social customs that are harmful to the female child or woman or that place a woman at a disadvantage within a marital union. There is no known women's movement such as women's suffrage to fight for women's right to vote, since both men and women voted at the same time. Thus, the status of Myanmar women is traditionally believed to be high and exemplary in Asia and beyond and most Myanmar are sincerely proud of it.

The high status of Myanmar women in the home, in the community and in the society at large place them in positions of considerable influence to extend the culture of peace that they practice within the family to the society. Senior women, especially past the childbearing age are held in high regards as "mother figures" and are freer, to play the role of mentors of peaceful spiritual lives that is indeed basic to the Buddhist philosophy and culture.

The role of Myanmar women as active partners within the family and on the jobs is well organized and accepted. A visit to Myanmar bazaars or markets, work sites, factories and offices; and the sight of street hawkers and vendors would quickly establish the direct role of Myanmar women play in the economic life of the country. Still, the claim of a proud husband that the wife is maintained in "circumstances where there is no chance for hair on her arms and legs to be signed" can sometimes be heard. Possibly, marriage may be considered by some women as "a meal ticket", though in reality, majority must supplement or take on the duty herself as the female head of households. Women have no social or emotional barrier to being economically active in different circumstances

---

<sup>85</sup> Dr. Yi Yi Myint is retired professor of economics and chairwoman of the Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs Association. Ma Hinn Wai is her assistant.

and at different levels of skills. The middle age and menopause seem to free women to be more active, assertive and to command respect from both men and women. Two recent independent studies of women employed in the informal sector confirmed the finding that “spouse generally give encouragement or are co-operative” of wives’ income generating activities. As elsewhere in the world, home-keeping and child-caring responsibilities oftentimes put competing pressures on most women who must set individual priorities between their “reproductive” and “productive” roles at different stages in their lives. The flexibilities afforded by extended family living, self-employment and employment in the informal sector seem to be the favourable factors for this favourable situation.

Since the mid 1990s, there was a growing awareness of the role of women in national and community development activities. Myanmar tradition of community living and sharing was formalized by forming Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA). Other women organizations, such as Myanmar Women’s Sport Federation, Women chapter of the Myanmar Medical Association, Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs’ Association (MWEA), two women co-operatives engaged in business and in women development all became actively and organizationally involved.

Women at home play a vital role in resource allocation, mediation, tender persuasion and family cohesion. This role must be preserved, and enhanced despite the competing demands of modern economic life, by introducing flexibilities in the work place and women support measures. However, violence at home that do emerge usually because of lack of education, substance abuse and difficult circumstances can now be channeled through the organized women’s groups that are now highly visible such as the Working Committee for Violence Against Women in Myanmar, under the Myanmar National Committee of Women Affairs.

According to the Myanmar women in employment by industry survey, the different roles of women in economic activities can be defined.

### **Rural Women**

Women who live and work for their living in rural areas mostly work as agricultural labourers transplanting, weeding and harvesting for daily wages paid in cash or kind. Agriculture work is seasonal but the more recent practices of triple cropping, and integration of farming and animal husbandry could mean increased opportunities for employment, and greater utilization of women in economic activities. However, because of the seasonal and often weather-dependent nature of agriculture and the possible landlessness of some, weaving, sewing, basket weaving etc. should be considered and promoted as income-generating activities for women

### **Urban women in work-sites and Cottage Industries**

Urban women with little skill and no education use their physical strength working mostly as



professor. They serve as role models for women and as instances to demonstrate that women also can reach the top.

### **Women Entrepreneurs**

The entrepreneurial skills of Myanmar women are well demonstrated by such famous women as Naga Daw Oo, Sein Brothers Daw Kyi Kyi and more recently by Daw Se, Daw Sein Sein, Dr. Daw Yi Yi Hla of WYZ Co., and Daw Khin Myint Myint of Aung Aung Enterprise. We also have in the co-operative sector, Daw Thet Yi and women co-operatives such as Thiri-May, Myitta Shin and Sandi Daywi. With the market economic system, there is flourishing of companies and joint ventures some with very outstanding women presidents, directors and general managers. Perhaps business is the occupation where women can achieve their highest potential.

The probably the most important point that can be made about Myanmar women is the fact that there is no traditional and cultural barriers that prevent or put social pressure on women to stay home as wife, mother and home-maker. Whenever, there is a need and an opportunity and the will, women simply can go out and be gainfully employed. According to two women surveys, most married women-workers had the support and co-operation of their husbands. There is no profession, position or honorary post from which Myanmar woman, especially educated woman, are excluded either by tradition, law or practice, this fact is demonstrated by some very important positions occupied by women in Myanmar. The Philosophy of some very successful business women of present day and yesteryears provides inspiration to women. The another point that deserves attention and reflection is the fact that only the very insignificant proportion of working women reached the higher level jobs. The fact that majority of women occupy the lower and middle level positions is perhaps partly due to the attitude of women, ready to take back seat is there is someone to take the leadership.

Myanmar women have equal employment opportunities and equal pay for equal work. There are no barriers to employment for women; the majority of women graduates applying for jobs, outnumbering and outshining men in academic performance, create problems of gender imbalance in by the Public Services Selection and Training Commission. However, the career ladders of men and women are observed to take different paths beyond the first few levels of promotion, after which it becomes increasingly difficult for women to advance further, especially to reach the top.

At present, by bringing together the various images of the Myanmar women in economic activities, it may be able to identify more clearly the role of Myanmar women play in the country's development. The roles that the majority of the women especially those in the rural and urban grass-root level play are in survival and subsistence economics, by their income generating activities from within and outside of the home as co-sponsors of the family.

### 3.7 Bo Bo, Some Remarks on Recent Socio-Cultural Changes in Myanmar

People are suffering under the regime, they don't have any exit. They are trying a cure by themselves, watching Korean soap operas and love movies to forget their real life. In the real life, they cannot live like what they used to read in love story. They are facing with daily struggle for consumption. Even if they cannot get what they want in the outside world, at least they can get some inspiration from books for what they want to be.

#### 1 The Role of Korean Soap Operas in Myanmar Culture

Korean TV series programs were broadcasted in Myanmar channels since 2002. A great majority of Myanmar people are addicted to these Korean series, especially many young ladies like to watch how the Korean actresses acting, living – and what they are wearing. They try to imitate the clothes of Korean actresses. This imitation has

Moreover, their mindsets have been changed by watching Korean series. For example, in Myanmar, females traditionally do not dare to drink alcohol in public places. In the mind of the people, a woman who drinks with man in a restaurant could be a prostitute. So, elder people teach young Myanmar girls since their childhood not to drink alcohol.

In a drastic changing era, such kind of teaching is out of date. As Korean culture dominates on their life, many Myanmar ladies are daring to drink outside, and no ones blames them as hookers. However, some still resist the influence of Korean culture and follow the traditional way of teaching.

#### 2 Daw Ju's Remembrance

In Myanmar, only the smart people can go to the Institute of medicine. Most of the students who passed the grade 10 with the highest score, choose the Medical University. People admire the medical students as well as the writers from the Medical University. They do have influence on young people.

Juu is one of the prominent writers in Myanmar. "A Mhat Ta Ya" (Remembrance) is her first book and the most controversial one in the literary history of Myanmar. Audiences are so amazed to read the book because a lot of sex scenes are described in it. It is kind of sensual seduction. Also it is written by woman author who is from the Medical University. After the allowance of publication once, there wasn't any permission from "Sar Pay Si Sit Yay" (the group which is formed by government to control & edit the literary texts) until now. Likely, the book is a true story based on personal experiences of the author.

The book is about the tragic love story of two lovers. The lady is attending the Medical University

in Mandalay. She falls in love with her classmate. When they become a couple, she moves on to her boy friend's rented house instead of living in the hostel as before. In Myanmar culture, that kind of life style is not acceptable. Her boy friend is having a secret affair with another girl while he has the chance to return to his native in summer time. After they have been living together for 3 years, they got to split up and go back to their hometowns as they intend to get posted at country side hospitals. Unexpectedly, her boy friend's another girl comes and visits to Mandalay before they return. The story becomes sad and ends up with the main narrator's breaking of the heart. There were quite a lot of people criticized on "A Mhat Ta Ya". They said that book is against the Myanmar tradition.

The creative writing of Juu is incredible. Everything she wrote in "A Mhat Ta Ya" is not just like a novel but it is like actual facts. For someone who had being broken heart once, he or she may not forget "A Mhat Ta Ya".

The author writes about the one sided love of a woman who continues her serious love even when the man she loves abandoned her. This is how the story ends. Besides, it is the one who doesn't really care on how she is looked down from other people because her living together with a man without married which can be regarded as an unethical act according to Myanmar norms. Nevertheless, in Myanmar there are just a few people who accepted this kind of living-together-lifestyle so far. In fact, if couples decided to stay together, many questions are coming to them, do we have a job to live all by ourselves, do we have a house to live in, otherwise, they need to have income for renting house, and these are constraints of living together for Myanmar young people.

However, the novel does not provide any solutions to these economic problems. It just concentrates on the love story in accordance of the insinuation of the Myanmar youths to read love stories.

From the point of artistic value, "A Mhat Ta Ya" is the classic one. Let me quote Lenin here, one of his friend playing a piano and it was a sonata of Beethoven. Lenin said "I was amazed to hear that song, I just wonder is that truly come from the human being" and he kept saying "When we listen to beautiful melodies, our mind become with compassion and want to scrub the heads of the other people", "Actually, what we got to do is beating the heads of people in this kind of period" (the civil war of that time).

In my opinion, when young people read "A Maht Ta Ya", they will try not to be apart from their love ones. Moreover, they regard love as their first priority in their life. They may forget to think about their country is one of the LDC countries.

### 3 Creating Fantasy Worlds

Especially, people who live in rural areas, reading love novel is some kind of entertainment for them. They are living in place of difficulties to get electricity. So, they rent love novels from book

shop as they don't have much choice for entertainment. Otherwise, they go to small video shops running by generator to watch the movies.

99 out of 100, Myanmar movies and novels are based on the university life. Actors and actresses are students, they get support from parents. No need to worry about their expense while they are studying at University. After they graduate, they can get a job easily. The reality, however, is in the contrary: Even a doctor cannot get a job easily in outside world.

A few years ago, if someone asks what kind of books are the best sellers in Myanmar literature, we must say love novels written by authors from medical universities, and of course, some books which can provide to get knowledge to be wealthy and successful in life, follow by the second place. It can be seen that love novels are so popular in Myanmar. In recent days, the popular trend of Myanmar literature has changed a bit. Love stories still prevail but more and more include funny are included. In fact, literature has some influence on the film industry as well, so that movie directors are much more focusing to create comedy which means that they follow the market's demands. If one produce a simple love story, probably one would not be able to get much profit like if he makes funny movies. Looking at the Myanmar film production in the whole year of 2010 only one or two love stories were showed in Cinema, and the rest of them are funny love stories.

One of film maker said "People don't want to watch sad movies or tragedy; they want to see happy endings. When they go out from Cinema, I want to see smiles on their faces". In this case, it can be interpreted like going to see a movie is trying to forget the actual life for a moment. Although they cannot smile and be happy under the suppressive regime, reading love stories and watching funny movies are a remedy for them in a way.

### 3.8 Samuel Ngun Ling, Work-Related Socio-cultural Values and Economic Options in the Buddhist context of Myanmar (Burma)•

#### **Introduction**

In the context of the widening trade and business gap between Myanmar and developed nations, with the increasing number of European and American companies withdrawing themselves from doing businesses in Myanmar in past years, the need to review Myanmar economic system was already overdue, in light of the incoming impacts of the challenging forces of globalization and changing trends of local peoples' social and cultural values. To be candid, most of Western criticisms on the economic issues of Myanmar have failed to see the significant roles of Myanmar cultural and religious traditions, namely, tradition of Theravada Buddhism, with its intermingled local belief systems, social values and moral behaviors that encompass the whole life and business of Myanmar people. Once this religio-cultural context is well understood, it will become apparent that its values have played a significant role in the constitution of peoples' work and consumption behaviors. This paper will identify some religio-cultural values, relating to economic actions of the local people, and indicate areas of influence on their works and consumption. My focus will be confined particularly to Myanmar Buddhist economic context. Five crucial points are to be explored here for further discussion: (1) An Overview of Economic Situation (2) Entanglement of Buddhist Culture in Myanmar Peoples' Socio- Economic Life; (3) Work Values. Social Prestige and Economic Concerns; (4) How Globalization Affects Life in Myanmar and (5) The Significance of Social Relationship in Doing Business in Myanmar.

#### **Myanmar: Highlights of her Socio-Economic and Religio-Cultural Setting**

##### **a. An Overview of the Economic Background**

Myanmar, a nation which regained her independence on 4 January, 1948 from the British colonial rule, is the second largest country in the Southeast Asia region, with a total area of 261,228 square miles. It shares a 6151 kilometer (3822 miles) boundary with five neighboring countries: 2205 kilometers (1370 miles) with the People's Republic of China, 2108 kilometers (1310 miles) with the Kingdom of Thailand, 1339 kilometers (832 miles) with India, 274 kilometers ( 170 miles) with Bangladesh, and 225 kilometers (140 miles) with the Lao People's Democratic Republic.<sup>86</sup> Myanmar became a member of the United Nations on 19 April, 1948 and joined ASEAN on 23 July, 1997. Myanmar is a Union of seven ethnic States and seven Burman (ethnically Burmese) Divisions. There are altogether 135 national ethnic groups, out of which the eight major ethnic groups include Bamar (Burman), Karen, Kachin, Chin, Shan, Mon, Rakhine and Kayah. The total population of Myanmar in 2004-2005 is an estimated 54.3 million (latest estimate) and 70% of this population live in rural areas. Economically, Myanmar enjoyed economic prosperity for a short period of parliamentary rule following her independence (January 4, 1948)) for instance, it was known in Asia as the world's leading rice exporter until the military took power in 1962, It was since 1962 that the serious economic mismanagement of General Ne Win's Burmese Way to Socialism, which employed isolationist economic policies, has gradually made Myanmar into one of the most impoverished countries in the world today. It was under this policy of the Burmese Way to Socialism that Myanmar made experiments in the socialist economy for about three decades.

The fundamental concepts of this socialist economy stated: "In Burmese socialist society, equalitarianism is impossible. Men are not equal physically and intellectually in the respective

---

<sup>87</sup> Samuel Ngun Ling is Professor of Systematic Theology, Director of Judson Research Center, Myanmar Institute of Theology, Insein, Yangon, Myanmar and editor of RAYS MIT Theological Journal and Engagement, Judson Research Center Bulletin, published by the same institute. – He presented this paper in the Workshop: "Values in Work and Consumption - Rethinking the Link between Work and Consumption in Europe and Asia" at the 2006 World Deauville Forum: World Economy for All - An Asian-Europe Dialogue. – Reprinted with the consent of the author.

<sup>86</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of the Union of Myanmar, *Implementation of the Seven-Step Map and Sector wise Development of the State* (27<sup>th</sup> March 2005), 1.

quantity and quality of service they render to society and differences are therefore bound to exist. But at the same time social justice demands that the gaps between incomes are reasonable and correct measures will be taken to narrow these gaps as much as possible. In building up an economy according to socialist plan, every able individual will have to work according to his ability. The material and cultural values that accrue will be distributed in accordance with the quantity and quality of labor expended by each individual in social production."<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, this socialist economic system had failed miserably in implementing its policies and ideologies after three decades of political mismanagement under Ne Win. The mismanaged economic policy has then resulted creating a series of peoples' demonstrations, riots and conflicts against the central government especially since 1988 and even to the present in diverse forms and at different levels of socio-political dimensions.

## **b. Economic Situation Since 1988**

Many people especially those who are poor, powerless and marginalized have experienced a lot of economic hardships through decades economic repressions under the long military rule, These economic hardships, combined with corrupted moral and socio-political suppressions, have kept many people in fear and anxiety of life. In order to survive, people have developed a coping mechanism which is dubbed a 'corruption-adapted common way of life and which is potentially harmful for both the individual and society. Hence, knowingly or unknowingly, almost every person gets involved in doing some things that would have been considered illegal or unethical, religiously speaking. No one is sure about his or her future. Fear, anxiety, ambiguity, uncertainty and distress are common experiences, coupled with continuing nationwide economic crises. All these have dampened peoples' moral obligation to the poor, powerless and marginalized have uphold truth and justice.

Consequences of Myanmar economic breakdown since 1988 have covered diverse issues such as banking crisis, poor communication system, insufficient economic expertise and lack of skilled labors, shortage of supplies of power energy such as electricity, gasoline, petrol, poor conditions of infrastructures, unstable inflation under controlled monetary system, crisis of low income (many live below one dollar a day) and many other issues that cannot be mentioned here. In this context, Myanmar needs a sound economic system with increasing capital investments, including a reliable and efficient banking and monetary system, for instance, to assure that people will have saving security. Inflation rate needs to be systematically put under control to make a long term saving and economic investment secured and trustworthy. In addition, reliable and efficient health insurance and better educational system, which Myanmar lacks of for a long time, needs to be reformed in an urgent manner in order to provide economic security. In regard to labor market, Myanmar has a surplus of unskilled labors on the one hand, and shortage of skilled labors on the other. As development projects are undertaken, it is observed that the stocks of unskilled labors have often diminished.

Myanmar has a potential market for recruiting both unskilled and skilled labors while this market is strongly driven by both regional Asian (ASEAN) and global economy. The international pressure, along with its economic sanction, on the issue of human rights and dignity has forced Myanmar to limit foreign investments and export of commodities to developed countries, especially to the West. Due to such a serious impact of economic crisis in the country, a growing number of young people flock to abroad (Asian and European countries) to work legally or illegally. The less the young labors experience employment opportunities and earnings (less than a dollar per day) within the country, the more they move and work abroad. Hence, Myanmar needs more and more foreign capital investments (but not impose of economic sanctions), technical cooperation from International firms and explorations of better employment opportunities to help keep the production of cheap labors under control and do a better economy of her own.

---

<sup>87</sup> The Burma Socialist Programme Party, the Union of Burma, *The System of Correlation of Man and Environment: The Philosophy of the Burma Socialist Programme Party*. (Rangoon): Sarpay Beikman Press, 1964), 46.

At present, Myanmar is trying to rebuild, with its own philosophy, a numerous political challenges both from outside and inside. Just as 'Burmese way to Socialism' was the popular slogan during Ne Win's Socialist period, so is 'Burmese way to Democracy' today. To speed up the process of economic development, the government which renamed itself as State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) initiated market-oriented economic policy since 1989 and laid down four economic - objectives: ( 1 ) Development of agriculture as the base and all-round development of other sectors of the economy as well (2) Proper evolution of the market-oriented system; (3) Development of the economy inviting participation in terms of technical know-how and investments from sources inside the country and abroad; and (4) The initiatives to shape the national economy must be kept in the hands of the State and the national peoples.<sup>88</sup>

The government tries to implement all-round national development plans based on the above economic objectives. Of varied economic development plans, agriculture is the main economic sector of Myanmar, of which rice, beans, edible oil crops plants, jute, palm, rubber, sugar cane, cotton, corn and castor are the major crops, with 25.4 million acres of farmland, which is 59,2% of the total arable land area (42.9 million acres) of the country. According to 1990 Labor Force Survey, over 55% of the employed population was engaged in the primary sector of agriculture, forestry and fishing, while 15% in the secondary sector of mining, manufacturing, construction and electricity, and 30% in the tertiary sector of trade, restaurant and hotels, water and sanitary services, communication and various social services.<sup>89</sup>

## 2. Entanglement of Buddhist Culture in Peoples' Socio-Economic Life

There are three strands that make up Myanmar culture: pre-Buddhist (primal) culture, traditional (typical) Buddhist culture, and popular (modern) Buddhist culture.

### a. Pre-Buddhist Strand

This cultural strand is primarily derived from primal peoples' daily life's experiences with nature, land and supernatural powers, known in Burmese as *Nats* which means 'spirit'. Pre-Buddhist culture is believed to be the very basic foundation in shaping the material and social cultural worldviews of Myanmar people. Spirit (*Nat*) worship is widely practiced among Myanmar Buddhists of any school. The practices of making appeal and appease to malevolent *Nats* (harmful spirits) for life security, property security and social security are still very common among the Burmese Buddhists.

The second common tradition is 'ancestor worship' in which generations of forefathers, elders, and national heroes who played influential social and political roles in the affairs of families and society at different levels were made. This tradition is still common among both the Burman Buddhists and tribal peoples in Myanmar.

### b. Traditional Buddhist Strand

This strand is particularly the Theravada form of Buddhist culture that strongly sticks itself to the original teachings of the elders, *the Theras*, of Buddhism so that it gives not much appreciation to the syncretistic forms of popular Buddhism. This typical Buddhist culture plays central roles in maintaining majorities' Buddhist cultural identities and spiritual values so that many Myanmar Buddhists would identify themselves being in line with this typical Buddhist strand, from which is derived a common Myanmar Buddhist philosophy that claims. "To be a real Burman is to be a Buddhist." Myanmar Buddhists respect the Buddha, although they fear the spirit.

---

<sup>88</sup> Dr. Thet Lwin and Daw Khin May Aung, "A Population Profile of Myanmar," in *Human Resource Development and Nation Building in Myanmar* (Papers presented at the Symposium at the International Business Center Yangon 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> November 1997)(Yangon: Office of Strategic Studies, Ministry of Defence, 1998), 41.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.



*Darling, if I do not die luckily, but you do, would you give me winning lottery numbers in my dreams?*

### c. Popular Buddhist Strand

Popular Myanmar Buddhist culture is profoundly amalgamated with primal and Hindu cultural elements, Many Myanmar Buddhists who claim to be good Buddhists still practice Nat (spirit) worship for their safety, and still consult with Hindu Brahmin priests for business advices, and for directions of their future visions, have demonstrated that the primal and Hindu religious thoughts have still captured the mindsets and behaviors of Myanmar people. The Brahmin priests were accepted, for instance, as advisers (gurus) at the royal courts of Myanmar kings and this influence continues to exist in Myanmar society especially among the ruling and working class people. More specifically, the Brahmin astrologers are used to be consulted when people want to choose the auspicious date and place for doing business, for holding significant religious ceremonies, and even for conducting the State's affairs.

Myanmar typical Buddhist merchants, traders, and businessmen used to seek, if not always, a piece of secret advice from the Brahmin astrologer, should they want to do business with confidence and

self-assurance. Most ordinary Myanmar Buddhists, if not all, have their own horoscope which they take to the astrologer for consultation when the need arises, and that a great majority of Myanmar Buddhists bear astrologically auspicious names chosen by their respective Brahmin gurus. This fact clearly shows that from the cradle to the grave, the Brahmin Hindu cultural influence governs consciously or unconsciously the daily life of Myanmar people.<sup>90</sup>

#### d. Family Values

Myanmar family is structurally patriarchal (male-dominated), Fathers, being regarded as guardian spirits (*ein-oo-nats*), have the highest roles in the family and sons are culturally entitled to inherit most of the parents' possessions. In typical Buddhist families Children are to show their deep respects to parents by bowing down before them twice a day before their parents' going to work in the noon and going to bed in the night. Mothers, being submissive to Fathers, played important roles in many aspects of Myanmar societal life. They are strictly bounded by the patriarchal traditions and cultures, not only to bear and care for children but also to control the purse, prepare food, keep order and discipline, and to be responsible for the general well being of the whole family. In society, constitution gives women equal rights with men, although the Buddhist culture provides the reverse. Article 154 of the 1974 constitution stated that women are allowed to enjoy equal political, economic, social and cultural rights. The Myanmar Buddhist Law also gives Myanmar women equal rights as men with regard to inheritance and divorce. As of the 1983 census, the literacy rate of women is 71.3% and in higher education, women comprise 57.89% of the total student enrollment. The participation of women in the work force also increased dramatically since 1980s. According to a the 1990 Labor Force survey, the employment in 1990 was 15.64 million out of which women's participation rate was 22.34% in the primary (agriculture) sector, 32.85% in the secondary (industry) sector and 44.53% in the tertiary (services) sector.<sup>91</sup>

#### e. *Kamma* as a Culture of Consumption and Economic Action

Majority of Myanmar Buddhists invest more in religious and cultural spending than in business-related economic investment. They will generously give alms/donations to various religious cultural activities such as celebrating novice-hood, sponsoring special festivals, feasting of monks, and construction of pagodas. Why? The first reason is, because for them, religious spending is believed to be more meritorious than economic investment. Second reason is, because of the impacts of Buddhist belief in *rebirth*, *merits* and *Kamma* on peoples' consumption behavior.<sup>92</sup> As noted by Melford E Spiro,<sup>93</sup> very well-known American Anthropologist, who is one of the authorities on Burmese Buddhism, Burmese *Kammic* Buddhism provides incentives to worldly action (economic and political), for economic success is a necessary means for Buddhist soteriological action, which in turn has important worldly consequences, social and economic alike. In this *Kammic* Buddhism, a pleasant rebirth is considered as the result of excellent *Kamma* that has to be accumulated by good merits. Burmese Buddhists are therefore enormously concerned with increasing their store of merits. *Kammic* Buddhism hence views worldly action as soteriologically neutral. Since Buddhist salvation is believed to be attained through merit, merit has to be acquired through worldly action. Buddhism strongly resists especially against human evil desire (*ta-hna*) that is believed to be resisted basically from attachment to worldly possession, fame and lust, In other words, the soteriology of *Kammatic* Buddhism neither encourages nor discourages worldly action, while

---

<sup>90</sup> Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt, "Myanmar Culture, Human Resource Development and Nation Building in Myanmar" in *Human Resource Development and Nation Building in Myanmar* (Papers presented at the Symposium at the International Business Center Yangon 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> November 1997)(Yangon: Office of Strategic Studies, Ministry of Defence, 1998), 64.

<sup>91</sup> Daw Khin Aye Win, "Women, Active Participants in Nation Building," in *Human Resource Development and Nation Building in Myanmar*, 233-236.

<sup>92</sup> Dingrin La Seng, "Kammic Buddhism and Economic Action in Myanmar: A Christian Perspective" in *RAYS MIT Journal of Theology*, vol. 7 (January, 2006), 24-28.

<sup>93</sup> Melford E. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes* (2<sup>nd</sup>, expanded edition) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 453- 454.

economic action is indirectly an indispensable condition for salvation, it is only through this action that one can hope to acquire the most soteriologically valuable merit (*kutho*) - a merit that can be achieved through giving (*dana* in Pali) and morality (*sila* in Pali). This Buddhist belief in *kutho* (merit), *dana* (giving), and *sila* (morality), which is a primary means to salvation provides the powerful motive for economic action, essentially leading to sharpening of one's behavioral patterns and work-related values.

Wealth in Burmese Buddhist culture is the harvest of the good deeds in previous existence converted into reality in present life. It represents *Kammic* rewards for merits accumulated through *dana* in previous existences through giving. A Buddhist who is economically wealthy is therefore viewed as a man of great virtue with multiple merits - the merits that have been earned from the virtue of his or her past rebirths being converted into the prestige of wealth in his or her present rebirth. Again, this economic wealth can continue adding more and more accumulations of merit to present action of life in order to ensure better rebirths in the future existence. The more merit one accumulates, the greater one's chances of spiritual salvation. The merits being acquired through giving is the means par excellence for spiritual salvation, and hence the quest of merit as a noble path to the attainment of spiritual salvation provides the most powerful motivation for economic works and improvement of wealth.<sup>94</sup>

### 3. Cultural Impacts on Work Values, Social Prestige and Economic Concerns

For Myanmar Buddhists, acquiring 'merit-through-*dana*' is one of the noblest religious arts for the prestige of a person. Religious works such as giving alms, building pagoda, constructing monastery, sponsoring initiation of novice-hood and the ordination of monk-hood, and feasting of monks are usually public events, which involve public conspicuous display, consumption, and sharing of wealth. The more spending on these religious acts, the more prestige accrues to the sponsor. Economic work and consumption values in Myanmar are therefore often determined by such religious-oriented economic actions. Accumulating merit and earning social prestige are the most essential religious acts and social virtues, both of which require of economic investment in 'giving', provides a powerful motive for economic action (work and saving). This Buddhist tradition of merit-through-*dana* therefore brings, in a way, imbalances effects on the differences in the Burmese standards of living as the rich spends more in religious consumption (giving). In this sense, the Buddhist tradition of merit-through-*dana* seems to make people of different levels imbalanced in their living condition and economic actions. There are two assumptions: negative and positive assumptions on the question whether the Burmese Buddhist concept of *dana* strengthens or weakens economic actions of the people in Myanmar. As a negative assumption, Spiro wrote, "... it is probably safe to predict that ... the continuation of this soteriological pattern of merit-through-*dana* will continue to pose a serious obstacle to the future economic growth of Burma."<sup>95</sup> What Spiro tried to point out here is that even though Myanmar Buddhists need material wealth to accumulate their merits through giving, such a wealth may not lead them to the capitalist investment which could produce more wealth.<sup>96</sup> In support of this idea, Mya Maung,<sup>97</sup> a native scholar, came with a note arguing that Myanmar Buddhist cultural values, together with its politico-economic policy and traditionalism, resisted the economic progress of the country and affirmed the great influence of Buddhism upon the economic activities of the vast majority of the population, especially rural peasants.<sup>98</sup>

In light of views of the above two scholars, what can be concluded is that though economic activity can be stimulated by one's desire to have profits, a typical Burmese Buddhist culture of giving does

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid 454.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 463.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 463-468.

<sup>97</sup> Mya Maung is Professor of Finance in the Boston College School of Management.

<sup>98</sup> Mya Maung, "Culture Value and Economic Change" in *Asian Survey*, vol 4, No. 3 (March, 1964), 757-764. For more information about factors affecting poor economic performance of Myanmar, see Mya Maung, *The Burma Road to Poverty* (New York: Praeger, 1991 ), 205, 210-215, 275, 292-299.

not lead Burmese Buddhists to capitalist investment. This might be because, instead of investing their daily earnings and economic profits in profitable enterprises, they spend them mainly for religious purposes in order to accumulate 'good deeds' (*kamma*) and merits (*kutho*), which are determinant of happy rebirth in the future.<sup>99</sup> Looking back to the economic behaviors of Burmese Buddhists in pre-British Burma, E. Sarkisyanz,<sup>100</sup> argued that in pre-British Burma, Burmese Buddhists did not save for economic security and the Buddhist tradition allows accumulation of wealth only when it is related to works of 'merit' as building a monastery or pagoda. Thus, 'giving' rather than 'investment' that developed into the Burmese Buddhist culture is characteristic even among poor families of the lowest income. "Out of little one should give little, out of what is moderate, a moderate amount. Out of much give much," read Buddhist maximum.<sup>101</sup> While works of merit continued to serve, in some ways, as motivation for economic activity, Buddhist values are considered as an obstacle to economic growth and capital investment.<sup>102</sup> To support this idea of understanding Buddhist values as an obstacle, U Tin Soe<sup>103</sup> identified two major factors as the important causes of economic crisis in Myanmar: one is the Buddhist concept of *Kamma* (good deeds) and the other is *Lawba* (greed or avarice) and explained that Myanmar Buddhists believe that one's good fortune, high authority and high social status in this life are 'givens,' and are bound to the 'merits' that had been done in previous (past) life so that all life issues including economic prosperity and even poverty are caused first of all by *Kamma* (deeds) and followed by *Lawba* (greed).<sup>104</sup>

In contrast to the above views, Padmasiri De Silva<sup>105</sup> proposed another aspect on the positive effects of *Kamma* on the economic actions of the people in Myanmar. In opposition to the idea of Max Weber (1864-1920)<sup>106</sup> who understands Buddhism as other-worldly, monastic ideal, which requires absolute abandonment of the world and its drives. De Silva strongly emphasized the significance of Buddhist ethics opposition to the idea of Max other-worldly, monastic ideal, which requires absolute abandonment of the world and its drives, De Silva strongly emphasized the significance of Buddhist social ethics and hence denied any rational action, which impedes the activity of concentrated contemplation. For Weber, there is no path leading from this "world-rejecting" religion to "any economic ethic or even any rational social ethic."<sup>107</sup> De Silva therefore criticizes Weber for wrongly asserting that Buddhism is not a source of this worldly social ethic. His critical argument is the fact that Buddhism has a genuine social ethic and hence plays a vital role in social change, even though it is other-worldly directed. In addition, he argued that the Buddhist doctrine of "no-self" (*anatta*) does not weaken a healthy drive for personality integration, social reform or even nation building. Instead, Buddhism has enhanced cooperation and social integration by reducing one's self-centeredness, self-manipulation and greediness.

In view of De Silva, Weber's theory ignored the significance of inter-relationship between lay Buddhism and the world-denounced monastic Buddhism.<sup>108</sup> Again, in view of another scholar, namely, E. Sarkisyanz, member's view on Buddhism tends to be too narrow', because it is confined only to the canonical Theravada Buddhism and Weber does not fully understand "the Asokan

---

<sup>99</sup> Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 192-193, 206-207.

<sup>100</sup> E. Sarkisyanz was Professor and Director of the Political Science Department of the South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg. He earned his PhD from the University of Chicago.

<sup>101</sup> E. Sarkisyanz, *Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), 142.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Dr Tin Soe is Professor and Head of the Department of Economics at Yangon University of Distance Education.

<sup>104</sup> Tin Soe "An economic Interpretation of Some Myanmar Traditional Concepts in the Context of Globalization," in *Traditions of Knowledge in Southeast Asia*, Part, 3, published by Myanmar Historical Commission, Ministry of Education, Union of Myanmar (Yangon: University Press, 2005), 147-148.

<sup>105</sup> Padmasiri de Silva is Professor and Head of Philosophy at University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

<sup>106</sup> Max Weber (1864-1920) was an influential sociologist.

<sup>107</sup> Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, transl. Ephraim Fischhoff (Boston, Beacon Press, 1963), 267.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

political Buddhism."<sup>109</sup> It was this Asokan political Buddhism that devoted the Indian State of that time to the creation of a prosperous nation as a precondition for the support of the Sangha and for "the escape from suffering and the realization of moral law (the Dhamma) in this society as whole."<sup>110</sup> In line with this thought, Frank E. Reynolds<sup>111</sup> asserts that the Buddhist law of *Kamma* ensures that piety, moral behavior, and wealth are "mutually supportive" and that a large store of merit gained through giving is believed to assure chances of pleasant rebirths in the future.<sup>112</sup> Hence, Buddhism is not completely void of the motive of capital investment but it emphatically teaches, "An ethic of diligent work" for the laity and hence to support entrepreneurial energy directed to investments and reinvestment.<sup>113</sup>

#### 4. How Globalization Affects the Life of Peoples in Myanmar

Many leaders in Asia today assume that in spite of some considerable benefits, globalization created social disintegration, inequality, poverty and even endangerment of the human environment. Through a vast network of marketing systems, globalization brought about the widening income gap between the rich and the poor both at national and international levels. The richest quarter of the world's population saw its per capita GDP (Gross Domestic Product) increase nearly six times during the 20th century, while the poorest quarter of the world's population had a per capita increase of only three times.<sup>114</sup> A Third World country like Myanmar is still not included in this reference of income growth. Myanmar is far behind global market economic competition. She is being ranked as one of the ten poorest countries in the world. It is estimated that 75 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

Because of its long-standing exclusion from international community and global market relations, Myanmar impoverished herself almost to the highest point of socio-cultural, educational, economic, and political collapse. Isolationism provides Myanmar with two inter-linked consequences: first, to content with her own self, being detached religiously and culturally from the demonic forces of globalization that would bring about mono-cultural homogenization to the country, and second, to isolate the country by detaching herself economically from the global market competition. Economic sanctions (e.g., restrictions on licenses of foreign trading firms) on Myanmar began since March, 2002, affecting around 100 foreign trading companies.<sup>115</sup> Full foreign ownership of companies operating in Myanmar is prohibited and hence most foreign investment is carried out through joint ventures with the government. The imposition of economic sanctions upon Myanmar was then made by the Bush's government of the United States of America and by the European Union from March, 2003. This economic sanction has seriously affected only the mass poor people but not the elite groups. In response to the said economic sanctions, Myanmar turns to neighboring countries such as China, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and India for regional economic co-operations. Resistant to the incoming impacts of globalization on Myanmar religion

---

<sup>109</sup> Dingrin La Seng, "Kammic Buddhism and Economic Action in Myanmar: A Christian Perspective " in *RAYS MIT Journal of Theology*, vol. 7 (January, 2006), 12-36.

<sup>110</sup> Sarkisyanz, „Buddhist Backgrounds of Burmese Socialism,“ in *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos and Burma*, ed., Bardwell L. Smith (Chambersberg P.A.: Anima Books 1978). See also S.J. Tambiah "Buddhism and This Wordly Activity" in *Modern Asian Studies* 7, no. 1 (1973), 5. Tambiah is Professor of Anthropology at Harvard University.

<sup>111</sup> Frank E. Reynolds received his doctorate from the University of Chicago, where he currently serves as Associate Professor of Buddhist Studies in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations and as Chairman of the History of Religions Field in the Divinity School.

<sup>112</sup> Frank E. Reynolds, "Ethics and Wealth in Theravada Buddhism: A Study in Comparative Religious Ethics," in *Ethics, Wealth and Salvation: A Study in Buddhist Social Ethics*, ed. Russell F. Sizemore and Donald K. Swearer (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 59-76.

<sup>113</sup> Peter Harvey, 207-209.

<sup>114</sup> Marj Rosenblum, Globalization], an unpublished document prepared for teaching students of English class at the American Center. Yangon (2003.), 25.

<sup>115</sup> See Burma: *Country in Crisis: Foreign Investment*. Open Society Institute, Burma Project, 2001, available at <http://burmaproject.org>.

and culture, the resurgence and revitalization of the Buddhist faith and culture are revived by renovating new Buddhist pagodas, temples and meditation centers. It is reported that the number of Buddhist meditation centers in Myanmar has increased rapidly in recent years, for instance, Myanmar today has the largest number of Buddhist meditation centers in the world with a total of 28 in 2003.<sup>116</sup> Hence Myanmar is "benefiting from a worldwide trend, because increasing number of foreigners (468 in 2002 & 471 in 2003) have been coming here to learn Buddhist meditation techniques."<sup>117</sup> Other non-Buddhist institutions like Muslim and Christian institutions such as home for orphanage, schools for the blind and the disabled, the deaf, nursery schools for children, Christian Bible schools, have also increased in number in recent years.<sup>118</sup> The emergence of these new religious institutions, some of these have been developed not necessarily for spiritual purposes but significantly for commercial and economic purposes, has shown the growing impacts of materialism and economic globalization on the existing religions and religious movements of Myanmar, the process of which can be called as 'religious commercialization of our time.'

For economically poor Myanmar, a question posed by the various effects of this economic globalization is, how to deal with this forceful phenomenon in the most responsible way? Can Myanmar religious and cultural forces resist or curve the trends of globalization?<sup>119</sup> Are Myanmar people ready to boldly face this homogenized streams of globalization and how? The answer to these questions could be both "Yes" and "No." First, Yes, because the resurgence and revitalization of the Buddhist faith, nationalism and indigenization of ethnic Christianity (e.g.,

development of the Christian contextual and indigenous theologies) arose intensely in past years as counter-responses to penetration of economic globalization, together with its Western cultural accessories. Second, "No," because limited open market system helps Myanmar only with provision of limited economic resources and opportunities merely for the elite groups and power holders who are minority. Other religious and cultural minorities especially the powerless mass still live in abject condition of life. The net result is that economic globalization has benefited mainly the ruling and rich class people. Such benefits have in turn strengthened the legitimacy and perpetuation of the successive political powers in Myanmar.

In short, globalization of financial markets, not benefiting developing which have no free economic access to the networks of global economic systems, has produced only disadvantages, Hence, the open market system, controlled by the power holders, has resulted in various forms of moral corruption, disintegration of socio-cultural life, collapse of public education, and instability of political life. In fact, unless Myanmar develops competent economic management skills, she may continue to suffer abject poverty in the future and her restricted open-door economic policy might have worsened people's conditions in all sectors of life, from politico-economic injustices to religious exploitations. To give an example among others, many school teachers these days, because of low income paid by the school, spend more of their teaching hours for private home tuition than teaching in the school. These tutoring teachers earn three or four times, sometimes even more than that, of their monthly salaries. The result is that school education in Myanmar has gradually turned to be central on home-based education system, which many poor families cannot afford.<sup>120</sup>

All the above factors, among many others, show how globalization affects our communities

---

<sup>116</sup> Nyi Nyi Aung, "Foreigners look to fled station to quell Modern-day Anxieties," in Myanmar Times (February 24-March 2, 2003), 7.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. Increasing interest in Buddhist meditation does not necessarily imply one's conversion from his or her own religion to Buddhism.

<sup>118</sup> Since 1990s, more than 70 new small Bible schools and orphanages were reported established by the evangelical and para-church groups based in Yangon.

<sup>119</sup> See Vinay Samuel "Keynote Address: Evangelical Response to Globalization: an Asian Perspective, in *Transformation* (January, 1999), 4.

<sup>120</sup> Samuel N. Lynn, "Voices of Minority Ethnic Christians in Myanmar," in CFC Bulletin vol. XVIII, No. 2- vol. XIX, No. 2 (December 2002-August 2003), 15. A paper from the Consultation on "Journeying Together with Indigenous Peoples in Asia" at Cairns, Australia (Sept.29-Oct. 6, 2002).

especially the mass poor who live below poverty line in Myanmar 36 today.<sup>121</sup>

*Other people working as sailors on sea-going vessels own a car or a house. In my case, I own only this bulging belly.*

## 5. The Significance of Social Relationship in Doing Business in Myanmar

Myanmar society is a tradition-bound conservative Buddhist society so that any attempt to understand the economic trends and motives of modern Myanmar would not be possible unless the basic knowledge of traditional Buddhist cultures, customs, moral concepts and social behavior is seriously taken into account. Traditionally, society is being composed of five social classes:<sup>122</sup> ( 1 ) farmers (or

Myanmar cultivators; (2) merchants (or traders); (3) Entrepreneurs; (4) Well informed and reputed *hmu-matts* (royal officials) and ( 5 ) The learned reverend monks. The four out of the five classes were considered as economically productive classes in Myanmar society and are therefore the main sources and causes of wealth, prosperity and welfare of the state.<sup>123</sup> In order to do a successful business in Myanmar one will need we to understand the significance of social values and know how to have a socially healthy environment built before doing the greater business in Myanmar. There is a Burmese idiomatic proverb, "*pokku-khin hmah, taya mein,* " which literally means, "one justice (accountability) only on a friendly tenns,"<sup>124</sup> explains what important role 'friendly social relationship' plays in constituting the communal accountability in 40 Myanmar cultural society.<sup>125</sup>

In doing whatever business big and small, social relationships always have a role and weight. As a head or a superior of a company, for instance, one will be looked upon as a father or a mother and a teacher if he or she has a good and healthy social relationship with his or her workers. Looked upon as father means not having an authoritarian power but it rather means taking a good care and a high responsibility in the needs of workers. Socially, Myanmar people cannot endure or tolerate any cultural humiliation in front of others. Many Myanmar people do not like to lose their faces before their superior or inferior. This means that *frankness, openness* and *criticism* which are not problematic in Western culture should have a limited range and be made neither publicly nor privately when these are considered to affect interpersonal relationships.<sup>126</sup> Doing business on the basis of a healthy inter-personal relationship would be more effective as all business in Myanmar in the first place is largely on inter-personal (face-to-face) basis. In this respect, human face always plays an important role in making deals with any kind of business. The second important thing is a significant role the 'social understanding' (*na-lay-hmuh*) plays.

What it means by social understanding depends on the context, some time it means mutual forgiveness between employers and employees and some other time it means a consensus for mutual cooperation leading to mutual benefits. In fact, social understanding makes one's business faster, better and even more effective, because it has a unique potential to remove all sorts of social tensions between business-doing peoples. The only warning is that it could also be a great block to effectiveness of any business when it is employed as a means to selfish economic exploitation and

<sup>121</sup> Salai Hta Oke Yangon Church Directory (Yangon: The Christian Library, 1999).

<sup>122</sup> *Hman-Nan Yazawin* (The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma), trans. by Pe Maung Tin & G. H. Luce (Rangoon: University Press, 1960) and U Po Hlaing's *Raja Dhamma Singaha Kyann*. U Po Hlaing was a very popular minister who had served the last three successive kings of Konbaung dynasty: Bo Daw (Badon) Min, Min Don Min and Thibaw Min. He was a learned Interior Minister (Shwepyi Wungyi) who was known as Yaw Mingyi (Governor of MinisterYaw region).

<sup>123</sup> Maung Htin, ed., *Raja Dhamma Singaha Kyann* (Yangon: 1992), 138.

<sup>124</sup> Hla Thamein, *Myanmar Proverbs* (in Myanmar and English) (Yangon: Padamyau Mauk Sapye, 2000), 88.

<sup>125</sup> Samuel Ngun Ling, *Communicating Christ in Myanmar: Issues, Interactions and Perspectives*. (Yangon: ATEM, 2005), 228.

<sup>126</sup> Saw Myat Yin, *Culture Shock: A Guide to Customs and Etiquette, Burma* (Singapore: Time Books International, 1994), 188-189.

manipulation of other's profit. The third important thing is Myanmar perception of the relation between time and business. While a saying, 'time is money' is true in other contexts, the reverse is true in Myanmar context. 'Money is time' in Myanmar context, because money makes time. One needs to pay more, for instance, to get a passport in time and he or she pays less to get it delayed is the reality of life in Myanmar today. In this context, the Myanmar concept of time is much more related to the person (human face) than to the clock. That does not mean that Myanmar people do not respect time. The point here is to say that 'time is social' and 'sociality' is fundamental to the achievement of doing a better and a greater business in Myanmar context.

## Conclusion

The situation of Myanmar economy is not yet promising and its prospect for the future is still dim. Myanmar at present is on a cross road between globalization and isolation. While the traditional trend of Myanmar economy is geared towards isolation, the changing global situation strongly demands and even challenges to move towards economic globalization. As globalization pervades, Myanmar has no choice but keeps abreast of it.

In this context of globalization, the whole discussion throughout this paper has analyzed some cultural interactions that have taken place between the Myanmar traditional values and the emerging global economic forces, both of which are believed to have immense impacts on economic actions as well as economic crisis in Myanmar. While traditional Buddhism is identified as lack of capitalistic motivation for economic development, it should not minimize economic options in Myanmar. Hence, the success of any economic action in Myanmar would depend not only on the potential of capital investment but also on one's understanding of Myanmar cultural and behavioral work values, on how effectively one determines to build basic social relationship with local people, and how much cultural investment one has invested as foundation for doing business in Myanmar. It is important to understand that the option of doing business in Myanmar cannot be successfully achieved apart from integrating one-self with its given religious, cultural and social context of the people and their human values.

### 3.9 Nay Yan Oo, Effects brought by Myanmar nationals working abroad on the Myanmar economy

Translation: Ye Nyunt

A new form of earning a livelihood has appeared for a long time in Myanmar as the process of globalization has gained momentum in this changing world. Nowadays, some people go abroad to work for some time or settle there for good. That is what we call working by temporary migration, which has great impacts on the Myanmar economy. Just as the Myanmar workers abroad are faced with no small challenges and obstacles, Myanmar is also enjoying positive effects from these temporarily migrating workers.

#### **The beginning of the process**

In the 1980s, it was only a fantasy to work outside Myanmar. It was difficult to leave for abroad with intent to work or pay a short visit amidst strict rules and policies of the government. Moreover, difficult foreign connections and high costs were other barriers. Except some people who worked on sea-going ships, the majority had to stay shut off from the outside world.

The few Myanmar sailors made money easily, and could afford to look after their parents. This inspired others who turned their aim to becoming a sailor on an international ship.

The doors reopened in the 1990s when socialism was changed to market-oriented economic system. It became easier to some extent to visit a foreign country or work abroad. Yet, it was still a little difficult to obtain a passport.

#### **To Singapore, Malaysia and neighbouring countries**

Everyone talked about working in Malaysia in the late 1990s. Whereas Malaysia needed cheap labour during its vibrancy of the economy, young Myanmar people found it a valuable destination for work. At that time, Malaysia needed large quantities of workers for its booming industries.

Likewise, construction sites in Singapore were in need of labour. Some chose Singapore where wages were comparatively higher.

In the year following the year 2000, Myanmar found it easier and smoother to go abroad. Throngs of people jostling at the office where passports were issued, people mushrooming at the foreign employment agencies and a rapid increase in the number of nationals working abroad were a manifestation of the large labour demand in fast-developing Asian countries.

## **Diversity of foreign labour markets and different working classes**

A Myanmar national can go back home with a smiling face after investing a sum (at least 300,000 kyats) and working in a foreign country for two or three years. Some people borrow money for the investment in working abroad, but this debt is settled after a few years working outside.

Their destinations have become widespread—not only neighbouring and nearby countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, but also developed countries such as Japan and South Korea and Middle-East countries such as the United Arab Emirates (Dubai) and Qatar.

Emigrating workers include two classes: white collar and blue collar. Engineers, computer technicians, statisticians, doctors and nurses have their destination as Singapore. During the 2-month period granted them as a tourist visa, they try to look for jobs. Almost everyone got a job in the earlier period. In the year after 2005, businessmen from ME countries visited Myanmar to mobilize labour force for their industries. Job opportunities exist in hotel industry where vacancies such as receptionists, waiters and clerks usually fall vacant.

Those who chose to work in Japan and South Korea are fewer because of the high costs of initial investment before working there. But these two countries are regarded as good destinations where wages are two or three times higher than those offered in other countries. There are only a few Myanmar nationals working in European countries, Australia and the United States.

The popular destinations for blue-collar workers are Malaysia and Thailand. There are two routes to reach the two countries: legal route (usually by air) and the illegal route (across the border).

In fact, the life of Myanmar nationals abroad is not flower-strewn: there are full of obstacles and difficulties.

## **Consequences on the Myanmar economy**

Debates are around while scholars are doing research on **brain drain**, and some are pointing out the fact that in the long term, the country will enjoy **brain gain** again. Nevertheless, the prevailing situation is regarded as a positive sign for Myanmar. It can be said that working abroad is a solution to unemployment and low wages inside the country.

God consequences flow from the situation of many young persons working abroad—the

working themselves enjoying good incomes and the government rewarded with an automatic solution to unemployment.

Working abroad is a new form of livelihood by which the nationals earn quick-to-see money. The incomes are much greater than those that can be earned in the country, and they can live in higher standards. They can transfer money to the family every month.

Despite the loss suffered by the country in technicians and labour force, there is a great inflow of money into the country, which form an integral part of the country.

What the country gains in turn are technology, expertise and foreign networks. At long last, the state-of-the-art technology, high technology and work experiences enter into the country directly or indirectly. The Myanmar workers already in foreign country serve as a base of connection for those who choose to work abroad and also for those who wish to pursue further education.

The major impact of foreign workers on the Myanmar economy was the remittance of money from outside. Myanmar is expected to enjoy more benefits when Myanmar nationals working abroad and those who have settled in foreign countries come back to their motherland where the door is more widely open, with policy changes.

## **Obstacles and challenges**

Working abroad has become a favourite livelihood for Myanmarers. However, not everyone is successful in this livelihood. In 2008, the world economic recession caused decline in the number of persons seeking foreign jobs. Struck by the global wave, Singapore reduced its labour force and suspended recruiting more labourers, leaving white-collar workers of Myanmar jobless. Malaysia labour market too nearly collapsed in 2009 and 2010. Myanmar's weekly news journals even wrote that Malaysia labour market was dead. The markets that have regularly served the Myanmar labour force were UAE (Dubai) and Qatar.

There have been many persons who fell prey to employment agencies in the country which are dishonest and swindling. Many persons in rural areas are inspired by their relatives who have succeeded in working abroad. However, these people are naïve, lacking in knowledge and information. Taking advantage of this, employment agencies and middlemen cheat such people out of their money. These people eventually end up in the loss of time, money and hope for life, going desperate.

These agencies ask more money than what is reasonable for the service they do for obtaining a passport. They charge high agency service fees. They con them into

believing that they would certainly get a job abroad, fleecing them of their money. Finally, the victims are stranded at a foreign airport, without anyone to greet them or without any contact to make. Even if they get a job abroad, the actual salary was much smaller than what they have been promised. The problems are a never-ending story.

There are also foreign businessmen who offer low rates for the labour agents. Myanmar workers are given low wages or given or denied overtime wages. Their working hours are long and could not enjoy a holiday every week. These are the troubles suffered by the blue-collar workers. Myanmar nationals who work as technicians or scholars are also faced with difficulties in obtaining stay permit (visa) and suffer losses such as paying double tax (both to the host country and the native country)

## **Conclusion**

The fact that the Myanmar economic engine has become more efficient can be attributed to the nationals working abroad. Income from outside the country bring a great deal of benefits to the country, especially those in the private sector such as air lines, employment agencies and financial services. Benefits such as inflow of money or the factor for the growth of GDP come to the country directly or indirectly or for the short term or for the long term.

The Myanmar government has to do something more in the following areas: weak enforcement of the Tax Law, lack of strict control over foreign employment agencies, policies that cannot protect the interests of Myanmar nationals working abroad, lack of forming workers unions and lack of encouraging social organizations.

### 3.10 Chit Oo Ko Ko, The outlook of Myanma's economy that has for ages been down in the dumps

The present era, known as the globalization era, is led by the market. After the eras of colonization and the cold war, the great countries are trying to be superior economically rather than politically; and almost all the countries have come to accept, that they need to, and strive for, to increase their exports to achieve economic progress. Therefore, in the present era, countries are trying to achieve economic superiority. Subjects such as economics, law and information technology have risen to the top. These subjects have progressed basically from experience and the state of the economy of present-day Myanmar can be viewed by studying its history in relation to the economy.

It has to be presumed that before the emergence of the country Myanmar, the Mon people were dominant in the Irrawaddy basin; they hunted and cultivated the land and bartered goods. In the first century A.D., the early Pyu(Myanmar) had attained a high degree of civilization and established the state of Srekettaya that was along the route used by the Chinese and Indian merchants. It could be said that there already was evidence of the use of Chinese silk and porcelain. The conclusion could be drawn that Myanmar's geopolitical importance had began from those days.

Up to the time when it had clearly emerged as Myanmar in the reign of King Anawrahta, the country, despite being fairly developed culturally, its economy still depended on agriculture and natural resources; the forestry products were the main component of the natural resources; goldsmith, silversmith and coppersmith were traditionally small family businesses that had been handed down the generations and gold refining had progressed during the decades. Presumably Arab traders had reached Myanmar to trade, as Motamma, Farokar and Rambia archipelago remain as Arab names to this day.

After the collapse of Bagan, there emerged many small states with agriculture as the main component of the economy. Dams were built and irrigation was much better than in the days of Bagan. Even though there would have been some taxation it was probably given in kind, offering the best product of the land to the lord of the territory/ the state. It remained like that to the time of Innwa and the contemporary early Konebaung period. Up to the early Konebaung period, the kings expanded their states not out of economic desires but rather to show their power and military prowess and were content to accept the offerings made yearly by the kings of the conquered lesser states, of gold and silver and their daughters. History had it that Innwa and Hanthawaddy were contemporary states that waged wars for over forty years; the wars had nothing to do with economics and were just tests of military prowess. During the reign of King Thalun, the son of King Anaukpetlun who rebuilt Innwa, there was standardization of weights and currency in the state.

The extraordinary fact at the time of absolute monarchs was that those who cleared land for

cultivation owned the land; the king didn't own it, and only when the owner died without leaving anyone to inherit the land, was it seized by the king. Those who worked the king's land had to offer him in kind an amount that depended on the harvest. The king would grant awards to the farmers and it was known that the king actually received only about 20% of the harvest. It was amazing to know that it had benefited the farmers more than the present system where the farmers had to pay according to the area of land used, irrespective of whether the crop succeeded or not.

Pyu coins were seen from the Pyu era to the Konebaung era, but it seemed that they only served as a commodity to be saved and wasn't used as a medium for exchange. Money could not be used in the buying and selling of goods. Pyu coins were presumed to have been used by the upper classes as status symbols and the ordinary people just bartered their goods. The last kings of the Konebaung dynasty, King Mindon and King Thebaw, had started to use coins with the image of a dancing peacock in the Yadanabon era and King Mindon began the system of paying salaries to his ministers and servants and taxing the people one tenth of their incomes. Records revealed that some people didn't like that system of taxation and migrated to the lower part of Myanmar that was governed by the English.

As mentioned above, up to the time of early Konebaung period there were only Chinese and Indian merchants plying through the state to trade. Occasionally, merchants from Europe hoping to expand trade would come to towns and villages which were accessible from the sea. In the early Konebaung period during the reign of King Alaunghpaya, the English came to Hiegyi Kyun(Island)to station a garrison and tried to open a trading post(store)there. It was known that Italian missionaries were already present in lower Myanmar before King Alaunghpaya's time. Myanmar had to surrender that part of India which had been under Myanmar rule to the English after the First War during the reign of King Bodawhpaya, the grandson of King Alaunghpaya. During the reign of Bagyidaw, the son of King Bodawhpaya, Myanmar had to further surrender lower Myanmar after the Second War. The first and second wars that occurred had not much to do with economics.

The third war of aggression was very unusual. King Mindon, the son of King Bagyidaw, had noted that the wars with the English were lost because of the (poor) defensive forces and tried to initiate an industrial revolution, placing much reliance on his brother, the crown prince, Prince Kanaung. Many state scholars were sent to France and other great countries and foreign experts were invited to Myanmar and industries were set up on a huge scale and Myanmar became the first country to develop the (submerged) mine. But prince Kanaung was assassinated and because the methods adopted were wrong, the industrial revolution failed in Myanmar.

One of the causes of the failure of the industrial revolution could be ascribed to the assassination of

Prince Kanaung, but actually, there were many errors in the methods used. The first was the error in the criteria used to select the state scholars; instead of personal qualifications, people of tall stature and those with relations to the royalty were selected. Some of them didn't return to Myanmar and some found it too difficult for them to study the subjects assigned to them.

And the worst of it all was that there was no modern system of administration and taxation, and the cost of the industries had to be taken from the royal coffers. No long-term financial planning was made for these industries and no local replacements were produced to take the place of the foreign experts. In addition, the industries did not produce products for sale inside the country nor for export but mostly for the defence of the country; there was no economic planning.

But there had been some modern good starts like the plan start banking in association with the French and the development of printing skills and techniques. There was freedom of the media and compared with the present times, it could be said to be of a very high standard because King Mindon allowed even himself to be criticized and news of events inside the palace could be written freely.

In 1885, during the reign of King Thebaw, the English, citing the timber-related matter of the Bombay Burma Company, seized the whole of Myanmar. The invasion was done by the British authorities at the behest of the company looking after its interests. It could be said that Myanmar's economy and form of administration were forged after coming under British rule.

As soon as they had seized Myanmar, the English formed regions of administration and areas of Jurisdiction and governmental organizations and machinery to run the country. Capitalist companies came and huge corporations like the British Oil Company emerged. Cultivation was done systematically and attempts were made to export rice to the world market. Economic policies were laid down and systematically carried out, like bringing in cheap farm labour from India for the enterprises in cultivation, and Tamil money lenders to lend money to the huge mass of farmers because banks could not do so. Although there were some native businessmen they were not performing well in external trade and it must be assumed that up to that time natives of Myanmar still had difficulty in doing external trade.

But there was the vivid reminder in history of the wealthy Mon U Nar Auk. The way he had his ships offer competitive service with the English resembled pretty much the model of today's market economy. At that time the Irrawaddy Flotilla, owned by the British, and U Nar Auk competed to lure passengers to ride on their ships. They reduced the fares and offered better services; U Nar Auk finally let the passengers ride free of charge on his ships and the business folded up because he could no longer compete with the English who had more capital. It was a fierce competition for the market. At that time it was a matter of shipping lines competing with one another but it also had

political effects. Although passengers initially rode on U Nar Auk's ships out of a sense of patriotism, they ultimately chose to ride on the English ships, despite the offer of a free ride by U Nar Auk, because it was human nature to prefer to have better services. If you looked at that incident from an economic perspective you would see that consumers only wanted to have better services and cheaper prices.

If you consider U Nu's 'Pyidawtha Hsimankein (Plan for a pleasant country)', although there was goodwill for the people, the government didn't realize the basic needs of the people and didn't bring into consideration beforehand the strength of treasury, the stability of the state etc. and the plan didn't succeed because the society basically wasn't ready and the government had overreached itself.

After U Nu, the 28 years of General Ne Win's centrally-controlled economic system led the country's economy to ruin. At that time everything was centrally controlled and the people weren't encouraged any form of enterprise; it was so bad that doctors and seafarers were about the only entrepreneurs. A black market came into fashion; the town of Lashio in Shan State became the main gateway for Chinese goods into Myanmar. Although the government was able to maintain the state of affairs to some extent before the collapse of the world rice market, from the year the world rice market collapsed, the cooperatives were no longer able to provide the people with the necessities of life and not long after, in 1988, there was the social uprising that ended the socialist system.

The socialist system failed because the bureaucratic machinery grew larger and the amount of money needed to pay the salaries of the employees increased; the pay was insufficient to support the family and there was bribery and corruption; the black market grew larger and the people were no longer able to afford the cost of living etc..

After 1988, the military government took over and claimed that there would be a market economy and there was some degree of liberalization. Up to the year 1995, it took only about a week to start a new company; the office procedures went smoothly and the tasks finished quickly. But the Americans and other western countries placed economic sanctions on Myanmar and Myanmar's share of the world market dwindled. The shrinking market share was taken by senior government officials and those in their favour. Financial transactions had to be done through countries which didn't take part in the sanctions; it involved additional costs that had to be borne by the consumers. Now that there was to be a new government after the 2010 elections, and as some of the representatives were from the democratic forces, there were voices calling for an end to these sanctions.

During the time of the current military government, there was the intention of having a market economy; sanctions by the international community prevented it from happening. The military

government was able to withstand these sanctions because the country had rich natural resources and they played their geopolitical cards right. The European Community countries had seen the countries trading with Myanmar, especially China, reaping benefits and were changing their stance and trying to deal more warmly.

These interrelations, globalization (making the world a village) and the market drive had the government and those they favoured, wanting for more than what they had already acquired; to catch up with the world market they realized the importance of free access to the market and they have come to adopt democratic processes in order to establish a free market. The other side had also realized that their sanctions had little effect and had seen the profits made by the Chinese; they have realized that they were unable to put pressure on the Myanmar government; it was not in their interest and they have come to see it as giving opportunity to the rival Chinese.

So, with the new Hluttaw (parliament) forming a government and if there were to be access to the world market, to what extent would Myanmar be able to ride the current of the world market? At the moment there are only two types of entrepreneurs in Myanmar.

One type is the generals and those in their favour. And the other is the Chinese who would bribe their way out if they got into trouble. Most of these Chinese had come from the border regions into Myanmar, following the Wa and the Kokant armed groups who had agreed to have peace with the military government. These Chinese, with the money they had gained by illegal means, were setting up businesses in Yangon, Mandalay, Muse, Taunggyi etc. Some were able to live on the incomes of these businesses but some locals, like those in Mandalay, would say that these were just fronts while they continued their illegal trade at the border regions. They would open businesses like restaurants and karaoke lounges which would not be bringing in many customers but all the same, they would be massing ever more possessions and it had the locals wondering how this could happen so.

Then there are other unrelated enterprises and what might be called the Myanmar middle class who are not manual workers but educated graduates who earn a moderate or a small income; few of the companies and corporations show professionalism in the way they operate and many are merely family businesses. It cannot be refuted that Myanmar as a people and a nation lags behind others on the subject of economics.

Although people have gone abroad to work, few have been able to work as experts. There are professors and economists who are recognized by the world but the number is too few to be of any significance (like the Myanmar saying that a single seed of sesame won't get you any oil). There is still a need to have a political system that would nurture such intellectuals.

In conclusion it must be said that although Myanmar is quite a civilization, it has been just over a

thousand years that it has emerged as a distinct people, and very late in its emergence if you compare it with such civilizations as Egypt, Babylon, China and India. The fact that maritime trade hadn't prospered in the country, the fact that the country has rich natural resources and that crops readily grow in the country, the fact that the people are too easily contented with what they have, and although full of hospitality they do not mingle easily with foreigners, have made the Myanmar people not as knowledgeable about politics and economics as other people. Therefore to catch up with the others in the rapidly accelerating market economy, we need political and economic systems that would enable us to do just that. The state should build the infrastructure, introduce stock exchanges and encourage private enterprises and the people should be systematically studying economics and related subjects.

#### 4 Instead of a Summary: **Trust in Institutions – Myanmar's Missing Commodity**

“In God we trust” - this slogan taken from a poem that now is used as the United States' national anthem is inscribed on all US dollar notes. The tradition goes back to the year 1864, when the US Congress at the height of the American Civil War decided that the religious motto should be engraved in the one and two-cent coins of the Union. The decision had been preceded by a campaign of northern Protestant Christians arguing and was endorsed in 1956 during the Cold War against the atheist Soviet Bloc. From that time on, it is the national motto of the United States replacing the Latin phrase *E Pluribus Unum* (from many, one). From 1957 on, the words were printed on US bank notes.

The United States, the world's leading economic and political power, found their economic and political fate on the trust in God. In turn, the US dollar has become the world leading currency. Trust is a factor linking economy, politics and religion.

The same applies to mistrust. Until very recently not every banknote representing the world's dominating economy was welcome in Myanmar. Money-changers did not accept dirty notes and visitors in hotels were told that due to orders of the country's Central Bank bills showing some flaws could not be taken to settle the hotel bills. Asked about the reasons for this practice in face of the fact that circulating banknotes of the Myanmar currency, the Kyat, are often very dirty and torn, most people shrug their shoulders. Some point to the government's mistrust in the United States. Talking about the Myanmar government, most citizens will express at least some reservation about its trustworthiness. The general attitude towards the rulers can be called a wait-and-see-attitude.

The theses and recommendations passed by the working groups published in this documentation, clearly show that in Myanmar trust in economic and political institutions is not confined to the US dollar but missing to a large extent in the country's socio-economic life. In Myanmar, trust is a rare commodity.

This essay tries to shed some light on the issue of “trust” as a fundamental component of building up Myanmar's economy. The first part will give a short overview of the economic history of Burma/Myanmar. Part two provides some theoretical reflections on the role of trust for economic success. Part three will give a short look at the economic moves and declarations of the new Myanmar government before some conclusions will be drawn.

##### 1 Looking back

One working group of the workshop dealing with the lessons of history put a big question at the end of its summary: “WILL HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF?” (see above p. X). The group members feared that the necessary “synergy” of institutional change in the economic system and the political

change might not be achieved and the the gap between great promises/expectations and poor outcome of real changes happening in previous periods of the country's history might reappear. This concern refers particularly to the gap between the majority of “poor” people living in the countryside working mostly in the agricultural sector and the few “rich” who benefit from the wealth of the country.

Such a statement parallels what J.S. Furnivall stated as early as 1931 in his ground breaking work on the political economy of Burma. At the end of the first chapter – entitled “The Wealth of Burma” - he summarises with reference to the outcome of the economic reforms introduced by the British: “In Burma the land has been developed and the people have been neglected. There has been progress in Burma but the Burman has been left behind.” (Furnivall 1957: 6) This summary of the British attempt to develop Burma along the lines of liberal capitalist practices was shared by the young nationalists whom the former colonial officer wanted to educate and still represents the official Burman assessment of the economic policy in the colonial period.

Furnivall was a member of the British Fabian Society (Pham 2005) which advocated a mild form of socialism. One of his early students<sup>127</sup> and Burma's first Prime Minister, Nu, tried to implement soft socialist politics in Burma. He inaugurated the *Pyidawtha* Program (see the contribution of Zeya Thu above p. X-X) which attempted to benefit the majority of the people. The ambitious project was popularised by the promise to provide each family in the country with a house, a car and a monthly income of about US \$ 200 coming close to the aim of turning Burma into *loka nibbein*, Nirwana on earth, a phrase brought up by Thakin Kodaw Hmaing, the revered national poet. In terms of economic data, the program was quite successful, but it failed due to two reasons: First because Nu's ruling party split and secondly because the high expectations, buttressed by references to Buddhist tradition (Tinker 1957: 104-105) could not be met.

The aim of Ne Win's “Burmese Way of Socialism” on the basis of a philosophy the new sole party proclaimed shortly after the coup of March 2, 1962 professed to build up an economic system in which the exploitation of man by man was strictly curbed and “self-interest and self-seeking” were not the dominating motives of economic growth (BSPP 1963: 44). This programme ended in a reversal of Furnivall's statement. The Burmans were brought to the fore but any economic progress and development were left behind. The result was the crisis of 1988 and the takeover of the military junta which lasted until the end of March 2011.

The junta again promised to open a new chapter of Burmese economy by saying goodbye to the socialist ways and adopting a free-market economy. This, however, was only done half-hearted in a way by pushing the accelerator and the break at the same time. Further, the new policy was

---

<sup>127</sup> Nu was a member of the Fabian Party founded by U Ba Choe before the 1936 elections. .

hampered by Western sanctions, mismanagement and the general mistrust against the men on the top and their – supposed – cronies. Finally the selling of Myanmar's newly discovered gas reservoirs to China and Thailand and the great influence of Chinese business allegedly turning Mandalay, the country's second largest city, into a Chinese town contributed to the feeling of many Burmans that Furnivall's statement of 1931 could be simply repeated: The country was developed but the benefits were once again not reaped by the ordinary citizens.

Such historical experiences confirmed the traditional mistrust in government as expressed in the often quoted Burmese proverb going back to the royal period that government together with storm, floods and fire belonged to the five evils that any ordinary citizen should avoid. Government as an political institution was and still is thus regarded as a kind of natural force beyond human influence.

This kind of mistrust deeply rooted in historical experiences has to be principally distinguished from the trust in a charismatic leader like Aung San Suu Kyi or her father, Myanmar's national hero Aung San (Zöllner 2012). Trust in such pre-eminent persons is a result of the belief that their abilities are a result of the good *kamma* they have accumulated in the course of their cycles of rebirths.. As a consequence, the citizens can delegate their contribution to the state's welfare to the paramount leader and his chosen co-workers as recently happening in the Myanmar by-elections of April 2012 which were won by the NLD just because of the trust invested in the party leader. The election result can be interpreted as evidence of the still existing mistrust in the constitution established by the military government and the institutions established since then. These new institutions however can only work if the citizens are cooperating.

## 2 Some theoretical reflections

In the preface to the third edition of the “Political History of Burma” written in 1957, shortly before Prime Minister Nu handed his post over to General Ne Win, Furnivall deplored that democracy by most Burmans was regarded as a system of enforcing their rights without counterbalancing them by a set of social duties as a basis for social relations. He illustrates this attitude with the last scene of a play performed during the independence celebrations in which people filled their pockets from a shower of gold and silver raining down from above (Furnivall 1957: ax). Further, in Burma's society no “common social will” existed “to restrict the anti-social tendencies of private enterprise, for the plural society of comprised so many different groups with no social interests in common” (ibid.: am). in other words, there was no trust binding the ethno-religious and political groups of Burma together. All institutions established after independence suffered from this trust deficit.

These observations can be connected to Francis Fukuyama's theory of trust as a central element of the culturally based social capital necessary for economic prosperity and democratic progress (Fukuyama 1995). Fukuyama defines the term broadly as “any instance in which people cooperate

for common ends on the basis of shared informal norms and values” (Fukuyama 2002: 23) and claims that such capital is necessary to promote liberal democracy and free market economy in transitional and developing countries as well as securing the success of countries like the United States. Crucial for the development is the openness for non-kin interaction in a given society and the extent of trust in and between voluntary associations. Referring to the widespread belief in the technological potential for progress, he writes:

[...] an individual can decide to “invest” in conventional human capital like a college education, or training to become a machinist or computer programmer, simply by going to the appropriate school. Acquisition of human capital, by contrast, requires habituation to the moral norms of a community and, in its context, to the acquisition of virtues like loyalty, honesty and dependability. The group, moreover, has to adopt common norms before trust can be generalised among its members. (Fukuyama 1995: 26-27)

Fukuyama draws his empirical material from great “low-trust” countries like Italy, France and China and “high-trust” countries like Germany, Japan and the United States and does not deal with small Theravada-Buddhist countries like Myanmar. Here, the family clearly forms the social nucleus of society whereas the social relations formerly existing on the village level have largely been damaged by the displacement of the old social order during the British administration of the country (Furnivall 1957). The prevalence of small family enterprises in Burma/Myanmar, the failure of the cooperative movement to take roots in Burma during the colonial period (Furnivall 1957: 128-135) and the fact that credits in Myanmar are mainly taken from relatives (Okamoto 2008: 188-191) support this assessment.

Religion matters for the acquisition of moral norms as the motto on the US currency show. The same applies to Myanmar. The accent on self-reliance within societal groups coupled with mistrust towards outsiders can be observed on the international level as well as exemplified by Burma's foreign policy after independence which stressed neutrality to the utmost. Like the attitude of individuals and the prevalence of small in groups can be connected to the religious beliefs of the Buddhist majority of Myanmar. Ultimate salvation by entering Nibbana (Nirwana) can only be obtained individually by following the teaching of the Buddha and the monks who strictly preserve his words through an uninterrupted chain of ordinations. The main “civil society” actors in whom trust is invested are the member of the Buddhist order who however do not wear civil robes because they represent the superior sphere of the supra-mundane. The relationship to the clergy as well to respected lay persons is a hierarchical one supported by the belief that people of higher status deserve their position because of their accumulated merit.

### 3 Initiatives taken by the new government and some assessments

The first initiative of President Thein Sein in the field of economics was the appointment of U Myint, born 1938, as the Senior Advisor on economics to the new government. The former

University professor was regarded as one of the country's leading economists but the appointment received attention mainly because of the new advisor's alleged close contacts with Aung San Suu Kyi. The move can thus be seen in line with other decisions of the President to win the trust of the population like the suspension of the highly controversial Myitsone Dam in northern Kachin State which was criticised because of ecological questions but more due to the Chinese business interest behind the construction.

The most important economic decision taken by the government was the overdue abolition of the double exchange rate of the country's currency, the Kyat, in April 2012. Officially it had been fixed at about 1 : 6 to the US dollar since 1977 whereas the tolerated exchange rate on the "grey market" was more than 100 times higher. In April 2012, the Central Bank set the rate at 818 Kyat per dollar allowing for moving as much as 0.8 percent of either side of the reference rate. The decision hurt Myanmar exporters but helped to make trade more calculable than before and can be considered as a move to promote trust in the Myanmar currency.

Other reforms could not be completed quickly. The amendment of the Foreign Investment Law of 1988 was drafted in January but was still waiting to be passed by both chambers of the parliament until July. The same applies to the law regulating the implementation of Special Economic Zones. In both cases the delay is at least partly due to the strengthened rights of the legislative in the new constitution.

Besides these concrete steps taken or in the making, both U Myint and the President himself spoke at length about the country's economic prospects. U Myint in May 2011 submitted a long paper on poverty measurement and reduction in a rather comprehensive and academic manner.<sup>128</sup> One third of the 97 paragraphs of the paper dealt with how poverty could be measured. Here, much was said about international criteria, but nothing about how poor people in Myanmar assessed their poverty.<sup>129</sup> The paper stands in the tradition of the elaborate works of the advisors to the Burmese kings and can be compared to the *Rajadhammasangaha* which can be translated as "civil society under the rule of the king"<sup>130</sup> submitted to the last Burmese king Thibaw shortly by the court official U Hpo Hlaing (1830-1873). The author was appointed by Thibaw's father, Mindon, to modernise Burma by evaluating the policies of western countries.

One year after the publication of U Myint's paper, the President addressed the issue of economic reforms in a long speech before high ranking government officials which was broadcasted on TV

---

<sup>128</sup> <http://www.scribd.com/doc/56329756/U-Myint-Advisor-to-The-President-Thein-Sein-Theme-paper-of-Poverty-alleviation-in-Burma>

<sup>129</sup> An outspoken German ex-diplomat called the paper completely useless (<http://www.mizzima.com/edop/letters/5335-u-myints-useless-paper-on-reducing-poverty.html>).

<sup>130</sup> Another more conventional translation reads "A Collection of Norms for Kingship".

nationwide.<sup>131</sup> The President announced a “second wave of reforms” and a five years National Plan. The main targets were a 7.7 percent annual average GDP growth, an increase of the industrial sector's ratio in the GDP and a triple increase in per capita GDP. The last goal was emphasised as an attempt to “to fulfil the basic needs of our people to witness a real income growth.” To achieve these goals’ investment, both domestic and from abroad, should be increased and a number of detailed plans for land allocation and other issues were announced.

The reaction on the moves of the government was mixed. Some observers hailed the advent of realising Myanmar's economic potential. The mission chief for Myanmar of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stated in May: “Myanmar could see strong growth if it pursues the necessary reforms to take advantage of its rich natural resources, young labour force, and proximity to some of the world’s most dynamic economies, including China and India.”<sup>132</sup>

Sean Turnell, a long-time critic of the economic policies of the military junta, after returning from Myanmar with an Australian business delegation stated that the government should seek to avoid the pitfalls of the Arab Spring, in which “there was no dividend for the average person.”<sup>133</sup> In a similar way, Industry Minister Soe Thein, a former naval commander-in-chief and close confidant of President Thein Sein, explained the needs for quick reforms. “If we reform very quickly, people will feel the tangible dividends of democracy. But if they get nothing, they'll feel the former government and the new government are the same. That is why we want to push reforms very quickly.”<sup>134</sup>

Quick reforms, however, could be dangerous as well. Aung San Suu Kyi on her first trip outside Myanmar after her return to Burma in 1988 told the audience of a World Economic Forum in Bangkok: “We do not want more investment to mean more possibilities for corruption [...] and greater inequality. We do not want corruption to mean more privileges for the already privileged.”<sup>135</sup> Instead she advocated the creation of more jobs particularly for young people. Further, she called for more basic and vocational training as a precondition for economic improvements. This assessment is supported by foreign reports that the insufficiently staffed offices in Naypyidaw might not be able to meet the proclaimed reform goals.<sup>136</sup>

Here, a vicious circle comes into sight. The good intentions (*cetana*) and plans of the government might fail because the rulers try to win the trust of the population by producing tangible benefits for the people which, however, cannot be achieved due to the lack of trained personnel working in the

---

<sup>131</sup> For the text of the speech see <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-06-20.pdf>.

<sup>132</sup> <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2012/car050712a.htm>

<sup>133</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/20/world/asia/myanmar-president-announces-new-reforms.html>

<sup>134</sup> <http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/06/26/myanmar-idINDEE85P02O20120626>

<sup>135</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PubsFbjZCBo&noredirect=1>

<sup>136</sup> <http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/06/26/myanmar-idINDEE85P02O20120626>

not yet reformed institution of the government. Any failure might confirm the notion of mistrust against the government. Aung San Suu Kyi shared this mistrust. When asked at a press conference after her speech at the Economic Forum about her assessment of the new government's commitment on reform she answered: "I do believe in the sincerity of the President when he speaks of his commitment to reform but of course I recognise that he is not the only person in the government and as I keep repeating there is the military to be reckoned with."<sup>137</sup>

#### 4 Conclusions

Myanmar's government is caught in a dilemma. The success of the reformers depends on winning the cooperation of the people in a short period of time which requires overcoming the traditional mistrust of the people towards the leaders of the country. This goal however can only be achieved through a slow process of implementing structural reforms from bottom to the top. This could only be achieved if all participants in the country's political process would join hands. This, however, is not the case. Aung San Suu Kyi still has the role of an opposition to Myanmar's basic institution, the constitution which she has vowed to protect when she was sworn in as a member of parliament. Her statement in Bangkok on the sincerity of her country's present government shows that she still plays with the idea that "the military", the institution which was the main force behind the transition process, cannot be trusted.

This basic ambiguity cannot be abolished, it can just be taken into consideration on the way to prevent another failure of Myanmar's development towards a prosperous nation. Strengthening institutional trust and broadening the base of the many civil associations in the country deserves to be given top priority. The many suggestions of the working groups of the workshop point to the many tasks to be tackled and the format of the workshop might be regarded as a model of how to bring people from different backgrounds together and give them the chance to engage in the future development instead of just adopting the traditional wait-and-see attitude. Western agencies and private individuals should keep in mind that investment and technical advice must not aim only at reducing Myanmar's trade deficit but its trust deficit as well – not just towards foreign currency notes. Otherwise, foreign engagement could turn out to be counterproductive and endanger the current transition progress.

#### References

The Burma Socialist Programme Party 1983 *The System of Correlation of Man and His Environment. The Philosophy of the Burma Socialist Programme Party*. Rangoon, Burma Socialist Programme Party (quoted as BSPP 1963)

---

<sup>137</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OB315XuPtyQ&feature=relmfu>

- Furnivall, John S. 1957 (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). *An Introduction to the Political Economy of Burma*. Rangoon, Peoples' Literature Committee & House.
- Fukuyama, Francis 1995 *Trust. The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*. New York, The Free Press.
- Fukuyama, Francis 2002 Social Capital and Development: The Coming Agenda. *SAIS Review* 22, 1: 23-37.
- Okamoto, Ikudo 2008 *Economic Disparity in Rural Myanmar. Transformation under Market Liberalization*. Singapore, NUS Press.
- Pham, Julie 2005 J. S. Furnivall and Fabianism: Reinterpreting the 'Plural Society' in Burma. *Modern Asian Studies* 39, 321-348.
- Tinker, Hugh 1957 *The Union of Burma. A Study of the First Years of Independence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zöllner, Hans-Bernd 2012 *The Beast and the Beauty. The Conflict between the Military and Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar 1988-2011, Set in a Global context*. Berlin, regiospectra.